

*The Works Of
The Flesh*

vs.

*The Fruit Of
The Spirit*

The 2004

POWER



Lectures

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Lectureship Director

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Dedication

He came to the Southaven church of Christ in the fall of 1974. In fact, he and his wife were both baptized in October of that year. He was not content to occupy a church pew. He wanted to work, and work he did.

He started with the Bus Program. He was the driver, and his wife was the secretary. He remembers a very memorable Wednesday night, when the Bus Captain, Don Ward, promised the kids that they would go for ice-cream cones if they had more kids on their bus than any of the other buses—they did—72 of them. On a cold, rainy night, after services, the bus pulled up to Dale's (when it was still a drive-in) and an order was placed for 72 ice cream cones. Don Ward never promised the children anything from that moment on.

The man to whom this book is dedicated became a Deacon around the winter of 1977. His first job as a Deacon was to work with the youth. He loved his work and he loved young people. He taught the Junior high boys class. He expected the boys to listen. Once he told a couple of boys to go to the auditorium and sit with their parents. One of them cried and begged him not to make him tell his father. Incidentally, one of the boys he taught would grow up and become his son-in-law.

He also loved to have fun with the young people. On one occasion, as he and his wife were leaving their home, a white goose fell out of the sky right beside their car. Since they were headed to a holiday party for the young people, and since gag gifts were to be brought anyway, they took the goose inside the house, and wrapped it up in a box—for a gag gift. It was a rather large box, so of course everyone wanted that box. It was a big laugh when the box was opened by one of the minister's wives, who had chosen that gift. The next night, for the junior high party, the goose made another appearance as a gag gift. It was great for two big laughs.

As time marched on, he worked on, and wore a number of different hats. He went to Nashville with three other brethren to look at church buildings as a part of making plans to build the new auditorium. For years he assisted with all of the baptisms, and kept the baptistery clean. He was also assigned

the job of being one of the deacons in charge of benevolence. In this capacity, he demonstrated a wonderful blend of compassion and using the Lord's money wisely.

He would still be working today if only he could. Unfortunately, in the spring of 2003 our beloved brother was diagnosed with ALS, also known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease."

This year's book is not dedicated to someone as famous as Yankee slugger Lou Gehrig, nor is it dedicated to Bruce Edwards, the famous caddy of Tom Watson, who also battled ALS. This year's book is dedicated to someone with little fame, but tremendous faith. His battle with ALS will never become national news. He will never stand in front of thousands at Yankee Stadium and make a moving speech. Yet, he will stand before God someday and hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21). Therefore, for all he has done in the past, for what he desires to do now, and with love and prayers for his future, this book is affectionately dedicated to John Coker. Along with this dedication we offer our love and prayers to John's faithful and loving wife, Beverly, and to his two children Sean and Christy.



John Coker

Acknowledgments

My heart is once again warmed by the association with all who had a part in bringing this volume into existence. Of course, without the support of the elders for the lectureship, there would be no such thing as this lectureship book. Thus, any and all good that this volume does is contingent upon the decision of the elders to conduct the 12th annual **POWER** lectureship. The Southaven church of Christ is blessed to have Larry Everson and Con Lambert as shepherds of the local flock. The brotherhood is also blessed by the vision that these men have for spreading the truth in printed form.

Special thanks to each and every speaker who contributed of their time and effort to author a manuscript. Unless you have written a chapter for publication in a book, you have no idea how much it really involves. We greatly appreciate the toil of our speakers/authors. It will take you much less time to read their chapters than it did for them to write them. Of course, their prayer and mine is that the words they have written will bring forth fruit in your life and mine for much longer than it took them to research and write their chapters.

In the third place, a special word of thanks is due to my precious family. In many ways, the production of this year's book, especially in its earlier stages, was a family affair. My wife, Tish, assisted me for countless hours in the typesetting and formatting of the book. My older children, Daniel and Holly, "Scripture-checked" each manuscript to make sure the verses cited, actually referred to the subject at hand.

Finally, my brother and friend Robin Smith chipped in "late in the fourth quarter" to help put the finishing touches on the book. His years of experience were just what was needed to complete this project. Thanks also to Geraldine Chaney for her volunteer spirit!

--B. J. Clarke

Foreword

Each one of the **POWER** lectureship books has been important because the content in each book has come from the Bible. Therefore, it is hard to say that any of these books is more important than the other volumes.

Having said that, it is safe to say that no theme could be any timelier than this year's study of **The Works Of The Flesh vs. The Fruit Of The Spirit**. As you look around the world today you cannot help but be reminded of John's inspired assessment of the world in his day: "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Turn on the evening news, read the daily newspaper, or just listen to the conversations of those around you, and you will find "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like" (Gal. 5:19-21).

What the world needs now is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). The world will never know how to cultivate these things apart from the teaching of the Holy Spirit on these matters as recorded in God's Divine Word. What the world needs now is Christ, and to imitate the pattern of Christ, Who shunned all works of the flesh and perfectly bore the fruit of the Spirit in His life.

The aim of this volume is to enhance our appreciation for the nine elements which make up the fruit of the Spirit, and to increase our disdain for participating in the works of the flesh.

We are not being overly dramatic when we say that our salvation hinges upon whether we shun the works of the flesh and incorporate the fruit of the Spirit into our lives. Those who engage in the works of the flesh "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). Therefore, let us "Walk in the Spirit" and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

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CHAPTER 1

The Battle For The Soul

B. J. Clarke

Introduction

IT IS A VERY popular VBS song, but the message it expresses is not just for children. It is the song which declares, “I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery; And I may never fly o’er the enemy, but I’m in the Lord’s Army.” When I was in college, we often sang the words, “I’m a hard fighting soldier on the battlefield, and I’m bringing souls to Jesus by the service that I yield.”

The message of these songs is very much in harmony with the Holy Scriptures. God’s Word constantly employs the language of warfare. While Paul was a prisoner at Rome he “was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him” (Acts 28:16). Considering the fact that Paul was often surrounded by military personnel and images of warfare, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit led him to use some of these very same images as metaphors for the Christian life. The apostle Paul referred to both Epaphroditus and Archippus as a “fellovsoldier” (Phil. 2:25; Phm. 2). Moreover, he often wrote to Timothy about the Christian warfare:

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18).

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-5).

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (2 Tim. 4:7).

The apostle Peter also employed the language of warfare when he wrote, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;” (1 Pet. 2:11).

Indeed there is a war going on and it’s not about the Middle East. The battle of which we speak has been going on since the dawn of time. This is not carnal warfare—it is a battle for the souls of men and women. The entire crux of the battle is the soul of man. The fact that one soul is worth more than the wealth of the whole world (Matt. 16:26), makes this battle the most important one ever fought. God has done everything necessary to save the soul of man. His desire is that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Enemy

There is no doubt concerning the identity of the enemy. “The enemy is the devil” (Matt. 13:39). Paul explains that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*” (Eph. 6:12).

Moreover, there is no doubt concerning the intentions of our enemy. Satan is “your adversary, the devil” who “as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan is fighting to cause as many souls as possible to be lost and to come live with him in everlasting fire.

According to Scripture, Satan has “his ministers” upon the earth as well (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Thus, in identifying the enemy in the battle for the soul, it is not just Satan, but those who serve Satan that constitute the enemies against whom we fight. Anyone who is not with Christ is against Christ, and is a servant of Satan (Matt. 12:30; John 8:34).

The Enlistment

In order to become a member of the U. S. Army, you must pass a physical. To enlist in the Lord’s Army you must willingly defect from Satan’s side to the Lord’s side. The Lord’s Army is a volunteer army. No one is drafted against their will (Matt. 23:37; John 5:40; John 6:44-45; Rev. 22:17).

The enlistment is ultimately accomplished by passing a “spiritual.” There are terms of entrance with which we must comply if we would become soldiers in the Lord’s Army. These terms of entrance involve hearing (Rom. 10:17); believing (John 8:24; Acts 8:35-37); repenting (Acts 17:30; Rom. 2:4); confessing Jesus as the Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) and being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27).

Once we have enlisted, we must recognize that we are no longer under the dominion of Satan. We have been delivered from the power of darkness and have been translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). Christ is now our Commander-in-Chief, our one and only Master, the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). We cannot serve

two masters (Matt. 6:24). The Christian soldier's one and only aim is to "please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4).

The Entanglements

We are naïve if we believe that Satan will leave us alone after we have deserted the ranks of his followers. After the baptism of Jesus, Satan immediately attempted to cause Jesus to succumb to numerous temptations. When Jesus won every battle, Satan finally "departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:13). You can count on it—if Satan tried to ensnare Jesus after His baptism, he will certainly endeavor to ensnare you and me (2 Tim. 2:26). We cannot afford to be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). We must scout out the enemy so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). The word "wiles" is from the Greek *methodeais*, a word which refers to methods or strategies; it involves a deliberate planning or system.

How will Satan seek to ensnare us? Well, what was his strategy in the Garden of Eden? He enticed Eve to sin with a three-pronged attack: (1) **The lusts of the flesh**: "the tree was good for food" (Gen. 3:6); (2) **The lusts of the eyes**: "it was pleasant to the eyes" (Gen. 3:6); (3) **The pride of life**: "a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6).

How did Satan seek to ensnare our Lord? He employed a three-pronged attack: (1) **The lusts of the flesh**: "Command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4:3); (2) **The lusts of the eyes**: "the devil...showeth him all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8); and (3) **The pride of life**: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down" (Matt. 4:6).

How does Satan seek to ensnare us today? We find the answer in Paul's words to Timothy: "No man that

warreth entangleth himself with **the affairs of this life**; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:4). Notice the expression “the affairs of this life.” This is the crux of Satan’s strategy to derail our path to heaven. Satan knows that if he can divert our affection from things above to “the affairs of this life” he has us right where he wants us.

How does Satan try to divert our attention from spiritual things to worldly things? According to 1 John 2:16, he utilizes a three-pronged attack: (1) **The lust of the flesh: *what feels good***; (2) **The lust of the eyes: *what looks good***; and (3) **The pride of life; *what makes me look good***. Indeed, Satan is using the same methods today he has always used.

Let’s look more closely at how our enemy endeavors to damn our souls. It is evident that the common denominator in Satan’s battle plan has to do with “lust.” The word “lust” is translated most often in the New Testament from the Greek word *epithumeo*. The word refers to setting our heart upon something, to long for something with passion. When we become Christians, when we enlist in the Lord’s Army, we are granted exceeding great and precious promises. It is at this time that we escape the corruption of the world which was produced by lust (2 Pet. 1:4). Sin occurs when lust has conceived, “and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:15). Consider the words of the following passages:

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, **they allure through the lusts of the flesh**, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have

escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:18-22).

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and **the lusts of other things entering in**, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:18-19).

Lust manifests itself in many different forms, as these passages show. However, we wish to notice three particular areas in which lust has served as a major entanglement to the Christian soldier.

1. Lust for Luxury. Jesus expressly taught that we should not lay up treasures upon the earth, but that we should lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). Thus, there is no connection between our wealth here and our wealth hereafter. Solomon noted concerning man, “As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand” (Eccl. 5:15; Job 1:21). The Psalmist echoed the same theme:

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul...He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light (Psm. 49:16-19).

Shortly before his death, Alexander the Great called his servants to his side and said, “When you bury me, I want you to leave my hands hanging out of the casket.” His soldiers thought this to be a rather macabre request and they pushed him to give a reason for it. He lamented, “Because as I draw near to death, I realize that, although I have amassed great fortunes and accumulated great wealth, I must leave empty-handed.” J. Pierpont Morgan was one of the greatest financiers that Wall Street ever knew. When he died, hundreds of businessmen from all around came to the viewing of his body. As two particular businessmen looked down upon him, one of them said to the other, “Reckon how much he left behind?” Without hesitation, the other businessman replied, “He left it all behind.” As the Spanish proverb puts it, “Shrouds have no pockets.”

1 Timothy 6:9 does not say that those who **are** rich will fall into temptation and a snare, although that is often true, as the next verse emphatically states. Literally, the passage declares that “they who **desire to be** rich” fall into temptation and a snare. Those who have a consuming desire to be rich are setting themselves up for great heartache and pain. Their desire for riches causes them to fall into temptation because their thirst for riches is so great they are tempted to do evil to realize their goal of becoming rich.

Of course, everyone thinks that they will be the exception to this rule. They conclude that money won’t affect them the same way it has affected others. So they go ahead and visit the casino; they pull the handle on the slot machine; they buy dozens of POWERBALL tickets; they choose to work overtime on Sunday to get that extra money to deposit in the bank, etc. Their quest for wealth may start out innocently, but Paul warns that riches are a snare. The word “snare” is from the Greek word *pagis*,

which “signifies a net, trap, gin, snare, springe, or pit dug in the ground filled with sharp stakes, and slightly covered over; so that when a man, or any animal, steps upon it, he tumbles in, and is taken or destroyed.”¹ I like what Matthew Henry wrote regarding those who fall into temptation and a snare: “When the devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly.”²

Once ensnared by the allure of riches, it is very hard to get loose. Accordingly, David warned, “if riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psm. 62:10). “They lead to bondage, not freedom. Instead of giving satisfaction, riches create additional lusts (desires); and these must be satisfied.”³ Solomon understood that “he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity” (Eccl. 5:10). How many times do we see it happen? A professional athlete, making 10 million dollars a year, comes in the next year and demands 20 million dollars. He wants more, and the year after that he will want even more. Do you think that Bill Gates is satisfied with how much money he has? How accurate is the man who said, “Wealth is like seawater; the more we drink, the thirstier we become!” I read recently that a person with six children is better satisfied than a person with \$6 million. The reason? The man with \$6 million wants more.

If the truth be known, it is not just the rich who want more. Picture a man making \$35,000 a year. The man says to his wife, “If I could just make \$40,000 a year we would have it made.” Lo and behold, the man gets a promotion and begins making \$42,000 a year. Not long thereafter he says to his wife, “If I could just make \$50,000 a year we would have it made; I would be completely fulfilled.” Sometime later he receives another promotion and achieves his dream of making \$50,000 a year. Is he finally

satisfied? Probably not. We must resist falling for the lie which says that contentment is connected with making a certain amount of money.

The Chicago Tribune (9/1/96) ran the story of Buddy Post, under the headline “Living Proof That Money Can’t Buy Happiness.” In 1988, he won \$16.2 million in the Pennsylvania Lottery. Since then, he was convicted of assault, his sixth wife left him, his brother was convicted of trying to kill him, and his landlady successfully sued him for one-third of the jackpot. “Money didn’t change me,” insists Post, a 58-year-old former carnival worker and cook. “It changed people around me that I knew, that I thought cared a little bit about me. But they only cared about the money.” Post is trying to auction off seventeen future payments, valued at nearly \$5 million, in order to pay off taxes, legal fees, and a number of failed business ventures. He plans to spend his life as an ex-winner pursuing lawsuits he has filed against police, judges, and lawyers who he says conspired to take his money. “I’m just going to stay at home and mind my p’s and q’s,” he said. “Money draws flies.”⁴

Mr. Post is just one of countless examples who provide living proof of the warning in 1 Timothy 6:9! Notice the progression of the passage. Those who desire to be rich (1) fall into temptation; (2) fall into a snare; and (3) fall into many foolish and hurtful desires. Ultimately, the pursuance of these desires will plunge the pursuer into ruin and destruction. The last phrase of verse 9 paints a very grim picture of the end result of obsessively yearning for riches. “The image is that of a wreck, where a ship and all that is in it go down together. The destruction is complete. There is a total ruin of happiness, of virtue, of reputation, and of the soul.”⁵ Adam Clarke summarizes:

The apostle considers these persons like mariners in a storm; by the concurrence of winds,

waves, and tide, they are violently driven among the rocks, the vessel is dashed to pieces, and in a moment they are all ingulfed [sic] in the great deep!⁶

The Scripture declares, “A faithful man shall abound with blessings; But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be unpunished” (Prov. 28:20, ASV). Because of the inherent dangers in desiring to be rich, we should instead be like Agur, who said, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:8-9).

1 Timothy 6:10 is one of the most often quoted and misquoted verses of the entire Bible, much less the book of 1 Timothy. Many are heard to say, “Well, the Bible says that money is the root of all evil.” However, that is not what the Scripture affirms. In and of itself, money is neither evil nor good. It all depends upon how it is used. The patriarch Job was exceedingly wealthy “so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3). Nevertheless, this same man was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). Abram “was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Gen. 13:2), but there is no evidence that his wealth interfered with his devotion to God. Thus, the mere possession of money is not evil. Our text (1 Tim. 6:10) declares that “the *love* of money is the root of all evil.”

Many an evil plot has been hatched because of a desire for wealth. The wise man warned his son not to consent to the enticement of sinners, whose murderous intentions were connected with the following goal: “We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse” (Prov. 1:11-14). Even still, some have made more out of Paul’s statement than he intended by understanding

him to mean that every time a man sins he does so because of the love of money. While we do not deny that the love of money is at the heart of a multitude of sins, perhaps even the vast majority of sins, it is not the case that every sin which men commit is committed because of the love of money. Did Adam and Eve transgress in the Garden of Eden because of their love for money? The ASV renders the phrase “For the love of money is **a root of all kinds of evil.**” In short, when one has an inordinate desire for money it will lead to all kinds of evil.

In contrast to Job, Abraham, and others we did not mention, there are innumerable examples of those whose obsession with money caused them to wander away from their covenant relationship with God. The phrase “coveted after” has a vivid meaning in the original. It translates a Greek word (*oregomenoi*), which means “1) to stretch oneself out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something; 2) to give oneself up to the love of money.”⁷ The picture is of one who has an insatiable desire for wealth, one who is so eager for money that he will leave the faith if that is what it takes to gain it. This was most definitely the attitude of Balaam “who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15; Cf. Num. 22-25). Sadly, there are many who, like Balaam, run greedily after money, even to the point of apostasy (Jude 11).

Perhaps this was the attitude possessed by Demas, of whom Paul wrote: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). How many righteous men have forsaken righteousness in order to accept a bribe (Ex. 23:7-8; Ezek. 22:12)? Delilah accepted a bribe in exchange for information about the secret to Samson’s strength (Judg. 16:5ff). In Micah’s day, the leaders judged for bribes, and the priests and prophets were hirelings whose only motivation for service was the pay they would receive therefrom (Mic. 3:11).

History is littered with the stories of those who, because of their quest for wealth, “pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Of this expression, Adam Clarke writes that it

is an allusion to one of those snares, *pagida* (NT:3803), mentioned 1 Tim 6:9, where a hole is dug in the earth, and filled full of sharp stakes, and, being slightly covered over with turf, is not perceived; and whatever steps on it falls in, and is pierced through and through with these sharp stakes.⁸

Barnes provides an even more vivid depiction of the phrase:

The word *peiroo* (NT:4008), means, properly, “to pierce through from one end to another,” and is applied to meat that is “pierced through” by the spit when it is to be roasted (*Passow*); then it means to pierce through and through. The addition of the preposition *peri* (NT:4012) to the word, conveys the idea of doing this “all round;” of piercing everywhere. It was not a single thrust which was made, but they are gashed all round with penetrating wounds. Such is the effect on those who cast off religion for the sake of gold.⁹

Simply put, the covetous man will end up as a victim who “finds himself impaled upon the murderous barbs of his own making.”¹⁰ The Scriptures say that the prosperity of fools shall destroy them (Prov. 1:32). Remember Achan? Although God had expressly forbidden the children of Israel from keeping any of the spoils of Jericho’s destruction for one’s personal gain, Achan violated this decree. When confronted by Joshua with his sin, Achan confessed:

Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I

saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it (Josh. 7:20-21).

Achan's covetousness pierced himself, and his family, through with many sorrows because "all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones" (Josh. 7:25).

The quest for Naboth's vineyard was a catalyst to Ahab and Jezebel piercing themselves through with many sorrows (1 Kings 21:1-25; 1 Kings 22:30-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37).

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, could not believe that his master refused to accept a monetary gift from Naaman in exchange for his cleansing from leprosy. Accordingly, Gehazi decided to "run after" Naaman and "take somewhat of him" (2 Kings 5:20). He proceeded to lie to Naaman that money and clothes were needed to support two young men of the sons of the prophets. Naaman gladly obliged and instructed his servants to give these items to Gehazi, who, in turn, hid them away (2 Kings 5:22-24). When he returned to the side of Elisha, the prophet inquired as to where he had gone. Gehazi lied, saying, "Thy servant went no whither" (2 Kings 5:25). Little did Gehazi know that the Spirit had already revealed his actions to Elisha. The prophet rebuked him for his self-serving interests and concluded, "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever" (2 Kings 5:27). When Gehazi walked out the door, he walked out a leper, and remained a leper all the days of his life, as did his seed. It would be hard to find a better example of one piercing himself through with many sorrows.

In the New Testament, Judas is perhaps the most prominent example of one whose covetousness pierced

himself through with many sorrows. He initiated contact with the chief priests “and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver” (Matt. 26:15). Covetousness caused Judas to betray the Master with a kiss, and although he later regretted his actions, he did not repent. Instead, he “cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5). The soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus, and knew that it was miraculously emptied, were bribed into lying that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus while they slept (Matt. 28:11-15). Because of their covetousness, the deadly lie spread far and wide among the Jews (Matt. 28:15).

Governor Felix is probably most remembered for trembling as he listened to Paul preach of “righteousness, temperance and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). He said to Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). The next verse records that Felix kept on sending for Paul to come and be with him. Why did he do this? Was it because he wanted to hear more preaching? No. It was because “he hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him” (Acts 24:26). Thus it is apparent that one of the barriers to Felix obeying the gospel was that he had a heart devoted to covetousness. He was more interested in the money Paul might offer him than he was in the treasures in heaven of which Paul preached. As one considers the above examples it is easy to see why James could write “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you (Jas. 5:1).”

It is tragic, but true, that the spirit of covetousness is still very much alive in our world today. Some who received the word initially have been overcome by the care

of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. (Matt. 13:22). Even some, who attend worship services regularly, are covetous in their everyday activities. They are reminiscent of those whom the Lord described to Ezekiel: “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Ezek. 33:31).

Although it may seem like awfully strong language, the Bible says that the Lord abhors the covetous man (Psm. 10:3). Covetousness is so serious that we are commanded to withdraw our fellowship from one who practices such (1 Cor. 5:11). Covetousness is not to be named among saints (Eph. 5:3). Therefore, let us adopt the attitude of the psalmist, who said to God, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psm. 119:136).

2. Lust for Leisure. In identifying the reasons why some would not bring fruit to perfection, Jesus included “the lusts of **other things** entering in” (Mark 4:19). This is a broad category but certainly it would include an obsession with recreation and leisure time to the point of crowding out church attendance and being uninvolved in the work of the church. A preacher can call a brother in the church, invite him to accompany him on a Bible study that would last one hour, and the brother can’t find time in his busy schedule to go along. Yet, the same preacher can call this same brother and invite him to play a round of golf (which lasts approximately 4 hours) and presto—the brother’s busy schedule has suddenly found an opening!

Some brethren will drive multiple hours (one way) to see a sporting event, but some of these same brethren will not drive across town to attend a Gospel meeting or a lectureship. Some will watch a 2 hour movie (or longer),

watch a 3 hour college football game, etc. and never utter a word of complaint, but if the preacher's Sunday morning sermon goes very far beyond 30 minutes they will be annoyed with him for his inconsideration of their time. What is going on here?

Jesus answers the question by saying, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). The plain truth of the matter is that many have the "Martha, Martha syndrome"—they are careful and troubled about many things, except for the one thing that is needful (Luke 10:38-42). Many do not enjoy worshipping God as much as they enjoy a movie or a ball game because their treasures are upon the earth, and not in heaven!

It is important to note that many of the things which distract us from our service to God are not wrong in and of themselves. It is just the fact that these things so dominate our time that by the time we get through with all the things we want to do, there is little if any time left for what God has told us to do. Although the following piece (written by an unknown author) is fictional, there is an element of truth in it that ought to cause us to inspect ourselves. It is entitled "Satan's Convention":

Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, "We can't keep the Christians from their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from forming an intimate, abiding relationship experience in Christ. So let them go to their churches; let them have their conservative lifestyles, **but steal their time**, so they can't gain that relationship with Jesus Christ. This is what I want you to do, angels. Distract them from gaining hold of their Savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day!"

"How shall we do this?" shouted one of his angels. "Keep them busy in the nonessentials of life and invent innumerable schemes to occupy their

empty minds,” he answered. “Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, spend, and borrow, borrow, borrow, borrow. Persuade the wives to go to work for long hours and the husbands to work 6-7 days each week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their empty lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon their home will offer no escape from the pressures of work!”

Over-stimulate their minds. Entice them to **always** play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive; to keep the TV, VCR, CDs, and their PCs going **constantly** in their home and see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-biblical music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ. Fill the coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, mail order catalogs, sweepstakes, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services and false hopes. Keep skinny, beautiful models on the magazines so their husbands will believe that external is what’s important, and they’ll become dissatisfied with their wives. That will fragment those families quickly!”

“Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted and unprepared for the coming week. Don’t let them go out in nature to reflect on God’s wonders. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts, and movies instead. Keep them busy, busy, busy! And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotions. Go ahead, let them be involved in church, but crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Jesus. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause. It will work! It will work!”

It was a quiet convention. The evil angels went eagerly to their assignments causing Christians everywhere to get busier and more rushed, going here and there. I guess the question is: Has the Devil been successful at his scheme? You are the judge does “busy” mean: **B**-eing **U**-nder **S**-atan’s **Y**-oke?

3. Lust For Lewdness. The apostle Peter described the conduct of those who “have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). He also mentioned those who “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government” (2 Pet. 2:10). These same individuals “count it pleasure to riot in the day time” and “allure through the lusts of the flesh” (2 Pet. 2:13; 2 Pet. 2:18). Numerous Scriptures describe various individuals as “walking after their own lusts” (2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 1:16-18).

This is not surprising because threaded throughout the pages of Holy Writ is the story of Satan’s repeated attempts to seduce mankind into pursuing the lusts of the flesh, while on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is depicted as calling upon mankind to abandon carnality and live a life of holiness instead. Several passages from the pen of the inspired apostle Paul sharpen the contrast between walking after the flesh and walking after the Spirit. Consider the following passages from Romans 8:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ... For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:1; Rom. 8:5-8).

From a reading of the above Scriptures the following conclusions may be reached: (1) A carnal mind leads to the pursuit of the flesh, which leads to condemnation and death; (2) To be spiritually minded is life and peace; (3) To be carnal minded is to declare ourselves at enmity with God; and (4) It is impossible to please God by minding “the things of the flesh.”

Another Pauline passage, which demonstrates the mutually exclusive nature of following after the flesh versus following after the Spirit, is recorded in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The pursuit of the flesh and the desire to walk after the Spirit are as different as light and dark. There is no such thing as a faithful child of God following after that which is unrighteous. Rather, the son or daughter who desires to please the Heavenly Father will separate themselves from any “unclean thing.”

Perhaps the most specific description of the conflict between serving the flesh and serving the Spirit is recorded

in Galatians 5:16-26. Paul emphatically admonished the Galatians to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). The Greek word translated “walk” is a synonym for the conduct of one’s life. Moreover, the original word is in the present tense, which indicates that the conduct is not occasional, but rather continual and habitual. As a result of habitually conducting oneself in harmony with the teaching of the Holy Spirit, one will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. In fact, the Greek text of Galatians 5:16 employs the strongest negative possible, meaning that the one who is walking the Spirit will not fulfill the desires of the flesh, no, not at all!

In Galatians 5:17, Paul affirms that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). There is absolutely no compatibility between the ways of the flesh and the ways of the Spirit!

Yet, our world today has a serious lust for that which is lewd. If you do not believe this, just turn on the television for a little while. Whether it is the outrageous, vulgar, and blasphemous antics of Howard Stern, or the blatantly suggestive programming of MTV, certainly, modern media has become one of Satan’s greatest servants in accomplishing his goal of keeping our minds on secular matters.

Through modern television programming, Satan’s henchmen (TV producers, scriptwriters, etc.) constantly assault and bombard the very foundations of our faith. The airwaves are full of “electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual and narcotic that childhood itself appears to be under siege” (U. S. News and World Report). Analyst and columnist Michael Novak wrote, “Our own public moral culture formed preeminently by television, cinema and music is a disgrace to the human race.” Even the

Ladies Home Journal published an article entitled “Living In Truly Tasteless Times”, in which the author asserted:

[T]he American people appear to be unshockable now, desensitized even to genuine brutality— not to mention simple civility— and possessed of an insatiable appetite for whatever might once have been thought unsavory, crude, crass and even decadent...our popular culture is becoming flashier, trashier, more vulgar and exploitive.

How did this happen? How did television get from where it was in the 1950’s to where it is in 2004? The answer is quite simple. Slowly, but surely, Satan’s servants in the media have pecked away and chipped away at our sensitivities, steadily seducing us into the surrender of our moral convictions until we have practically lost our ability to blush (Cf. Jer. 6:15). Like the frog in the kettle, we have been imperceptibly boiled, hard-boiled towards sin, one degree at a time.

For example, contrast the attitude towards homosexuality today with that of a few years ago. There is unquestionably more tolerance towards homosexuality today than in the past. And why? Again, it is because Satan has utilized his servants in the media to “soften” our moral objections. In 1991, the TV program “L.A. Law” introduced its audience to the bisexual character C.J. Lamb. Amanda Donohoe, who played C. J., said, “C.J. is as close as you can get to my personality in a fictional role. What I’ve decided to bring to C.J. are my sensibilities, my political views, and my morals.”

What are Donohoe’s “morals”? She once starred in “Lair of the White Worm,” a movie in which her character spits on a crucifix. Commenting on this scene in the film, she said, “I’m an atheist, so it was actually a joy. Spitting on Christ was a great deal of fun—especially for me being a woman...I can’t embrace a male god who has persecuted

female sexuality throughout the ages.” This servant of Satan was shown kissing another woman on the mouth during the February 7, 1991 episode of L.A. Law. Since that time, program after program has broadcast same-sex kissing. It is just one more example of the devil attempting to depict as normal that which God has decreed abnormal.

Modern songwriters promote lewdness in lyrics that Satan himself could have written. Years ago a singing group known as Salt N’ Pepa has a song entitled “*None of Your Business*.” The song contains the following lyrics: “If I wanna take a guy home with me tonight, it’s none of your business; if she wanna be a freak and sell it on the weekend, it’s none of your business.” This author knows of more than one “Christian” mother who has purchased the compact disc containing this song as a present for their teenage daughters. In more recent times, the lyrics of Eminem, Limp Bizkit, Korn, and just about any “Rap” artist you want to listen to, have filled the minds of our precious young people with what can be classified as nothing but garbage—raw sewage, to be more precise. But it’s not just “Rap” music that is the culprit. Lewd lyrics can be found from “Rock n Roll” to Country & Western music.

With the advent of the Internet, there are more opportunities to lust for lewdness than ever before. To combat lewdness in any form, the Christian would do well to commit to memory the following passages:

Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. (Prov. 6:25).

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? (Job 31:1).

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me (Psm. 101:3).

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (1 Cor. 6:15-18).

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:12-13).

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof* (Rom. 13:14).

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them* (Eph. 5:8-11).

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:3-5).

For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: (1 Thess. 4:2-5).

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (Jas 4:4).

The Equipment

God did not order His soldiers to go into battle unprepared and unprotected. He has provided all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4), and He has equipped the saint with all that he needs to win the battle.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle

not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

This text teaches: (1) The Lord has provided strength for the battle; (2) We must put on the whole armor of God, not just a part of it; (3) Our foes are not earthly; (4) God has done His part; we must do our part so that we have done all to stand; (5) The truth is to be wrapped around us, holding everything together; (6) We are to wear the breastplate of righteousness, i.e., it's hard to do wrong when you are so busy doing what is right; (7) We are to always have our shoes on and be ready to go to others with the Gospel of peace; (8) We can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked with our shield of faith; (9) Wearing the helmet of salvation will keep protect us from Satan's attempts to lure us into sin; (10) the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God is the offensive weapon supplied to us to win the victory; and (11) We should never underestimate the power of God's providence as He answers our prayers.

The End

It is so easy to become weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9). That is why Paul reminds us of the end. Someday, the battle will come to an end and there will be a great reward that awaits the faithful soldier. An understanding of Paul's

words to Titus will help us win the battle now and enjoy the victory then.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:11-14).

This passage of Scripture certainly demonstrates that the grace of God blesses us. But it also obligates us. It requires and teaches certain responsibilities for all who would enjoy its favor. The meaning of Titus 2:11-14 can be summed up with three main points, all beginning with the letter “L.”

1. A Leaving. First of all, the grace of God demands that we leave behind certain practices of the past and begin walking in the righteousness of God. We must leave behind ungodliness, worldly lust, and works of the flesh (Tit. 2:12; Gal. 5:19-21). After we have become recipients of the benefits of God’s grace, it is the cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back (Luke 9:62; Luke 17:32). We must remember to leave the “old man” behind in the watery grave where he was buried (Rom. 6:4ff). We must leave behind fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). Thus, first of all, the grace of God that brings salvation also brings the responsibility to leave ungodliness behind.

2. A Living. The grace of God not only demands that we leave ungodliness but that we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:12). It is not sufficient to merely eliminate evil from our lives; we must replace the evil with good. Jesus told the story of the unclean spirit gone out of a man, walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. The unclean spirit

then decided to return to his former residence. When he arrived he found it empty, swept, and garnished. Thus finding the vacancy, he went and took with him seven spirits more wicked than himself and they entered in and dwelled there again. Jesus said that the last state of this man was worse than the first (Matt. 12:43-45).

The obvious point of this declaration by our Lord is that it is not sufficient to merely eliminate evil from our lives. We must replace that evil with good. We must “put on” as well as “put off” (Col. 3:10-12; Eph. 4:24; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). We must be different or peculiar from the world not only in what we don’t do, but also in the things that we are doing. We must be sure to give attention to the “thou shalt” of the gospel as well as the “thou shalt not” (Jas. 4:17; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 3:14-19). Jesus is certainly the best example of what it means to live soberly, righteously, and godly. He kept Himself pure and went about doing good (1 Pet. 2:21; Acts 10:38).

3. A Looking. Not only must we leave behind ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, but furthermore, we ought also to look for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior (Tit. 2:13). This passage is a reference to the second coming of Christ. A companion passage that emphasizes the importance of living and looking is found in 2 Peter 3:10-14. In view of the fact that this world and all that is in it will someday perish in fire, Peter asked the question:

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?... Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Thus, righteous living must precede confident looking. Are you looking forward to the second coming? (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22).

The bottom line is that one of the things that will help us win the battle is to keep our eyes singularly focused upon our mission and our goal. Double-mindedness will never win the victory. Jesus said:

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:22-24).

We cannot keep one foot in the world and one foot in the church. We must allow the Spirit's Word to guide and govern us completely; partial surrender will never suffice. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:8)."

Endnotes

1 Adam Clarke, **Clarke's Commentary**, Electronic Database, Distributed by BibleSoft.

2 Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry's Commentary**, Electronic Database, Distributed by BibleSoft.

3 Warren W. Wiersbe, **Be Faithful**, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1981), p. 80.

4 **Biblical Illustrator For Windows**, Parsons Technology Software.

5 Albert Barnes, **Barnes' Notes On The New Testament**, Electronic Database, Distributed by BibleSoft.

6 Clarke, Electronic Database.

7 **The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon**, Copyright (c)1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.

8 Clarke, Electronic Database.

9 Barnes, Electronic Database.

10 Sydney Martin, **Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus: Bible Beacon Expositions**, Vol. 10., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 159.



**The Works
Of
The Flesh**

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CHAPTER 2

Adultery And Fornication

James Rogers

Introduction

PAUL DEALT WITH THE problem of Judaizing teachers in the Galatian epistle. Some were trying to bind the law of Moses on Christians. Paul stressed the tragedy of going after “a different gospel; which is not another gospel”¹ (Gal. 1:6-7). He also confronted the trouble caused by allowing a corrupted Judaistic system to affect fellowship (Gal. 2:1-21). He showed the trail from Judaism to Christianity (Gal. 3) and stressed the triumph of the freewoman over the handmaid (Gal. 4). In chapter five, Paul again stressed the tragedy of returning to the bondage of Judaism after being made free from the law of Moses through the Gospel. A part of this discussion concerns the contrast between the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21) and the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The “works of the flesh” deal with purity problems (fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings), priority problems (idolatry, sorcery) and people problems (enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings²). The “works of the flesh” show the bondage into which one brings himself when he leaves the teaching of the Gospel. Jesus stated that “every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34). Paul stressed to the Romans that one voluntarily

surrenders himself to bondservice to sin if he chooses to walk therein (Rom. 6:16-17). Peter emphasized the need to be “bondservants of God” (1 Pet. 2:16). If the Galatians emphasized a fleshly religion (Judaism), they would live a fleshly lifestyle (“works of the flesh”). Paul seeks to turn them heavenward in their lives.

Our discussion deals with two of the “works of the flesh” which concern purity. We are to discuss adultery and fornication. The King James Version records: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication” (Gal. 5:19). The American Standard Version omits adultery and records: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication” (Gal. 5:19). Adultery and fornication are two of the plaguing sins facing the church today. Godly elders and preachers are spending many hours trying to unravel problems caused by adultery and fornication. I trust the material presented in this discussion will be helpful to the reader in his study of these passages.

Definitions

When considering adultery, the word *moichos* “denotes one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another”³ The noun *moichalis* “is used (a) in the natural sense, 2 Pet. 2:14; Rom. 7:3; (b) in the spiritual sense, Jas. 4:4”⁴ The noun *moicheia* “is found in Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21; John 8:3 (A.V. only).”⁵ The verb *moichao*, “used in the Middle Voice in the N.T., is said of men, in Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11; of women in Mark 10:12.”⁶ The verb *moicheuo* “is used in Matt. 5:27-28; Matt. 5:32 . . . Matt. 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 16:18; Luke 18:20; John 8:4; Rom. 2:22; Rom. 13:9; Jas. 2:11; in Rev. 2:22, metaphorically, of those who are by a Jezebel’s solicitations drawn away to idolatry.”⁷

When considering fornication, the noun *porneia* is used (a) of illicit sexual intercourse, in John 8:41; Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29; Acts 21:25; 1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Cor. 6:13; 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; Rev. 2:21; Rev. 9:21, in the plural in 1 Cor. 7:2; in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 it stands for, or includes adultery; it is distinguished from it in Matt. 15:19 and Mark 7:21; (b) metaphorically, of the association of pagan idolatry with doctrines of, and professed adherence to, the Christian faith, Rev. 14:8; Rev. 17:2; Rev. 17:4; Rev. 18:3; Rev. 19:2.⁸

The noun *pornos* “denotes a man who indulges in fornication, a fornicator, 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5; R.V.; 1 Tim. 1:10, R.V.; Heb. 12:16; Heb. 13:4, R.V.; Rev. 21:8 and Rev. 22:15, R.V. (A.V., ‘whoremonger’).”⁹ The verb *porneuo*, “to commit fornication, is used (a) literally, Mark 10:19; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 10:8; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 2:20 . . . (b) metaphorically, Rev. 17:2; Rev. 18:3; Rev. 18:9.”¹⁰ The verb *ekporneuo* means “to give oneself up to fornication, implying excessive indulgence, Jude 7.”¹¹

Thus, when the two words are defined, we learn that both adultery and fornication concern unlawful sexual intercourse. Adultery and fornication are the misuse of a natural relationship which God intended for husband and wife in the bonds of matrimony. Adultery and fornication are illicit sexual relationships without the sanction of God. Adultery and fornication are sinful! Paul stresses that when one engages in unlawful sexual intercourse he is walking according to the “works of the flesh.” This would indicate that man is walking according to his own subjective standard and not according to the standard of the revealed will of God. When one makes his decisions based on a “thus desireth man,” he will fulfill the “works of the flesh.” Righteous decisions are based on a “thus saith the Lord.”

The Attire Of Adultery And Fornication

While many in the church scoff at lessons on modesty, the truth still stands that adultery and fornication often are committed because of what was started with immodest attire. John warned of “the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16). When Tamar wanted to entice Judah, she “put off from her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim” and “when Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot; for she had covered her face” (Gen. 38:14-15). Later, when Judah sent one to inquire concerning Tamar, he asked, “Where is the prostitute that was at Enaim by the wayside” (Gen. 38:21)? One would have had a hard time convincing Judah that Tamar was not a prostitute, not from the actions he observed from her, but simply from her attire. Solomon spoke of the “strange woman” who met the “young man . . . with the attire of a harlot” (Prov. 7:1-10). Let the foolish argue with the facts!

Donna Larcen (of the *L.A. Times* and *Washington Post*) had an article appear in *The Birmingham News*, July 14, 1993. The article was entitled, “Who Wears Short Shorts?” The author said: “We can divide the shorts set into two groups: **the young school-age kids who want to flaunt their stuff** (emp. mine JER), and the older set who prefer long bermudas. Gravity and cellulite often separate the two groups.” Joy Overbeck wrote an article in *Newsweek* (July 29, 1993) in which she decried the fashions desired by her ten-year-old daughter in order to be in style. She observed:

[R]udimentary good sense tells us that eroticizing children is irresponsible at best—not only sully their early years, but also exposing them to danger from human predators. It’s up to adults to explode the kids-are-sexy notion. Our kids need us to give them back their childhood.

We live in a day of nudity or near-nudity. Our children are exposed to double standards in this area. The school, which requires a dress code while in class, will put their students on the athletic field and in other areas of performance in attire that can in no way be called modest, and receive support from the community in so doing.

Children of Christians are allowed, even encouraged, to participate in activities that call for them to dress immodestly. Many children of Christians are encouraged to be cheerleaders or majorettes and many young women are engaged in “beauty” pageants which cause them to dress in such a way as to expose themselves to the onlookers. One young lady, whether a Christian or not I do not know, understood the fleshly desires of the world in this area.

Sage Johnson, Miss International Falls, has nipped her drive to be Miss America by dropping out of the Miss Minnesota contest in protest of the bathing suit competition. She said she felt uncomfortable wearing a bathing suit on stage. ‘It is something women in the 1990’s shouldn’t have to deal with,’ said Miss Johnson, 18. ‘Our perfect bodies shouldn’t matter if what they’re looking for is intelligence and community leadership.’¹²

When the dress standards of the world are accepted by Christians we are opening ourselves up for problems in the areas of adultery and fornication.

The Attitude Of Adultery And Fornication

Adultery and fornication come out of the heart. “For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications” (Matt. 15:19). Jesus emphasized the mental aspect of adultery and fornication when he stated “that every one that looketh on a woman

to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). David’s sin with Bathsheba began with an attitude. “He saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman” (2 Sam. 11:2-3). This was an intellectual pursuit as well as an emotional one. The headnote in my Bible at Psalm 51 reads: “A Psalm of David: when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” Many believe this Psalm is David’s confession of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. If this is the case, notice that he asks God to create in him “a clean heart” (Psm. 51:10) and observes that “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psm. 51:17). David was dealing with his attitude that led to his sinful actions.

Paul, in Romans 1:28, shows that all the sinful practices listed in that context had their root in the refusal of man to approve God in his knowledge. When God is abandoned, morals will decline. As one examines the things associated with adultery and fornication, he will recognize that all of them stem from a mind that is corrupt. This is the first step in declining morals. Once God has been dismissed, anything goes. If one rejects God he is free to reject God’s standard. This allows man to become his own standard (Judg. 21:25). The rejection of God and His Word paves the way for the humanistic philosophy of “do your own thing.” Man becomes his own god. If man is his own god and standard, nothing is wrong that he wants to do. God’s teachings concerning authority, love, marriage, adultery and fornication are ignored as man falls further and further into the morality maze of decay. With a “do your own thing” philosophy, man abuses his mate and children, abandons his family and attacks all who disagree with him. Bob Barnhill, writing about purity in marriage, observed:

The initial attack on the home, however, has usually taken place before two people ever meet in marriage. Years before the wedding day that little boy absorbed attitudes from his father and mother about the home. Elsewhere, a little girl was being trained by her parents. If, in the early years of their lives, this boy and girl received faulty information, unwholesome attitudes, and a contempt for the sacredness of marriage, they may, by their behavior before marriage, bring to their wedding, impurity.¹³

When one rejects Bible teaching concerning adultery and fornication he will be motivated by “the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God” (1 Thess. 4:1-8). Peter wrote of those “having eyes full of adultery” (2 Pet. 2:14). Full is from *mestos*, which “conveys the sense of having full measure.”¹⁴ This presents a “vivid picture of a man who cannot see a woman without lascivious thoughts toward her.”¹⁵ Solomon admonished his son concerning the “evil woman” to “lust not after her beauty with thy heart” (Prov. 6:25). The Christian, however, has “crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof” (Gal. 5:24). Certainly, Solomon’s admonition to “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23) will help us as we consider the matter of adultery and fornication.

The Addressing Of The Sins Of Adultery And Fornication

The sins of adultery and fornication were addressed in the Old Testament. God provided protection for the virgin (Exod. 22:16; Deut. 22:28-29), for those who were close relatives (Lev. 18:6-18), and for those who were married (Lev. 20:10). God provided these protections because He intended for His people to abide by His ordinances and live prosperous lives. Moses clearly stated

in the Ten Words, “thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exod. 20:14). One would have to have help to misunderstand the admonition, “thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor’s wife to defile thyself with her” (Lev. 18:20). The people of God failed to abide by these ordinances and corrupted their lives. Adultery and fornication ruined many in Israel like they are ruining many in the world today. Solomon warned of the enticement of the “strange woman” (Prov. 2:16-19) and the “evil woman” (Prov. 6:25-35). He made it clear that “he that keepeth company with harlots wasteth his substance” (Prov. 29:3). Hosea used a dramatic picture of adultery and fornication to call Israel from idolatry (Hos. 4:11). Surely people can read Hosea and see the degradation associated with these sins. Surely fathers and mothers can understand that they must influence their children in such a way as to lead them away from such an ungodly lifestyle!

The sins of adultery and fornication were also addressed in the New Testament. Jesus warned of the consequences of adultery and fornication (Matt. 5:27-32) and showed that such actions come from a defiled heart (Matt. 15:19). He also referred to adultery as “sin” (John 8:4; John 8:11). The elder brother thought these sins were of sufficient weight to turn the affections of the loving father against the penitent son (Luke 15:30). The self-righteous Pharisee knew that adultery was wrong (Luke 18:11). The early church knew the dangers of adultery and fornication, and warned against such (Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29). Paul stated that these sins come from a refusal to know God (Rom. 1:24-32) and showed that it is a work of the flesh which will cause the participant to miss heaven (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). He also showed that the reputation of the church is damaged by members who are guilty of these sins (1 Cor. 5:1). Righteous people mourn over the behavior of those guilty of these sins.

(2 Cor. 12:19-21). These things should not “even be named” among saints of God (Eph. 5:3) and should be among those things which were “put to death” (Col. 3:5) when one became a Christian.

Consequences

1. Earthly Consequences. Divorce runs rampant in our world because of the sins of adultery and fornication. Divorce and re-marriage among those guilty of adultery has become so common in some congregations of the “churches of Christ” that some false teachers have created theories to try to make the adulterers feel safe with God while they continue in their adulterous relationships. One writer observed that “many ‘churches of Christ’ have become refugee camps for adulterers and adulteresses.”¹⁶ Baptism does not make adultery legitimate and if those living in adultery do not repent (sever the relationship), they will be lost eternally. The Corinthians had been adulterers but now “were washed . . . were sanctified . . . were justified” (1 Cor. 6:11). Would any rational person think they were continuing in their former sins? One brother (who preached for a few years) even tried to justify his divorce on the grounds of “spiritual adultery.” His wife did not encourage him in his work, and was therefore guilty of unfaithfulness.¹⁷ Kenneth W. Franklin made the following observation:

The church in America is today reflecting the moral problems of our society. The Bible has not changed, but the attitudes and practices of some brethren have. Even the pulpit has toned down its attack against sin. In most congregations can be found adulterers, social drinkers, dancers, and filthy talkers. Some of these people serve at the Lord’s table and lead in public prayer. Some are teaching classes . . . It is time for preachers to preach plainly, for elders to discipline ungodly members, and for those in charge of our Bible classes to screen the teachers.¹⁸

Psychiatrist and family therapist Frank Pittman called adultery the “primary disrupter of families, the most dreaded and devastating experience in a marriage, and the most universally accepted justification for divorce.”¹⁹ Lipscomb and Shepherd said it well by observing that the “church of Christ should wage such a relentless warfare against all such wickedness that all such characters would either come to repentance, or find that the church has no fellowship for them.”²⁰

AIDS is a world-wide plague. This dreaded disease is passed in a number of ways and among them is fornication. Stop the fornication and the epidemic of AIDS will be slowed considerably and may eventually be eliminated. A *U. S. News & World Report* Special Report entitled, “Dancing In The Dark: New Hope For Aids In Africa,” contained valuable information about AIDS in Botswana. Some of the observations concerning AIDS in Botswana are true no matter the location and they point to fornication as the reason this disease spreads. Condoms are given free through 10,500 dispensers in Botswana, but AIDS is still spreading because many will not use the condoms. The following observation is telling:

AIDS is about sex, a fact that has made it an uncomfortable topic in every society. In Botswana, where homosexuality is illegal and IV drug use is rare, its major route of transmission is heterosexual sex. The spread is compounded by the common practice of older men having sex with much younger women ... ‘In Botswana, there’s intergenerational sex,’ ... ‘You have a virus that could possibly burn itself out if people had sex only with their age mates. But when you have 35-year-olds sleeping with 18-year-olds, the infected generation spreads it to the non-infected generation.’²¹

Many women, men and children have been abandoned and left to fend for themselves because of the

sins of adultery and fornication. When one partner “runs off” with someone else, the family suffers. Too many children are being reared in one-parent homes because of these sins.

The most recent study shows that the teenage pregnancy rate of girls who were under five when their fathers left the home was eight times that of families where both parents were present. Girls who were between 6 and 13 years old had three times the pregnancy rate.²²

The consequences are too overwhelming to be denied!

2. Eternal Consequences. Those who practice these sins need to know that “God will judge” them (Heb. 13:4) and that their actions will call the wrath of God upon them (Eph. 5:5-6). Let the guilty be warned by the example of “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them” (Jude 7). Those who are guilty of these sins in this life, and who die without forgiveness, will be separated from God in eternity (Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:15).

Practical Applications

1. The Situation In The World With Adultery And Fornication. Those who have observed the moral climate in our nation and in the world over the past few years have witnessed the decline in moral values. Those who have young children shudder to think what the value system will look like when it is time for their grandchildren to arrive. R. E. Howard observed:

To thinking men the moral laxity that is sweeping our world is a cause for alarm. History clearly reveals that it is the certain harbinger of a collapsing civilization. The most serious sign is the advocating of free love and the removal of moral restraint and inhibitions by educators. The final step will be its acceptance by religious leaders—and there are suggestions of that now present!²³

We must call people back to the system of morality found in the Bible if we are to have hope for the future.

Adultery and fornication are paraded and promoted in the public eye. A *USA Today* article reveals the statistics:

The 2002 Census Bureau figures indicate that 2.9 million children under the age of 18 live with a parent and his or her unmarried partner. The 2000 Census counted 4.9 million homes in which the head of the household lived with an unmarried partner of the opposite sex. About half of all marriages now involve couples who have lived together first. Maggie Gallagher, president of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, observed that if you are a parent living with a significant other, that is a very powerful statement to make to your child and it is not a good one to pass on. University of Wisconsin demographer, Larry Bumpass estimates that one in nine babies now born in the USA is to a cohabiting couple.²⁴

“According to the 2000 census, nearly 150,000 Georgians live together as couples.”²⁵ While we often think of this problem among youth, it is now the case that older people are caught up in the adultery/fornication conundrum. “Unmarried opposite-sex couples 65 and older rose 73 percent from 1990-1999, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.”²⁶ Pamela Smock, a demographer, observed concerning cohabitation that it is “in everyday life, in TV shows and films . . . There are even greeting cards on the Internet for cohabiting couples. It has become more institutionalized.”²⁷

Many who present themselves as role models for youth are better known for the number of husbands or “lovers” they have had than for the talents and abilities possessed in their chosen field of work. The tragedy of this is seen in the fact that many youth are following these “role models” into corruption and disgrace. As one

reads 2 Peter 2:10-22, he is reminded of our day. Peter lists the problems we face with amazing clarity. This shows that the root of the decay in morals today is sin and sin has never changed. Members of the church find themselves surrounded by the filthy life-styles of the wicked. In a written decision in a court case in North Carolina, Superior Court Judge Howard Manning commented on a case of adultery between a Baltimore psychiatrist and the wife of a Duke University professor. His comments are pointed and pertinent to our discussion. He wrote:

In this case, acts of adultery were committed by highly intelligent, multi-degreed academics . . . These acts of adultery occurred in an academic atmosphere, with trappings of fine wine, romantic lunches, classical records and CDs, cerebral conversations and within an environment self-perceived as highly cultured . . . Yet despite the trappings of intellect, self-perceived culture, fine wine and academic atmosphere, the adulterous conduct . . . can be described as no more than common as pig tracks.²⁸

Television and movies glamorize adultery and fornication. One can hardly find a show on television that is not promoting, laughing at or showing the very practice of adultery or fornication in prime time. As one examines that which is piped into the houses of our people, via television, movies, etc., he observes that through these media people are taught that infidelity and illicit love are the spice of life. The home as God would have it is shown to be boring. Mother is not respected and father is either gone or presented as a rascal. Someone observed that “the sun-tanned, cigarette-puffing, poodle-leading, cocktail-drinking, home-breaking female is made the queen.” Love is degraded into passion and children are not wanted. Marriage is not binding and living together is the desired

course of relationships. It is no wonder our homes are in disarray and that this chaos in the home has spilled into the church.

We are living in a day when all kinds of “adult entertainment” are available to youth. As family members view these tainted examples, they are tempted to imitate that which they see. It is unrealistic to subject youth to the media and then not expect them to act out what they are seeing in their “heroes.” We read with interest how some of the stars in these filthy movies and television shows will not allow their children to watch such. They protect their own families from that which they hoist on the families of others. Let us learn from this! Michael Medved observed that “in the visual arts...ugliness has been enshrined as a new standard, as we accept the ability to shock as a replacement for the old ability to inspire.”²⁹ He further observed concerning movies that “indescribable gore drenches the modern screen, even in movies made for families” and that “the most perverted forms of sexuality—loveless, decadent, brutal and sometimes incestuous—are showing regularly at a theater near you.”

How many of our youth are watching these shows and attending these movies? We have witnessed a gradual acceptance, among Christians, of PG and even R rated movies. The world is rating these movies and the world is telling us that there are some things in these that youth do not need to see. This ought to be a warning to the Christian to avoid these things rather than trying to find a way to accept them and justify their participation in such.

These media are especially contributing to the breakdown of respect for marriage. One sees a tremendous focus on singles. Medved stated:

[T]he number of films about single people will outnumber the films about married people by a

ratio of five or six to one. And even those relatively rare films that do make an attempt to show life within a family will most often depict a marriage that is radically dysfunctional—with a husband accused of attempting to murder his wife...or a wife sleeping with her husband's male (or female) friends...Apparently, some stern decree has gone out from the upper reaches of the Hollywood establishment that love between married people must never be portrayed on screen...the movie industry conveys the idea that it's exciting to live on your own, but boring and stifling to live within a marriage. The unspoken assumption is that married people never experience anything that's interesting enough to be dramatized in a feature film.³⁰

One has correctly observed:

It has become fashionable to be 'broad-minded,' a category into which more and more segments of society are striving to fit. Broad-mindedness is the keynote of our generation. Hollywood broad-mindedly hustles the philandering husband and faithless wife onto the wide screen for the applause of the broad-minded masses. The chiseling cheat has his applauders, the price-fixing executive his apologists. Minds have been stretched so broad that in many cases little of moral substance seems to be left between the ears.³¹

Certainly, one can see the effect of television and movies on the home and the church. We must work diligently to override this influence. The tragedy is seen when those who claim to be Christians count such as their regular viewing menu.

Perversion abounds in our society. No longer is homosexuality spoken of in hushed tones. "A 1995 poll suggested that 90% of the public believes that society 'should value all types of families,' including the homosexual arrangement."³² Today, homosexuality is

paraded by means of the public media and accepted even in the high offices of our land. Roberta Achtenberg became the first openly gay nominee ever confirmed by the Senate when she was confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. New York City's School Chancellor, Joseph A. Fernandez, suspended a school board in Queens because it "adamantly refused to adopt a multicultural curriculum that, among other things, teaches first graders to respect and appreciate gay people."³³ A gay-and-lesbian-rights march, held in Washington, was described by *Newsweek* magazine (June 21, 1993) as "an unabashed display of lesbian clout."

Michael Swift was invited to write the guest editorial for *Gay Community News*, February 15, 1987. He wrote:

We shall sodomize your sons, emblems of your feeble masculinity, of your shallow dreams and vulgar lies. We shall seduce them in your schools, in your dormitories, in your gymnasiums, in your locker rooms, in your sports arenas, in your seminaries, in your youth groups, in your movie theater bathrooms...Wherever men are together...Our only God is handsome young men.³⁴

Bailey McBride observed:

'Queer theology' – not my term, but one used by the religious community – dismisses all Biblical teachings about homosexuality as a reflection of primitive thinking and taboos. Genesis 19:4-11, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 are discounted as efforts to limit human freedom by creating taboos and codes. A radio talk show on religious themes recently had an Episcopal priest talking about 'sex for procreation' as a limited, confining concept. He argued that sex is the expansion of the self, making the case that any meaningful sex resulted in a new spiritual life.³⁵

Pornography seems to multiply with each passing day. Ten years ago I researched this matter and at that time there were at least 15,000 “adult” bookstores in the United States. I was told that was approximately 3 times the number of McDonald’s restaurants at the time. It is not unusual to see billboard advertising on the highways inviting one to an “adult” store nearby. Approximately 20 million pornographic magazines were circulated each month and I am confident this has increased. There were more than 450 different pornographic periodicals. That was enough pornography circulated each year to pave a two-lane highway, with covers alone, from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California. Dial-A-Porn listening is available for those who wish to use it. There are approximately 275 Kiddie-Porn magazines published monthly.

Pornographic movies are showing in major cities and videos are available in most hometown video stores. Adult comic books are published and are available. Of course, the annual swimsuit issue of a popular magazine is advertised on television and in other arenas.

Madonna released her book, which was described by *Newsweek* (November 2, 1992) as an “explicit coffee-table book of erotic photos and writings, celebrating sadomasochism, homosexuality, exhibitionism and other pansexual delights.” Computer pornography is now available. “Magazines, compact discs and CD-ROM offerings are taking aim at a mostly middle-age and male audience intrigued by the notion of seeking physical satisfaction through safe, high-tech stimuli.”³⁶

Many stories have been printed about the ungodly effect of pornography on those who have used it. As these things enter the minds of people in the world, the guard is let down. The home begins to be influenced by the images

read or seen and the church's moral stand against such is weakened by Christians who partake of the pornographic offerings of the world.

Lasciviousness is the way of life for many in the world. Pre-marital sex is paraded before our youth as the thing to do. "Government statistics show that about 50 percent of women ages 25 to 34 have lived with a man before they marry; and 75 percent of women have intercourse by age 19."³⁷ The stigma of out-of-wedlock or premarital births has faded over the years. "Decades ago, scarlet-letter stigmatization or shotgun weddings were common for single women who became pregnant. Now, having a child before marriage is seen as a lifestyle choice in many circles."³⁸

Once, the nation was scandalized when Ingrid Bergman ran off to live in unwedded yet pregnant bliss with Italian director Roberto Rossellini. Today, we barely blink when Marla Maples and Donald Trump not only announce that she's pregnant, but blithely offer details on where and when the conception took place.³⁹ "According to the 1990 U.S. Census figures, more than nine million mothers are raising their children alone."⁴⁰ More than 1,000 women nationwide are members of a New York-based support group called Single Mothers By Choice... Most single mothers by choice are college-educated, established in their professions and well-off financially, says support group founder Jane Mattes. They're also sick of waiting around for Mr. Right who may never make an appearance anyway.⁴¹

Camryn Manheim, an actress who played a single, expectant mother on the TV show, *The Practice*, is quoted by Leonard Pitts Jr., as saying, "single motherhood by choice . . . is 'the way of the future,' and folks better get used to it." Pitts comments: "'The way of the future,' she says. I pity the future."⁴² Some parents are allowing their

unmarried teen children to have sex at home rather than risk injury or other problems by sneaking around to commit fornication.⁴³ A Korean professor advocated pre-marital sex, pornography and legalized abortion. He said, “sex education in schools is useless because it focuses on how women should keep their virginity.”⁴⁴

Condoms are passed out in public schools and much of the “sex education” focuses on “safe sex” without abstinence being on the taught agenda. Pro-family groups opposed a decision by the Salt Lake Organizing Committee to provide free condoms to Olympic athletes attending the winter games in 2002. Experts have shown that condoms do not effectively protect against sexually transmitted diseases. A 2000 report by the National Institutes of Health concluded that while

‘[C]onsistent and correct’ condom use does show some measurable reduction in the transmission of gonorrhoea and up to 85 percent prevention of HIV, there is no clinical proof of effectiveness in preventing syphilis, genital herpes, human papilloma virus (HPV, the leading cause of cervical cancer), trichomoniasis, or chlamydia, according to the Physicians Consortium.⁴⁵

Allen Webster noted:

At a recent conference, sexologists were asked to raise their hand if they would trust a condom to protect them during intercourse with a person known to be HIV-positive. Not one in eight hundred raised a hand. If eight hundred advocates of safe sex unanimously agree that it is not always safe, then why call it ‘safe’?⁴⁶

These are the problems facing the home and the church in the area of lasciviousness. It cannot be surprising to thinking people that adultery and fornication are promoted in the world and many who profess to be Christians have bought into the world’s philosophy.

2. The Solution Available For The Sins Of Adultery and Fornication. Some may ask, “What are we to do in the midst of the moral decay of our time?” “Are we hopeless and helpless?” The Bible answers, NO! There is help and there is a solution to these sins. God’s Book provides the answers to the problems. “One out every twelve verses in the Book of Proverbs is devoted to warning men about the wrong kind of women.”⁴⁷

The sins of adultery and fornication will end when people are willing to imitate the example of Joseph. Joseph faced the temptation to commit fornication with Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:7-18) and was able to maintain purity in this impure situation. We, also, may remain pure if we will learn from him. How did Joseph deal with the temptation?

Joseph looked beyond the present (Gen. 39:8-9). The sins of adultery and fornication are based on the desire for instant gratification. Seldom do those engaged in these sins look beyond the present. Barnhill observed:

Illicit love is looked upon as pleasant and beneficial. Books, magazines, and the motion picture screen (which show all forms of sexual violations) fail to insert the last chapter! Invariably, the final page is not ‘living happily ever after.’ Proverbs says the end result is, ‘Bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down into death; her steps take hold of hell.’ Those who violate the sanctity of the home are to be pitied. Truly, the unhappiness of the ‘morning after,’ is a dear price to pay for an illicit liaison. Forbidden love is not as attractive when consideration is given to the damage to: the home, society, a person’s own body and soul, other people, and to God. The dietitians of the new morality fail to mention that forbidden fruit gives indigestion!⁴⁸

Joseph had the long view of life (Gen. 50; Heb. 11:22). Like Moses, he was not interested in enjoying “the

pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). This looking beyond the present caused Joseph to refuse to betray the confidence his master had in him by giving in to lust (Gen. 39:8-9). This looking beyond the present also caused Joseph to refuse to sin against his God (Gen. 39:9). When Nathan confronted David about his sins with Bathsheba, David confessed, “I have sinned against Jehovah” (2 Sam. 12:13). Like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. 1-3), Joseph made God his own God. His decisions were made based upon his relationship with God and with the realization that everything had an “end” (Prov. 14:12).

Joseph lived within his means (Gen. 39:9). He was not willing to take that which did not belong to him. He could have gratified himself with a “conquest” of his master’s wife, but he knew she did not belong to him. The children of Israel needed to heed the example of Joseph in this regard (1 Cor. 10:8). Herod’s eternity might have been different if he had followed the example of Joseph in this matter (Matt. 14:1-12). John made it clear that Herod was not living within his means in the matter (Matt. 14:3-4).

Joseph leaned on his knowledge of right (Gen. 39:7-12). Notice the number of times Mrs. Potiphar tried to get him to listen to her (Gen. 39:7; Gen. 39:10; Gen. 39:12). When confronted with the temptation to commit fornication, Joseph refused because of his knowledge of right. Adultery causes one to sin against the home (Exod. 20:14; Exod. 20:17), against himself physically (1 Cor. 6:18-20) and spiritually (Prov. 6:32) and against God (Gen. 39:9). If we will lay the Word of God up in our hearts (Psm. 119:11), when we are confronted with the temptation to do wrong, we will be able to lean on our knowledge and cleanse our way (Psm. 119:9). Joseph is a great example of one who could do this. In this regard, Wayne Jackson observed that parents

must take a greater responsibility in teaching their children the great truths of the Bible. Many youngsters today—especially older ones—show zero interest in church Bible classes. They refuse to do homework and they laugh at the idea of memory work. Why do such attitudes prevail? Because the home is no longer a place where the Word of God is revered, read, and discussed. ‘Church’ has taken a back seat to other interests. For many, Christianity has become an occasional weekend exercise to salve the conscience. Such has no power to protect and preserve.⁴⁹

Joseph left an ungodly situation (Gen. 39:12). The temptation to commit fornication was presented to Joseph “day by day” (Gen. 39:10) and Joseph said, “no,” and really meant it every day. Notice the resolve to do right! When Mrs. Potiphar finally gave up on trying to persuade Joseph with words, she “caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me.” What is one to do in a situation like this? Should he remain and continue to try to reason with her? Joseph was aware of the seductive measures of Satan. He knew there was no reasoning with her. Instead of compromising his morality, Joseph “left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.” He followed the course of action given by Paul to the Corinthians: “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). We are thankful for the example of Joseph!

Conclusion

We certainly do have a problem with declining morals in our country. Two writers have well observed:

American children are well on their way to becoming moral illiterates. When confronted with questions of right and wrong, many more youngsters are guided by what gets them ahead or what makes them feel good than by what their parents or religious authorities say...The growing moral illiteracy of children...reflects the decline of morality in society at large.⁵⁰

Our problems are not economic and political. They are moral and spiritual—and must be addressed on that level if real solutions are to be found...It is not a crisis in government—it is a crisis in us. Virtue, morals, respect for law and other people are not concepts that are caught, like a strain of flu. They are not acquired by human nature. In fact, they must be taught, even imposed...In Russia, there appears to be room in the inn for the One who has the answer. In America we have hung out the no-vacancy sign.⁵¹

The call must go forth to all who are children of God to take up arms against the moral decay witnessed in our nation and around the world as a result of the sins of adultery and fornication. God's moral standard addresses the subjects of adultery and fornication. Let all who are tempted to engage in these sins be reminded that the Bible describes such as "fire" (Job 31:12) and guarantees that it will burn (Prov. 6:27-29).

Paul, in the list of the "works of the flesh," has shown that these sins separate people from God. People need to be taught what God has said on these subjects and encouraged to comply with His standard. He who made us surely knows what is best for us. It is, therefore, the height of folly for the creature to ignore and repudiate the teachings of the Creator in this matter (Rom. 1:24-25). Gus Nichols wrote wisely when he wrote that "fornication and adultery are awful sins. They are to be shunned as one would flee from a rattlesnake, or a roaring lion. These sins should be spurned as one would abhor the thought of armed robbery, or murder."⁵²

Those who are guilty of adultery and fornication may be rescued if they are willing to "put to death" their "members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5). Through faith (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession (Acts 8:37) and baptism (Rom. 6:1-4), they may

arise to walk as new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). Some in Corinth did this very thing (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Acts 18:8). Christians who have become guilty of these sins need to repent, confess as publicly as their sin is known and ask the forgiveness of God (Acts 8:22-24). Paul exhorted the church to bring such a one to repentance (1 Cor. 5). Let the world understand that adultery and fornication are “contrary to the sound doctrine” of God (1 Tim. 1:10). Let all give heed to God’s pattern of morality so that purity may prevail and souls may be saved.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 3

Uncleanness And Lasciviousness

Gary Summers

Introduction

C'MON, BABY, DO YOU do more than dance?" asked Foreigner, thus indicating the connection between dancing and immoral sexual conduct.¹ "I can tell by the way you dance that you're gonna love me tonight," sang Vern Gosdin in a popular country song.² "We already know, from dancing so close, how good it will feel," promised Juice Newton to her partner more than two decades ago.³

For years, preachers made the connection between dancing and sexual immorality; many pooh-poohed them as old fogies who were out of touch and determined to keep young people from enjoying a little harmless fun. For some time now, however, the admission has been freely made by those who promote lascivious behavior and fornication.

The words, **uncleanness** and **lasciviousness**, we come across occasionally in the Scriptures, and we probably have formed a general image of the concepts, but what do these words really mean, how are they used, what examples of such behavior are mentioned, and how can we avoid committing these sins?

Definitions

Lasciviousness

The King James Version translates the Greek word *aselgeia* as “lasciviousness,” “wantonness,” and “filthy.”⁴ A check of various versions on Galatians 5:19 yields a mixed selection: while some retain “lasciviousness” (ASV), other renderings are also found: “indecenty” (NEB), “sensuality” (NAS and ESV), “licentiousness” (RSV, Confraternity), and “lewdness” (NKJ). With such a variety of choices, further study is in order.

A thorough treatment of the word is contained in a study of New Testament words by William Barclay. He begins by saying: “In many ways *aselgeia* is the ugliest word in the list of NT sins.”⁵ He cites Plato as using it in the sense of “impudence,” an unnamed writer as “violence coupled with insult and audacity,” another writer as “preparedness for any pleasure,” and Basil as “a disposition of the soul which does not possess and cannot bear the pain of discipline.”⁶ Barclay’s own assessment of the person under the domination of this sin is: “He is the man who is lost to shame. Most men have enough decency left to seek to hide their sin, but the *aselges* is long past that. He will be guilty of any outrageous conduct, and care for nothing but to satisfy his desires.”⁷

Robertson defines it as “unrestrained sex instinct.”⁸ Arndt and Gingrich use: “Licentiousness, debauchery... follow the inclination to sensuality, esp. of sexual excesses, indecent conduct, licentious desires” (114).⁹ Thayer points out that the word is of uncertain origin; many think that the *selges* root derives from a city in Pisidia, *Selgee* (pronounced sell’gay), “whose citizens excelled in strictness of morals.”¹⁰ The opposite, then, would refer to people whose morals are loose—that is, without restraint. Thayer suggests what most of the definitions already provide—“unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness,

wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence”—as well as the oft-quoted phrase for the plural of the word as found in Romans 13:13: “wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.”¹¹

Of the nine times *aselgeia* appears in the New Testament, only twice is it found by itself (2 Pet. 2:7; Jude 4). In the other seven passages, it is either part of a word list, or it is associated with other words of its ilk. The Mark 7:21-22 list includes words or expressions such as **evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, and an evil eye**. In Romans 13:13 it is plural (as mentioned previously) and connected with a word translated “chambering” (from *koitee*, translated “bed” in Hebrews 13:4). In 1 Peter 4:3, *lasciviousness* is linked with “lusts, excess of wines, revelings, and banquetings.” The false teachers of 2 Peter 2 allure through *aselgeia* and the lusts of the flesh. In three verses **lasciviousness** is linked with **uncleanness** (2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19). The first of these also adds **fornication**; the second mentions that word plus **adulteries**.

Even though **filthy conversation** appears by itself in 2 Peter 2:7, describing the behavior of those in Sodom and Gomorrah (which would include their homosexual preferences), the people are termed **wicked** in that same verse, are guilty of **unlawful deeds** in the next verse, referred to as **unjust** in the one after that, and serve as an example for those who choose to live **ungodly** in the previous verse. *Aselgeia* does not keep very good company; all of its friends are about as bad as it is.

The ninth and final occasion of its usage is Jude 4: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The fact that we have all often heard this verse quoted cannot be allowed to diminish the significance of it. The grace of God is a wondrous thing, but it teaches us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” so that we may “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:12). To apply God’s grace in such a way that it promotes immoral behavior and a lack of self-restraint is to turn it into lasciviousness—this ugly, impudent attitude that says, “It’s my body, and I’ll use it for fornicating purposes if I want to.” A Christian cannot so affirm, however, because he is not his own; his body was bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

This kind of behavior belongs to the Gentiles—not those who call themselves Christians. Paul associates hard-heartedness and close-mindedness with such actions:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

They not only have given themselves over to *aselgeia*, but they do so with *pleonexia*, a word that is generally translated “covetousness” the nine other times it appears in the New Testament, but “greediness” here. Barclay points out: “*Pleonexia* is the unbridled longing to possess more, the uncontrollable desire to possess things which are forbidden and which should not be desired at all.”¹²

Another associated word is *komos*, which appears only three times in the New Testament, and all of them are in lists with *aselgeia*. In Romans 13:13 it is translated “rioting”; in Galatians 5:21 and 1 Peter 4:3 it is rendered “revelings.” Barclay records of this word:

Originally a *komos* was a band of friends who accompanied a victor in the games on his way home. They sang their rejoicings and his praises. But the word degenerated until it came to be a 'carousal', a band of drunken revellers, swaying and singing their way through the streets. Therefore *aselgeia* has in it that 'sheer self-indulgence', which is such a slave to its so-called pleasures that it is lost to shame.¹³

The discussion on *aselgeia* will be completed with a look at what some of the ancient writers said concerning it. In his **Republic**, Plato describes the individual who possesses this vice as "one without a sense of restraint, unrestricted by moral laws or standards of decency."¹⁴ Demosthenes portrayed him as one "into whose company no sensible man would ever take his daughter."¹⁵ Plutarch depicts him as one "who was at the mercy of his passions, impulses, and emotions; in whom the voice of calm reason had been silenced by the storms of self-will."¹⁶

Although Barclay himself renders a pretty good definition when noting the other sexual words that accompany it, saying that such a person "has no more shame than an animal in the gratification of his physical desires,"¹⁷ he gives the final comment to a historian.

It is perhaps Josephus who gives us the flavour of the meaning of *aselgeia* best of all. He couples it with *mania*, 'madness', and he declares that that was the sin of Jezebel when she erected a shrine of Baal in the Holy City, the very city of God. Such an act was a shocking outrage which defied all decency and flaunted all public opinion.¹⁸

Uncleanness

Akatharsia appears ten times in the New Testament, and each time the King James translators rendered it "uncleanness." A related word, *akathartees*, is used only

once in Revelation 17:4, where it is translated “filthiness.” The adjective, *akathartos*, is given as “unclean” all but two of its thirty times; “foul” was the other choice. Twenty-three times *akathartos* modifies **spirit(s)**. This Greek word is the negation of *kathairo* and its cognates, which are expressed—depending on their part of speech—as “clean, pure, purification, purifying, cleansing, or purge.” It can refer both to ritual or moral cleanliness.

Jesus compared the Pharisees to whited sepulchers, which were full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27). He used the state of physical corruption to symbolize their spiritual corruption. Despite their outward pious appearances, they were inwardly unclean. Most of the time, as with *aselgeia*, this word is also found in a number of lists and with a definite sexual emphasis. For example, Romans 1:24 tells us that, when people turned to idolatry, “God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.” Paul, in emphasizing our new master, righteousness, reminds brethren that they should yield themselves as enthusiastically to it as they once did to uncleanness and iniquity (Rom. 6:19).

Sexual promiscuity must have been a difficult habit to give up, judging from the frequent references to it. Paul feared that some in Corinth might not have repented “of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed” (2 Cor. 12:21). He included it in “the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21), affirmed that it should not “be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3), and reminded some brethren: “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess. 4:7). Clearly, such behavior belonged to the Gentiles and was not to be characteristic of the members of the church (Eph. 4:19).

Although the word retains this meaning in 1 Thessalonians 2:3, the context is different from those

mentioned above. As Paul discusses his motives in preaching the Gospel, he proclaims that they were always noble and honorable. He did not preach to them out of “deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.” While such a notion may seem odd to us, it was not unusual in first-century culture. Robertson comments:

This disclaimer, startling as it may seem, was not unneeded amidst the impurities consecrated by the religions of the day” (Lightfoot). There was no necessary connection in the popular mind between religion and morals. The ecstatic initiations in some of the popular religions were grossly sensual.¹⁹

Paul wanted to distance himself from such religious “leaders.”

Examples

Although we do not have many details concerning his life, in some respects Lamech typifies *aselgeia*. His taking of a second wife flies in the face of the convention God had established in the Garden of Eden. He thus introduced polygamy into the world and was the first to impudently and outrageously defy God’s pattern for the home. He is the epitome of the man who would use “violence coupled with insult and audacity”: it was he who bragged about killing a man for wounding him (Gen. 4:23).

Although Lamech was the first who took what he wanted, regardless of anyone else’s thoughts on the matter, he would not be the last. The men of Sodom displayed that same spirit. They were morally unclean and spiritually defiant. So determined in their wickedness were they that, even after being struck with blindness, “they wearied themselves to find the door” (Gen. 19:11). Such commitment they had—to lasciviousness! The men of Gibeah were no different; although they wanted to

practice homosexual rape, they settled for a concubine and abused her so badly that she died the next morning (Judg. 19:22-26). To make matters worse, these unrestrained, filthy deeds were committed by God's own people! And the people of Benjamin, instead of disciplining them, went to war to defend the atrocity! How far from God sin drives some people! *Aselgeia* inflames them, overriding self-control.

The entire world can give itself over to such ungodly license. Consider society prior to the flood: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). They were busy, undoubtedly, entertaining sexual fantasies, coveting the possessions of others, and plotting evil against their neighbors. Furthermore, they had lost all civility: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). Lasciviousness and uncleanness reigned to the degree that God determined to cleanse the earth of all this filth.

God's own people are not exempt from the lusts of the flesh. After the Lord delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, they were free from their taskmasters but not their desires. While Moses was receiving God's holy law upon the mount, the people were thinking unholy thoughts down below. They decided to cast off their moral restraints along with their physical ones: "...and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exod. 32:6).

Clarke says the word "play" is translated from "...*letashek*, a word of ominous import, seems to imply here fornicating and adulterous intercourse, and in some countries the verb **to play** is still used in precisely the same sense" (1:464). The word "play" refers to sexual license, and the same Hebrew word is translated by some as "fondling" in Genesis 28:6.²⁰

Later, one of the Israelites was so “in your face” with his brand of *aselgeia* that he brought a Midianite woman into his tent for the express intent of committing sexual immorality with her. Furthermore, he did it “in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Num. 25:6). How outrageous and insolent could a person be! Committing this action was to say, in essence: “I’m going to be immoral. What are you going to do about it?” There was no subtlety about it; he was exercising his “unrestrained sex instinct.” One man, however, was not so overwhelmed by his audacity as to stand idly by. Phinehas took a javelin in his hand, followed the brazen couple into the tent, and thrust them both through with it (Num. 25:7-8). The penalty for uncleanness may not always be so immediate, but it is certain.

Similarly, Eli’s sons lacked any kind of restraint whatsoever. The sacrifices that Israel brought to these “priests” did not belong to the Lord—they belonged to Hophni and Phinehas. Disregarding the Lord’s instructions regarding the preparation of the meat offerings, they took the meat while it was yet raw and with the fat still on it. If anyone objected, they would respond in their insolence, “Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force” (might makes right). God considered their actions a “very great sin” (1 Sam. 2:12-17). Their immorality was seen in their lying with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (1 Sam. 2:22). They hesitated not to profane the sacred.

Although David is nothing like those already discussed, he did on one occasion lose his spirituality and take the wife of another man. After he saw Bathsheba, it was as though he “was at the mercy of his passions” (and

should not all Christian men therefore be careful?). Of course, this sorry moment was not indicative of his true character but was rather an aberration. Unfortunately, his sons went much further in this direction than he did. Amnon forcibly raped his sister Tamar. She offered several protests against his foolish intentions, but “the voice of calm reason had been silenced by the storms of self-will” (2 Sam. 13:10-14).

Absalom, although he did so for political reasons, was nevertheless profane enough to lie with his father’s concubines in a tent on the top of a house “in the sight of all Israel” (2 Sam. 16:21). Solomon lived the hedonistic lifestyle (purely for research purposes). With a thousand women, wealth untold, and the latest in entertainment available to him, he indulged himself freely, showing “preparedness for any pleasure”: “And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy...” (Eccl. 2:10). Although he saw that these things were vanity and that God is more important than all of these things combined (Eccl. 12:13), he nevertheless allowed his wives to turn his heart after other gods (1 Kings 11:4). In multiplying wives, Solomon actually violated the law (Deut. 17:14-17).

Josephus cited Jezebel as the epitome of *aselgeia*. Her impudent and outrageous behavior toward God was seen by the erecting of a shrine to Baal in the very city of God, defying all decency. Her total lawlessness was seen in the way she arranged the murder of the innocent Naboth in order to confiscate his vineyard and by her threat to the great prophet Elijah, who had to go into hiding out of fear for his life. Her sexual license is not emphasized except in her affinity with Baal and Asherah (“groves”), who were male and female fertility gods (1 Kings 18:19). In the church at Thyatira there was a woman with the same character: she called herself a prophetess and was seducing

brethren to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:20). These types of individuals always want to associate religion with immorality, somewhat parallel to those denominations that are currently endorsing homosexuality, which is modern-day *aselgeia* at its worse.

Also mentioned in the book of Revelation is Balaam, who personally did not typify this kind of behavior. His sin was covetousness: he loved “the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15; cf. Jude 11). However, he understood about the lusts of the flesh and the evil desires of men, and he used that knowledge to his monetary advantage. To the Christians at Pergamum, Jesus wrote: “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). Again, the association with idols by itself is an affront to God, but that association usually involves sexual immorality as well.

In the New Testament, we find not only counterparts (Balaam and Jezebel) to some in the Old Testament, but we also have a few originals. Probably the briefest description of *aselgeia* is found in connection with what we usually term the **prodigal** son, although that adjective does not appear in the text. We read that the young man “wasted his substance with riotous living” (Luke 15:13). None of the usual synonyms of **uncleanness** can be found in this text. The word translated “wasted” is elsewhere rendered “strawed” (Matt. 25:24) and “scattered” (Matt. 26:31). Robertson says that the verb is the very opposite of “gathering together” (also used in Luke 15:13) and is “used of winnowing grain (Matt. 25:24).”²¹ In other words, he took his inheritance and scattered it everywhere. The word translated “riotous” means the opposite of “saved.”

Robertson suggests that the word means he is a spendthrift, which certainly fits the text; he was “one who does not save.”²²

The man was not scattering his wealth into various business ventures; in fact, work was the farthest thing from his mind. Although we do not know for certain the places the money ended up, we do know that he exercised little discrimination. His older brother said that he had devoured his father’s living with harlots (Luke 15:30), and he was probably correct. It would have been necessary for him to have a place to live (a hotel) and food. Perhaps he also indulged in wine and lost money gambling as well. He defied his background, all that he had been taught, and the love of a good father—throwing it all over for the temporary and the fleshly. Would he look back on this episode with fondness? If he really came to himself, he would forever lament having given up all that was valuable for things that he ultimately learned were worthless.

For a time the prodigal son behaved like one of the simple youths, ensnared by the immoral woman described in Proverbs 7. She is both unclean and without license. She is described as “loud and stubborn” (Prov. 7:11), and “with an impudent face” (Prov. 7:13) she tells him, “I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows” (Prov. 7:14). As with so many people today, she sees no connection between religion and morality. How many in the church today attend the worship assemblies faithfully yet partake fully in worldly activities? The devil does not care what Christians profess, so long as we follow him in the way that we live. Unfortunately, many brethren display this same *aselgeic* attitude of the immoral woman.

The Herod family cared nothing for the laws of God with respect to morality. “Herod the Great had ten ‘wives’ and at least eight sons.”²³ His son, Herod Antipas, is the one who is married to Herodias in Matthew 14. Brother Mosher quotes Henson as saying:

Herodias divorced one uncle, Herod Philip #1, in order to marry a second, Herod Antipas.,., The effects of this transaction were far-reaching, for kinship and politics.... Herodias accepted Antipas' offer with the stipulation that Antipas divorce his wife, the daughter of Aretas.... It is clear that Herodias significantly enhanced her status by changing husbands.²⁴

Marriage and divorce, to this crowd, was nothing more than political expediency. They had no regard for the laws of God. At the time that Paul spoke before Herod Agrippa II (great-grandson of Herod the Great) (Acts 26), he was incestuously involved with his own sister Bernice—but not before she had married two other men, the second of which was her uncle, Herod Agrippa I's brother—Herod of Chalcis.²⁵ Wedding ceremonies could also serve as family reunions. In order to quell rumors about her relationship with her brother, Bernice married Polermo, king of Sicily, but shortly thereafter she returned to her brother.²⁶ “In later years she and Agrippa took an oath of loyalty to the emperor Vespasian,” and she eventually became the mistress of his son Titus.²⁷ Herod Agrippa II had another sister besides Bernice, and her name was Drusilla; she was married to the governor Felix and had only one previous marriage on her resume.²⁸

Those who put themselves above God's moral laws are likely to go wherever their feelings lead them. They are without restraint and bound by nothing except, perhaps, what society thinks—and even then peer pressure is still likely to take a back seat. In fact, there have been occasions when evil has dominated culture to the point that wickedness is the norm. One cannot read Jeremiah 5:7-8 without thinking that it records an example of unbridled lust. God's people were so enamored with idolatry and filled with *aselgeia* that they “assembled

themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses ("lustly stallions," ESV) in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife."

Such behavior would be bad enough in Israel, which was a theocracy; it is especially despicable when it is advocated and practiced in the Lord's church. Both Peter and Jude write concerning those who have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). The brother of the Lord continues by describing such ones as "brute beasts," having corrupted themselves (Jude 10), motivated by fleshly lusts and covetousness (Jude 11-12; Jude 16; Jude 18), ungodly (Jude 15), and sensual (Jude 19).

The apostle's description is similar; he characterizes these "brethren" in 2 Peter 2 as walking "after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness," presumptuous, self-willed (2 Pet. 2:10), "as natural brute beasts," full of corruption (2 Pet. 2:12), day-time rioters, deceivers (2 Pet. 2:13), having "eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin," covetous (2 Pet. 2:14), alluring "through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those" who had "clean escaped from those who live in error" (2 Pet. 2:18), "servants of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:19). The "blackness of darkness" is reserved for these ungodly souls who masquerade as Christians (Jude 13), and those who follow them, who "turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" shall fare worse than if they had never obeyed the Gospel (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

Modern Forms Of Lasciviousness And Uncleanness

The Bible is nothing if not relevant. Human beings are the same today as they were in the first century, and they were the same then as they were in the time of Moses or prior to the flood. The Greek words translated

“lasciviousness” and “uncleanness” when the Greek New Testament was written we have seen applied throughout the history of humankind. Therefore, it can be no surprise that modern-day applications of these conditions are in abundance. In fact, it may be that the world is more lascivious now than it has ever been. If not, we surely cannot be far removed. The order of the following discussion will be to consider the various forms of lasciviousness and uncleanness from the least amount of clothes involved to the most. Although it should be obvious that nakedness is wrong, this sinful conduct does not depend on such; it does have that result in view, however.

Pornography

Just about every definition provided previously regarding the two words under discussion is typified by pornography, including the violence. One may think of pornography as something that just involves nude photos (which would be bad enough), but much more is being portrayed than just that elementary, introductory step. Magazines now provide still shots with couples engaged in various stages of sexual intercourse. On the internet one can view miniature pornographic movies, involving these same actions. Stephen Monsma provides, as part of his definition of this genre, the following assessment: “At best, women are pictured as sexual objects existing for the pleasure of men and at worst as objects of male sexual violence.”²⁹

Furthermore, in an experiment with one group that viewed pornographic movies (while the control group did not), “The exposed group accepted male dominance over females **twenty times** more than did the control group. (This applied to women as well as men, although women less so.)”³⁰ One of the problems of pornography is:

“Depictions of violence against women are related to violence against women in real life.”³¹ This type of pornography perpetuates the “rape myth,” causing “men to believe that women really want to be abused even when they vigorously deny it.”³²

Although Hollywood produces about 400 movies a year, the porn industry churns out about 10,000. Furthermore, one can easily find hundreds of thousands of sites on the internet. Charles Colson laments that “pornography makes women into objects, pieces of meat on public display....”³³ He also stated correctly:

For the Christian, who has a high view of individual dignity, pornography is not only disgusting, it is debasing, a many-fingered beast that rakes dignity from both those it exploits and those it titillates. It corrupts the very root of life—the sexual union ordained and blessed by God.³⁴

Women are not viewed as individuals made in the image of God; pornography reduces both males and females to a few body parts performing pleasurable functions, as though these are the only important things in life. Imagine assigning preeminence and glorification to something so temporary and inferior as flesh is!

It seems unlikely that pornography would be so popular, paying such rich dividends to its promoters, if those professing to be Christians were not also captured by it. Some of the other ill effects of its use (besides promoting an attitude of violence against women) include:

1) “For a certain percentage of men, the use of pornography is progressive and addictive in nature.”³⁵

2) Those exposed to pornography are “twice as likely to accept sexual infidelity in their own marriages...as the control group.”³⁶

3) The use of pornography “reduced satisfactions with the partner’s affection, sexual behavior, and sexual curiosity and innovations.”³⁷

4) “It enhanced the importance of sex without emotional involvement.”³⁸

Some are ignoring all of the information gathered on this subject and pretending that this moral uncleanness is all right. In response to columnist Hugh O’Neill, who wrote in **AARP Magazine** that “level-headed adults can enjoy erotic pictures in private without undermining their relationships, their immortal souls, or the republic,” Tim Wildmon, president of the **AFA Journal**, said,

Pornography has led to the breakdown of too many marriages and families for this columnist to suggest there is nothing wrong with viewing it. There is clear evidence and research showing viewing pornography is harmful to relationships.³⁹

O’Neill is wrong on all three counts. *Aselgeia* does not help couples or the republic (which it weakens), and it does do damage to the soul. In fact, Christians are admonished to avoid fleshly lusts because they war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). Nothing could be more full of fleshly lusts—the kind that make a man desire sexually a woman (Matt. 5:27-28)—than pornography. These things are not of the Father but of the world; they will all pass away (1 John 2:15-17). Christians must concentrate on spiritual matters.

Nudity

Even if no lewd acts were being depicted in magazines and on the internet, nakedness all by itself would qualify as moral uncleanness. Its purpose may be of a sensual nature, but it is always associated with shame. One does not need to read very far along in the Bible to pick up a clue on this matter: Genesis 2:25 reports: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not

ashamed.” What makes this time in the garden unique is that nakedness usually makes one ashamed, but in this instance it did not because, as yet, human beings did not possess the knowledge of good and evil.

It might be helpful if some of this fruit was still available at the nude beaches and nudist colonies across this nation (groups even book nude cruises on luxury liners). The notion that the practice is not for lustful purposes, or that nobody really cares what anyone else looks like, does not negate the fact that God regards it as shameful. When Aaron made the people naked (in connection with the golden calf), it brought shame before their enemies (Exod. 32:25). God does not change in regard to this practice; the thinking of man has become depraved. Other instances of nakedness being shameful may be found in Isaiah 20:4 and Isaiah 47:3, Micah 1:11, Nahum 3:5, Revelation 3:18 and Revelation 16:15.⁴⁰ Nakedness, then, is a shame and a humiliation—even if one chooses to display oneself voluntarily.

The darkest blot upon the life of a man after God’s own heart came as the result of public nakedness. In the midst of a restless evening, “David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Sam. 11:2). Was she behaving in a sensual manner as she washed? Nothing in the text implies lascivious behavior, but she was naked. How much in the public view was she? We do not know if anyone other than David saw her, but just one was sufficient for the sin that followed. Why was she bathing in such a fashion that even one person could ogle her? She cannot be judged innocent in this matter.

Near-Nudity: Mixed Swimming

This subject is one that many members of the Lord’s church do not want to hear. We hear things such as, “I just

like to swim,” “I love the ocean,” or “Nobody cares about the way you’re dressed.” Nothing is inherently wrong with the first two statements; times of privacy can be found to accomplish both. The third assertion is untrue. **God** cares how one of His children dresses in public. For that reason He provides passages encouraging **modest** apparel (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-4). When Adam and Eve learned they were naked, they covered themselves—barely. God clothed them in animal skins that covered them from the shoulders to the knees.⁴¹

A “Christian” magazine, called **World**, published an article last year with a title in the form of a question: “Bathing Suits or Birthday Suits?” The author, Joe Maxwell, asks a quite pertinent question: “Why are many women willing to be seen at the beach or a swimming pool in less clothing than their normal underwear?”⁴² He chronicles the thinking of a 16-year-old girl and her grandmother as the youngster tries on “a few scraps of cloth that pass for ‘swimwear’ these days”—“three patches of cloth held together by strings....”⁴³ When asked by the reporter why she would wear something like that in public, the girl who attends a “Christian” high school replied that she got a better tan line and then added: “You want to look nice for the opposite sex. It’s kind of a competitive thing.”⁴⁴ The reporter then asked three younger girls (ages 13, 14, and 14) the following question:

“Would someone bother you if you wore your bikinis to school?” The three teens laugh at the thought. “We’d be suspended!” To a follow-up question—“What do you think boys are thinking when they look at you in your bikinis?”—one of the threesome replies with reluctant candor: “They are probably trying to figure out what we look like underneath.”

Shortly after this interview, the parents of one of the girls approach my wife and me and accuse

us of being “pervert[s]” for asking the children such questions. This, of course, raised another question: If the **WORLD** reporter and his godly wife are perverts for asking obvious questions, what does that make these parents—consenting exhibitionists?⁴⁵

It cannot be successfully argued that swimwear is not chosen for lascivious purposes on the part of most people. Allen Webster cites the Merit Report, which appeared in a column in **The Dallas Morning News**. “More than 60% of men and women agree that men go [to the beach, GWS] mainly to watch.” Furthermore, 42% of men and 30% of the women said that women go to be watched.⁴⁶ Interestingly, 59% of the women thought that their suits were too revealing.⁴⁷

What these statistics mean is that, whether or not some people have innocent motives for going to the public beach—say, to swim, for example—a great percentage are there to have their lusts stimulated or to assist in provoking lust in others. These purposes qualify one to be **unclean**. It is difficult to fathom how that some brethren believe that just adding water to immodest dress makes it all right. Such clothing is inappropriate in worship, in school, in a restaurant, in a courtroom, in the office, and in numerous other places—but if there is water nearby, it suddenly becomes sanctified garb. This kind of **garbled** thinking results from a lack of holiness on the part of the Christian. When we realize Whose we are and His holy nature, we will want to be like Him—not the world (Rom. 12:1-2).

Attire

About fifteen years ago, one of the older teenage boys in a particular congregation made a derogatory remark to a 15-year-old girl about the way she was “dressed” for

worship. She told her father, and he asked the one who had spoken to her: “Did you say that my daughter was a prostitute?” “No, sir,” he responded. “I just said that she looked like one.” Unfortunately, he was right. Her father and mother should have told her that, but the seeds of destruction had already been sown; immorality and divorce have characterized this family ever since.

According to his Friday, April 23rd, news broadcast, Paul Harvey mentioned that the peers of the 13- and 14-year-old girls who are imitating Britney Spears by sporting bare midriffs accompanied by jewelry are calling them “prostitots.” Why is it that Christian girls this age seem so enthusiastic to conform more to the world than to modest apparel?

Lynn Parker published an excellent article from a penitent woman about her attitude as a young girl toward her apparel. Her Christian parents did not interfere as they should have. They allowed her to be involved in mixed swimming and to perform as a twirler. At first, she protested wearing the immodest leotard, but the whistles from young men and the compliments overcame her doubts. When asked if she had ever thought she provoked lust in men, she answered, “I certainly hoped so! That was the whole point of it!”⁴⁸ Eventually, some brethren got her to see that lascivious behavior is not consistent with Christian conduct.

Our problem is that all too often we let the world set the standards, and we conform to them (everybody’s doing it). We are not to be **con**formed to the world but **trans**formed by our faith in God and our willingness to please Him. A “Christian” psychologist surveyed 25 female college students, and they cited—as factors in their dress—peer pressure and the desire to look pleasing to the opposite sex. Two-thirds said they dress “to personally feel

sensual or sexy regardless of others' reactions."⁴⁹ *Aselgeia* remains a powerful force in our society. Our young people need to be informed regarding it in its various forms.

Dancing

This study began with admissions from worldly people that dancing was oftentimes a forerunner of and stimulation to fornication; no one can successfully deny this point, in light of those blatant admissions. The definition of *aselgeia* by Thayer regarding "indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females" could scarcely be a better description of some of the modern dances. While it is true that many folk dances and other types do not fit these definitions (and are therefore not under this condemnation), most of the ones that people engage in today are of a lascivious nature. Brother Moses asks: "Is dancing suggestive? It most certainly is—of lustful thoughts, of worldliness, of disrespect for the will of God, and of disregard for the souls of men."⁵⁰

Conclusion

Many of these forms of uncleanness and licentiousness have proven to be problems for members of the Lord's church. No one, except the Lord, knows the percentage of men in the body of Christ who have become ensnared by pornography, but undoubtedly there are many. They know better intellectually and spiritually, but they have allowed their thoughts to become dominated by fleshly lusts—to their shame and, perhaps, their ruin.

We are not aware of any brethren who are secretly nudists, but there are plenty who practice near-nudity—apparently without shame. The fact that undressing and appearing in public (near water) that way is acceptable by society does not mean that it is acceptable to Christ our Savior. He and the apostles did not appear along the

Sea of Galilee, clad only in 16 inches of cloth to cover private areas. His mother Mary and the other ladies did not put on bikinis and go water skiing. If we protest that this kind of apparel would seem incongruous and inappropriate on such godly and spiritual women, then what does that tell us about the character of those who have no problem wearing it today? One of the characteristics of *aselgeia* is that sort of impudence which would say (in effect): "I'm going to display my body, regardless of what the preacher or elders think."

This same attitude of insolence exists with respect to the immodest clothing that is also worn mostly by younger women (although some older women dress similarly, in a vain effort to recapture their youth). Why can the ladies not abide by the definition of modesty found in the **Oxford American College Dictionary** (of a woman): "Dressing or behaving so as to avoid impropriety or indecency, especially to avoid attracting sexual attention."⁵¹ Women of virtue and character never have difficulty finding the right man.

Dancing carries with it the potential for danger and sometimes even the expressed desire for fornication to follow. But none of these warnings will do any good unless people are first committed to their Savior. Jesus did not die so that we would be unclean and lascivious. We cannot even influence others in a positive way with licentious behavior, let alone fulfill the great commission. We are called unto holiness (1 Thess. 4:7); we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1); we are to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Until we firmly grasp (and remind ourselves often) the nature and character of God, the salvation Christ obtained for us, and the teachings the Holy Spirit has revealed to us, we will always be making provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Let us instead pursue the way of holiness, whose fruit is everlasting life (Rom. 6:22).

Endnotes

1 These words are from the song, "Hot Blooded," a Top Five hit from 1978.

2 Lee Moses, "Is Dancing Suggestive?" (Mt. Pleasant, TX: North Jefferson Church of Christ, 2004).

3 These words are from the song, "In the Heart of the Night" (1982).

4 All quotations will be from the King James Version unless otherwise specified.

5 William Barclay, **New Testament Words**, (Philadelphia, PA: the Westminster Press, 1974), p. 60.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 61.

8 A. T. Robertson, **Word Pictures In The New Testament**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1930), 1:325.

9 Maurice W. Lusk, III, "Lasciviousness," **Biblical Ethics**, ed. Terry M. Hightower (San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1991), p. 456.

10 Joseph Henry Thayer, **A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 79.

11 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

12 Barclay, p. 61.

13 Ibid., pp. 61-62.

14 Lusk, p. 457.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

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18 Ibid., p. 62.

19 Robertson, 4:16.

20 Bobby Liddell, "The Golden Calf and Immorality," **The Book Of Exodus**, ed. Curtis Cates (Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1987), p. 327.

21 Robertson, 2:208.

22 Ibid.

23 Keith A. Mosher, Sr., "The Herods, A Family of Continuing Iniquity," **Great Lessons From New Testament Characters**, (Memphis, TN, Memphis School of Preaching, 1991), p. 380.

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- 24 Ibid., pp. 382-83.
- 25 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 4 vols., 1:462. See also the genealogical chart of the Herods (2:693).
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid., 1:995.
- 29 Stephen Monsma, "Should Christians Push Their Views on Others?" **Pornography**, ed. Tom Minnery (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1987), p. 81.
- 30 David Alexander Scott, "How Pornography Changes Attitudes," **Pornography**, ed. Tom Minnery (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1987), p. 139.
- 31 James C. Dobson, "Enough Is Enough," **Pornography**, ed. Tom Minnery (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1987), p. 39.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Charles Colson, "Introduction," **Pornography**, ed. Tom Minnery (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1987), p. 19.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Dobson, p. 40.
- 36 Scott, p. 130.
- 37 Ibid., p. 141.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 "Pornography," **American Family Association Journal**, (Apr 2004): p. 7.
- 40 Tony Lawrence, "Ungodliness: TV, Music, Videos & Porno," **"...Live Soberly, Righteously, And Godly, In This Present World"**, (*Titus 2:12*). Ed. Paul Sain (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1992), p. 126.
- 41 "3801." **Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament**, Trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, LL.D. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 420.
- 42 Joe Maxwell, "Bathing Suits or Birthday Suits?" **World**, (June 14, 2003) p. 33.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
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45 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

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47 Ibid.

48 Lynn Parker, "Who Told Thee That Thou Wast Naked?"

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50 Moses.

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CHAPTER 4

Idolatry

Eric Owens

Introduction

I AM HONORED TO be a part of this wonderful lectureship. The POWER Lectureship is well known and hopefully will continue to grow in its godly influence. The theme this year, **“The Works of the Flesh vs. the Fruit of the Spirit,”** is always a needed study. This is the case because the nature of man has not changed. As long as men live on the earth, sin will demand that we teach against the works of the flesh, and encourage men to live according to the fruit of the Spirit. Within this needed theme, I have been assigned the subject of idolatry. Idolatry may appear to be an issue for foreign nations with strange practices. However, as we will see, idolatry is a matter of the heart, not a matter of culture, or time. We might not think about it often, but the practice of idolatry is as prevalent today as it has ever been in anytime in history. One could actually make the case that it is even more rampant today. We have both an abundance of things from which to choose, and an ease of access to them that former generations never knew.

There are several things that make this subject important for us to study. One is the fact that God is a jealous God. God is jealous of man’s worship, his allegiance, and his heart. He desires preeminence in our lives, and He will accept nothing less. Another reason idolatry is an

important study is because God will reject anyone who worships idols in any form. It is a fatal mistake for men to think that God will turn a blind eye to the heinous practice of idolatry. Idolatry is condemned in Scripture whenever it is mentioned. Both Old and New Testaments consistently condemn those who practice it, and give warnings to those who might consider it. There is never a good word said about idolatry, except when men are turning from it (1 Thess. 1:9). Still, another reason this study is important is the extreme evil associated with it. Like all sin, idolatry attacks the character and nature of God. But idolatry is different from other sin in this regard: it attacks both the revelatory work and the creative work of God. Understood correctly, it is a direct assault against God Himself and challenges and rejects His being and actions. It strikes at the heart of human existence.

Idolatry forces us to ask, “Why did an infinite God create fallible man in the first place?” The Bible makes it clear that God is not deficient in any way. Since He lacks nothing in His character, or His nature, then He cannot be in need of anything. In other words, the explanation for the creation of man could not be because man gives, or contributes something to God. Such an answer would suggest that God had needs, and man was made to provide them. This conclusion is unacceptable because it is against the nature of God. Yet, the question of why God made man must be answered if we will appreciate the dark, destructive, deadly, and damnable sin of idolatry. In answer to this question it may help to first understand the purpose of material creation.

Why Did God Create The World?

Thankfully, God did not leave us in the dark concerning this question; He told us the purpose of His creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (Psm. 19:1-6).

Without any thought of its own, the creation does what God designed it to do. It has no will, no desire, no volition; it cannot think, reflect, or regret. It does what God intended; it declares that He is glorious. The creation makes this declaration daily, the psalm says, “day unto day.” This declaration is multi-lingual and audible, “there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” This declaration is made universally, “their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” The creation does not add to God or His glory, but it consistently, clearly, and convincingly declares it! This is not done for God’s benefit; (He needs nothing) it is done for man’s benefit. By looking at and listening to the creation, man can come to know that God is, and that He is glorious. By such action, he could seek God, and find Him (Acts 17:24-27).

Why Did God Create Man?

If the purpose of material creation is to declare God’s glory, then why create man? We know that man is different from the material creation. He can think, ponder, reflect, regret, feel, enjoy beauty, consider, and choose a course of action. Therefore, man could not have been made simply to declare God’s glory; creation already does that. Of all of

God's creation, only humans are made in His image. Only humans possess an eternal soul. Therefore we conclude that God had much more in mind for man. God created man not to declare His glory, but rather to **partake in His glory** (2 Pet. 1:3-4; Heb. 12:9-10). Peter speaks of exceeding great and precious promises that God has given. He tells us that by those promises we can be **partakers of the divine nature**. John tells us that we are the sons of God right now. And that later we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:1ff). The Hebrews writer speaks of our being chastened, and that through it we can be **partakers of God's holiness**. It is clear from the teaching of Jesus that our heavenly Father desires us not to simply declare Him, but to be like Him. The Lord taught that we are to love others as God loved us (Matt. 5:43-48; John 13:34-35). Not only does this apply to how we love, but it encompasses all that we do. It dictates how we show compassion (Matt. 18:33). It determines how we forgive one another (Eph. 4:32). Paul speaks of putting on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and longsuffering (Col. 3:12-13). This is all designed to enable us to partake in and share the character of God.

God did not get bored, and decide to create man. Nor is it the case that by doing His will, worshipping Him or glorifying Him, man adds something to God. Man must understand that every beast of the forest belongs to God. He knows the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts belong to Him. If He were hungry, He would not tell us, because the whole world is His and everything in it. He lacks nothing; neither does He need anything from us. It is because of His divine nature, that He made us. He is so perfect and complete that He wanted to share that, therefore He created man to share His glory and His nature. What a humbling thought, what a wonderful God,

and what a blessed benefit He has given. Unfortunately, men live beneath the lofty position God intended for them. And nothing so demonstrates that as engaging in the thoughtless, haughty, ignorant, selfish, fleshly, carnal, foolish, sin of idolatry. God made this point clear when He said,

Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings unto Baal, **which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind** (Jer. 19:4-5 emp. added).

The living God, Who created heaven and earth and everything in it, never intended that man would be idolatrous. How sad it must be for Him to see so many of His offspring committed to it.

What Is Idolatry?

It is unfortunate to think that many people are engaging in the practice of idolatry and may not even know it. It is imperative that we study the Bible, define the words, and put them into their proper context. It is imperative because, without doing this, there is no way to know God or if we are doing what He desires (1 Cor. 2:8-13).

If you had to define idolatry, what would you say? In defining the word idol, Webster says, “an image of a god, used as an object or instrument of worship; in monotheistic belief, any heathen deity.”¹ Of idolatry he says, “worship of idols; excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing.”² In his Bible dictionary, under the word idolatry Smith says, “strictly speaking, denotes the worship of deity

in a visible form, whether the images to which homage is paid are symbolical representations of the true God or of the false divinities which have been made the objects of worship in his stead.”³ Finally, there is this helpful summary statement about idols and idolatry:

There is ever in the human mind a craving for visible forms to express religious conceptions, and this tendency does not disappear with the acceptance, or even with the constant recognition, of pure spiritual truths. Idolatry originally meant the worship of idols, or the worship of false gods by means of idols, but came to mean among the OT Hebrews any worship of false gods, whether by images or otherwise, and finally the worship of Jehovah through visible symbols and ultimately in the New Testament idolatry came to mean, not only the giving to any creature or human creation the honor or devotion which belong to God alone, but the giving to any human desire a precedence over God’s will.⁴

Hopefully, from these statements we better understand that idolatry is not limited to the worship of false gods, but also includes putting yourself above the will of God. Scripture also describes this heinous practice with words like, teraphim, images, gods, worshipping the host of heaven, high places, or similar words or phrases.

Idolatry: The Sin Of Humanity

The phrase “Jew and Gentile” is representative of all humanity, and Scripture teaches that humanity has committed this egregious sin. As early as Genesis, Satan enticed Eve with the idea that she would be as gods and know good and evil (Gen. 3:5). The first mention of figures used for worship is the account of Laban. It is recorded in Genesis 31:19 that Rachel stole her father’s images. In

the same context, he later accused Jacob of stealing his gods (Gen. 31:30-32). Joshua tells us that Abraham's family worshipped other gods. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods" (Josh. 24:2). It can hardly be doubted that this is the reason God separated Abram from his father's house (Gen. 12:1-3). Even a cursory study reveals that from the beginning of time, idolatry has been a constant threat to man's relationship with God.

Idolatry Among The Gentiles

The Gentile world as a whole went so far into idolatry that God literally gave them up. This explains God's actions throughout the Old Testament in dealing with the Gentiles and choosing the Jews as His special people. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul, through inspiration, explains what happened.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor

their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; fully of envy; murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whispers, Backbiters, haters of God despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:18-32).

The sad truths told in these verses happened as a result of idolatry. It must be understood that this explanation by Paul furnishes us with the understanding of the Gentile world as far back as Abraham. As we have noted, his fathers worshipped idols. Paul explains how far reaching this sin was. It must also be appreciated that these people were not atheists. The verses teach that God's wrath was revealed because He had shown Himself to them. From the creation they could have clearly understood God's eternal power and His divine nature; therefore they had no excuse. Additionally, Paul said they did know God. This point must not be missed. They knew God, but they did not glorify Him as God, that is, they did not give to Him the glory and honor due Him as the Creator

and sustainer of life. Instead they cast God off, and chose their own imaginations. They proclaimed that they were wise, and by so doing actually became fools. **They changed the glory of God, or rather exchanged the glory of God for images of men, beasts, birds, and creeping things. This is idolatry!** God created the world and it works as God intended. God created man, and he often refuses to do what God intended. The Gentiles tried God on, and did not like the fit. This is what Adam and Eve did in the garden. They chose self over God. Idolatry, like all sins, begins in the heart of man. It should not be thought of exclusively as carving a piece of wood, or hewing a block of stone and bowing before it. While this foolish behavior is included, it is simply a symptom of a much bigger problem, the root of the problem is the heart and the will of man (Mark 7:21-23).

God created man to share in His glory, and man seeks to go it alone. The vessel has turned to the potter and not only asked, "Why have you made me this way?" but added, "I do not want your hands on me! I will make my self what I want! I will make you what I want!" This situation was so prevalent among the world in Noah's day that God destroyed it. After the flood it again ran so rampant that God gave the Gentiles up to their own foolish hearts.

Idolatry Among The Jews

The Jews, though they were God's people, and though they had every advantage, they did the same things. Romans chapter 2 opens with a declaration of that fact.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man,
whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein
thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself;
for thou that judgest doest the same things. . .
Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest
thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man

should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you...(Rom. 2:1; Rom. 2:21-25).

Because of idolatry, God gave the Gentiles up, while at the same time warning His chosen people, Israel, to serve and worship Him exclusively. From their genesis as a nation after the exodus, God opened His giving of the Law with these commands.

I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous god, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me (Exod. 20:2-5).

Not only were the Jews to serve God exclusively, but they were also to drive the inhabitants out of the land, because of their idolatry. This served a two-fold purpose. First, God was bringing judgment upon the nations for their idolatry. For centuries God watched as the heathen nations who refused to retain Him in their knowledge corrupted themselves in Canaan. His mercy waited, His love hoped, but they never repented. The course of action was to judge them for their sins. Though not full in Abram's day, the cup of the Amorites had become full by the days of Joshua. Second, God was separating His people so that they would not commit the same sins. To Moses and Israel God said,

For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images (Exod. 23:23-24).

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee. . . seven nations greater and mightier than thou: And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth (Deut. 7:1-6).

Unfortunately, Israel did not follow God's instructions. They did not put the people out of the land. In many instances, they put them to tribute (Judg. 1:27-36). They also made leagues with them, and gave their daughters and took their sons in marriage (Judg. 2:1-2). Because of this, God left the nations in the land. The Gentiles were a thorn in the Jew's side, and their gods were a snare to them (Judg. 2:3). Eventually, to be like all the nations around them, God's people asked for a king. It was the intermarriage and resulting idolatry of Solomon,

Israel's third king, that led to the dividing of the kingdom (1 Kings. 11:1-11). From that point forward, idolatry ran rampant in the nation. The ten northern tribes, known as Israel, or sometimes Ephraim, were idolatrous until their destruction. Hosea's pleas and statements summarize their condition.

My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place. Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone. Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned" (Hos. 4:12; Hos. 4:16-17; Hos. 7:8).

Judah followed Israel into the sin of idolatry, and would also go into captivity because of it. Ezekiel 16 graphically portrays the disgusting display of idolatry among God's people. Both the Jew and Gentile rejected God and served sin, self, and Satan. They opted to worship the creature rather than the Creator; and for this, the Gentiles were given up, and the Jews were punished and ultimately rejected.

Idolatry Today

Idolatry is by no means just an ancient problem. Neither is it a remote problem in some obscure land. Idolatry is in full force wherever and whenever men refuse to humble themselves in the sight of God. Man's worship of himself poses the greatest threat to his relationship with God. While a few people have been so insanely haughty as to refer to themselves as god, most people will not. However, most people end up in the same place because they refuse God's preeminence in their lives. Jesus

said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). In this one statement our Lord made it abundantly clear that everyone either worships Jehovah or practices idolatry. We will notice several ways this may manifest itself, but in the end, these are the only two choices we have. From other statements of the Lord, it is clear that most men continue to reject God for idolatry (Matt. 7:13-14). These two choices get us back to the purpose of our creation.

Idolatry: The Battle For Self

Idolatry is a spiritual battle for control over our heart and will. There are several questions connected with this situation. Who will govern my life? Will I recognize that God created me and that I did not make my self? Will I give up my selfish desires and willingly put God’s will above my own? Will I live in view of eternity, realizing there is life after death? Or will I live for me, give in to my desires, seek to please self, and live only for this world. These are some of the questions that are involved in a study of Idolatry.

God created us to share in His glory. He intends for us to use this world as a place to prepare our souls for eternity. We will live somewhere forever; it will be either with God or without God. The battle for our souls is raging right now! God desires us to live with Him in heaven, Satan desires for us to live in hell, but we will make the ultimate decision. No one can win or lose this battle for you. You must decide to follow God or reject God. You must choose to live for self, or serve the Lord. There is one thing for certain--you cannot do both (Matt. 12:30). These three things must take place if we will win this battle. We must deny ourselves (Luke 9:23). This is not some ascetic life style of going without physical things. Rather this is the

issue of the heart. We are not animals blindly living by instincts. We have a will, and we must control it. We must deny ourselves living and doing what we want to do to please ourselves. We must choose to seek the Lord's way and do that in spite of our desires. This is not pretending that we do not have a will or desires; rather it is controlling our desires and denying the selfishness of living for self.

Of course our perfect example is Jesus. Our Lord did not do His own will but the will of the Father (Matt. 26:39; Matt. 26:42; Matt. 26:44). We must follow His example and deny our will for the will of God. We must not only deny ourselves but we must also humble ourselves (Jas. 4:7). There is no pride in God; therefore there can be no pride in His spiritual children. This is so important because it focuses on my motivation for my actions. Pride is why we live for self. I think too much of my wants and wishes and not enough of God's or any one else's.

A humble disposition is needed in order to be instructed by God. It helps us recognize our place and the place of God. He is the creator and we are the created. This humbling of self is a prerequisite for serving God and helps us avoid idolatry.

Additionally, we must submit ourselves to God (James 4:10). There is only room for one on the throne of our heart. The choice boils down to whether we will reign or God will reign. Here is the birthplace of idolatry. The battle for our souls and eternity is won or lost here. We may practice it in different ways, but those are simply manifestations of the choices we have already made. It is why Romans 1 reads like a description of modern day America. It will always be relevant.

Some Examples Of Idolatry

Idolatry runs rampant today because many have rejected God and sought to go it alone. Some idols are the

same today as they have been since the creation of man. Others are new and improved forms with new bells and whistles. But in the end it is all the same. Men seek to go it alone, reject the God of heaven, spurn His offers of redemption and sentence themselves to eternal damnation. The challenges are many and the stakes are high. Truly, the more things change the more they stay the same. Let us notice a few of the ways idolatry manifests itself presently.

1. Some worship the false god of materialism.

This god is an old one but it continues to grow in popularity. Yet we are warned, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5; cf. 1 John 2:15-17). “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Though warnings abound, many have rejected the one true God for the false god of money and possessions. Many are drowning in debt because they have bowed too long at the altar of materialism. Jesus teaches against this false god because it demonstrates a total lack of trust in Him. Jesus told us that by putting the kingdom first, all our physical needs would be provided (Matt 6:19-34). When teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus taught them to pray for daily provisions (Matt 6:11). Far too many of God’s children and churches are not ready to contribute to good works because they have tied themselves to this false god. Missionaries often lack needed support because our money is already earmarked for the latest gadget, car, fad or thing. In time, like all false gods, this one will hurt you. Who are you

serving? Just check where your money goes each pay-period?

2. Some worship the false god of pleasure:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly . . . Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents (Rom. 1:26-30).

Once God is cast off, you are free to do whatever comes to your mind. And history testifies with unwavering accuracy, that men choose what brings them pleasure. When this mindset prevails within a nation, that nation is headed for ruin (Prov. 14:34; Judg. 21:25). What is sad is that this seems to describe the desire of many in our nation. The more our world casts God off, the more they ensnare themselves in immorality. Read the paper or watch the news! Some want men to marry men and women to marry women.

Every generation thinks they will be different. They refuse to learn from the countless examples of those who have gone before. When God is rejected immorality prevails and destruction is the result. Man is left alone to guide himself. Sadly, at that point, he is a blind man, with his mind darkened, walking in darkness, with no understanding of where to go or how to get there (Eph. 4:17-19; Jer. 10:23).

As God's people, we must not allow the world to influence us to give in to this false god (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 5:3-4).

Regardless of how loud the world shouts, immorality is still wrong. No matter what the voters choose, no matter how many petitions are signed in support of sin, it is still righteousness that exalts a nation - not wickedness. The nature of man has not changed, nor has the purpose for his creation. Immorality is wrong and this false god leads to ruin; we must not worship it.

3. Some worship the false god of human wisdom. The creation declares God's glory so precisely that anyone who does not recognize God is without excuse. Because of this, Scripture takes a very dim view of those who reject God's existence. Psalms 14:1 sums up God's position. "**The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God***" (emp. added). Those who persist in such a position are left to their own imagination about themselves and the world in which they live. The way in which they describe themselves is ample proof of their thoughts. Not all but some of them refer to themselves as humanists, and by definition there is no room in this person's heart for God. Concerning God and His existence this is the standard sentiment:

There is no place in the Humanist worldview for either immortality or God in the valid meanings of those terms. Humanism contends that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings given rein to their imagination, created the gods.⁷

Paul Kurtz said, "Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe."⁸ Concerning the matter of ethics, there is one major question:

The fundamental question of ethics is, who makes the rules? God or men? The theistic

answer is that God makes them. The humanistic answer is that men make them. This distinction between theism and humanism is the fundamental division in moral theory.⁹

William Provine said, “No inherent moral or ethical laws exist, nor are there absolute guiding principles for human society. The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate meaning in life.”¹⁰

Concerning man’s existence, Carl Sagan said, “Evolution is a fact amply demonstrated by the fossil record and by contemporary molecular biology. Natural selection is a successful theory devised to explain the fact of evolution.”¹¹ George Gaylord Simpson expanded on this kind of thinking when he said,

Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is material.¹²

These positions are not taken because of a lack of evidence. Creation does its job in proving the existence of God. The above positions are taken because God is rejected. Robert Green Ingersoll makes that clear when he says, “The statement that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, I cannot accept.”¹³ If one cannot accept God, then just how did the world come into existence and how did man get here? Listen to Carl Sagan’s explanation:

The first living things were not anything so complex as a one celled organism, already a highly sophisticated form of life. The first stirrings were much more humble. In those early days, lightning and ultraviolet light from the Sun were breaking apart the simply hydrogen-rich molecules of the primitive atmosphere, the

fragments spontaneously recombining into more and more complex molecules. The products of this early chemistry were dissolved in the oceans, forming a kind of organic soup of gradually increasing complexity, until one day, quite by accident, a molecule arose that was able to make crude copies of itself, using as building blocks other molecules in the soup.¹⁴

Isaac Asimov agrees and offers his own explanation:

Once upon a time, very long ago, perhaps two and a half billion years ago, under a deadly sun, in an ammoniated ocean topped by a poisonous atmosphere, in the midst of a soup of organic molecules, a nucleic acid molecule came accidentally into being that could somehow bring about the existence of another like itself – And from that all else would follow!¹⁵

These statements give one a glimpse into the world that one is reduced to when he rejects God. It would be much wiser to accept the evidence God has given. One need only look and listen to the creation. Marvel at the complexities and design of man and woman. Search the revelation of the Living God. Submit to Him and worship Him. Eternity awaits us all. How sad it will be for those who have rejected God to one day meet Him face to face. “Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psm. 100:3).

For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them” (Psm. 135:14-18).

Endnotes

1 **Webster's New World Dictionary**, Victoria Neufeldt, Editor in Chief. (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1984), p. 670.

2 Ibid.

3 William Smith, **Smith's Bible Dictionary**, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA. 1997), p. 262.

4 **The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia**, James Orr, General Edit. Vol. III, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA. 1994), pp. 1447-48.

5 Corliss Lamont quoted in **Understanding the Times** David A. Noebel, (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 1999), p. 51.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

Witchcraft

Harrell Davidson

Introduction

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID, “Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies” (Gal. 5:20). He wrote this in combination with several other sins that he listed by Inspiration as being “works of the flesh.” When one looks at reliable sources there are some puzzling results. Vine says, “For Witchcraft see Sorcery.”¹ Thus, the author turned to the word “sorcery” and found out why witches use the Greek word “*pharmakia*.”² Vine lists “sorcery as Eng., pharmacy etc. primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then poisoning; then sorcery, Gal. 5:20.”³ One gets the idea very soon in this study that this is a multifaceted, deliberately organized and well-funded practice that has literally hundreds of thousands in its grasp.

The subject of witchcraft is multifaceted even in the way it is used in the Scriptures. Moses wrote, “Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments (Exod. 7:11). Adam Clarke said:

Sorcerers, those who reveal hidden things; probably from the Arabic root [Arabic] *kashafa*, to reveal, uncover, &c., signifying diviners, or those who pretended to reveal what was in futurity, to discover things lost, to find hidden treasures.⁴

However, notice that magicians and sorcery are connected with wise men and that at least some of these used “their enchantments.” Other passages are helpful at this point in our study; after all, we want to learn exactly what this work of the flesh is all about.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said (Exod. 7:22).

And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt (Exod. 8:7).

The frog miracle is very interesting and somewhat amusing. Moses, by the handiwork of God, had already caused frogs to be over all the land. Pharaoh’s magicians did the same. Therefore, they now have more frogs. Pharaoh and his people want the frogs removed. Moses asked them “When?” and they said, “Tomorrow.” There were frogs in the bedchambers. Can you imagine turning back the covers on the bed only to find that it was full of frogs or wanting to cook a delicious cherry pie, and opening the door to your oven, and finding that it too was full of frogs? Frogs were everywhere, yet they wanted them removed **tomorrow**. They wanted to live one more night with the frogs! That sounds like some of us today who procrastinate. We intend to do something tomorrow, but for the life of me I cannot imagine one more night with the frogs.

Well did Isaiah write:

But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy

knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me (Isa. 47:9).

Because of the multitudes of sorceries, in one day, widowhood and the loss of children would take place. No reader can look at such and think that this is not an enormously grievous sin in the sight of God that we are studying. Sorcerers used drugs and incantations that appeal to the occult. The adherents looked for certain charms or special gifts. The entire arrangement was in order that a person who had come to such a one would be impressed with the mysterious powers that sorcerers pretended to use.

In Acts 8:9, Luke wrote, "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one." The word bewitched, as used here, carries with it the basic idea of confusing or amazing the people. It is for sure that Simon used such trickery in order to make a living. Vine shows that the word "bewitch" means "primarily to slander, to prate about anyone; then to bring evil on a person by feigned praise, or mislead by an evil eye...."⁵ We should be thoroughly convinced that witchcraft is attached to many fallacious ways. The very idea that one would use such methods to feign praise in order to bring evil is opposite terms on the face of it.

A Witch Shall Not Live

Moses told the children of Israel that, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. 22:18). Adam Clarke says:

If there had been no witches, such a law as this had never been made. The existence of the law, given under the direction of the Spirit of God, proves the existence of the thing. Whether the persons thus denominated only pretended to

have an art which had no existence, or whether they really possessed the power commonly attributed to them, are questions which it would be improper to discuss at length in a work of this kind; but that witches, wizards, those who dealt with familiar spirits, are represented in the sacred writings as actually possessing a power to evoke the dead, to perform, supernatural operations, and to discover hidden or secret things by spells, charms, incantations, etc., is evident to every unprejudiced reader of the Bible.⁶

From Clarke's comments notice the word "wizards." Those who dealt with familiar spirits actually had the power to invoke the dead by secret or hidden things by spells and charms. This fits entirely into the modern agenda of those who claim to practice witchcraft. Their charms and incantations are almost endless. There are shops or stores set up in our major cities where one can purchase the articles that are used in some of these incantations, or in their perverted worship or darkness. It is hard for me to imagine someone actually going in the doors of such establishments and buying frog knees or bat's wings, yet it is happening over and over every day that we live, and, according to some, witchcraft is a very fast growing religion. Yes, dear reader, you read correctly—it is a recognized religion and is listed as a non-profit religious organization in various places.

Before the author is a document, eight pages in length, that reads, "United States of America, State of Louisiana, Wade O. Martin, Jr. (who is listed as) The Secretary of the State, of the State of Louisiana." Stating his name, he then says:

Do hereby certify that a copy of the Articles of Incorporation of THE RELIGIOUS—ORDER OF WITCHCRAFT, [caps on original document] Domiciled at New Orleans, Louisiana, Parish of Orleans.

These papers were filed on February 2, 1972 with a picture of one who billed herself as America's leading witch—High – Priestess Mary Oneida Toups. This religious order, under the terms of being a non profit religious organization, gave terms of “The RELIGIOUS – ORDER of WITCHCRAFT” [caps on original document]. What follows are the terms under which witches will operate:

- (1) To promote the Old and Original Religion of Witchcraft. To accord Witchcraft recognition of the evolution and revolution of Godliness fathered by the Craft.
- (2) To dedicate oneself to the ultimate achievement of Godliness through search, study, application, learning, perfecting and mastering the universal elements by and through which acceptance into the Kingdom of God is achieved.
- (3) To exercise the same Constitutional guarantees as Established Churches, Faiths and Sects have been granted.
- (4) To pursue Witchcraft as a religion in accordance with 1st Amendment of the United States Constitution: ‘Right to Establishment of Religion, free exercise thereof; freedom of Speech and the right to peaceably assemble.’

Mary Oneida Toups said, “This Religious-Order shall be perpetual.” She avers in this document under the heading of qualifications:

Membership applicants must establish themselves with the High-Priestess. They must exhibit sincerity attuned to personal dedication and application of themselves towards the extreme achievement of Godliness. They must be of a minimum of 18-Years of Age. A candidate ‘must’ possess knowledge of Books concerning Holy and Religious acumen. NEVER will an applicant be considered if it be ‘known’ that he or she ‘ever’ used ‘Hallucinatory-Drugs and/or consorted with Demons or practiced Demonology.

The author promises that every word used here has been copied from the State or Louisiana ordination papers and all words with caps are as given in the document.

Toups goes on to point out that there are Satellite Covens that have been created wherein seven certified witches of the “Original and Parent establishment” shall be present to have a Quorum. A Coven is a group of exactly thirteen who are witchcraft practitioners. One witch is in charge of one Coven. Toups said that there were more than one hundred thousand witches in America in 1972. The math is quite simple is it not? One million three hundred thousand practicing witches during that era of time! What a thought!

Toups, America’s leading witch, wrote 22 rules or ordinances that the Religious Order of Witchcraft was to follow. They are listed under “Domain and Realm of the Unknown & Unseen.” I shall group some of these together for our study. They include “allegiance and fidelity of persons of devine [sic] inspiration.” Thus, here is a claim for inspiration for witches.

Coven secrets are to be kept “SECRET”; they are revealed to only the members of that particular Coven. Any witch that betrays this is censored with silence. The author supposes that the high priestess will not speak to her for a period of time. You might ask, “How do you know that it is a woman?” Good question!

Article six states, “This Coven is established with the primary intent to be a ‘Female-oriented Coven’ and as such the Male-witch shall be subordinate to the High-Priestess.” When member witches take a husband or a wife they are required to present a written statement from their partner that he or she approves of and “will not impede” the other’s pursuit and activity in the religious order of witchcraft. Further, a witch’s oath is “infinite in it’s declaration.” There is no oath that can be nullified. All

Coven “paraphernalia” shall be “standardlized”[sic] in order for all to be alike. Even witches understand the need for unity while some of my brethren have not learned as much as witches know!

Article 11 says, “To achieve the end result of perfected-WISDOM, the Coven-Leader shall be in possession of all known Craft-Books and setforth[sp] a Book-List which will be material required for ALL WITCHES TO MASTER.” This may help us understand Luke’s statement in Acts 19:19 a little better. He wrote: “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

It is rather evident that some of the Ephesians were using some of these “curious arts.” In Deuteronomy 18:10, we read, “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.” Again, it is easy to see the various “curious arts” of this nature that the Scriptures group together. After the 22nd article these words are written: “So Mote It Be!” Signed by, “Oneida, The Witch.”⁷

Earth Religion News, which bills itself as being “The Only Pagan Tabloid Newspaper Dedicated To The Practice And Study Of Paganism” says boldly on page one, second paragraph 2:

Today we find Celtic covens; Druidic covens; Alexandrian; Norse; Sicilian; Garderian (plus a host of Gardnerian adapted, such as Al-Gard, Bell Gardnerian; Kneited-Gardnerian, etc.); American Celtic; Welsh; Irish; Spanish; Huna; Atlantian; and so on.⁸

It is easy to see that no country or ethnic group is likely excluded from this growing list. Raymond Buckland,

author of *Earth Religion News*, has reversed himself on homosexuality by revealing that although Garderian witches have over the years tried hard to stick to an equal number of males and females, that now it is not practical. He said:

In recent years we have seen a mellowing of this approach. With the greater acceptance of homosexuality—Garderian covens, along with other traditions, are quite willing to accept individuals of whatever mind...homosexuality is today, therefore, no more reason for exclusion from Garderian covens than is race or color.⁹

And why not? On page 15 of the same newspaper there is a picture of four naked Garderian Witch Queens who are meeting to divide up the world. The caption says, “Skyclad Ain’t Bad....”¹⁰ Above the picture, column 3 page 15, we note:

Is the training into a Coven a missed assortment of spells, crying, and magick [sp] tricks? Or is there a constant, continuing effort toward an awareness of the Goddess and Her Consort? Only the latter is the religion of Witchcraft, a **faith** [bold added for emphasis by HDD] whose goal is not power and control, but a regaining of our lost kinship to Nature, an ever growing closeness to the Goddess and Her Consort...There is a magick [sp] of ceremonial magicians. Our magick [sp] comes from that ‘regaining,’ it comes from an awareness and kinship, a ‘knowing’ of Nature.¹¹

The idea of “nature” to the witch and the Christian is quite different. For a witch this is something that they are able to delve into and get revived with “tree-huggers” and other groups similar, while nature to the Christian has to do with God’s beautiful creation that He made for our enjoyment.

The title of the article is “City Witch Title Sought.”
The date line is Salem, Mass. (AP):

Dressed in black cape and boots, Laurie Cabot maintains she’s a witch—of sorts. The divorced mother of two, she runs a small shop in this 17th century witchcraft center, selling potions, graveyard dust, snakeskins and candles to tourists. ‘Being a witch is being involved in mysticism, a science,’ she explains. ‘Devils and demons are in people’s heads.’ For the second year in a row, Mrs. Cabot has petitioned the City Council to make her Salem’s official city witch. Her request has been referred to a committee.¹²

Sybil Leeks and Oneida Touns are world leaders in America in Witchcraft. Leeks claims to have four hundred friends who are witches. Touns says she has more. They both believe that God is in everyone, that God shares his power with all beings, and that God has gifted all witches the use of His own power. Thus a witch believes that her power is from God. Witches believe that they are reincarnated. They consider that reincarnation is proof of one’s failure to have achieved godliness in the previous life. Therefore, in this life we hope to achieve higher wisdom and spiritual enlightenment

There are three basic kinds of witchcraft practiced today. They are white, black and Gardnerian. Those who practice white witchcraft claim to get their powers from God. Those who practice black witchcraft claim to get their powers from evil spirits. Gardnerian witchcraft, started by a man named Gardner, stresses the amassing of secret knowledge as its principal goal.

It is abundantly clear in the Scriptures that witchcraft is tied to and is a great part of the occult. Wizards, necromancer, soothsayers, fortune telling, magic, Tarot Cards, Ouija Boards and such like are all tied

together. In fact, the apostle Paul tied these things together with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, by Divine Inspiration, in Galatians 5:21 when he used the phraseology, “and such like.” Having introduced the word “occult” above let us explore this for a moment.

The word “occult” means to hide from sight or to conceal something that is not revealed or secret. Webster says it means mysterious, that it deals with supernatural agencies. Occultism is “a belief in or study of supernatural powers and the possibility of subjecting them to human control” (Webster).¹³

The occult started having a resurgence during the Vietnam era and especially post-Vietnam. Some of our soldiers became acquainted with the so-called “black arts” while in the service. The author understands that all black arts did not come from our military, but the resurgence of such practices reach back to that era. For instance, there were 40 million Quija Boards sold in 1971 alone. Fortune telling began to be popular again. Gypsy tea leaf readers flourished again. Crystal balls began surfacing for twenty dollars in those places where the things associated with the curious arts were sold.

Why do these things happen and continue to this very day? When men ignore the warnings of God and enter into any forbidden realm they may witness all kinds of experiences, trances, magic phenomena, but such practices do not make these things miraculous as the practitioners claim. They represent the operation of the devil within a certain sphere tolerated by God (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-11). When we leave Biblical truths, ignorance will flourish. Ignorance breeds gullibility. Deception occurs when we are not taught the Word accurately. When men violate the spiritual and moral laws of God, they subject themselves to the realm of all powers of the occult. When people depart from Christ there is a spiritual vacuum that is created. People in such

situations begin to look for fulfillment in such things as witchcraft, sorcery, card reading, séances, table lifting, ESP and other psychic practices and experiments. Spiritual lawlessness, in which occultism and false religionism flourish, goes hand in hand with moral lawlessness, and the occult revival starts and prospers in a morally and spiritually sick society.

What can we do? First, study the Bible on the occult. Show that occultism contradicts the Bible and appeals to the base elements in man. Warn of the dangers of curiously playing around with the occult. Be informed about the presence of the occult in your community. Last, teach the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spiritually insecure persons are those most affected by the occult. There is no greater power, and no greater message than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

- 1 W. E. Vine, **Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words**, p. 223.
- 2 Ibid, p. 51.
- 3 Ibid, pp. 51-52.
- 4 Adam Clarke, **Exodus Power Bible CD 2.4 Edition**.
- 5 Vine, p. 9.
- 6 Clarke.
- 7 Official Incorporation Papers from the State of Louisiana.
- 8 **Earth Religion News** Volume 1, Issue 1, (300 Henry St. Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201 Yule 1973), p. 1.
- 9 Ibid, p 1. Ray Buckland Reverses Stand on Homosexuality.
- 10 Ibid, p. 15.
- 11 Ibid, Column 3, p. 15.
- 12 **The Daily Oklahoman** (Newspaper) May 9, 1974.
- 13 **Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary**, p. 583.

CHAPTER 6

Hatred, Variance, And Emulations

Wayne Cox

Introduction

WHEN ONE MENTIONS THE word “heart,” he normally refers to that vital nine-to-eleven-ounce-fist-sized-muscular organ that lies in the cavity of our chest that receives blood from the veins and pumps it into and through the arteries. What a workhorse the heart is! The heart:

beats an average of 75 times a minute, forty million times a year, or two and a half billion times in a life of 70 years. At each beat, the average adult heart discharges about four ounces of blood. This amounts to three thousand gallons a day or 650,000 gallons a year – enough to fill more than 81 tank cars of 8,000 gallons each.

The heart does enough work in one hour to lift a 150-pound man to the top of a three-story building, enough energy in twelve hours to lift a 65-ton tank car one foot off the ground, or enough power in seventy years to lift the largest battleship afloat completely out of the water.¹

No wonder we’re tired at the end of the day!

This year’s **POWER** lectureship concerns the heart of man. But, of course, these aren’t lessons on human

anatomy, nor are we qualified to speak on such. We're talking about a heart of a different kind – the spiritual heart of man which involves our “desires, affections, perceptions, thoughts, understanding, reasoning powers, imaginations, conscience, intentions, purpose, will, and faith.”²

Hopefully, an examination of our inner man would reveal positive spiritual health, since we are incorporating into our lives the wonderful fruit of the Spirit, nine elements listed by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. Reality, however, would reveal that the majority of people would receive a markedly different diagnosis of their heart's condition, as so many are involved in wrongdoings called “the works of the flesh,” listed by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21. The apostle had just mentioned the “desires of the flesh” in Galatians 5:17, and now sets forth ways in which these passions are fulfilled.³

A. T. Robertson combines these works of the flesh into four groups of “manifest vices.”⁴ Hendricksen does likewise and labels his categories immorality, idolatry, rivalry, and inebriety.⁵ The third group is the largest; the reason why so much prominence is given to this category of sinful practices is perhaps because of Paul's statement in Galatians 5:15: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Evidently, the Galatians were doing exactly that!

Here, in verse 15, people – church-members at that! – are pictured in the act of rushing at each other like wild beasts. By means of an ascending series of gruesome acts their violence and its threatening woeful result is pictured: they bite each other, “gulp each other down,” and, if they persist, will in the end be totally consumed by one another.⁶

Our assignment is to discuss these rather unpleasant dispositions and sins of attitude – the terrible trio of

hatred, variance, and emulations. What detrimental effects these can have on our hearts! But, before noticing each term, does it really matter what is in my heart? Is it really important what I think, as long as I don't commit some outward evil?

Indeed, it does matter. The type of heart one has is largely determined by his thoughts. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). As one has well said, "We may not be what we think we are, but what we think, we are." Tragically, the number is legion who believe they can harbor evil thoughts without committing evil acts. In fact, some religious leaders in Jesus' day were guilty of that very thing, and the Lord did not mince words when addressing them! For instance:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also (Matt. 23:25-26).

These Pharisees were righteous on the outside, but rotten within; their righteousness was all show and no substance. Though their lips said the right things, their hearts reflected the wrong attitude. For them, there was nothing more important than looking good, appearing clean, going through the motions, and impressing people with their trimmed robes and large phylacteries. They could quote the Law verbatim, but within they were corrupt. No wonder the Lord admonishes: "A clean plate does not mean a clean heart!"

Indeed, internal problems require internal solutions. This principle, so simple to understand, is so often ignored when it comes to our heart problems. We feel guilty, and so we shine our appearance by contributing more on

Sunday. We have bad thoughts, so we sing louder, trying to drown out the noise of a bothered conscience. Hatred, contention, and jealousy rage within, so we buy new clothes and new toys to make us feel better for the moment. Like those ancient Jews, we modern Pharisees never really solve the problem because we're focusing on the external, not the internal where it really counts.

With that in mind, let's concentrate our thoughts on these three "works of the flesh" – hatred, variance, and emulations. And, as we do, let's make sure these haven't taken root in our hearts, and, if so, let's do our utmost to eradicate them and be clean from the inside out!

Our assigned objectives are as follows: to define each term, to demonstrate how Bible characters were guilty of participating in these specific sins and the consequences that were forthcoming, and to make practical application as to how Satan is still enticing us to pursue these works of the flesh in our modern circumstances.

A Definition Of Terms

Hatred

"Hatred" is derived from the adjective from which we get the word "enemy," and is the exact opposite of love⁷ – everything love is, hatred is not! Robertson prefers the rendering "personal animosities,"⁸ while other sources translate this term "enmities" (ASV, NASV) and "hatred" (NKJV).

Of course, all hatred is not wrong; there is, after all, "a time to hate" (Eccl. 3:8). God Himself is said to hate certain things, such as abominations (Prov. 6:16–19), divorce (Mal. 2:16), wickedness (Psm. 45:7), and iniquity (Heb. 1:9). David, a man "after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), hated every false way (Psm. 119:104; Psm. 119:128), lying (Psm. 119:163), and vain thoughts (Psm. 119:113).

Those who love and fear the Lord are commanded to hate evil (Psm. 97:10; Prov. 8:13). John warns against our loving the world (1 John 2:15) and gives valid reasons for such a warning in that context.

Our aversion should always be to sin, but never to the sinner. Herein lies the difficulty for many – failing to distinguish between the two. When C. S. Lewis was asked how it was possible to hate what a man did without hating the man, he replied, “It occurred to me that there was one man for whom I had been doing this all of my life – myself.”⁹ One is said to be in darkness for hating his brother (1 John 2:9), and hating a brother is tantamount to murdering him (1 John 3:15)! Indeed, hatred is an internal vice that often leads to external atrocities, and one cannot be said to be led by the Spirit while allowing this work of the flesh to rule his life.

Variance

“Variance” is rendered “strife” (ASV, NASV) and “contentions” (NKJV); it involves wrangling, quarreling, fighting and discord. The same word in the original language is translated “debate” (Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:30), “strife” (Rom. 13:13), and “contentions” (1 Cor. 11:11).

Variance is the outward result of an inner hate; in fact, hatred is said to fuel strife (Prov. 10:12). Carnality among the Corinthians caused “strife and divisions” (1 Cor. 3:3), false teaching likewise leads to such (1 Tim. 6:4), and Timothy was to avoid “foolish and unlearned questions” since they too “gender strife” (2 Tim. 2:23).

The last thing God’s person wants to do is to stir up trouble – there are enough problems in the world as it is! We should strive to make every effort to get along with others, to pursue peace, to “bend over backwards” if necessary to have harmony, and to let others have their way if necessary on optional matters to promote unity.

Emulations

The word “emulations” (KJV) is somewhat of an archaic term; it is translated in more modern language by the word “jealousies” (ASV, NKJV) and “jealousy” (NASV). The term is also translated “zeal” (Gal. 4:17-18; Rev. 3:19). A term closely related to jealousy is envy, another work of the flesh. Jealousy:

...denotes some kind of passionate desire. Whether it was of good or evil tendency depended on the nature of its object and the spirit in which it was pursued: for the same term was used to designate zeal for God or for some noble object, personal passion, or an exclusive spirit of selfish jealousy.¹⁰

Thus, like hatred, jealousy isn’t always evil within itself. In fact, God is said to be a jealous God (Exod. 20:5). Paul even refers to the kind of jealousy he had for the Corinthians as “godly jealousy” (2 Cor. 11:2). It is the motive behind the jealousy that makes it right or wrong. When the motive is wrong, jealousy is sin, and a work of the flesh at that.

A Demonstration Of Terms

Now, let’s see how all three of these sins together influenced the following Bible characters, and let’s note the disastrous consequences that were forthcoming as a result.

Cain

One doesn’t have to look far down the annals of history before finding one beset with these three works of the flesh. Cain, firstborn son of Adam and Eve, had some very real problems with hatred, strife, and jealousy – so much so that he bears the stigma of being the world’s first murderer. His tragic story unfolds in Genesis 4.

The Background (Gen. 4:1–5)

“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Gen. 4:1). The first family began, as most all do, with the joyful birth of their firstborn, Cain. Eve named him such because “Cain” sounds similar to the Hebrew word for “gotten.”¹¹

Soon, another son was born: “And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground” (Gen. 4:2). “Abel” is related to a Hebrew word which literally means “vapor, breath.” One commentary asserts the name may have “indicated generally a feeling of sorrow on account of his weakness, or was a prophetic presentiment of his untimely death.”¹² In any event, two sons are born; two brothers grow up in the family, with Cain being a farmer, and Abel a shepherd.

Little else is known about the early life of Cain and Abel, but time passed, and the two boys matured to the point where they made a sacrifice to the Lord:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect (Gen. 4:3-5a).

Cain’s offering was “of the fruit of the ground,” Abel’s “of the firstlings of his flock.” Cain’s offering was rejected but Abel’s accepted. Why? Since Abel brought his offering “by faith” and it was a “more excellent sacrifice” than Cain’s (Heb. 11:4), and since faith “comes by hearing the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), one can only conclude that either God directly or indirectly (through Adam and Eve) instructed Cain and Abel what type of sacrifice to bring.

A theme throughout Scripture is that one must approach God with an atoning blood sacrifice, such by His design: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). There was no blood to be found in Cain’s fruit, of whatever sort it was, but there was blood in Abel’s sacrifice of sheep. In comparing the two brothers (and perhaps even the two sacrifices), John, in his first epistle stated that Cain’s “deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous” (1 John 3:11-12).

Cain made the same mistake of which many today are guilty – that of attempting to worship God by the way of his own choosing, rather than by the Father’s revealed Will. What an excellent passage of Scripture to refute the false notion that “God will accept one as long as he is sincere”! This also disproves the view of God that some have as His being a gracious, easy-going, laidback grandfatherly type with a long beard sitting in a rocking chair in heaven hoping people will come to Him the right way, and if not, He’ll overlook it. Indeed, God is a loving God, but He is also a just Father Who has spelled out in His Word how we are to approach Him in worship and in life.

Cain’s stubborn and rebellious attitude would be but the beginning of a downward spiral spiritually for the young man; the seed is now planted and the stage is now set for the germination and growth of hatred, jealousy, and strife in his heart: “And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell” (Gen. 4:5b). Cain didn’t have to say a word – you could see the anger on his face! He knew what he was supposed to do, did not do it, did not get the respect of God, and became furious as a result. Out of loving concern, God then provided:

A Warning (Gen. 4:6-7)

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?” (Gen. 4:6). God was

asking, not for information on His part, but for reflection on Cain's: "What has made you so mad? Why are you angry?" Of course, part of Cain's problem was that he was jealous; he was the older brother jealous of the younger brother. Perhaps there was some measure of competition between them, as is often true when there are two boys in the family. God has smiled on the younger brother, frowned on the older, and jealousy rears its ugly head.

Such happens in families all the time, right? One child gets one kind of toy, the other, one not so nice, and what is the result? Jealousy. Such happens at the workplace all the time, right? One fellow gets a raise while others don't, and what is the result? One employee hasn't been at the company nearly as long as you, but gets a promotion over you – what is the result? Jealousy! Before we're quick to point an accusing finger at Cain, we might ought to examine our hearts first!

God continued admonishing the sulking Cain: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). If Cain had done right, he would have felt right, and would have been right! It was neither Abel's nor God's fault for his being wrong; Cain was responsible for his own sins. If, however, Cain continued his present course, "sin lieth at the door." Sin, like a wild animal, was ready to pounce, overwhelm, and devour Cain. The beast was indeed on the prowl, but Cain could still "rule over him" or master it. "You need to control it before it controls you!"

Cain was now at the "fork in the road;" he had a choice to make. God's warning was given and was clear. Cain could turn back, obey God, and be accepted just as Abel had been, or he could continue the direction in which he was now headed, until jealousy turned to hate, hate turned to strife, and strife turned to murder. Unfortunately for both Cain and Abel, Cain chose the latter.

The Murder (Gen. 4:8-10)

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:8). Because he didn’t gain the mastery over sin, sin won out over Cain, and, in killing his brother physically, he drove a dagger through his own soul spiritually. One makes this interesting observation:

As an act of defiance against God, Cain twisted His requirements for an atoning blood sacrifice – shedding righteous Abel’s blood instead of a lamb’s. “You want a sacrifice, God? How’s this!” And Abel falls dead, becoming the first name on history’s shameful long list of murder victims.¹³

What a horrible act! How could anyone just rise up suddenly one day and murder his own sibling? As we’ve seen, this wasn’t a spur-of-the-moment decision, but one that had been brooding for some time in the hateful, jealous heart of a young man completely out of touch with all things good and holy and who had for some time been walking with Satan, who himself was a “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).

What awful silence there must have been immediately after the killing! A body that once breathed, talked, sang, laughed and lived is now forever mute. But, not even that humbles Cain, as he buries the body in the ground, covers the grave with dirt, foolishly thinking he could hide his sin from God. But, Cain soon found out otherwise.

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). The silence brought by sin is now broken by God’s penetrating question, “Where is your brother?” Not that God didn’t know what had happened;

again, the question was not for God's benefit, but Cain's. "Why is your brother not here?"

Sin often has a mushrooming, snowballing effect, as Cain – jealous, hater, fighter, and murderer – now becomes a liar as well: "I do not know where my brother is." Having washed his brother's blood off his hands, he had also erased the guilt from his conscience. No, every murderer does not have a conscience, and yes, some murderers will kill again and again!

Sensing no remorse whatever from Cain, God replies: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). "Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven!"¹⁴

With no confession of wrong, no admission of guilt, Cain left God with no choice but to punish – and to punish severely.

The Punishment (Gen. 4:11-15)

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth (Gen. 4:11-12).

Cain, who made his living from the ground, would lose his "green thumb" with this curse. "Since Abel's blood spilled on the ground, the ground – which was Cain's source of life – would contain the punishment to fit the crime."¹⁵ Cain would have great difficulty making a living now, perhaps going from job to job, being a "vagabond" or wanderer. At long last, Cain shows some emotion, but even then, it's selfish in nature:

And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven

me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me (Gen. 4:13-14).

Cain in essence is saying, “God, how can I go on?” He fears that now the hunter will become the hunted, that what “goes around comes around” and someday someone will stick a knife in his back! He is afraid that he will be treated as he has treated Abel, with such coming from his own family!¹⁶

Had we been in charge, we might have said something like “You deserve it” or “You should have thought about that before.” But, even in dealing with this murderer, God gave His amazing grace: “And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” (Gen. 4:15). Much speculation has been made about the mark or sign God placed upon Cain, but whatever it was, it was not for punishment, but for protection to keep him from being killed.

The account of Cain’s life is fact, not fiction, and what a heartrending story his is. The attitudes and actions of his life well illustrate these works of the flesh Paul would mention to the Galatians centuries later – hatred, jealousy, and strife, not to mention murder. Would that Cain had a monopoly on these evils – that all such began and ended with him! However, such is not the case.

An Application For Today

We have a tendency to categorize sins, don’t we? Some sins are big, others small; some are black, some are grey; some are bad, some aren’t quite so bad. We tend to compartmentalize these works of the flesh too, right? While

we would never dream of committing Cain's crime of murder, since God condemns such not only here in Galatians but throughout both Old and New Testaments, we do allow ourselves (like Cain) to entertain evil thoughts of others that promote jealousy. Instead of "bringing into captivity" those thoughts "to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5), we allow them to fester, to grow, and to turn into hatred. Given enough time and development, hatred eventually explodes in abusive speech and/or physical assaults.

Do you still think that a little jealousy, hatred, and strife are not all that bad? Go back to Abel, and ask him. In the end, he died because of such. And, ask brother Cain. He killed because of such. Ask families torn apart by the ravages of spousal abuse, drug abuse, drunkenness, separation and divorce – rampant evils of our day finding their root in the disposition of hate. Ask victims of assault, battery, knives, bullets, and bombs – those who know firsthand – of the end results of hatred, jealousy, and strife.

And, while we're asking, let's ask the church. Ever wonder what causes congregations to split? No, not murder usually, but thoughts just as vicious as the actual act! Churches don't divide because of love, joy, peace, and longsuffering! The body of Christ is rent asunder by immature, selfish disciples who think more of themselves than the overall good of the church. Elders become jealous of other elders, preachers of other preachers, song leaders of other song leaders, and members of other members. Jealousy turns to hatred, hatred to strife, and strife to separation. The fruit of the Spirit calls for unity, while Satan's fruit – the works of the flesh – calls for division.

We hear much about restoring the church of the first century as she followed God, and rightly so. Great strides have been made in restoring the organization of the church, the pattern of the church, and the worship of the church.

We laud those accomplishments, and are indebted greatly to many who have paved the way for such restoration. But what about the attitude of love that characterized the first century church? Have we truly restored the church in that area? No, this is not a blanket condemnation of everyone or of every congregation, but just a question for each of us individually to consider – some food for thought. In a day when brother bashing, sister smashing, and church crushing are in vogue with some, we truly are made to wonder if we've even gotten to first base when it comes to removing hate and restoring love in our hearts.

Conclusion

We end as we began, talking about the heart. Yes, the physical heart is important – no doubt about it. When it hurts, we're in serious trouble; when it fails, we die. Thousands die every day of heart disease. However, through medical advances, some have overcome heart problems to lead normal lives.

Philip Blaiberg was one of Dr. Christian Barnard's first heart-transplant patients. When asked by the famous surgeon if he would like to see his old heart, Blaiberg said yes. The doctor handed him a glass container.

A few moments of silence followed as for the first time in history a man actually gazed at his own heart. Then the two men talked about it. Finally Philip Blaiberg said, "So that is the old heart that caused me so much trouble," and he handed it back, turned away, and left it forever.¹⁷

Spiritual heart disease has also reached epidemic proportions across our land. These works of the flesh – hatred, jealousy, strife, and others – have clogged many arteries, have weakened many pulses, and have hardened many hearts. The good news is that for those with spiritual

coronary problems, a cure is available, and a new lease on life can be given. God can replace that old heart with a new one. He is a skilled surgeon Who can operate on the inner man; with the scalpel of His Word He can excise works of the flesh and can transplant in their place the wonderful fruit of the Spirit.

Endnotes

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8 Robertson, p. 312.

9 As quoted by Wendell Winkler, **Heart Diseases and Their Cure**, (Hurst, TX: Winkler Publications, 1972), p. 78.

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12 C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, **Commentary on the Old Testament**, Vol. 1, (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 109.

13 Charles R. Swindoll, **Memorable Scenes From Old Testament Homes Bible Study Guide**, (Anaheim, CA: Insight for Living, 1992), p. 14).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Those from whom Cain feared retribution would be his other siblings: “He who turned on one of his relatives now must watch out for any of his relatives.” Victor P. Hamilton, **The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament**, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 233.

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CHAPTER 7

Wrath

Barry Grider

Introduction

AS I PEN THESE words it is a mild, cool day in the metropolitan Memphis area. However, I realize when this manuscript is orally presented at the Southaven lectureship in August, only one word will describe the outside temperature—HOT! Summertime in this part of the country is almost unbearable. We look forward to autumn because of the cooler weather. However, with regard to the temperaments of some individuals, it appears they are always hot. We might even describe those who are always filled with wrath as being “hotheads.” The person who cannot control his anger has a serious problem. One who is filled with wrath is fulfilling the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20)¹ and to engage in such is to engage in a most dangerous and deadly sin.

It is imperative that we see the danger of anger. Man has the ability to respond positively or negatively to his surroundings or circumstances. When a wild animal attacks his prey in the African jungle, this is not a demonstration of wrath. The beast operates according to his instinct or the “law of tooth and fang.” Even though we describe certain animals as mean, in reality this is not true. However, man is different. He can make a choice as to how he responds to a certain situation. For example, a man, in a fit of rage, killed his wife. Later, the wife’s brother,

a missionary, visited his brother-in-law in prison, and not only forgave him, but, taught him the Gospel and baptized him. In another situation, an erring member of the church refused to return to worship because of the anger she had for her brother-in-law, who had verbally and physically abused his wife, which was this lady's sister. These are both true stories. Notice a difference between these two responses. One controlled his temperament and demonstrated the spirit of Christ, overcoming evil with good (Rom. 12:21). The other lost control of her temperament and allowed her wrath to turn into hatred. Gary Inrig wrote:

One of my favorite stories concerns a man who was bitten by a dog, which was later discovered to be rabid. The man was rushed to the hospital where tests revealed that he had, in fact, contracted rabies. At the time, medical science had no solution for this problem, and his doctor faced the difficult task of informing him that his condition was incurable and terminal. 'Sir, we will do all we can to make you comfortable. But I cannot give you false hope. There is nothing we can really do. My best advice is that you put your affairs in order as soon as possible.' The dying man sank back on his bed in shock, but finally rallied enough strength to ask for a pen and some paper. He then set to work with great energy. An hour later, when the doctor returned, the man was still writing vigorously. 'I'm glad to see that you're working on your will.' 'This ain't no will, Doc. This is a list of people I'm going to bite before I die.'²

What Is Wrath?

Anger is defined as "extreme or passionate displeasure." Wrath is defined as "extreme anger."³ In this study the two words will be used synonymously. The strong feelings of displeasure demonstrated in a wrathful person are produced because of antagonism. This involves both

the mind and emotions. It is the result of a real or imaginary injury, or the intention of such, which causes intense hurt or pain.

Keep in mind, not all anger is sin. Jesus said, “But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgement...” (Matt. 5:22, emphasis, BMG). Paul wrote, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). A number of words in the Old Testament are translated wrath or anger. Most of the words have reference to God’s holy response toward sin. Far be it from mere mortals to question His Divine judgments. In fact, our Lord says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” (Rom. 12:19). Also, the Bible student will remember that Jesus got angry. Remember this occasion:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12-13).

Now anger can lead to sin, yet Jesus never sinned one solitary time (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, Jesus’ reaction in the temple was justified. In fact, the context bears out He was still in control of his temperament, for we read, “And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them (Matt. 21:14). Could He have done this if He was out of control? Jesus was filled with righteous indignation toward sin, traditions of men, and man’s own inhumanity. Some things ought to make us “good and mad.” For example, do you have the right kind of anger toward the sins that plague the home, church, and nation? Unfortunately, most of us do not respond the same way as Christ. Jesus did not become angry when He Himself was

attacked. However, let someone attack us personally and we are outraged. Let someone attack our Lord, His church, or His truth--will any kind of response be generated?

In this study the focus is on wrath that is ungodly and sinful. The intense hatred for our Lord is clearly demonstrated as His accusers, whose voices were filled with anger, cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him" (Luke 23:21). Wrath and anger still crucify today. Great harm will come to the one to whom anger is directed and perhaps the most harm will be to the one who is angry. Frederick Buechner said:

Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself, the skeleton at the feast is you.

Remember, anger is the result of a real or imaginary offense. One cannot help but notice when he is offended. However, listen to this wise counsel, "The discretion of a man defereth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Prov. 19:11). Notice, the prudent man does not respond immediately to an offense. Likewise, he does not say something in a fit of rage he will later regret.

Why is it best to wait? Why count to 10 or to 100 before responding to an offense? Several reasons come to mind. First, deferring your anger allows a cooling down effect. If you take something out of the oven, you must allow time for it to cool. Second, if you delay your response, you will then be able to speak when thinking more clearly. Third, by deferring your anger you may realize that some

things are not worthy of a response. The wisdom of President Abraham Lincoln is clearly seen in the following account:

Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, was angered by an army officer who accused him of favoritism. Stanton complained to Lincoln, who suggested that Stanton write the officer a sharp letter. Stanton did, and showed the strongly worded missive to the president. 'What are you going to do with it?' Lincoln inquired. Surprised, Stanton replied, 'Send it.' Lincoln shook his head. 'You don't want to send that letter,' he said. 'Put it in the stove. That's what I do when I have written a letter while I am angry. It's a good letter and you had a good time writing it and feel better. Now burn it, and write another.'

Grievous words often cause anger. Again, the wise man noted, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). Under consideration are words that cause vexation of spirit. Words that cause anger to rise higher and higher. Or, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. It has been said that "a person who is angry on the right grounds, against the right persons, in the right manner, at the right moment, and for the right length of time deserves great praise." While this is true, rarely can such a person be found.

The Bible depicts as foolish the person who does not control his anger. "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly; and a man of wicked devices is hated" (Prov. 14:17). Likewise, such an individual demonstrates weakness of character. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32). A lady once came to denominational preacher Billy Sunday and tried to rationalize her angry

outbursts. “There’s nothing wrong with losing my temper,” she said. “I blow up, and then it’s all over.” “So does a shotgun,” Sunday replied, “and look at all the damage it leaves behind!”

Why Is Wrath (Anger) So Dangerous?

1. Anger brings harm to your physical health.

The word “wrath” in Galatians 5:20 carries the idea of “breathing hard.” Picture an agitated, snorting bull about to attack and you have a good idea of a person who is filled with wrath. Consider the physical characteristics of an angry person. He not only breathes hard, but often, his face will turn red, his voice will rise, and some may even begin to cry as a reaction is set off in the body. Likewise, a person’s blood pressure will probably begin to rise when he is filled with anger. When God refused Cain’s offering, the text reveals, “And Cain was very wroth, and his **countenance** fell” (Gen. 4:5b, emphasis BMG). Not only was Cain angry, he looked angry. James writes, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, **slow to wrath**” (Jas. 1:19). If one does not get a hold of his angry emotions, he will suffer many sleepless nights, digestive disorders, and all kinds of nervous problems. Sadly, this is the atmosphere in many homes where yelling and screaming is heard along with grievous words constantly being spewed forth.

2. A person who is filled with anger will later suffer remorse and regret. Not until reason is restored, poise recovered, composure regained, and we think things over, can we fully measure how really bad was an outburst of anger. Why is anger so bad? It often harms our dearest associations. As the songwriter penned, “Brightest links of life are broken by a single angry word.” Husbands and wives divorce and entire churches divide because of uncontrollable anger. Preachers and funeral directors have

witnessed on many occasions guilty family members, pouring out their souls, begging forgiveness from a departed relative. “I didn’t mean to be angry at you.” “I didn’t really hate you.” “I’m sorry I mistreated you.” But too late!

3. A person who is filled with anger is emotionally unstable. If this sin is not controlled you will forever be saying things you would not say under normal circumstances. An angry person will seek to destroy whatever or whoever has inflicted their pain. Sometimes a young person will behave in an abnormal manner simply to frustrate his parents who have caused him to be angry.

The angry person can never believe anything good about himself or another. Such individuals are filled with cynicism. Some one says to the angry person, “You look nice today.” He responds, “Yeah, right.” He operates by the philosophy, “Don’t get mad, get even.” But usually he wants to hurt another more than he was hurt. Such individuals are dangerous to themselves and others.

Make no friendship with angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul (Prov. 22:24-25).

4. Anger brings much unhappiness. Happiness and anger cannot appear in the same heart. If a person desires to remain angry, he will, likewise, be miserable. An angry person does not like anyone, including himself. Furthermore, a life filled with uncontrollable anger will result in that person losing his soul. Anger that is sinful gives Satan control of one’s life. “Be ye angry, and sin not: Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil (Eph. 4:26-27). Through outbursts of anger we allow Satan to work through our lives. As a result, they which persist in this sin, shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:20-21).

How Can We Control Our Wrath (Anger)?

According to Proverbs 16:32, controlling our anger can be done, but it takes work. Christ desires to dwell in our hearts. He dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Now consider that Jesus is our great high priest. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, **but was in all points tempted like as we are**, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15, emphasis BMG).

Jesus was therefore tempted to sin through anger. Imagine how Jesus could have been consumed with sinful anger when, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). He could have been outraged at the remark of Phillip in John 14:8, “Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” However, He mildly rebuked, “Have I been so long with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?” (John 14:9).

During the time of the Savior’s arrest, Peter took a sword and smote off the ear of the high priest’s servant. After commanding Peter to put up his sword, Jesus said, “thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53). Obviously, Jesus thought about what He could do, but was always in control of His temperament.

How can we, following the steps of the Savior, overcome the sin of anger?

1. Intimate association with the Father will help us to overcome anger. It is hard to be filled with wrath while communing with God. This relationship meant so much to the Son, for we read in the Scriptures, “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there

prayed” (Mark 1:35). It would be helpful if we incorporated Jesus’ routine in our lives. Prayer and meditating upon God’s Word (Psm. 1:2) will ensure that we keep our focus and guard our tempers.

No one has ever faced harder hearts, intense hatred, and agonizing pain inflicted by his enemies than did Jesus while hanging on the cross. Did He cry out for the condemnation of his crucifiers? No! “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). He could have called out for the punishment of His cruel persecutors, but cried instead, “Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Only intimate association with the Father and complete allegiance to His Divine will, would allow our Lord to do this. Every Christian is reminded to “draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...” (Jas. 4:8). When you are about to be overwhelmed with anger, get down on your knees and pray.

2. Know yourself. Often we need to pull out the inner man and get a good picture of ourselves. The Bible is like a mirror to the soul. James wrote:

For if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work this man shall be blessed in his deed (Jas. 1:23-25).

Before judgment can ever be made against another, I must first examine myself (Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1). When tempted to be angry, realize that you could be wrong and someone else right. A “know-it-all” attitude is not good. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15).

Find out what makes you angry. Think of those things that bring you joy and happiness and then ask how is that destroyed. Be wise enough to listen to the counsel of others who perhaps can help you identify the source of your anger. Be big enough to take constructive criticism. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6).

Recognize that you are human and have weaknesses like others. Do not deny your anger – admit it! Once you recognize your flaw, you can begin to work on overcoming the problem.

3. Fairly, objectively, and lovingly examine the one who has caused your anger. If we could only see some things from another’s perspective it perhaps would help us to control outbursts that are filled with rage. Try to get into a person’s mind and see why he has acted or reacted toward you in such a way. Instead of punishing the individual, see if you can help him. The person may be suffering themselves in a way you did not realize.

Sometimes we can be frustrated and choose to vent our anger on those totally innocent, like family members. Others may take out their frustrations on us. Be mindful not to respond the same way. Not only should you pray to overcome your own anger, but pray for those who have made you angry or respond angrily toward you. As you pray, your feelings of bitterness and resentment should begin to wane. Hear the words of the Master:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:44-45).

4. Stop being so sensitive. Are you quick to feel slighted or hurt? Do you carry your feelings on your sleeves? Keep in mind, everything people do is not intended to be against you. Far too many individuals like to dissect the statements and actions of others. (Ex. “I wonder what they meant by that?”). If you are not careful, you will begin to hear and see offences that are not real but imaginary. You will still suffer with anger, but for no reason. God will not tolerate this. In the beautiful love chapter of the Bible, Paul writes, “[Love]...is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Cor. 13:5). If you will stop being so sensitive, you will not so easily “fly off the handle” and you will not keep a record of every offense committed against you, intentional or otherwise.

5. Seek wisdom. “Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath” (Prov. 29:8). It is the foolish who delight in contention. Wise men promote peace. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Those who are wise avoid sinning through uncontrolled anger. Their attitude is “let’s try to get along” or “let’s work together.” Remember, two people can disagree without being disagreeable.

6. Think of the damage done to the cause of Christ because of uncontrolled anger. Again, hear James:

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (James 1:20)

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:16).

The church of Christ is bigger than any one individual. Yet, there have been those who would destroy a local congregation through big egos and lost tempers. A number of souls, who perhaps could have been converted, have been

lost forever, because they witnessed uncontrolled anger between one or more who claimed to be Christians. Before you unleash your anger, ask yourselves, “Is this worth the damage that will be done, the harm inflicted, the reproach that will be brought, upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His church?”

7. Memorize the Fruit of the Spirit. Remember this lectureship is not just concerned about overcoming the works of the flesh, but about producing the fruit of the Spirit. Fill your life with good things. Think on things that are noble and right. As you seek to overcome wrath by producing the fruit of the Spirit, particularly focus on the attributes of meekness and temperance (self-control), and incorporate these qualities into your life.

Conclusion

How serious is wrath (anger)? It was one of the sins that crucified the Lord. Remember, when we refuse to control our anger we too can crucify another. The best way to deal with any sin that crucifies is to crucify the sin. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Let us then imitate the Savior, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23).

Endnotes

1 All Scripture references are from the King James Version.

2 Gary Inrig, **The Parables**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1991) p. 63.

3 **Reader’s Digest Complete Wordfinder**, (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader’ Digest Asso., 1996).

CHAPTER 8

Strife

Bobby Liddell

Introduction

STRIFE, THE CONSEQUENCE OF selfishness and the cause of separation, divides and destroys. Ambitious self-promotion fuels the consuming fire of this work of the flesh. Its cost is far too great for us to allow it to pollute our souls and to poison our relationships with man and God. We dare not afflict our brethren with this carnal failing, nor be the ones to open the door to strife in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18; cf. Acts 9:4). Rather, we should seek to cultivate within us the gentle selflessness and humble consideration for others as manifested by the Patriarch of old.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren (Gen. 13:7-8).

How gracious for the elder Abram to allow the younger Lot to choose the way which he thought to be the best and most advantageous to him.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take

the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left (Gen. 13:9).

Had Abram been of the attitude of heart (condemned in Galatians 5:20) of serving himself, and of putting himself above others, he might have claimed the land for himself and fought with Lot, or banished him. Our fervent prayer and earnest desire should be that “there be no strife” between us, “for we be brethren.” Likewise, our actions and interactions should demonstrate to all our concern for peace, harmony, and unity, and our determination to think right, talk right, and live right, and, in so doing, seek the best for others, so as not to be the cause of sinful strife (Rom. 12:9-21).

Sadly, instead of love, strife has become the “badge of discipleship” for too many who wear the Lord’s name, but who, in reality, follow Satan, not the Christ (cf. John 13:34-35). Saints who permit self-promotion to change them into self-serving sinners use strife as a tool to drive a wedge between best friends and brethren. It does harm, unnecessary and eternal, to congregations, and to good works and good men. Strife serves as a means to an end, and also as an end for those who are mean. In other words, strife is the way to accomplish the goal of the ruthless (usually nasty and often angry) lovers of self, and is far too often, for such men, the goal itself.

What Is Strife?

Strife, as used in Galatians 5:20 (and as we shall use it in our study), refers to contention caused by the evil desire to promote oneself.¹ **Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged** uses these words to describe strife: contention, struggle, and quarrel. **Vine’s** equates strife with faction, and notes:

ERITHIA (or—eia) denotes ambition, self-seeking, rivalry, self-will being an underlying idea in the word; hence it denotes party-making...seeking to win followers.... Faction is the fruit of jealousy.²

Thayer gave this derivation of the word and its meaning:

...used of those...courting popular applause by trickery and low arts...apparently, in the N. T. *a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness.*³

The Analytical Greek Lexicon includes these descriptive terms: “party spirit, feud, faction...contentious disposition.”⁴ **Berry** has “self-seeking, a partisan and factious spirit.”⁵ **Meredith** states:

In Phil. 2:3 it stands opposed to the mind of Christ. Barclay says, ‘In Paul the word clearly denotes the spirit of personal ambition and rivalry which issues in a partisanship which sets a party above the church.’ ...Aristotle lists this activity as one of the practices which in the end lead to revolutions.⁶

Smith cites seven occurrences of the word in the New Testament (it is found once in the LXX in Isaiah 38:12) where it is translated as strife five times (2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 2:3; Jas. 3:14; Jas. 3:16), as contention once (Phil. 1:16), and as contentions once (Rom. 2:8).⁷ **Thomas W. Larkin** wrote the following:

Strife (*eritheia*) has an interesting etymology. It has its roots in those days that laborers engaged in honest labor for their wages, but it came to be used of one whose sole motive for working was his pay. With no concern for the quality of work, or no motive of service to others, the only concern was, “What will I get out of it?”⁸

In Aristotle's day, *eritheia* was used of those who sought political office by unfair means.⁹ Against this background, "strife" in the NT refers to selfishness and selfish ambition. The danger of such is seen in James' statement that "where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (Jas. 3:16). Paul uses *eritheia* twice in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. 1:16 and Phil. 2:3) describing "the wrong motive for preaching and the wrong spirit in which to live."¹⁰ Lipscomb's comments on Philippians 2:3 are worthy of note:

The moment a man falls into a factious temper and thinks so much of promoting his own selfish ends, and makes it his chief business to object and find fault, he becomes an element of discord to everyone with whom he may be identified. If there is to be any real unity of mind and heart, the factious spirit must be crucified.¹¹

Burton's extensive discussion of the etymology of the word includes these thoughts helpful to our study.

Examination of the passages from this point of view suggests two meanings: (1) "self-seeking," "selfishness." (2) "factiousness," "party spirit." ... We seem, therefore, justified in deciding that *erithia* in N. T. means "self-seeking," "selfish devotion to one's own interest"; that this is a possible meaning for all instances; but that "party spirit" is in some passages a possible alternative.¹²

What shall we conclude concerning the meaning of strife as the Holy Spirit revealed the word used in Galatians 5:20? Strife is the sin of selfish ambition which sows discord, causes quarrels, and promotes divisions as one seeks to advance himself to gain position, prestige, and power over others. It is the result of the motivation to seek followers that one might lead his own faction (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13). One

who acts this way does so callously, disregarding the expense of unity and peace, and without Christian consideration for the body of Christ (the church), individual members (brethren), the law of Christ, or the lost who observe the strife and are repulsed by it. Strangely, some seem blind to what they really are doing, and would be surprised to learn their guilt; however, strife is still, and is indeed, a work of the flesh.

In addition, strife is one of the “works of the flesh” which Paul, by inspiration, declares is “manifest.” Manifest means apparent, known, open, evident, or well-known.¹³ Thus, these are sins which are not hidden, secret, or unknown. Were they such, the terrible impact would be lessened for the consequences would be limited; however, these sins manifest themselves in contentious conflict affecting many.

The words in this list of vices fall into four groups, indicated by the punctuation of the translation. The first group includes three sins in which sensuality in the narrower sense is prominent; the second includes two that are associated with heathen religions; the third group contains eight in which the element of conflict with others is present; the fourth consists of drunkenness and its natural accompaniments.¹⁴

We all know strife is wrong, for it obviously is so. From its secretive hold of gestation, it is born, creeps forth, gains boldness, and becomes known to all. Having learned the sinfulness of strife, let us consider the source of strife.

How Does Strife Begin?

Strife begins in the heart. It is the evil fruit of a wicked mind, the rebellious child of ungodly rearing, nourished by carnality, encouraged by worldliness, mentored by Satan, and brought to manhood by

inexcusable ignorance of, or rebellious disregard for God's will (cf. John 12:48). It surely starts with love of self above others—even above God Himself, contrary to all that the spirit of Christianity entails (cf. Matt. 6:33). To the Romans, Paul penned:

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another (Rom. 12:9-10).

Thus, Paul, inspired apostle, lists this despicable characteristic, which loves, honors, and prefers self above others, among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

Hogg and Vine make the obvious connection between strife and jealousy.

Factions,—*eritheia*, party-making, and taking sides for or against party leaders; it is frequently associated with jealousy, see James 3:14-16, 'where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed.' The order is significant; jealousy is the root of which faction, like wrath, is the fruit. These four words appear in the same order in 2 Cor. 12:20.¹⁵

The jealous man will not long tolerate the acclaim or advancement of others without finding fault, even if it requires a microscopic, mote hunting, hyper-criticism of the most minute matters (Matt. 7:1-5). Calvin wrote:

The envious man has no desire to excel, but is grieved at the excellence of other men.... What produces heresies but ambition, which deals not with the lower senses, but with the highest faculties of the mind?¹⁶

Strife may begin in a small way—with a diminutive, unintended affront, an undersized oversight, or simply a

single word mistaken by the recipient as a slap at his standing. From Proverbs, comes the admonition to stop strife before it can begin.

The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with (Prov. 17:14).

This verse indicates strife may begin in the same way as a small opening, cut in a bank of a river or in a dam, allows water to flow, so it may widen till the water rushes out of its bounds to do great harm. So, some elementary principles are: do not meddle with strife; do not let it begin; and, if it does begin, be quick to stop the leak before it becomes a raging, destructive torrent (Prov. 20:3). Surely, we can act like grownups, not children, and overlook slights, whether intended or not. Our concern should be for the good of others, the promotion of Christ's cause, and the glory and honor of God (Matt. 5:16). The example of Christ is highlighted in Philippians 2:1-11.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:1-11)

In like manner, we must be ready to give up strife, repent of it, and repair the damage (as much as possible). We dare not let strife rise, like the Phoenix, from smoldering embers of long-held animosity. Jean Ingelow wrote: "An old affront will stir the heart through years of rankling pain."¹⁷ How sad to think of wasted years nursing a grudge, harboring hatred, plotting and planning to undermine and overthrow another in a twisted, perverted scheme to elevate oneself. The real loser is the conniving striver.

Strife is a sinful, soul-damning work of the flesh intended to advance one's selfish ambition. It begins in a heart out of tune with the way of Christ, but where does it end?

Where Will Strife End?

Strife is not harmless, innocuous, and undeserving of attention and correction. It causes discord (cf. Prov. 6:16-19). Such discord is detrimental, even deadly if unchecked, to the local church. McClintock and Strong report the view the early church had toward strife:

In the early Church it was considered a privilege to make oblations to the Church, and a sort of lesser excommunication to be debarred from doing so. The officers would not receive the offerings of persons that were at enmity or variance with their brethren, neither at the altar nor into the treasury. This custom was grounded upon the rule of our Lord (Matt. v, 23). Further, all open enmity and quarrelling, *strife*, envy, and contention, were punished with excommunication, as tendencies towards, and lower degrees of murder.¹⁸

Thus, the result of strife is discord among brethren who should be one (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Rom. 12:20).

Strife brings division. Discussing “Christian Union,” Van Dyke wrote:

A similar train of thought may be indulged with respect to the actual divisions in the Church of God. They *ought* never to have happened. They never *would* have happened had it not been for the pride, the prejudices, the selfishness, and the ambition of depraved man.¹⁹

Strife runs with this pack of carnal companions, as noted above, pride, prejudice, and depraved ambition. Let there be no doubt—strife drives the wedge which splits churches, divides brethren, weakens God’s people, and emboldens the workers of iniquity. The “factious feelings roused on behalf of this cause and that; such sentiments are likely to eventuate in...divisions.”²⁰ Paul wrote:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

A factious party spirit does not promote unity, as Jesus desires, but bursts asunder the good and pleasant oneness of saints (Psm. 133:1-3). It is not enough to hear the truth; we must obey the truth. It is not enough to begin by faith; we must consistently continue by faith. It is not enough to wear the name of Christ; we must live like Christ. Carroll commented:

He (Paul, BL) is saying to them, “You must not make the mistake that by mere intellectual perception of doctrinal truth you have therefore exercised the faith of the gospel.” We may put it down as settled that no religion is worth a cent that does not make a man better than he was

before; a son a better son, a father a better father,
a mother a better mother, a daughter a better
daughter.²¹

Strife sows seeds of enmity. It is listed with sins which are “violations of brotherly love.”²² It is the “factious opposition to others” as noted in Philippians 2:3, and it “denotes those who set themselves in factious opposition to the truth” (Rom. 2:8).²³ One man’s (or one group’s) menacing, malicious ambition begets the contentious wrangling which true Christians detest. Strife separates friends and brethren, polarizing them into opposing camps, sweeping all (if brethren are not careful) into a church-wide quarrel where brethren choose sides and fight each other. Strife, like a black hole, pulls in energy which should be used in doing the work of the church; thus, it saps the strength of the church, discourages the weak and newly converted, and blemishes and stains the Lord’s body (Eph. 5:23-27). Lambert gave the following illustration:

A farmer was riding along the road in his wagon and his dog was following along panting with his tongue hanging out. A neighbor accosted the farmer: “Aren’t you ashamed to ride in an empty wagon with your dog following along so tired and hot?” The farmer replied: “That dog ain’t tired from following, it’s his zig-zagging that made him tired. He ain’t missed a puddle hole nor a hollow tree since we left town.” It is not our following Christ that causes strife and sin in the church but our “zig-zagging.” We detour after too many sinful things.²⁴

Strife will keep one out of the kingdom. We love to sing, “How beautiful heaven must be,” and, “There’s a land that is fairer than day.” How we long for that perfect place of peace and rest, forever to dwell with God and the good of all ages! Truly, if we miss heaven, we miss it all. Yet, who will keep men from heaven if not themselves? Strife,

this sinful course of man's own choosing, this wicked work of the flesh, will close the doors of heaven to its practitioners, barring them forever from entrance into the "land of fadeless day." Of what value will the stroking of one's ego in this life be when he finds himself, in the life to come, in the eternal punishment of hell? As Clarke wrote: "They are not the *children* of God, and therefore cannot inherit the kingdom which belongs only to the *children* of the Divine *family*."²⁵

Read again, Galatians 5:19-20:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ***strife***, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: ***of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*** (Gal. 5:19-20, emph. BL).

Now, consider the comments of McGarvey and Pendleton:

These sins are too well known to need analysis or comment. It is startling to find "factions, divisions, parties," in so black a list, and coupled with so clear a declaration that these sins exclude the perpetrator of them from the kingdom of God. Verily all professing Christians would do well to take heed to what the Bible designates as sins, and not trust too much to their own fallible sentiments and judgment in such matters.²⁶

Who would want to go to heaven if there, throughout eternity, would be the problem of strife; if the heavenly home were divided into warring factions led by hostile aggressors; if contentions were on every hand? Rest assured, there will be no strife there, nor will those who practice such be there (Rev. 21:27). Barnes wrote:

They *cannot* enter into the kingdom of heaven as they are. Nor is it *desirable* that they should. What would heaven be if filled with adulterers, and fornicators, and idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers, and drunkards? To call such a place *heaven*, would be an abuse of the word. No one could wish to dwell there; and such men *cannot* enter into heaven.²⁷

Lipscomb and Shepherd also stated, after citing Ezekiel 3:17-19:

Whatever may be the relation of men to the church, however their profession of faith in Christ, they shall not, if their works are such as he has just enumerated, be admitted into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11). Their very characters unfit them for that kingdom. Moreover they are rebels against the government of God.²⁸

How Strife Works To The Harm Of The Lord's People

From experience and observation, these points come to the forefront when considering strife. First, some brethren, though embarking on a noble course of life, even of preaching the Gospel, and, no doubt, with sincere and lofty motivation at the first, fail to grow in knowledge, and/or to practice what they do know; that is, they do not mature spiritually. Thus, they may have the position and the voice of leadership or preaching, but their hearts lack the key constants of selflessness and humble service as Christ exemplified. As such, they allow sin to overtake them, or they pursue it until they overtake it! They become contentious (Rom. 2:8), and lose sight of the need to seek peace and ensue (pursue) it (1 Pet. 3:11). Through time, they become exalted in their own thinking though not as highly exalted in the thinking of others (as they believe

they should be), and they begin to feel slighted. Observing others in positions which they desire, and for which they consider themselves equally, if not far better, suited, they allow themselves to become bitter. Their bitterness is the glue which binds them with others of the same kind.

Second, their spiritual immaturity progresses to spiritual atrophy. While their knowledge may increase over time, there is an inverse ratio of proper application in their personal lives. They come to be known for their lack of spirituality; thus, for their carnality, and, sometimes, even anger-driven radicalism.

Sound brethren, seeing (or sensing) this anomaly, cease to use them in meetings and lectures which, in turn, exacerbates their bitterness, intensifies their determination to be well-known, sought-after, and much used, and precipitates their complaint of “church politics.” Instead of honest self-examination resulting in repentance and reformation of life, and in order to cover their own deficiency, and to denigrate others, they find the devil’s old tool of unjust criticism of others.

Lacking the ethics which Christians should incorporate, they learn how half-truths, innuendo, and insinuation can cause the gullible to look with suspicion on the faithful. As they seek to bring down the humble servants and stalwart soldiers of the cross, they think themselves uplifted. They join in “factious opposition” to true Gospel preachers.²⁹ Lipscomb and Shepherd stated it thusly:

Acts of contention to which enmities lead. [This is seen in church troubles, when men take opposite sides, not so much from different convictions, as from personal dislike and the disposition to thwart an opponent.]³⁰

Third, opposition to their increasingly wicked lives, malicious railings, and deceitful workings, instead of

prompting their repentance, as it should, infuriates them. They scour the brotherhood to find others likeminded, and bind themselves together in opposition to their hated enemies. Their wrathful response knows almost no bounds. Since their inflated egos blind them, they cannot be wrong, and their ungodly friends cannot be wrong, seemingly, regardless of what they do or how they do it. Thus, they declare all out war against their perceived enemies, under the name of saving the church, and rejoice to be leaders of something even if it is a band of carnal misfits.

Fourth, some unsuspecting brethren, drawn in by these workers of strife who play on their sincere desire for purity of the church, become opponents of faithful brethren and of good works without really knowing why—except that some preachers whom they admire, or who are their friends, are against them. They join, advance, and support a sect whose reason for existence is the hateful opposition intent on destruction of some brother, some paper, some school, or some church. Anyone who touches anyone who touched one of their enemies immediately becomes himself an enemy. As Zerr wrote, concerning strife, “It describes one who is determined to win, by fair means or foul.”³¹

Finally, the tragic consequences are: brethren divide, churches split, good brethren and good works lose support, and souls will be lost. The world sees brethren in strife, and they look elsewhere to try to find God’s people. Everybody loses and Satan wins. All of this is because of fleshly, sinful, self-seeking, self-serving, self-loving, arrogant, ambitious, self-promotion.

Conclusion

“Self-pre-occupation, self-broodiness, self-interest, self-love—these are the reasons why you go jarring against your fellows.”³² Brethren, every moment spent in

contentious striving is a moment forever lost to peace. Every example of ambitious self-promotion is a vote for division and against unity, for Satan and against God, for the world and against the church, for hell and against heaven.

Let us beware of strife, and overcome such fleshly desires with obedience to the Word of God evidenced by faithful living in, and like, Christ (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20). Let us flee from even the semblance of such sin in fear of losing heaven. Let us not allow it to linger in our thinking, but rush such thoughts from our minds with an “It is written” (cf. Matt. 4; Psm. 119:11). If we give an eye for an eye, we may all end up blind. Instead, let us first conquer our own minds, bringing ourselves into subjection to our Lord, then conquer our enemies with love.

As Jesus proclaimed, the way up is down (Luke 14:11). Thus, our ambition should be to be faithful servants (Josh. 1:2; Luke 19:17). Our Lord stated this truth:

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:26-28).

Remember, when confronting strife, error does not become truth just because it fills one’s factious desires, nor because he angrily, loudly shouts it. The threat of strife may silence the timid, but it does not solve the problem; it only creates more and greater problems. Let us all determine to stand for what is right with the right spirit. Standing for right may have a high price, but it pays richly—for it is never wrong to do right, nor is it ever right to do wrong.

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CHAPTER 9

Seditious And Heresies

David B. Smith

Introduction

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF the Genesis record are important for numerous reasons. For one, they fill in the blanks (so to speak) in areas of knowledge regarding the creative process wherein man is too finite to discover independently. Additionally, they explain the God of creation and provide an identity to the eternal mind who stands behind the miraculous creation of a material universe. They emphasize the duty of man to exercise good stewardship of the earth and all such provisions from God. And, among other rich and valuable lessons, of course, they record the rebellion of man toward a loving God.

What most people fail to see in these opening chapters is the laying of a foundation for the remainder of the Sacred Text—more especially, the laying of principles which will be evidenced in the lengthy fight against the wiles of the devil.

Every event that happens beyond the expulsion from the Garden of Eden can trace its beginning/foundation to these first several chapters. The nature of sin, as presented in the first case (Gen. 3:1-6), is of particular importance here. God had clearly outlined the dietary laws for life in the Garden; nothing was left to ambiguity or guesswork (Gen. 2:8-17). Yet these same precise and understandable laws were the very subject of the devil's scrutiny in the

temptation of the woman. This fact cannot be overlooked, since the wresting of the law of God helps to describe both the nature of the devil's work and the real appeal of sin. Every device employed by the devil on this occasion (and on every occasion, for that matter) appeals to the negative "self's" of man: self-reliance, self-indulgence, self-glory, selfishness, et cetera. True, the devil did draw attention to the restriction from God; but this he did in order to provoke within the woman the desire for self-indulgence. True, the devil did misrepresent God by offering the woman a special, concealed knowledge; but this he did to incite the desire for self-sufficiency. If one lesson is emphasized more than others in this account, it is that sin is rooted in self.

The real horror of this truth is evidenced in the contrast of the first three chapters of the Genesis record. The first two chapters of the record paint the portrait of a loving God who has made every provision for man. Even the later part of chapter three extends this thought, with the more meaningful, spiritual provision in the Messianic promise (Gen. 3:15).

It is no surprise then that writers, like James, would describe God thusly: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). Such descriptions only amplify the tragedy of sin; the breach of fellowship in the Garden of Eden could be appropriately translated as a slap in the face to a God who wants nothing but the best for the prize of His creation.

The selfishness of sin and the love of God are therefore opposites. And this is conveyed well by John's words, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). But what does this have to do with "seditions and heresies"?

It is expected that if sin is self-serving (and the antithesis to the love of God) that the fruits of sin will reflect its nature; and, so it is. And “seditions and heresies” are but two of many fruits that reflect the self-centeredness of sin. They are the products of dispositions guided by the depths of Satan, instead of the precepts of a loving God. As a note of interest, one could very well view the temptation and transgression in the Garden as “sedition” and “heresy.” The devil, himself a part of a seditious group of angels, taught the heresy to the woman which caused the subsequent division (a sedition) from God.

The reader should not be surprised then to find that “seditions” and “heresies” are listed among the “works of the flesh,” in Paul’s inspired contrast between fruits originating from different priorities of life (Gal. 5:19-21). Each of these works of the flesh points back to the motivating source, the element which feeds their existence: a heart, bent on pleasing and serving only its own self. Both seditions and heresies can be summarized therefore as bitter fruits of a rotten heart, since a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

Terms Defined

To even the casual reader, the works of the flesh are apparently grouped by characteristic similarities. Some concern the produce of self-satisfaction: *adultery*, *fornication*, *uncleanness* and *lasciviousness*. Some concern the lack of self-control: *drunkenness* and *revellings* (and “witchcraft” should be added here due to its implication of non-legitimate drug use). Still others concern a self-deification through the vanity of false religion: *idolatry* and *witchcraft*. But the group of primary importance for this study is that one which regards the fruit of self-glorification: *hatred* (the antithesis of brotherly love), *variance* (discord or strife), *emulations* (bitter envy toward

others/things), *wrath* (uncontrolled anger), *strife* (selfish interests for personal gain), *envyings* (a mind soured by another man's good fortune), *murders* (willful and non-judicial taking of another man's life), *seditions* and *heresies*. These last two terms are now the subject of deeper investigation.

Seditions

Of the two terms, less is mentioned lexically regarding "seditions" than "heresies." The original term for "sedition" is *dichostasia*, and basically inheres the concept of "dissension." "In the NT it signifies 'objective disunity' in the community."¹ But the term does identify a problem much deeper than mere politics, something more than anarchy against the physical government. Macknight renders this conclusion well:

The word *seditions*, by which our translators have rendered the Greek word *dichosasiai*, is of too limited a signification, denoting only a state crime; whereas the Greek word signifies, those uncharitable and causeless separations, which break not only the civil, but the religious ties, whereby mankind are united; and which proceed from the prevalence of covetousness, pride and other lusts of the flesh.²

The term is found only one other time in the New Testament, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). This passage is significant because it helps to concrete the true import of "division" for the term now under examination. Still, it is difficult to draw major distinctions between this and "heresy," since the terms are so closely aligned. And in the judgment of this writer, while there are many more instances of "heresy," the majority of contexts imply one

by the other. Paul's separate use of the terms in the "works of the flesh" is only broaden the scope of the sins covered and implied under these general headings.

Hogg and Vine suggest that "the difference between the words seems to be that a division is the initial stage of a sect, a sect is a division matured and established."³ This is a hard difference to make, when the words are examined comprehensively. Both terms seem to encompass the entire sphere of selfish and bitter activities. But if a difference is to be made, in relation to place, it would seem rather that heresy comes before the sedition (division). But again, this is a hard line to draw since a seditious group is equally considered heretical. Before moving to the companion term, it is only fitting to supply at least a few examples of "sedition." The following list should prove somewhat beneficial.

1. During the period of return from captivity, adversaries of the Jews conspired against them by charging them with sedition in a letter to Artaxerxes:

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river (Ezra 4:12-16).

Now while it is true that the Jews maintained a consistent history of rebellion toward the authority of God, and even toward surrounding nations, this particular charge was falsified as a slander against the people of God. Still, it serves to prove that “sedition” is equated to “rebellion.” In fact, the king’s response — no doubt due to his search of the existing archives, which would have revealed earlier revolts against the Assyrian and Babylonian empires — mentions that the Jews had “made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein” (Ezra 4:19).

2. With this in mind, it would be difficult to refuse the example of Barabbas. Of this man it was spoken, “who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison” (Luke 23:19). Edersheim describes this man as belonging “to that class, not uncommon at the time, which, under the colourable pretence of political aspirations, committed robbery and other crimes.”⁴ Mark’s account is clear that Barabbas was not alone in the insurrection, and that he had “committed murder in the insurrection” (Mark 15:7). This alone should help the reader to understand why Paul groups together the sins of hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings and murders in the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21).

3. There is yet another valid demonstration of “sedition” from the pages of history. Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, offers intricate details of the political revolts during the time just prior to and culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. To be sure, both Jewish and Roman authorities were in disarray. The following quotation from Josephus describes the power struggle for the throne in Rome (between Galba, Otho and Vitellius) as well as the bloody battle for power and prestige among the seditious Jews:

But now sedition and civil war prevailed, not only over Judea, but in Italy also; for now Galba was slain in the midst of the Roman market-place; then was Otho made emperor, and fought against Vitellius, who set up for emperor also....Otho gained the advantage on the first day; but on the second day Vitellius's soldiers had the victory; and after much slaughter, Otho slew himself....Now this Simon, who was without the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves, as were the zealots who were within it more heavy upon them than both of the other; and during this time did the mischievous contrivances and courage [of John] corrupt the body of the Galileans...thus did Simon get possession of Jerusalem, in the third year of the war, in the month Xanthicus [Nisan;] whereupon John, with his multitude of zealots, as being both prohibited from coming out of the temple, and having lost their power in the city (for Simon and his party had plundered them of what they had) were in despair of deliverance.⁵

Obviously this quotation is patched together from a much larger section; but there is enough supplied to know that “sedition” entails a thirst for power (the vainglory of life), at whatever the cost.

Heresies

As mentioned above, more is supplied lexically on “heresies.” The word itself is a transliteration of the original *haireseis*, and in its base form denotes the idea of “choice.” But since the term appears in Paul’s inspired list of self-centered activities, the term takes a negative force and entails the choices rooted in self-glorification and the pride of opinion. “Choice” is an earlier, historical use of the term—before the New Testament supplies its now understood sense. In Classical usage, the term denoted the “seizure of a city” or “choice, in the general sense of choice of a possibility or even to an office...inclination...resolve.”⁶

Moulton and Milligan confirm this generic use of the term, stating “in the papyri the meaning seems generally “choice.””⁷

But like many terms, *haireseis* takes a transition in meaning so that the New Testament application places it within the category of condemned works (Gal. 5:21). This connotation developed primarily within Judaism. “When certain minim separated themselves from the orthodox Rabbinic tradition, it came to be used only of trends within Judaism opposed by the Rabbis...the term thus stigmatised certain groups as “heretical.””⁸ Macknight captures the real sense of the term by stating:

[H]eresies, being ranked among the works of the flesh, must be opinions in religion, embraced from pride of understanding, and factiously obtruded on others, in opposition to a man’s own conviction, for the sake of worldly interest.⁹

Still, it is best to let the context of the term supply this derogatory meaning.

From this definition, it does seem that, if there is any order to “seditions” and “heresies,” the heresy leads to seditions; but of course, both are works of the flesh and therefore works that condemn those who either engage them or endorse them. Barclay calls heresy a “crystallized dissension,”¹⁰ which actually reverses the order. The words are so close in meaning that, again, it is difficult to make dogmatic distinctions. But since “heresies” involves the “choice,” it seems better to view this as the first step to the other.

The illustrations provided for “seditions” could legitimately be used here for “heresies,” without any real harm to the meanings of the terms. But there are a few notable “heresies” worth mentioning:

1. Perhaps the most familiar is the Pharisaic party, which so troubled both the Christ and the Church during the greater part of the first century. It is indeed interesting that the word “Pharisee” somewhat entails the concept of “heresy,” since the title for this group comes from a root term meaning “expressly distinct,” or “one who is separated.” While it is true that the group did seek political independence under John Hyrcanus I, their quest for political power should be viewed simply as a means to an end — a way to enforce their particular religious views (the tradition of the elders) on others. And though the charge may have been denied by some, Paul states “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Acts 26:5). “Sect” is a translation of the same term. See also Acts 15:5, where *haireseis* is also employed to describe the Pharisees.

2. There were also the Sadducees, who constituted a group much like the Pharisees and different from them in only major tenets of belief. Despite good sources, the history of this group is not nearly as clear as the Pharisees—but clear enough to know that they were incredibly political and just as dogmatic in regard to their religious planks. And like the Pharisees, they are expressly labeled a “sect” by the Sacred Text, “then the high priest rose up, and all that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation” (Acts 5:17).

So it is that “heresies” (much like “seditions”) entails a quest for power and unlawful distinction, as well as the pride of opinion or false doctrine which propels and motivates the division.

A Few Points Of Clarification

Like most issues, some people either go too far in their definitions and applications or not far enough. For

those who may read multiple sources (especially reference material) on this subject, there is a need to exercise extreme caution and render a very careful discernment. The fact is that outside of sound, reputable sources, “seditions” and “heresies” are often misrepresented. Here are few, which ought to show the tendency among commentators with preconceived or biased notions.

1. False statement: “Modern scholars make a distinction between “parties” (groups that recognize the existence of others from whom they are separated as having a place in the total people; cf. modern Christian denominations or political parties in a country) and “sects” (groups claiming an exclusive right to represent the total people and having exclusive possession of the truth.)”¹¹

The above statement is erroneous for many reasons. First, and obviously, there are no “Christian denominations.” “Christianity” is used merely to denote compliance with the requisites of God, of the life which mimics the pattern laid by the Lord Himself. Denominationalism does nothing of the sort. In fact, denominationalism is the antithesis of New Testament Christianity. It violates the distinctiveness of the church, and suggests that there are “many faiths” when there is only “one” (Eph. 4:5). To be sure, denominationalism is perhaps the perfect current example of “seditions and heresies” available.

Second, Ferguson clearly misrepresents the facts when he implies that claiming to “represent the total people of God and having exclusive possession of the truth” is heresy. What he calls heresy God calls “the church of the Christ” in the Sacred Text. There are no saved people outside of that one church built by Jesus (Eph. 5:23). And Paul plainly states that this one church is the exclusive “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Ferguson’s comments are much like those opponents of the church in

the first century, who attempted to slander God's faithful by making such comments as "this man is a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). It is a bully-tactic by false men to drive people away from the true concept of Christianity.

2. False statement: "The Christian religion has produced more heresies than any other religion, and the heresies it produces are more tenacious than those of any other religion."¹²

This statement is actually itself a "heresy;" and who could believe that such a remark is even remotely kin to the truth? It sounds a great deal like the remarks of today's theological liberals, who bash the concept of a first-century religion in a modern world. But the "Christian religion" does not produce heresy. This is akin to saying that a good tree produces bad fruit; and Jesus states emphatically that this is impossible (Matt. 7:18). Truth does not author error. And the key is found in Paul's list of sins in Galatians 5:19-21. Remember, these are all works that originate from a corrupted heart—a heart given to the worship of self. And so it is self-centered, self-seeking heart that produces heresy and sedition, not the pure body of the Christ.

Is Standing For The Truth Heresy?

Of late, there have been numerous attacks against people who want to do what is right by those with neither the desire or wherewithal to do the same. The story is almost identical in each case: a congregation begins to practice unsound doctrine, refuses to discipline the erring, or fails to preach the whole counsel of God; some within the congregation try to help restore the congregation; after all attempts have failed, the small group leaves in order to practice pure religion and undefiled; but they are labeled

“seditious” and “heretical” by those unwilling to follow the Christ. Has this group of people, those who leave to practice pure religion, engaged a work of the flesh by acting in such a way? Are they part of a heresy or a sedition?

The simple answer is “no.” And here is perhaps the best way to view this situation. First, truth is the basis for unity. And when truth is violated, unity cannot and does not exist between the holy and the profane (2 John 9-11). Second, the violation of truth is the point of division—division between God and the man (or men) who violates the truth. Third, since faithful people cannot fellowship those with whom God has no fellowship, they must remove/separate themselves from those people. Now consider again the example above. In such a situation, is it the faithful people who are guilty of heresy or sedition? No. The faithful people, those loyal to the doctrine of the Christ, are simply removing themselves from heresy and sedition — just like they are told to do (Rom. 16:17-18).

To be sure, it is tragic that so many congregations are falling into the ranks of apostasy. But, on the other hand, it is refreshing to hear of people so committed to the Lord that they are ready to sacrifice everything to remain faithful and someday reach the shores of glory.

Practical Points

With limited space, it is not possible to address every Scriptural counter to seditions and heresies. But the following are offered to be of some benefit to the reader.

1. Stay honest. Only good soil can produce the necessary fruits involved in New Testament Christianity (Luke 8:15). And as long as one stays honest, he will always be willing to ensure that what he believes is right and not heretical.

2. Maintain a healthy respect for Bible authority. Seditions and heresies develop because men dismiss

Divine authority as irrelevant. But one can only claim Jesus as Lord if he does what the Lord says to do (Luke 6:46).

3. Place love for God at the top of the list of priorities; and place love for fellow men second (Matt. 22:34-40). Christians should be able to say “none of self and all of thee” without hypocrisy.

4. Emphasize the fruit of the Spirit in personal character, since it is the antithesis to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-22).

5. Stay alert for the development of seditions and heresies; and be quick to restore those charting these unholy paths (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20).

6. Teach and preach the whole counsel of God, since the Word of God seeks to prevent evil works as much as rebuke those involved in them; prevention is always better than the cure (2 Tim. 4:1-4; Acts 20:27).

7. Remember always that, in the church, the Christ is in charge; members of the church should seek to glorify only their Savior and never themselves (Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 3:20-21).

8. Endeavor to keep the unity required by God, the unity based on the truth (John 17:17). There can be no “unity in diversity;” this is heresy. But the fellowship authored by God through His Word should be considered among the greatest blessings for a saint.

Conclusion

While more could be said, enough has been written to this point for the reader to establish that seditions and heresies are generic terms that cover a broad range of sins, that anything that falls under these two categories results in the damnation of the soul, that these works are the proceeds of a selfish heart, and that Christianity is not a heresy or a sedition. Paul’s final words of the chapter offer the best conclusion to this discussion, “let us not be

desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:26). May this be the goal of each member in the Lord’s church.

Endnotes

- 1 Gerhard Kittel, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), vol. I, p. 514.
- 2 James Macknight, **Apostolical Epistles**, (Indianapolis: Faith and Facts Press, 1994), vol. III, p. 198.
- 3 C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, **The Epistle to the Galatians**, (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., 1921), p. 283.
- 4 Alfred Edersheim, **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, (New York: E.R. Herrick & Co., 1886), pp. 576-577.
- 5 Josephus, **The Wars of the Jews**, Book IV, Chapter IX: 10-12.
- 6 Kittel, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, pp. 180-181.
- 7 J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, **Vocabulary of the Greek Testament** (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 13.
- 8 Kittel, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, p. 182.
- 9 Macknight, **Apostolical Epistles**, p. 198.
- 10 William Barclay, **The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians**, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 48.
- 11 Everett Ferguson, **Backgrounds of Early Christianity**, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 480.
- 12 Harold O.J. Brown, **Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church**, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), p. 6.

CHAPTER 10

Envyings

Curtis Cates

Introduction

NO *THEME COULD BE* more important in the dawning of the twenty-first century than the one chosen for the Twelfth Annual **POWER** Lectureship of the Southaven church of Christ: **The Works of the Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit**. Brother B. J. Clarke, splendid lectureship director, the elders, and the congregation, are to be greatly commended for all of the labor of love that goes into making this great lectureship possible.

The “deadly list” of the **works of the flesh** in Galatians 5:19-21 can be divided into four groups: (1) Sensual sins like fornication, (2) Idolatry, (3) Personal relations, and (4) Drunkenness. In the third list is “envyings,” along with “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and murders.”¹ “Surely a lively list,”² wrote Robertson. Lenski observed:

Paul places “envies” in the group headed by mercenary “factions” and intends to convey the idea that “envies” are one of the motives which help to create such doctrines and the parties and splits which they cause. Here we may note Matt. 27:18 and also Phil. 1:15.³

J. M. Powell wrote, “This is one of the blackest sins of the human heart. It is closely akin to jealousy, that ‘green-eyed monster.’”⁴ These sins “are often looked upon

as being quite respectable, for the ‘best’ people practice them, staunch members of the church, even elders and preachers.”⁵ The scholarly J. Noel Merideth correctly observed, “Envy is one of the most heinous sins of the flesh and one of the most uncalled for.”⁶

Brother J. M. Powell gave an illustration of envy:

Some five centuries B. C., there lived in Greece a statesman by the name of Aristides, known for his strict integrity. His fellow citizens gave him the title “The Just.” He was one of ten generals who fought with the Persians at Marathon. Following the battle Aristides held a high political office, and enjoyed such popularity that he excited the jealousy of Themistocles who sought and procured the banishment of this just man. Themistocles was asked why he hated Aristides and what harm Aristides had done him. Themistocles answered, “Why he has never done me any harm, but I am tired of hearing him called, ‘The Just.’”⁷

Commenting on the statement of Solomon that “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30), J. W. Brents observed, “Perhaps the most odious in itself and the most damaging evil to the soul is envy. It is not a mere surface sore, but a deep-seated disease. It is ‘rottenness of the bones.’”⁸ Dear reader, envy is extremely self-destructive!

C. D. Plum stated:

In this catalogue of sins, the works of the flesh, we have the Holy Spirit’s condemnation of seventeen specific sins, and for safety, lest some different shade or grade of sin might not here be named, the Holy Spirit named all the other works of the flesh by the expression, “and such like.” So nothing is omitted—no sin is left uncondemned.

If language means anything at all, the Scriptures mentioned above enumerate sins that

will undoubtedly keep people from heaven. This being true is it not worth our effort to study these things closely...?⁹

In this vital study about envy, we should keep firmly affixed in mind the powerful, sobering observation of brother Frank L. Cox:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest,” i.e., offensively visible. Like a buried seed, sin can be concealed only for a season. Committed at first in secret, sin eventually works its way to the surface. The evil thought will betray itself in action (See James 1:15; Matt. 15:19).¹⁰

This chapter on “Envyings” will consist of an investigation into the following major areas: Definition and Explication, Examples, Characteristics, Consequences, and Remedy.

Definition And Explication

The word “envyings” in the Greek is “*phthonoi*, feelings of ill-will.”¹¹ The word “is rendered in the plural correctly: ‘envyings’ (KJV). This word is followed in the KJV list by ‘murders’...**Envy** has the meaning of ‘malice,’ ‘ill will,’ or ‘jealousy.’”¹²

Merideth wrote:

The word “envy” etymologically means to look with ill-will, to look against. By definition “envy” is chagrin or discontent at the excellence or good fortune of another; resentful, begrudging. Jealousy and envy are to be distinguished in the following manner. We are jealous of our own; we are envious of another man’s possessions or good fortune. Jealousy fears to lose what it has; envy is pained at seeing another have. In setting forth the sins that come from within, out of the heart of men, Jesus lists “an evil eye” in Mark 7:21-22. The Revised Standard Version translates the passage “envy.” The sin of envy is indeed the evil eye.¹³

Brother Frank L. Cox, citing 1 Corinthians 13:4, “charity envieth not,” defined it as “Grudging to another some advantage or favor or honor.”¹⁴ Envy is a bad disease. When we see others excelling and happy, and it causes pain in our chest, we are envious. There is just not much cure for it.¹⁵

The following descriptions of the hideous and “insidious thing” should show us the seriousness of the subject under discussion:

Hastings: “It is a feeling of uneasiness or displeasure occasioned by beholding the prosperity or advantages enjoyed by others with the illicit wish it was ours not theirs.”

Fallows: “The despicable passion which desires to bring another down below one’s own level while it covets the things which he possesses.”

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: “Envy comes from the Latin word “*invideo*,” “*in*” against and “*video*” to look. To look with ill will toward another is an evil condemned in both the Old and New Testaments. It is distinguished from jealousy.”

“Envy is the filthy slime of the soul, a venom, a poison, or quicksilver which consumeth the flesh and drieth up the marrow of the bones.”—**Socrates.**

“As rust corrupts iron so envy corrupts man.”—**Antithenes.**

“Envy is like a fly that passeth all a body’s sounder parts and dwells upon the sores.”—**Chapman.**

“There is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy.”—**Sheridan.**

“Base envy withers at another’s joy and hates the excellence it cannot reach.”—**Thompson.**

“Envy lurks at the bottom of the human heart like a viper in a hole.”—**Balzue**.

“Envy assails the noblest. The winds howl around the highest peaks.”—**Ovid**.

“Sicilian tyrants never invented a greater torment than envy.”—**Horace, 65 B.C.**¹⁶

Envy “is a form of spiritual perversion. While the spirit of compassion is made to ‘rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep’ (Rom. 12:15), the spirit of envy is more likely to weep when others rejoice.”¹⁷ Brother Elam stated that envy looks

begrudgingly and with discontent and even pain and mortification upon the success and prosperity or Christian character and the good of others. It causes the heart to grieve and fret at the excellencies and honors of others, to wish evil to the ones who excite it and to rejoice at any misfortune that they may suffer.¹⁸

What Produces And Provokes Envy?

Of course, as in all other sins, envyings are produced in the heart:

Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (Jas. 4:5).

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:14-15).

Ira North correctly observed that envy

is aroused because of feelings of fear and self-doubt. Envy develops in the person who feels inadequate and who fails to believe that God has made us with infinitely more talent, ability, and potential than we can ever use.¹⁹

William Barclay stated:

Maybe it is true to say that there is no better test of a man than his reaction to the greatness and to the success of someone else. If it moves him to the *zelos* which is noble ambition to goodness, that is the work of the Spirit, but, if it moves him to a bitter and envious resentment, that is the work of the flesh, and what ought to be a spur to goodness has become a persuasion to sin.²⁰

Brother Brents observed similarly:

There is a trait or characteristic implanted in men by the Lord for good and laudable purposes in order to excite to worth-while attainments and to stir one to imitate the good and noble in others. This principle is called **emulation**. Its purpose is to excite us to greater achievements; but when it meets with a corrupt and rebellious disposition, it degenerates into that most malignant passion in man's nature, the most obnoxious weed of the poorest soil, called envy.²¹

What Do Envyings Produce And Provoke?

“The fruit of envy is evil continually.”²² One, the envious person has transgressed God’s law in thought: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). This leads to multiplied miseries and griefs to the soul:

While making other people unhappy, they make themselves wretched.²³

Envy pains and destroys a man like a knife in the chest.²⁴

Two, the envious person’s “thoughts lead him to do and say unkind and often untrue things about the envied person (Jas. 1:14-15; Jas. 3:13-18).”²⁵

If envy were not so injurious and destructive and if we were in no danger of harming others and

of being destroyed ourselves by it, God would not so constantly and so strongly warn against it. But envy leads to backbiting, slander, and murder. Of course, slander embraces lying. There is nothing too mean, too sneaking, too low, for envy to do. There is nothing blacker than envy, except outer darkness itself.²⁶

Thus, one sees that envy not only has the potential of harming, destroying the reputation of, even murdering the person envied, but also destroys the person who allows this insidious evil to abide in his or her heart: “For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one” (Job 5:2). Though wrongly applied to Job, this statement by Eliphaz is true. Brother Merideth related the following vivid illustration:

There is a Greek story about a young man who killed himself through envy...This man’s fellow citizens had erected a statue to one of their number who was a celebrated champion in the public games. But, this man, a rival of the honored athlete, was so envious that he vowed that he would destroy that statue. Every night he went out into the darkness and chiseled at its base in an effort to undermine its foundation and make it fall. It did fall—but it fell on him and killed him.²⁷

Examples

The Word of God is replete with examples of those who were envious and of those who were injured, persecuted, and/or murdered by envy’s deadly fangs. Not only does God warn us of the cruel sin of envy, but He also gives vivid, powerful illustrations of its folly and fatality, thereby leaving the envious absolutely without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Everyone should take heed, for “Envy is common to all—to sinners and saints, Christians and heathens—and to all generations.”²⁸

“Envy has a long and ugly criminal record,”²⁹ and the following examples should be earnestly, soberly, and seriously contemplated if we would avoid envy in our hearts and its bitter, evil, fatal fruits in our lives.

1. Cain’s heart was filled with envy when his brother’s animal sacrifice, offered by faith (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17), was accepted, and his own offering “of the fruit of the ground” (not what God commanded, not by faith) was rejected. Moved with envy, “Cain rose up against his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:1-11); Cain now had to spend his life as a “fugitive and a vagabond,” away from the presence of God (Gen. 4:14; Gen. 4:16).

2. The Philistines in Canaan had filled with dirt all of the wells which the servants of Abraham had dug (Gen. 26:15). But God continued to bless Isaac as He had Isaac’s father, Abraham:

[A]nd the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him (Gen. 26:12-14).

God made room for Isaac elsewhere when the Philistines’ envy kept frustrating his purposes (Gen. 26:18-22).

3. Rachel, when she “saw that she bare Jacob no children,...envied her sister [Leah, whose womb the Lord opened because she “was hated” (Gen. 29:31), and she bare four sons (Gen. 29:32-35)]; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die” (Gen. 30:1).

4. Joseph’s own brothers “envied him” (Gen. 37:11). Because Israel loved Joseph more than he did the other sons, and because “he made him a coat of many colors..., they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him” (Gen. 37:3-4). These feelings intensified when “Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren” (Gen. 37:5);

the brethren resented the fact that they would, along with his parents, “bow down themselves” to Joseph (Gen. 37:10). Their envy caused the brothers to “conspire against him to slay him” (Gen. 37:18). However, Reuben “delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him” (Gen. 37:21-22). Instead, they sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites into Egypt (Gen. 37:25-28).

They lied to (deceived) their father that the wild animals had killed Joseph, causing Jacob to go into a deep state of mourning: “he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him” (Gen. 37:29-35). Noel Merideth perceptively observed:

But in the end a perilous famine forced them to recognize Joseph’s superiority. Their envy impoverished their lives, but the intended harm to Joseph never came. Envy is a boomerang-like weapon which hurts the attacker more than the attacked.³⁰

Stephen recounted these events, stating, “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom” (Acts 7:9-10).

5. “Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses” because of envy, saying, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it” (Num. 12:1-2). They were envious of Moses’ standing and authority before God, whereupon God asked them, “wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (Num. 12:8). Miriam was stricken with leprosy, as the result of God’s righteous indignation (Num. 12:9-15).

6. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were envious of Moses and Aaron: “they gathered themselves against Moses and against Aaron, and said, Ye take too much

upon you” (Num. 16:1-4). They were also accompanied by 250 “men of renown.” Moses stated that their rebellion was “against the Lord” (Num. 16:11):

They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord (Psm. 106:16).

This is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the Lord (Num. 26:9).

What was the result?

[T]he ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up...and they perished from among the congregation (Num. 16:31-33).

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred fifty men: and they became a sign (Num. 26:10; cf. Psm. 106:17-18; Jude 11).

7. Saul, the king of Israel, envied David when the women said:

Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward (1 Sam. 18:7-9).

David and Jonathan loved each other as their own souls, and David had been even set by Saul “over all of the men of war” and had successfully fought Saul’s battles, i.e., “the slaughter of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 18:1-6). Saul tried multiple times to kill David (1 Sam. 18:10-11). The Lord

departed from Saul but was with David (1 Sam. 18:12-14). In the face of great jealousy and envy against him, David “behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul” (1 Sam. 18:14; 1 Sam. 18:30). Saul even tried to persuade his son Jonathan and all his servants “that they should kill David” (1 Sam. 19:1). David finally fled from Saul (1 Sam. 20:1). Upon Jonathan’s defence of David, his father “cast a javelin at him to smite him” (1 Sam. 20: 31-33); he warned David again of his father, and David fled again (1 Sam. 20:34-42).

8. The presidents and princes who served under Daniel, because of envy, “sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful” (Dan. 6:1-3). They then set a trap and made false accusations against Daniel (Dan. 6:5-13). However, Daniel was delivered by God from the den of lions, and his lying, envious enemies were killed by the lions (Dan. 6:14-24).

9. Haman, upon being invited to Queen Esther’s banquet, went “forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai” (Esth. 5:9). That ate on Haman’s mind, and he told his wife and friends that the invitation to be with the king and Esther at the banquet “availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate” (Esth. 5:13).

His wife and friends suggested that Haman build a gallows on which Mordecai would be hanged, “And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made” (Esth. 5:14). The root of the envy, to kill Mordecai because he “bowed not, nor did him reverence,” caused Haman to seek “to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom” because Mordecai was a Jew (Esth. 3:5-6). However, through the providence of God,

“they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai” (Esth. 7:10), and, not only were the Jews saved from the death decree of the “wicked Haman,” their “adversary and enemy” (Esth. 7:6), but “many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Esth. 8:17).

10. Judas for envy betrayed the Lord to the Jews with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48). He was even Christ’s “own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, [who] hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psm. 41:9). To attempt to cover his real character and motives, Judas asked why the spikenard (a costly perfume) used by Mary to anoint the feet of Jesus “was not...sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (John 12:1-6). This selfsame wretch, “having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons” to the Garden of Gethsemane, and there he treacherously and willfully turned the innocent Master over to His enemies (John 18:3).

11. The Jews and the Romans united to crucify Christ, as was prophesied by David a thousand years earlier:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people
imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set
themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD, and against his anointed,
saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and
cast away their cords from us (Psm. 2:1-3).

Inspiration is very clear; “for envy they had delivered him” (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). The only perfect, accountable person ever to walk this earth was brutally murdered for envy! Truly, this is a very sad example of the observation by brother Powell that “Envy begets strife, strife begets hate and hate begets murder”³¹:

The leaders of the Jews were jealous of the miracle-worker who had swayed the crowds and had robbed them of attention and status. His popularity had filled them with raging envy, and they plotted craftily to get him out of their way. Jesus knew what it meant to be the object of envy, but he never retaliated. He could even say on the cross, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).³²

Indeed, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem only increased the envy and hatred: "And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine" (Mark 11:18). However, try as they might [influenced by Satan, the archenemy of God and man, and who has tried all through the ages to thwart the eternal purpose of God to save the penitent obedient in the church (Eph. 3:10-11), as Judas was likewise influenced (John 13:27)] to destroy the scheme of redemption, everything was going according to plan, according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," when they took and "by wicked hands" crucified and murdered Him, "Whom God raised up" from the dead the third day (Rom. 1:4) and made Him "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:23-24; Acts 2:36) "by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33). Indeed, David was correct when he prophesied, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psm. 2:4).

12. Saul of Tarsus, before he was converted to Christ and while persecuting Christ and His church by murdering Christians, was motivated by envy, among other sins: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3). He was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). But he was able to obtain mercy and forgiveness through God's grace (Tit. 3:4-7).

13. The early church at times experienced the problem of envy, including the church at Corinth. The Corinthians preferred one preacher above another, demonstrating a factious and divisive spirit. Paul soundly and summarily rebuked them for this carnal attitude; they were all to

speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Some preachers in the first century church did

indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife...of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel (Phil. 1:15-17).

Characteristics

The study of what the Scriptures reveal about envyings and of the examples found therein shows the following characteristics of this deadly sin.

1. "It is a great evil under the sun that one cannot do well without exciting the envy of others."³³

2. "As love and light come from God, envy comes from Satan. As one who loves is begotten of God, so one filled with envy is a child of Satan."³⁴

3. Envy always tries to hide its true motive, whether its goal is slander, mistreatment, destruction of a good work or reputation, or murder. The Jews

did not ascribe their cruelties to him, their torture and murder of him to that cause [envy], but to blasphemy. They said their great loyalty to God led them to put to death the blasphemer.³⁵

Envy never recognizes or acknowledges itself. A bad man never attributes his wicked deeds to bad motives.³⁶

Judas is an example; he was not a thief; he just wanted to help the poor, he pretended. Envy flies under false colors. It is no surprise that at times envy mimics its father, Satan, posing as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) in order to gain an audience, cultivate followers, and bring about its devious, Satanic aims.³⁷ Why, it might even [supposedly] “save the church”!

4. Brother E. A. Elam described another characteristic of envy:

One envies in others that which one aspires to be. A woman envies the beauty and charms of other women; a man envies the graces and courage of other men. A farmer does not envy the physician or lawyer, but his fellow farmers. Physicians envy physicians; lawyers envy lawyers; preachers envy preachers; politicians envy politicians; the man who makes some money envies other men who make more; and thus it goes.³⁸

This trait can be seen in virtually all of the Biblical examples noted earlier.

5. Brother Elam also wrote:

Envy acknowledges the superiority of the one envied. One does not envy an inferior, but always a superior; hence envious feelings and actions are the acknowledgment of the superiority and excellences of the object envied.³⁹

6. Envy does its evil work and takes action by using excuses, which are dressed up in the skin of reasons. Brother Powell said the following:

There is a mighty thin line between a lie and an excuse. Aesop tells of a hungry wolf which was standing by a stream, while below him was a little lamb. The wolf did not want to devour the lamb without some kind of excuse, so he said to the lamb, "Stop muddying this water." The lamb turned to the wolf and said, "Don't you see you are above me?" "Well," said the wolf, "you muddied it a year ago." "Ah," said the lamb, "but I was not born a year ago." "Well," said the wolf, "it doesn't make any difference, I did not like your father, and I am going to eat you." So you see, an excuse is not by any rule a reason. Unprincipled men deal in excuses and not reasons.⁴⁰

7. The objects of those guilty of envyings have done them no harm. What harm had the righteous Abel brought upon his brother, Joseph upon his brothers, David upon Saul, Daniel upon the other presidents, Christ upon Judas or upon the Jewish leaders and mob? They were motivated by an evil heart of insane hatred and jealousy (Prov. 14:30): "It is envy that causes most of the world's problems."⁴¹

8. Envy is intent in its aim to discredit, to remove, and/or to destroy its object. Brother Elam wrote:

Again, and worst of all, envy seeks to put out of its way the object which excites it, and stoops sometimes to the lowest depths and uses the vilest means to do so, as when Joseph's brethren sold him—a weeping and clinging lad, a tender and helpless child in their care and keeping, but also in their cruel power—into slavery and imprisonment. It is sly and sneaking, undermining and treacherous, or bold and arrogant in accomplishing its purpose. The enormity of this sin is increased when committed in the name of religion, professed loyalty to Jesus, and love for the church.⁴²

However, brother Elam observed in a later article, "Envy never says: 'I want the object that excites and troubles, pains and distresses me, out of my way, if I have to destroy it.'" He continued:

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company did not say: “We envy Moses and Aaron.” They said, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah?” (Num. 16:1-3). They accused Moses and Aaron of doing that which Moses and Aaron did not do, but that which they themselves wanted to do and made an effort to do. They attributed what they undertook to do in violation of God’s law to their love for **the rights of the people**.⁴³

9. Envy wrecks our health physically and spiritually.

G. F. Raines wrote:

‘What rust is to iron, and mildew is to corn, and the moth is to the cloth it breeds in, that is envy to the unhappy heart in which it dwells.’ Envy will wreck one both physically and spiritually. We should never allow ourselves to be guilty of it for a moment.⁴⁴

Speaking of the wounding words of a talebearer, and of “burning lips and a wicked heart” of a treacherous, hateful, deceitful person who has “seven abominations in his heart” (no doubt one of which is envy), Solomon appropriately warned:

[H]is wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin (Prov. 26:22-28).

Brother Cox observed, “The false accuser loses the respect of his fellows, and soon finds himself in painful isolation.”⁴⁵

Envy And The Peaceable Kingdom

Can the deadly sin of envy and its devilish fruits invade the church of Christ, the peaceable kingdom over

which the Prince of Peace rules as King? Isaiah in prophecy described the church:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:6-9).

What a warmly comforting, tenderly supporting, brotherly loving, and uniquely peaceful place! It is possible only because of the transforming power of the Word of God (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 4:12). What other power can enable one to become "poor in spirit," "pure in heart," and one of "the meek" and of "the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:5; Matt. 5:8-9); to become humble as a "little child" (Matt. 18:3-4); "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, [to forbear] one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3); to crucify the "old man...that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6), thereby being "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20); to be counted among those who would "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks" with those out of every nation who would not lift up sword or study warfare "any more" against each other in that peaceable kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4)? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

The reality is, though, that entrance into the peaceable kingdom does not rid the child of God of his free will, though it is certainly unbecoming for the

Christian to “continue in sin” (Rom. 6:1-2). We must remember that it is possible to allow the old, crucified man of sin again to “reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:6-13). Clearly, if “brethren [who] are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Rom. 8:12) do “live after the flesh, ye shall die [be destroyed eternally in hell fire]” (Rom. 8:13), Paul warned.

Let us not be deceived; if we return, after entering the peaceable kingdom, to being wolves, leopards, lions, bears, and poisonous snakes, we shall be destroyed (2 Pet. 2:20-22; Rev. 21:8). Note the description of the Jews who failed to fill their hearts and lives with good thoughts and good works after the evil had been cast out [illustrated by Christ regarding the “unclean spirit...gone out of a man”]; the evil returned seven times worse than it was before (Matt. 12:34-45).

No wonder some members of the church will do anything and say anything! No wonder the apostle Peter said concerning those who had “escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord...[and] are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet. 2:20)! That evil is multiple times worse, as is their ultimate punishment (Luke 12:47-48; Jas. 3:1). Yes, the grievous sin of envy can invade the peaceable kingdom as long as we human beings in the flesh constitute God’s kingdom. Satan, that roaring, vicious lion, is trying to devour us first (1 Pet. 5:8); we are his top priority, and one of his most powerful tools [perhaps **the** most powerful] is envy! J. M. Powell wrote, “It is envy which estranges men and divides the church.”⁴⁶ Merideth observed:

Unfortunately envy creeps into the hearts of some preachers, teachers, elders, and members. And “where envying and strife are, there is

confusion and every evil work” (Jas. 3:16). It saddens us to see one preacher envious of another because he has a better name, more baptisms, a larger congregation to work with, a larger salary, more meetings and wider influence. Instead of rejoicing at his work and talent and great results he is envious and has that “funny look” in his eye.⁴⁷

Brother Powell also wrote:

It is envy that causes us to divide. It breaks up homes and alienates brethren. It causes preachers to fight among themselves and to say all manner of evil against each other. Yes, the world and the church are filled with men, little men, who like Themistocles are afflicted with this vile thing that we call jealousy.⁴⁸

Brother Kirk described how heinous it is to trouble and divide the church, the beautiful bride of Christ and His spiritual body, out of envy:

Envy has produced some terrible results; the magnitude of its influence cannot be measured... It has divided churches, and while the Roman soldiers who crucified and plunged a spear into the physical side of our Christ, were guilty of a heinous crime against mankind, the man or men who would permit envy to so twist their brains as to cause them to divide the “spiritual” body of Christ, the church, are guilty of a greater sin.

It is a most lamentable thing today when we find members in the church envious of other members, elders envious of other elders, preachers envious of other preachers, educators envious of other educators and editors envious of editors.⁴⁹

Hartline stated that envyings “become extremely dangerous to the local congregation when they divide brethren who polarize into factions, not over things right and wrong, but personal preferences and personalities.”⁵⁰

It is truly destructive when these envyings are escalated like wildfire from the local situation into the brotherhood. The envy and destructive work of the Judaizers against the apostle Paul was virtually brotherhood-wide, following at his heels wherever he planted and strengthened the church.

These brethren so strongly resented Paul and “his company’s” (Acts 13:13) success that they lied about him and his work [Read 2 Cor.] and tried to turn the other brethren against Paul; further, they [Brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., was strongly convinced] were even among the mob crying out and trying to take his life in the temple area in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30-35). “For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him” (Acts 21:36). A number of times in studying in brother Turner’s classes on Acts and in discussing with him this point, the writer heard him say that he thought “the Judaizers were crying out the loudest!” His point was that the bounty for the poor in Jerusalem collected and delivered by Paul had not quelled this bitter envy and hatred, which was Paul’s hope. The viciousness of envy is hard to quell. Truly, it is “the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30).

The Judaizers resented Paul’s influence and authority [which he used “for edification, and not for your destruction,” 2 Cor. 10:8]; **they** wanted that influence and authority! They lied about his letters and his preaching; “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10). They by lying about this great apostle wanted to discredit him with those whom he had taught the gospel and loved so dearly, so **they** themselves could be held in such high esteem—envy personified! Dear reader, who had the better heart; who truly loved the Lord and the souls of mankind; who was dedicated to the preaching of the gospel in love, Paul or the envious

Judaizers? Who had laid down his life for them and had made countless sacrifices to reach the lost with the precious gospel (2 Cor. 11:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:21-33)? Who really cared for “all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28), doing all within his power to save them from vicious, lying accusations, division, and strife resulting from evil envy? How much **could** Paul have accomplished for the Lord through His grace if he not had to defend himself from attacks by envious brethren? But, it very much grieved him that “though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Cor. 12:15).

Likely, the attacks were aimed also at his fellow-workers, Timothy, Titus, and others; “I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps?” (2 Cor. 12:17-18). Might the Judaizers have spoken in derision in an attempt to discredit Paul and his “yokefollows” by calling them names similar to “Pauline clones,” or “the evangelistic circuit,” or “knuckleheads,” etc., which the Judaizers intended to be disrespectful, prejudicial, and destructive? To say the least, they attacked Paul, Timothy, Titus, and others of Paul’s fellow gospel preachers. And sadly, sometimes those who envied Paul succeeded in alienating brethren from Paul (Gal. 4:16).

The reaction of Paul to this destructive type of envy was to state the truth, to salvage as best as possible the Corinthians’ confidence in him, and thus to maintain the allegiance of the Corinthians to the Sacred Message (2 Cor. 13:1-7), to the end that they might “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace,” so that “the God of love and peace” might be with them (2 Cor. 13:11), which peace they were very much in danger of losing. Please note that Paul did not get into the mire of wickedness and into the lies of envy with the enemies of

truth. That reaction is a real and present danger for those who are attacked by jealous, envious people, who at times even carry on a “witch-hunt” for fodder they might use to destroy those who are in envy’s “evil eye” (Mark 7:21-22).

There is also a danger involved for the one against whom the attack has been mounted. In confusion and frustration, he could become guilty of saying and doing things he would not normally have done. So the vicious circle begins, and the end result is much like the fabled tigers which chased one another until they melted into butter.⁵¹

Also, the apostle Paul defended Titus against envy’s attempt to besmirch Titus’ name (2 Cor. 12:18). It behooves every Christian, when hearing charges about our brethren, to “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” based upon objective truth and evidence, not based upon envy and its fruits (John 7:24). “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 17:15).

Remedy

As it has for every other transgression, the Bible has the remedy for the root sin of envy. B. C. Goodpasture wisely observed, “If envy could be removed from the hearts of all men today, many of problems that beset and the troubles that afflict people in the church and out, would immediately disappear.”⁵²

In the first place, we must turn to the Word of God and practice and preach the truth about envy. Brother Elam wrote:

We do not wonder that the Bible so solemnly warns Christians against envy, and charges all to lay it aside. (1 Pet. 2:7) Love envies not. (1 Cor. 13:5) The heart with envy in it is not right

in the sight of God. In practicing and preaching the whole counsel of God, envy comes in for due consideration. Let us practice and preach all the Bible says against envy.⁵³

Note the connection between “laying aside all...envies” and “desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:1-2).

In the second place, we must examine ourselves. Brother Elam also perceptively wrote:

All persons should examine themselves to see that nothing is done by them through envy, strife, or vainglory. Men have acknowledged that they have been drunk, have cheated others, and have committed other sins; but where is the man who ever confessed that he acted from envy or was ever jealous and envious? Reader, did you ever see that man? I have never met him.⁵⁴

We need to view our hearts, motives, and actions in light of the “perfect law of liberty” and make the changes in our lives necessary to bring ourselves into congruency with the mirror of God’s Word (Jas. 1:22-25). Indeed, the person who “deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (Jas. 1:26).

In the third place, we must recognize realistically the innate worth and the abilities of others of God’s offspring, along with our own worth and ability. Brother Brents put it thus:

Can envy be cured? It can if one will take a right estimate of things. By the law of God we judge the standard of good and evil. What the law of God declares to be valuable or enjoins to be beneficial is certainly so, and what the law of God disclaims to be hurtful, harmful, and worthless is in fact to be so regarded. Truly the word of God condemns the spirit of envy. One should try to make a right judgment of his worth

and ability. If one does this, he will find that there are others at least as wise and as good as he is, and likely he would find that if merit were the standard of honor, his would not measure up to the standard as much so as another. If one would seriously reflect upon the vanity of all worldly things, and if advantage should be gained, how much has one profited by being envious of that creature, one's fellow man, "whose breath is in his nostrils," and whose "glory fadeth as the flower of grass"?⁵⁵

Job recognized very keenly the sacred nature and dignity of all human life, for every person is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and is the offspring of God (Acts 17:26-29). Job realized that had he mistreated his fellowman, God would judge and punish him come the Day of Judgment: "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" (Job 31:14-15). Question: when I am envious of the ability God gave to another, what does that say also about my attitude toward God?

Dear reader, would it not also be utterly foolish for a soldier in a foxhole (under severe attack by the rushing enemy) to envy, resent, and try to destroy his fellow soldier in the foxhole for being more successful in defending their lives and combating the enemy than he? We are under vicious attack from Satan and his evil forces. Anyone with sanctified common sense ought to be able to see that it is utter folly to envy those who are successful, influential, and gifted in soul winning and upholding the blood-stained banner of King Immanuel and in being "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17)!

In the fourth place, brother Noel Merideth wrote, "The antidote for envy is genuine love cultivated for our fellow man."⁵⁶ Dunn stated:

Paul said: “Love envieth not.” (1 Cor. 13:4.) One cannot love those whom he envies, and he cannot envy those whom he loves. These two impulses are at opposite poles. They cannot dwell together in the same human heart with reference to the same person. Love is godlike, and envy is diabolic. To “love your neighbor as yourself” is to fulfil a **royal** law (Jas. 2:8); but jealousy springs from a wisdom that is “earthly, sensual, and devilish” (Jas. 3:13-15).⁵⁷

Note the powerful observations of brother Cox:

The divine remedy for envy is love—love out of a pure heart, love like that which motivated the Lord Jesus....Love is not grieved when others are honored, when others are favored, when others are promoted. When one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with him; when one member of the body is honored or praised, all the members rejoice with him. (1 Cor. 12:26) “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.” (Rom. 13:10)⁵⁸

Brother North summarized his article thus:

Envy and love cannot remain in the same mind at the same time. Love cannot envy (1 Cor. 13:4), for envy provokes while love embraces (Gal. 5:26). So, the way to overcome envy is to love. And the way to react to someone envious of us is to love them. “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.” (Prov. 25:21-22.) We are paid handsomely when we displace the venom of envy with the peace of love. In this way, we replace an enemy with a friend.⁵⁹

Jesus is our perfect example in returning good for evil. He fully knew what it is to have been the target of

unrelenting, vicious envy. Even while He was shedding His innocent blood for all of us whose sins put Him onto the cross, He could cry out, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). Some of them did indeed receive forgiveness, when they were baptized as penitent believers (Acts 2:36-41). Very sadly, though, “they also which pierced him” and who repented not shall see Him at His second appearing, unprepared, “and shall wail because of him” (Rev. 1:7). We realize that not every enemy can be transformed into a friend, to be realistic, though that should be our goal. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18).

Conclusion

Very regretfully and in spite of being commanded “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1), the Lord’s precious family has through the years been troubled and in some places rent asunder by envy and its fruits. At times, such attitudes have placed not only the envious souls in immediate jeopardy, but through their influence the souls of countless others within the congregation [perhaps far beyond that local situation] have been alienated from each other. It often works similarly to, and is as destructive as a spreading, virulent cancer. It has separated long-time, formerly deeply devoted friends and co-workers, just one of its deadly consequences. Sometimes, it has brought about large-scale divisions in the body of Christ which shall never be healed. How heaven must weep over such folly!

Dear reader, have you ever wondered why factions and divisions and alienations over personalities and personal preferences in our spiritual family very often have little or no chance of being rectified? Is it a **lack of continued respect** for Biblical authority, or for forbearing one another and letting the love of the

brotherhood continue, or for Christ's prayer for unity, or for the precious souls of oneself, his wife and children, and of brothers and sisters in Christ? Is it **pride** that is involved in a refusal to bring oneself to repentance, especially when others have been influenced to polarize around such a faction?

Brother Bill Hartline made the following observation:

And even if there is confession made regarding this terrible sin, the injury and hurt are for all practical purposes, irreversible. The illustration of shaking into the wind, the contents of a feather pillow, and the futile effort to recover all the feathers, points out all too clearly, the futility one would encounter if he tried to recover all the hurtful and sinful things said about another.⁶⁰

The place to stop the fruits of envy is at the little end of the taproot—in the heart. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

Endnotes

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3 R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians** (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 288.

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6 J. Noel Merideth, “Envy—The Evil Eye,” **Gospel Advocate** (April 1, 1965), p. 193.

7 J. M. Powell, “The Curse of Envy,” **Gospel Advocate** (December 22, 1960), p. 801.

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 - 9 C. D. Plum, "The Works of the Flesh," **Gospel Advocate** (July 24, 1941), p. 703.
 - 10 Frank L. Cox, "Works of the Flesh," **Gospel Advocate** (June 10, 1954), p. 443.
 - 11 Robertson, **Word Pictures in the Greek Testament**, p. 312.
 - 12 Robert L. Johnson, **The Letters of Paul to the Galatians** (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet Co., Inc., 1969), p. 155.
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 - 15 Fred E. Dennis, "The Works of the Flesh," **Gospel Advocate** (April 29, 1948), p. 417.
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 - 17 Jack C. Dunn, "Envy," **Gospel Advocate** (December 21, 1961), p. 804.
 - 18 E. A. Elam, "Envy," **Gospel Advocate** (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.
 - 19 Ira North, "The Sin of Envy," **Gospel Advocate** (February 17, 1972), p. 100.
 - 20 William Barclay, as quoted by J. William Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," **Gospel Advocate** (February 31, 1973), p. 345.
 - 21 Brents, "The Rottenness of the Bones," p. 501.
 - 22 G. F. Raines, "Envy—A Deadly Evil," **Gospel Advocate** (November 12, 1959), p. 722.
 - 23 Dunn, "Envy," p. 804.
 - 24 Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.
 - 25 Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," p. 345.
 - 26 E. A. Elam, "Envy," **Gospel Advocate** (January 1, 1914), p. 12.
 - 27 Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.
 - 28 Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.
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- 30 Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.
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 32 North, "The Sin of Envy," p. 100.
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 42 Elam, "Envy," (January 1, 1914), p. 12.
 43 Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.
 44 Raines, "Envy—A Deadly Evil," p. 722.
 45 Frank L. Cox, "The Venom of Envy," **Gospel Advocate** (April 30, 1959), p. 282.
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 47 Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.
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 50 Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," p. 345.
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 53 Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1129.
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 55 Brents, "The Rottenness of the Bones," p. 501.
 56 Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 199.
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CHAPTER 11

Murders

Tyler Young

Introduction

ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, OUR NATION witnessed in horror the greatest mass murder ever to take place on American soil. On the fateful day, the complacent, insulated populace of our nation was roused from its self-absorbed slumber to see that real evil still exists in this world. That evil which we knew was “out there” came to our own doorstep as over three thousand died in the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. As sickened and outraged as we are over such tragic, senseless loss of life, the 9-11 victims were but a few of the hundreds of millions who have lost their lives through the ages at the hands of their fellow man. Though we would not minimize the significance of their deaths, when we step back and view the world, past and present, we see theirs is but a drop in an ocean of blood filled and being filled by hate and treachery.

Man’s homicidal potential was first manifested when Cain slew his brother. God asked the son of Adam and Eve, “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Gen. 4:10).¹ That cry would be joined by countless others. In the ancient world, the slaughter of man was vicious and widespread. Through the centuries, brutality and bloodshed were common and persistent. Following the Enlightenment, and with the rise of Darwinism in the nineteenth centuries, men optimistically

embraced the doctrine of human progress, believing the accumulation of scientific knowledge and man's continual evolutionary ascendancy would lead eventually to the pinnacle of a completely civilized world. But the events of the twentieth century exposed this delusion. In fact, the secular humanism undergirding this lie was itself a major contributing factor to the decidedly uncivilized behavior of modern man.

Technology made it possible to kill on a wider scale, and technology combined with political power and godless ideology made for a murderous potential not before imagined. As a consequence of Marxism and Nazism, tens of millions were wiped from the earth. Socialists Stalin and Mao Tse Tung—favorites of America's leftist elite—and their accomplices were responsible for the murder of over sixty million. The Nazi death camps, the Soviet Gulag, the killing fields of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, genocide in Rwanda, the terrorism of Islamic fundamentalism, Palestinian suicide bombers—willing to kill even themselves to kill others, including women and children—these all have soaked the ground in blood.

Murder happens individually and on a mass scale. The deed is done randomly and systematically, privately and publicly, collectively and personally, reluctantly and zealously, passionately and calculatedly. People take the lives of others for different reasons, but murder (and here we are not speaking merely of manslaughter, but what we would call first-degree murder) is an act born of unbridled anger or unmitigated hatred. It might be considered the greatest sin one can commit against another—the ultimate imposition of one person's will over another.

Such hostility stems from a heart devoid of love for fellow man—a love which stems from the love of God and the love for God—and a soul bereft of the fear of God. In characterizing the murderous depravity and debauchery

of the Gentiles, Paul cited the Psalms and Isaiah: “There is none that seeketh after God... Their feet are swift to shed blood... There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:11; Rom. 3:15; Rom. 3:18). To kill without Divine justification, one must yield to the lusts of the flesh; the higher, spiritual impulses must be suppressed and the carnal urges entertained. That is why the Paul includes “murders” among the “works of the flesh” contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-24,² stating that “they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21).

Because it is such a heinous act, with so profound consequences, murder creates outrage. At least it should. When someone loses a loved one to a murderous act, the demand for vengeance and justice is intense. In high-profile cases, such as the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman; Laci Peterson and her unborn child, Conner; or the 9-11 attacks, public outcry is great. There is immense satisfaction when killers are convicted and punished, agonizing frustration when they escape justice. But in other cases, where outrage ought to be the greatest, such as the killing of the helpless—the aged, the infirmed, the unborn—there is appalling indifference to murder that is legalized and carried out on a grand scale.

In our time, we have raised a generation alarmingly desensitized to murder, at least in certain forms. Through the constant glorification of killing, popular entertainment promotes a callous disregard for the value of life. Movies, television, music and video games popular with youth today are brimming with gratuitous violence and dripping with blood. One source estimates, that by the time the average American child reaches sixth grade (about age thirteen), he has watched some 100,000 acts of televised violence, including 8,000 depictions of murder. As pop culture has dramatically deteriorated over the past several decades, respect for life has been undermined. We have gone from

The Andy Griffith Show and **The Brady Bunch** to **NYPD Blue** and **The Sopranos**; from **The Sound of Music** and **It's A Wonderful Life** to **Natural Born Killers** and **Pulp Fiction**; from **Singing In The Rain** and **Casablanca**, to **Texas Chainsaw Massacre** and **Kill Bill**; from doo-wop and bee-bop to gangsta-rap and hip hop; from Buddy Holly and The Beach Boys to Ice T and Fifty Cent.

The coarsening of the culture, the breakdown of the home, the rejection of objective morality and the rise of moral relativism—in which each person is free from outside moral restraints to become his own god—have had a devastating impact on our culture. Social science has provided ample evidence that exposure to violence in entertainment has a negative impact on impressionable children, contributing to an increase in aggressive—and sometimes deadly—behavior. Why, then, should we be shocked to walk through the halls of Columbine High School and see the stains of blood from kids killing kids? Both physically and morally, we are what we eat, and, when we fail to ground our children in God's values and allow them to feast on a constant diet of the glorification of killing, we have no right to be surprised when they pull the trigger, or their peers pull the trigger on them.

Murder is all around us, but what exactly is it? Is all killing murder? What are the temporal and eternal punishments proscribed by God for this work of the flesh? What are its causes and consequences? What are the forms this crime takes in our own culture, and what should we do about it? We turn our attention to these issues.

The Meaning Of Murder

A Crucial Distinction

Long ago the voice of God thundered from Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13). This sixth

commandment of the Decalogue incorporated into the special revelation of the Law of Moses what had already been a part of moral law recognizable by man from the beginning of time. It was not necessary for God to give explicit revelation to Cain for him to know he sinned when he killed Abel. Those who lived before Sinai, and those who lived outside the community of Israel and who were not recipients of the Mosaic Law, as moral beings made in the image of God, had an innate understanding of the wrongness of killing. Those today who have never been exposed to the Word of God know by their God-given moral awareness that they ought not to kill (Rom. 2:14-15).

But what does God mean when he tells us not to kill? Are we to suppose that it is **always** wrong to take life intentionally?³ There is a critical distinction, which many fail to recognize but which is upheld throughout Scripture, between killing and murder. That is, there is a difference between the Divinely authorized taking of life, and the unauthorized taking of life. The latter is murder; the former is not. We should understand, then, the command, “You shall not kill,” more precisely as “You shall not **murder**,” which is how Exodus 20:13 is rendered in the New King James Version and other translations.

This distinction between killing and murder is evident from the fact that God himself commanded life to be taken on numerous occasions in various contexts. Following the flood, God told Noah:

And surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require; At the hand of every beast will I require it. And at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man’s brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For in the image of God made he man (Gen. 9:5-6).

This text sets forth a timeless, moral principle given before the Law of Moses and operative as long as man is “in the

image of God” (cf. Gen. 4:14-15). It requires that a murderer be killed by man. After issuing the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” Jehovah then commanded Israel to kill those who violate this statute (Exod. 20:13; Exod. 21:12). From these and other texts we must conclude, therefore, that there is killing that is wrong (not authorized by God, not according to His will), and killing that is right (authorized by God, according to His will).

It is a simplistic assessment and grievous error to attempt to make all intentional killing of human life morally equivalent. This is the mistake made by those who take the strict pacifist position, arguing that it is wrong to take life even in self-defense, or as an authorized agent of the government. When a police officer finds it necessary to take a life to protect innocent citizenry, he is not committing murder. The use of deadly force to save one’s own life or the lives of others from being unjustly taken is not murder. Those who extend the command not to kill to all killing—regardless of the circumstances—would make murderers out of those who are, in fact, not committing murder but preventing it (or in the case of capital punishment, avenging it). When a man is in the act of bludgeoning a helpless victim to death and a police officer steps in to shoot the assailant (assuming there is no other practical way to stop the assault in time to save the victim), it is an egregious abandonment of all moral discernment to equate the two acts.

Such lamentable lack of discernment characterizes those who vilify United States military action in the protection of our nation or other nations from unwarranted aggression. There was a time when the public, largely speaking, understood that action like the Allied bombing of Germany to stop Hitler’s conquest of Europe was not the same thing as the Third Reich’s bombing of Poland or London. Yet protesters objected to the war in Afghanistan

and Iraq, as if the bombing of Kabul and Baghdad was as wrong as the terrorists' attacks on the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon. Posters of innocent children injured or killed in Iraq were paraded about as though President Bush were as bad as Saddam Hussein, because both were using their authority to kill. While we are not arguing that all wars are just (a just war being one in which a nation has a right to use necessary deadly force, not for conquest, but for protection), or that, even in the context of just wars, every individual act of war is just, it is a disgusting distortion to equate the use of military force for the protection and liberation of a nation with the butchery of tyrants and the murderous acts of terrorists. As 9-11 and continued terrorist attacks and genocidal campaigns reveal, there is real evil in this world, and, at times, it must be resisted with deadly force, or murderers will rule the world and no one will be safe.

Failure to distinguish between killing and murder is also the basis for the charge of hypocrisy against those who endorse capital punishment but condemn abortion. Those who oppose abortion for Biblically sound reasons do not do so on the grounds that it is always wrong to take life, but that it is wrong to take innocent life without justification. Ironically, it is typical for abortion proponents to be opposed to the death penalty, thus placing themselves in the position of advocating the death of the innocent while protecting the life of the guilty. Who are the hypocrites here?

Pertinent Passages

There are a number of passages which shed light on the distinction between killing and murder, and which make it clear that there are times when God authorizes the taking of life.

Romans 13:1-7: Space does not allow a thorough exposition of this text, but there are several important points to be noted from it. In discussing our obligation to be obedient to civil authorities, Paul tells us that the authority of civil rulers is given to them by God (Rom. 13:1-2), and that the “powers that be” are ministers of God’s will to uphold the good, protect the innocent and punish the evil. We are to be obedient to civil authority:

for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:4).⁴

The use of the word “sword” is significant. The Romans used the sword as a symbol of the power of life and death. It was the instrument used to execute criminals and so is used by Paul to speak of the civil authority’s power to take human life when necessary in maintaining order and punishing evil.⁵ It signifies the right and duty of civil authority to take human life in order to punish and protect. It may be necessary for rulers to act in this capacity against individual criminals or at times on a wider scale against other nations for the protection of innocent citizens.⁶

As part of the civil order, duly appointed soldiers, police officers and executioners function as ministers of God for the good of society and as such they are to be supported by their citizens with taxes (Rom. 13:6). Though rulers, armies and police forces may—and frequently do—abuse their authority, when they do what is in accordance with the will of God, they are to be feared, respected, honored and obeyed (cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

Acts 25:11: It is of note that, when Paul gave his defense before Festus, he acknowledged the right of the civil rulers to exercise the power of the sword when he

said, “If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die” (Acts 25:11). As an inspired apostle on trial, Paul was speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:19-20). His statement indicates that (1) there are some crimes worthy of being punished by death, and (2) properly appointed civil authorities have the right to administer that punishment if it is appropriate. The view that it is always wrong in every situation for a man to take another man’s life cannot be reconciled with this inspired statement.

Luke 3:14: It is of interest that, when soldiers came to the prophet John in response to his command to “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance,” John did not require them to set aside their arms. He did say, “Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully, and be content with your wages.” Notice that the prophet did not tell them they were not to use any force against others in the exercise of their authority, but they were not to abuse their power or wrong any man. In essence, John commanded them to be good soldiers, which would be unthinkable if it were always wrong to take life—a potential, if not primary, responsibility of those in the military.

Luke 22:36-38: It appears the disciples took literally Jesus’ advice, “he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword,” for they said, “Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.” True, Jesus would not permit them to use their swords in preventing His death or for the spread of the Gospel (Matt. 26:51-52), but there must have been some purpose for which Jesus permitted them to possess swords at all. What purpose might that be? A sword is not used to roast hot-dogs—it is a weapon.

When Peter tried to step in and prevent Jesus from being offered as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world,

the Lord did not tell him to get rid of his sword, but to put his sword “in its place” (Matt. 26:52). There is a rightful place for one to have and use a carnal weapon. If not on religious grounds for spiritual battle or for aggressive use, then it must be on social grounds for personal or civil defense. It is hard to understand how the Lord could have approved of His disciples’ possessing weapons if it were **never** permissible in **any** situation for them to use them.

Christians And Killing

While some take a completely pacifist position and maintain it is wrong for anyone to take life as an agent of the government, others say it is wrong only for the Christian. Some brethren recognize that God has instituted governments and given them the authority to take life, but maintain that the Christian has been forbidden from administering that punishment.⁷ They hold that the non-Christian in certain situations may, without sin, take life, but that the Christian may not. If this is true—if there is something which those in the world may do but those in the church may not—then it must follow that all men are not under all of the Law of Christ. This is a conclusion, however, that many of our pacifist brethren are unwilling to accept. When it comes to marriage, divorce and remarriage, they repudiate the heresy that only the church is under the New Covenant. They explicitly deny that God has two laws, one for saint and one for sinner. Yet, since they hold that a non-Christian may take life when a Christian may not, they implicitly affirm what they explicitly deny.

In order to justify those who have been divorced and remarried in violation of God’s law, false teachers argue that God’s law on this subject (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9) only applies to a man after he is baptized. According to this popular error, if a man divorces and remarries for some

reason other than fornication on the part of his wife, whether or not it is a sin depends on whether or not he was a Christian at the time. If he was not a Christian, then he did not sin; if he was a Christian, then he did sin. Although they do not recognize it, brethren who advocate “Christian pacifism” make the same error in principle. They hold that whether or not a police officer or soldier may take the life of another depends on whether or not the officer or soldier has been baptized. How is this any different than advocating the doctrine of Bales, Fuqua and Billingsly, that all men are not subject to **all** of the New Covenant? **Are pacifist brethren willing to accept the implication of their doctrine that whether or not an action is right or wrong is determined by whether or not it was before or after baptism?** On what Scriptural basis can such a distinction be made? There is none.

The basic issue here is whether or not all men are amenable to all of the Law of Christ. There is one and only one body of teaching for all men living today. It is designated as the Gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15), the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:17-28; 2 John 9), the Truth (John 8:31-32), the Word (Acts 2:41), the faith (Acts 6:7), the new covenant (Heb. 8:8-10), the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2). Since all of this body of doctrine is to be taught to all men and obeyed by all men (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20), then it is a universal law to which all men are amenable.

Objections Considered

We have already addressed the objection that all killing is wrong in our remarks above. Limitations of space do not permit a thorough listing and refutation of all of the other objections which might be raised, but let us briefly consider a few of the more common ones.

God has forbidden His children from retaliating or taking retribution against those who

do evil (Rom. 12:17-21; Matt. 5:38-48). The matter of amenability is again at issue here. To suggest that the non-Christian may (without sin) take life in some situations, but the Christian may not because of the teaching of Romans 12 and Matthew 5, is to suggest that the non-Christian is not subject to the teaching of these passages. If all of the Law of Christ applies to everyone, then any Scripture which would prevent a believer from taking life would also prevent the unbeliever from doing so. Yet the point brethren are making in the use of these texts is to limit the Christian from doing what they affirm the non-Christian may do with God's approval. (Again, note the parallel with saying that Matthew 19:9 prevents members of the church from divorcing for reasons other than fornication, but not those in the world.) If God does not have two laws (and he does not—Matt. 23:18-20; John 12:48), then what is wrong for **anyone** is wrong for **everyone**.

In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus forbade personal retaliation against those who insult us, not the defense of innocent life against violence. There is a difference between private revenge and public justice. Yes, Paul tells us vengeance belongs to God (Rom. 12:19), but he goes on a few verses later to tell us one way that we leave vengeance in the hands of God is by supporting the “higher powers” that are “ordained of God” and “bear the sword” as “a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:1-6). Again, there is a distinction between a man (Christian or non-Christian) acting on his own to take personal retribution, and a man (Christian or non-Christian) acting as an authorized agent of the government to carry out social vengeance as a “minister of God.” The former is sin (Rom. 12:19); the latter is not (Rom. 13:1-7).

Carnal warfare is contrary to New Testament principles of love and peace. Again, let the question be answered: Do the New Testament principles of love and peace apply only to the church, or to all men? If the non-Christian may, with the authority of God, take life in some situations without violating God's laws on love and peace, then the Christian may do so as well. To say otherwise is to say God has two laws on this issue. There is simply no way to avoid this implication of pacifism. If God requires the non-Christian to love his enemy and also permits him in some situations to take life, then it is possible for him to do both without sin, and if the non-Christian can do both without sin, then the Christian can do both without sin.

It is true that, as soldiers of Christ, our battle is "not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:6). Members of the church are not to use violence to expand the borders of the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The church as a spiritual institution wields the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) to save the souls of men. The government as a carnal institution uses carnal weapons to punish and protect its people. Certain aspects of these institutions are distinct (Luke 20:25), while certain aspects of them overlap. For example, the church and the home are separate institutions, and the church as the church is not to do the work of the home, but a member of the church still has responsibilities to his home. A deacon may have to use a rod to correct his child (Prov. 23:13-14), yet he does not do so on behalf of the church but as the head of the home. That same deacon may also be a police officer and have to take the life of another man, but he does not do so on behalf of the church but as an agent of the government. A police officer may not use his gun to coerce a man to read his Bible, but he may use it to prevent a man from committing murder. Passages concerning the peaceable nature of the kingdom of God must be understood

in this light (Isa. 2:2-4). Jesus condemns the use of the sword for religious reasons (Matt. 26:51-52; John 18:36), but authorizes its use by civil agents for social purposes.

We are to love all men, but who would dare affirm that love requires us to stand idly by while helpless victims—even our families—are raped, mutilated and murdered? What a distorted understanding of the command to “love thy neighbor as thyself” and the “golden rule” that would be (Matt. 22:39; Matt. 7:12)! Paul tells us what we should think of a man who refuses to protect his family: “But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). Was Paul suggesting a man must do what he can to protect his family from starvation and illness, but not rapists and murderers? Should we love the murderer more than the person he is bludgeoning to death?

If love and carnal punishment are incompatible, then what about Ananias and Saphira, or the countless others whom God killed at various times in Bible history (Acts 5:1-11; Gen. 6-7; Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 16; 2 Sam. 6:7; et al.)? Did God love them when He killed them? Note this point: God commanded Israel, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. 19:17-18), and then went on to say that, if one of them worshiped Molech, “he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones” (Lev. 20:1). Thus, Jehovah said, “Love your neighbor” and then added, “if he sins, kill him.” How can it be said, then, that all carnal punishment is contrary to love? Those who have a proper understanding of love realize that it does not exclude carnal punishment, but, to the contrary, it may at times require it (Prov. 13:24; Heb. 12:5).

God uses evil men to serve as ministers of His wrath. God used sinful men and nations as rods of his

anger to execute his vengeance, but afterward punished them (Isa. 10:5-14; Jer. 25:8ff). In like manner, it is argued, he uses evil men in the civil government as vessels of his wrath to keep evil in check, but the Christian may not serve as a vessel of wrath. According to this view, then, non-Christians acting as agents of the government sin when they properly punish evil doers and will be punished by God for acting as “ministers of God.” God has used evil men to punish evil men, but it is a perverted concept of Divine justice which implies that God is going to punish a policeman for defending an innocent citizen. Actually, God requires rulers to execute justice on behalf of their citizens and will punish those who fail to punish evil (Prov. 8:15-16; Eccl. 5:8).

Consider again a question we have previously addressed. If a Christian steps in and uses force to prevent a rape or murder, is he committing an act which is morally equivalent to the act of the rapist or murderer? To say the Christian sins in killing to prevent a murder is to charge him with committing a sin equivalent to that of the murderer. Surely the thoughtful person can see there is a significant, moral distinction between their acts.

If the armed forces of the civil government sin when they use the sword to protect their citizens, then the Christian sins if he calls upon them to protect him. We are responsible for what we ask others to do, and we sin by agency if we ask others to commit sin (2 Sam. 11:14ff; 2 Sam. 12:9; Acts 2:22-23). Yet when the apostle Paul’s life was threatened, it is implied that he requested and accepted the armed protection of the Roman army to prevent the unjust taking of his life (Acts 23:12-35). Did Paul accept and request action on the part of the government that was sinful? Can a Christian call upon a non-Christian to do what is morally wrong? To ask is to answer.

The Punishment For Murder

Murder And God

It is not difficult to ascertain from Scripture the Divine attitude toward murder. In the list of things which God's hates is included "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). In exposing the depravity of the Gentiles, Paul said, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Among the sins of those who "refused to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28), he included murder (Rom. 1:29), adding that "they who practice such things are worthy of death" (Rom. 1:32). "Knowing this," the same apostle said, that law is...for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of father and murderers of mothers...and if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:9-10). Jesus said that out of the heart come those things which defile a man, including murder (Matt. 15:19).

There can be no mistake about the fate of impenitent murders. Paul said that they who practice such things "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). In our age in which a perverted concept of tolerance is exalted as the supreme—seemingly the only—virtue, it is considered unacceptable to condemn others and declare dogmatically that there are things which will keep one from heaven. One of the only exceptions to this is murder. This is one of the only sins we may feel safe in condemning without inviting the scorn of the enlightened. Those who decry objective morality will often still draw a line when it comes to murder; even the most politically correct still seem to find it in themselves to be morally indignant over this crime. We dare not suggest that fornicators and adulterers are headed for hell (after all, we are all sinners, right?),

but we are safe when we say that murderers will burn. That is what Scripture tells us: murderers will “have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Barred from heaven are “the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. 22:15).

This does not mean a murderer cannot be forgiven. After David’s shameful murder of his own faithful warrior, Uriah, the penitent king of Israel confessed his sin to God and begged for mercy, pleading:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin (Psm. 51:1-2).

Although unworthy, he was granted that cleansing (2 Sam. 12:13). A notorious murderer who called himself the “chief of sinners” will be in heaven. Although he persecuted God’s people “unto death” (Acts 22:4; cf. Acts 26:10), Saul repented, and God had mercy on him. Reflecting on this, Paul said, “the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:15), stating that the reason he obtained mercy was “that in me as chief [of sinners] might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:16).

Paul’s point was simply this: If God can forgive me, he can forgive anyone; if there is hope for me, there is hope for all. The immeasurable depth of God’s grace and love is seen by the fact that He will forgive even the murderer who comes to Him in humble submission to His will. No matter what we have done, the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from “all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7;

1 John 1:9)—even murder—if we will repent of our wicked ways and turn to God in obedience to His will (Isa. 55:7).

Murder And The State

Under the Law of Moses, murder was to be punished by execution (Exod. 21:12; et al.). But even before the Law was given, God revealed to mankind through Noah a principle which is still operable today: that those who commit murder are to be put to death. We cite again Genesis 9:5-6:

And surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require...And at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For in the image of God made he man.

Capital punishment for murder, although included and extended under the Law of Moses, did not originate at Sinai. As a part of the moral order, therefore, the requirement of blood for blood was not abrogated by the New Testament, but incorporated into the Law of Christ. This is evident from several texts already considered, especially Romans 13:1-7, in which Paul referred to civil authorities as servants of God who exercise "the sword" in the punishment of evildoers (cf. Acts 25:11, and the comments on this text above). Justice requires that the murderer forfeit his life.

But, it is argued, is it not the height of hypocrisy to kill someone for killing someone? To contend that capital punishment for murder is itself murder fails to recognize the distinction, already noted, between authorized and unauthorized killing. Before Lonnie Weeks was executed in March of 2000 for the murder of Virginia State Trooper Jose Cavazos, the victim's two surviving children

campaigned to save Weeks' life. Cavasos' daughter, Leslie, wrote to the governor: "We have thought about this very carefully...We want to set an example for society. We do not condone the act of taking the life of another human being in any way, or for any reason." Despite their claim, and like many others, Cavosos' children had not thought carefully enough—certainly not Biblically—about the situation. There are profound and frightening implications to the unbiblical position that it is always wrong to take life.

Those who regard capital punishment as murder are woefully misguided in their moral judgment. We are to execute murderers, not because it is wrong to take life, but because it is wrong to take innocent life—to kill without just cause. The murderer shows wanton disregard for the life of his victim; a failure to execute him only compounds that disregard. In what way? Demanding the murderer forfeit his own life upholds the value and dignity of the life of the victim. But to protect that murderer from execution is to suggest that his life is of more value than his victim's, and constitutes a gross miscarriage of justice. No amount of time in prison can satisfy the demands of Divine justice. As God said to Israel:

So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it polluteth the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it (Num. 35:33).

But what about forgiveness? Murder, as with any sin, when unforgiven, brings the wrath of God. We have seen it can be forgiven, but, if it is, does that mean then that all consequences are erased? When Carla Faye Tucker was executed in Texas in 1998 for the 1983 double murder of a man and woman with a pickaxe, the national debate over capital punishment was opened again. It was passionately argued, especially by those in the "Christian"

community, that her death sentence should be commuted because she had allegedly “found Jesus” while on death row. She should be spared, it was said, because she was genuinely penitent and had been forgiven by God in her supposed conversion to Christ. Then Governor George Bush refused to pardon her, and her execution was widely considered an unfortunate miscarriage of justice.

But the fact is that penitence and forgiveness do not have a bearing on the justness of capital punishment. David was forgiven of his sin, but still had to face grave consequences for his evil choices (2 Sam. 12:1ff). Prisoners may find salvation in Christ and have the hope of heaven, but we do not swing open the prison doors to all who manifest sorrow for their crimes or who purport to undergo a conversion experience. An adulterer may be forgiven (1 Cor. 6:9-11), but forfeit his right to marriage (Matt. 19:9). Just so, a murderer may be forgiven, but still forfeit his right to life.

Origins And Murder

What is it that makes the unjust taking of human life a grievous offense? When God told Noah that those who shed blood are to be executed, he gave him the reason that murder requires the death penalty: “for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). It is the fact that we are unique creations of God, bearing His moral and spiritual image, that gives us a value which demands that we treat our fellow man with respect and dignity, and which requires a high price be paid for the supererogatory taking of human life. Our nation’s founding fathers understood this, as evidenced from the famous line in the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed

by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Notice the recognition that the right to life is something endowed by the Creator.

What a person believes about human origins, therefore, is critical in shaping his understanding of human nature and ethics. This is why the teaching of Darwinism is a serious threat to the well-being of man. From the evolutionary viewpoint, man is not created in the image of God, but is only a fortuitous combination of chemicals, a mere product of purely natural processes. If we are then nothing more than accidents of time and chance, then what real, inherent value do we have over any other form of life? Man is but a naked ape. As a spokesman for the radical animal rights group **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals** infamously declared, “A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.” This evaluation is meant to elevate the status of animals, but, instead, it demotes man to a mere beast. If man is but an animal, then killing a man is no more morally significant than crushing a bug underfoot.

Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton University, has introduced the term “specieism” to characterize the position, against which he is an outspoken opponent, that human life is more valuable than animals. The doctor does not believe humans are of any more value “than the life of a pig, or a dog, or a chimpanzee.” Little wonder, then, that he advocates the legalized killing of unwanted newborn babies at the whim of their parents, and dispatching the aged or infirmed when the expense of their care becomes exorbitant. In addressing the connection between the rejection of the doctrine of creation and the value of life, Singer states:

The philosophical foundations of [the sanctity of life] view have been knocked asunder. We can no longer base our ethics on the idea that human beings are a special form of creation, made in the image of God, singled out from all other animals, and alone possessing an immortal soul. Our better understanding [meaning our acceptance of evolution, and the naturalism and philosophical materialism on which it is based—TY] has bridged the gulf that was once thought to lie between ourselves and other species, so why should we believe that being a member of the species *Homo sapiens* endows its life with some unique, almost infinite value?⁸

As appalling as Professor Singer's arguments may be, there is no logical grounds on which to object to them if Darwinism is true.

Scripture makes a definite connection between atheism and wickedness (Psm. 10:4; Psm. 14:1ff). Paul related the immorality of the Gentiles—including their murderous behavior—to their rejection of the knowledge of God to embrace the excesses of paganism (Rom. 1:18ff). As previously observed, Paul cited Scripture to show the basis for bloodshed: “There is none that seeketh after God...Their feet are swift to shed blood...There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:11; Rom. 3:15; Rom. 3:18). It is the fear of God that prompts us to restrain ourselves from harming our neighbor: “Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor...but thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah” (Lev. 19:13-14; cf. Lev. 25:17). When we remove from people's minds this fear—the idea that they will be held accountable by God for their conduct—we have let down the barriers of moral restraint and endangered our very lives. In reflecting on the horrors of the Nazi death camps, the late journalist Dorothy Thompson wrote, “When I surveyed Dachau, my soul trembled within me...I am beginning to think that when God goes, all goes.” She was right.

Our founding fathers, as well as a long line of other influential public figures in our nation's history, acknowledged this point. William Linn, famed orator and theologian, friend of George Washington and first Chaplain of the House of Representatives, well represented the view of the majority of America's founders when he said:

Let my neighbor once persuade himself that there is no God, and he will soon pick my pocket, and break not only my leg but my neck. If there is no God, there is no law, no future account; government then is the ordinance of man only, and we cannot be subject for conscience sake.

Outstanding nineteenth-century educator, William Holmes McGuffey, authored a number of textbooks which were widely used in public schools and are considered educational classics. They made a significant contribution to the molding of our national character over several generations. In **McGuffey's Eclectic Reader** of 1854 there is a powerful warning worthy of careful consideration:

If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undeciding, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there be any such being as God; you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people...Avarice, perjury, ambition, and revenge would walk through the land, and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men.

If we teach our children that they are nothing but animals, should we be surprised when they act like animals? The

implications of the creation-evolution debate are not slight and impractical; they are foundational and profound, with far reaching consequences. The war for the minds of men with respect to human origins is, in many respects, quite literally a battle of life and death.

Modern Murder

As the naturalistic explanation of our origins has supplanted the traditional Judeo-Christian view of human beings as created in the image of God, we have witnessed an alarming rise in the lack of respect for human life, and an accompanying shedding of blood of terrifying proportions.

Abortion

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case of **Roe v. Wade** that the term “person,” as used in the Fourteenth Amendment, does not include the unborn. (The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted to overturn the **Dred Scott** decision, which had legalized slavery, states that “no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.”) In an act of supreme arrogance, and against all legal and moral precedent, the majority of the court imposed its own social agenda on the nation, striking down a Texas law prohibiting abortion, fully legalizing abortion on demand. Since that fateful day, a mother’s womb has been the most dangerous place for a child in America to be. In just over thirty years since **Roe v. Wade**, over forty million babies have been brutally butchered in their mothers’ wombs.

For all the rhetoric to the contrary, abortion is not about concern for the well-being of women, as the advocates of the murder of the unborn pretend. It is about the desire to be free from moral restraints, and the loathing for the

idea that anyone should dare to dictate to us what we can or cannot do. Abortion is the chief sacrament in the religion of the self, which is why abortion activists—groups like Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider, and the ACLU—and their allies in the mainstream media, government and entertainment industry promote their cause with religious zeal. Despite the devastating impact that abortion has on women, abortion proponents oppose any restrictions on abortion, including laws requiring that minors obtain parental consent or that women receive information about prenatal development or alternatives to abortion, such as adoption. So much for “choice” and concern for women.

Abortion on demand has become so sacrosanct in our courts that judges have refused to let stand laws prohibiting the killing of a full-term baby in the process of being born. Federal courts have struck down laws banning partial-birth abortion, in which all but the head of the baby is delivered out of the birth canal, so that the child’s head may be pierced with scissors, her brain sucked out, and her skull crushed so the head can be removed from the birth canal without dilating the mother. This barbarous procedure is nothing but infanticide, and thankfully, Congress passed and President Bush signed into a law new legislation outlawing this procedure. But it has been challenged again in the courts, and, at the time of this writing, we are still waiting to see whether the law will be permitted to stand, or whether unelected judges will once more overturn the will of the people as expressed in their elected representatives.

Advocates of abortion have been successful in shifting the debate, through the use of carefully selected terminology, away from the real issue, and that is whether or not abortion is the taking of human life. This is the fundamental issue, and rests on the answer to the question

of when life begins. The Biblical and scientific evidence overwhelmingly indicates that life begins at conception, and that what is in the womb of a pregnant woman is—a living, human being (Psm. 139:14ff; Jer. 1:5; Matt. 1:18ff; Luke 1:41; Luke 2:12). They may call an unborn child a mere “fetus,” or the “product of conception.” They can refer to abortion as merely the “termination of pregnancy” or the “extraction of fetal tissue.” They may speak of “reproductive freedom,” “the right to choose,” and “woman’s rights.” But all the rhetoric in the world cannot change the fact that abortion is the violent taking of an innocent, helpless baby. It is murder. And it has been happening some 4,000 times a day for over three decades. As the nation goes about its business, indifferent to the plight of the unborn, the land is filling with blood.

Cloning And Stem Cell Research

Due to advances in science and changes in morality, we find ourselves wrestling with complicated, agonizing issues—ones our grandparents, just a generation ago, could never have imagined would arise. Cloning and research using human embryos is one of the crucial ethical issues of our day. The moral implications of this matter are profound, for at stake in the national debate over this issue is the definition and the value of human life.

Human cloning is when an ovum, a human egg cell, is removed and replaced with the nucleus from a cell from the person of whom a clone is being made. The cell is then artificially stimulated so that it begins to develop into an embryo in the same way that a normally fertilized ovum would. There are two kinds of cloning, or two courses that may be pursued with cloned embryos. In reproductive cloning, the embryo is allowed to develop into a full-grown baby. With therapeutic cloning, the embryo is broken up at an early stage, when the embryo is known as a

“blastocyst,” and stem cells are harvested from them. Scientists hope that research using stem cells obtained in this way will prove useful in providing possible cures for debilitating diseases like Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s Disease.

Genetic engineering technology has now been used to produce “designer children” for the express purpose of providing blood and tissue donors for siblings. The problem with this type of genetic tinkering is that it involves the creation and destruction of numerous human embryos. That is, living human beings are created, and then destroyed, for the possible benefit of others. With cloning and stem cell research, man is playing God, creating and disposing of life for his own purposes. Dare we treat our fellow man, who bear the image of God, as mere laboratory experiments? This is exactly what Hitler’s Third Reich did with its eugenics program. Innocent, helpless people were experimented on and eliminated—without their consent, even against their wills—at the whim of scientists in the name of advancing the Aryan race. It appears that we may not be far behind.⁹

Euthanasia

What shall we do with the aged and infirmed, especially when we find them to be inconvenient? The answer for some is simple: kill them. But this sounds harsh. The euphemism “euthanasia” (literally meaning “good death”) is gentler on the ear, less offensive to our sensibilities. The movement to legalize the killing of the terminally ill or those deemed to be lacking a sufficient “quality of life” continues to gain acceptance in our day. It is called “death with dignity,” and who can argue that we should be able to live and die with dignity? But is killing bedfast great-grandma because her medical bills are burdening the family, or her care is interfering with their lifestyle, a dignified treatment of our fellow man?

In recent years, the media attention given to Dr. Jack Kevorkian has drawn attention to the issue of so-called physician-assisted suicide. The high court in Oregon has twice allowed to stand that state's physician-assisted suicide law, making it the only state where one may legally receive assistance from his doctor to take his own life. But with the combination of life-sustaining technology and the burdens it places on families of the infirmed, the undermining of respect for life, and the preoccupation with self in our increasingly hedonistic culture, we should expect to see the trend toward greater acceptance of physician-assisted suicide and other forms of euthanasia continue. Passive euthanasia, in which necessary care is withheld from the living, gives rise inevitably to active euthanasia: the voluntary form, to the involuntary.

It is not difficult to see the connection between abortion and euthanasia. If we may, after all, dispose of life at its earliest and most vulnerable stages to satisfy our own selfish desires, then on what grounds should we be prevented from doing the same with life when, at its latest stages, it is equally dependent upon our care and willingness to protect and preserve it?

Accessories To Murder

In the battle for human worth and dignity, our elected officials and the judges they appoint will determine whether millions live or die. For that reason, we must work to change public opinion and reverse the culture of death. We must be informed and concerned about using our freedom to influence the political process for the sake of protecting life. Perhaps we need to be reminded that being disciples of Christ means following Him in all things, including our political allegiances. We do not cease to be Christians when we enter the voting booth. Those who would put party loyalty or family tradition over the lives

of innocent, unborn children in the exercise of their right to vote ought to be ashamed. More than that, we ought to fear that, because of our silence, willful ignorance, or ungodly obstinacy in voting for candidates committed to the murder of children, we will stand before God with hands stained with innocent blood.

Murder And The Heart

We should keep in mind that we do not have to personally pull the trigger to be guilty, in a sense, of murder. John warns us, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). That is not to say that hate makes us guilty of the overt act of murder; it is to say that, when we harbor ill will in our hearts toward others, we stand condemned before God because we are guilty of maintaining the disposition which leads to murder. It is not enough that we withhold ourselves from actual violence. This was the point made by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mountain when he said:

Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire (Matt. 5:21-22).

The Lord went on to say that if we have sinned against a brother that we must take proper steps to resolve the matter lest we face the judgment of God (Matt. 5:23-26).

Since murder stems from a heart of hate (Matt. 15:19), we must reach back behind the act to cleansing the heart of the hostile attitude which has the potential of producing the act, and without which the act would not

occur. When Paul listed some of the commandments of the law, including, “Thou shalt not kill,” he said that they are “summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10). Love must purge the heart of hate or we are murderers—if not with our hands, with our hearts. And that love stems from the love of God, Who first loved us (1 John 4:19). When we love one another as God has loved us, the hate and hostility that finds expression in murder will be no more.

Conclusion

The blood of Abel, and countless others, still cries from the ground. The spiritual descendants of Cain are still at work, killing their brothers. Behind it all is the devil himself. Jesus tells us the devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44)—he succeeded in bringing death into this world, and, every time a murder occurs, the influence of Satan is present.

Here, however, is the great irony. The most heinous crime ever committed was the crucifixion of the Son of God. It was on the cross of Calvary that the ultimate murder occurred. It was there the devil used evil men to kill the Christ; the serpent bruised the heel of the seed of woman. A murderer, Barabbas, was set free, and an innocent man—the only truly innocent man—was murdered. But in the death of Jesus Christ, a death blow was delivered to Satan; as the devil had been warned, “he shall bruise thy head” (Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:8). In Christ, God took on a body in order to be murdered, so that

through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

By giving Himself up to be murdered, He made possible the forgiveness of His murderers, and of us all.

Murder is a terrible sin. But there is one murder for which we are, and forever will be, thankful—not that it had to happen, but that He was willing to have it happen. Praise God that He was murdered that we might live.

Endnotes

1 Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the American Standard Version.

2 The KJV has the terms “murders” in Galatians 5:21, but the ASV and other modern translations omit this word on the grounds that it is lacking in some of the reliable Greek manuscripts. Murder is condemned in numerous other texts, of course, including Matthew 15:19; Matt. 19:18; Mark 7:21 and 1 Timothy 1:9. Though it may not be explicitly included in Paul’s list in Galatians 5, the teaching of Scripture indicates overwhelmingly that it is a work of the flesh, and would at least be included under Paul’s terms “and such like” (Gal. 5:21).

3 The word “intentionally” is significant. The Law of Moses maintained, as do the laws of virtually all societies even today, the distinction between unintentionally and intentionally taking life (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Deut. 14:9-10). Under our law, the former is not necessarily a moral offense or crime, though it can be if a person is regarded as having acted carelessly or recklessly, even without the intent to kill (see Exod. 21:28-32). This is classified in our law as manslaughter, either voluntary or involuntary. Manslaughter is distinguished from murder by intent, and varying degrees of murder by varying degrees of premeditation.

4 Obviously Paul has in mind civil authorities which function **as God would have them**. Frequently corrupt rulers punish good and reward evil. When Paul says “rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil...” etc., he is not suggesting that whatever rulers punish is evil and whatever they reward is good. The terms “good” and “evil” represent objective concepts of good and evil as defined by God. Note Isaiah 5:20;

Malachi 2:17; et al. The apostle has in mind rulers who use their authority in accordance with the will of God. We are not justifying the **abuse** of civil power, but the **use** of it in harmony with God's will, in keeping with the principle set out in Acts 5:28-29 and other texts.

5 Though "evil" as defined by God's Word can include thoughts of the heart, words of the tongue and other moral and religious offenses (Matt. 5:21ff), civil authorities deal primarily with the overt act, or evil "work" (Rom. 13:3) which violates the civil order and which must be punished "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity" (1 Tim. 2:2).

6 This is not to say that all wars or all acts of war are justified, as already noted, but simply that there may be situations in which a nation is justified in bearing the sword against another nation.

7 For example, in his work **The Christian and Civil Government**, our highly esteemed and beloved brother Wayne Jackson states:

The Christian is never authorized to function as a punitive agent for the civil powers. While it is true, as we have observed already, that God does providentially use the powers that be to administer the sword of justice in a lawless world, he, nevertheless, has not commissioned his children to bear that sword of wrath.

Brother Jackson notes a number of leading brethren of the past who advocated pacifism, including Alexander Campbell, Moses Lard, J.W. McGarvey, David Lipscomb, and H. Leo Boles (pp. 9, 15).

8 Peter Singer, **Pediatrics**, July 1983.

9 Some of this material on cloning and stem cell research has been taken from material published by Apologetics Press, and also by Wayne Jackson in **The Christian Courier**.

CHAPTER 12

Drunkenness And Revellings

Gary McDade

PAUL BEGAN HIS CORRESPONDENCE to the churches of Galatia by reminding them that Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4). In urging them to adhere to the Father’s will he spelled out the danger posed by the lusts of the flesh and in the list he gave of the works of the flesh he specified drunkenness and revellings, cautioning “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). In order to be “delivered from this present evil world” Christians must know that from which they are to be delivered.

Definitions Of The Terms

The words “drunk” and “drunkenness” appear forty-three times in the Bible and are used in the sense of “having the faculties impaired by alcohol . . . intoxication.”¹ The Bible gives a very clear understanding of what the word means in Proverbs:

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath
contentions? who hath babbling? who hath
wounds without cause? who hath redness of

eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again (Prov. 23:29-35).

The word “revellings” appears twice in the New Testament where it appears in the midst of other terms such as “drunkenness, excess of wine, lasciviousness (lustful bodily movements, e.g., dancing), and banquetings.” It means “a wild party or celebration” not unlike Haman’s “banquet of wine” in Esther chapter five because the word “carouse” is connected with it and “carouse” means “to drink liquor deeply or freely.”² The prophet Habakkuk warned, “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord’s right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory” (Hab. 2:15-16). The apostle Peter said:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not

with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead (1 Pet. 4:1-5).

Peter's sobering remarks are punctuated by the fact that the activities engaged in here and now will be accounted for at the judgment bar of Christ.

Descriptions Of The Problems

The number one drug problem in America is not cocaine or even marijuana, but alcohol. Alcohol use characteristically begins early in life. More young people, age twenty and under, are likely to die from alcohol use than from death by all other illegal drugs combined.³ Researchers Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman, with the National Institute on Drug Abuse, report that by the time they get to the eighth grade half the students have had at least one drink and more than twenty percent of these children admit to having been drunk. About twenty percent of eighth graders and fifty percent of twelfth graders have consumed alcohol in the last month.⁴ Behavioral scientists acknowledge a link between early alcohol use and alcohol dependence in later life. *Alcohol Alert*, No. 59 (April, 2003), produced by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (www.niaaa.nih.gov) reported:

Early alcohol use may have long-lasting consequences. People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some time in their lives compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.⁵ It is not clear whether starting to drink at an early age actually causes alcoholism or whether it simply indicates an existing vulnerability to alcohol use disorders.⁶ For example, both early drinking and alcoholism have been linked to personality characteristics such as strong tendencies to act impulsively and

to seek out new experiences and sensations.⁷ Some evidence indicates that genetic factors may contribute to the relationship between early drinking and subsequent alcoholism.⁸ Environmental factors may also be involved, especially in alcoholic families, where children may start drinking earlier because of easier access to alcohol in the home, family acceptance of drinking, and lack of parental monitoring.⁹

The destructive effects of alcohol use upon young people are well known. They include the aftermath of drinking and driving. While the leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 20 is car wrecks, “the rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older.”¹⁰

Suicide, where contributing factors like depression and stress are coupled with alcohol use, is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 14 to 25.¹¹ Sexual assault, including rape, is often linked to alcohol use. A youth risk behavior report from 2001 showed that approximately ten percent of female high school students reported being raped.¹² And, research proves alcohol use by the offender, the victim, or both, increases the likelihood of sexual assault by a male acquaintance.¹³ Sexual activity, including unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, is common among adolescents who use alcohol.¹⁴ The *Journal of Health Economics* affirmed that among adolescents, “The probability of sexual intercourse is increased by drinking amounts of alcohol sufficient to impair judgment.”¹⁵

The broader picture of societal ills associated with the use of alcohol includes 15,000 deaths in motor vehicle collisions each year. Obviously, these are lives that quite possibly could have been spared were it not for the

presence of alcohol. In an effort to assist in putting this annual tragedy into perspective, notice that this is five times the loss of life suffered in the destruction of the World Trade Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001.

It would seem that American society has come to accept a high number of preventable deaths annually at the hands of those who use alcohol when operating a motor vehicle while the newer, fresher threat of death by terrorism has the entire nation on high alert.

Dr. Enoch Gordis, M.D., Director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, recently wrote on “Alcohol and Transportation Safety.” His commentary is provided to educate and familiarize people with deficient laws on alcohol use by the public and to allow an investigation of what things like “blood alcohol content” really mean in relation to alcohol consumption.

At what blood alcohol level (BAC) are individuals too impaired to drive a car safely? In the United States, the BAC limit for driving a car in many States is 0.10 percent. The United States, in fact, is the only industrialized nation to have a BAC limit this high. A large body of creditable research over many years has clearly shown that impairment of tasks necessary for safe driving begins at levels as low as 0.05 percent. At the 0.08 percent BAC level, currently under consideration in many States, individuals are significantly impaired and at risk for causing harm to themselves and others.

To date, 27 States have lowered the legal BAC limit to 0.08 percent. In many of the States that still maintain the higher 0.10 percent BAC, debates about lowering it often have had little to do with scientific soundness—focusing instead, on arguments that lower BAC limits infringe on the public’s right to drink socially. This argument has no merit; a 160-pound man generally will have reached only a BAC of approximately 0.04 percent 1 hour after

consuming two 12-ounce beers or two other standard drinks [the definition of a “standard drink” is 12 ounces of beer or 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits—all contain approximately 5 ounces or 12 grams of alcohol, GM], on an empty stomach. Until these debates consider the actual, rather than the perceived, results of lowered BACs, we all run the risk of being injured or killed in automobile crashes due to drivers who are significantly—but not legally—impaired.¹⁶

Remember the list of works of the flesh in which drunkenness and revellings appeared—excess of wine, lasciviousness (lustful bodily movements, e.g., dancing), and banquetings? Some things just seem to always go together. Well, before moving on, something else that goes with drinking deserves comment, and that is, smoking tobacco. It is not out of the ordinary for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings to be held within a fog of tobacco smoke clouding the room. The subject of tobacco use, which formerly was off limits due to the fear that working toward eliminating two addictions would be insurmountable and tobacco usage was viewed as the “lesser of two evils,” is receiving long overdue attention from those working with recovering alcoholics.

For example, compared with the risk for nonsmoking nondrinkers, the approximate relative risks for developing mouth and throat cancer are 7 times greater for those who use tobacco, 6 times greater for those who use alcohol, and 38 times greater for those who use both tobacco and alcohol.¹⁷

Thirty-eight times! The increase in the risk level is astounding and should continue to be the subject of serious consideration and discussion among health professionals working to assist those suffering from both addictions. The

ancient prophet Isaiah warned of the dangers of rejecting the law of God and “adding sin to sin” (Isa. 30:1). Smoking, drunkenness, and revellings are works of the flesh that destroy the body which the Bible says is “the temple of God,” and “if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:17). A Christian will be conscientious concerning the care of his body.

Dangers With “Moderation”

Many take the position that drinking in moderation is the socially and personally responsible approach to take to avoid offending those who love alcohol and everything associated with it. Serious objections from a physical standpoint must be raised in light of this observation. Again, current research will assist in developing the point that physically adverse consequences may occur when consuming alcohol even at relatively low levels.¹⁸ Six areas of heightened risk associated with what is mistakenly called “moderation” received attention in an NIAAA article appearing in *Alcohol Alert*, No. 16 (April, 1992).

Stroke. A review of epidemiologic evidence concludes that moderate alcohol consumption increases the potential risk of strokes caused by bleeding, although it decreases the risk of strokes caused by blocked blood vessels.¹⁹

Motor vehicle crashes. While there is some evidence to suggest that low blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) bear little relationship to road crashes, impairment of driving-related skills by alcohol has been found to begin at 0.05 percent BAC or lower, with rapidly progressing deterioration as the BAC rises.²⁰ A man weighing 140 pounds might attain a BAC of 0.05 percent after two drinks.

Interactions with medications. Alcohol may interact harmfully with more than 100 medications, including some sold over the

counter.²¹ The effects of alcohol are especially augmented by medications that depress the function of the central nervous system, such as sedatives, sleeping pills, anticonvulsants, antidepressants, antianxiety drugs, and certain painkillers. There is a consequent increased danger of driving an automobile after even moderate drinking if such medications are taken.²² In advanced heart failure, alcohol may not only worsen the disease, but also interfere with the function of medications to treat the disease.²³

Cancer. Although most evidence suggests an increased risk for certain cancers only among the heaviest drinkers, moderate drinking may be weakly related to female breast cancer. In one study,²⁴ breast cancer was approximately 50 percent more likely to develop in women who consumed three to nine drinks per week than in women who drank fewer than three drinks per week. Although evidence concerning large bowel cancer is conflicting, one study suggests the possibility of a weak relation to consumption of one or more drinks per day.²⁵

Birth defects. Several ongoing studies are exploring the fetal risks associated with low levels of alcohol consumption. In one study,²⁶ children whose mothers reported consuming an average of two to three drinks per day during pregnancy were smaller in weight, length, and head circumference and had an increased number of minor physical anomalies when examined at intervals through the age of 3. In addition, mothers' self-reported consumption of as few as two drinks per day during pregnancy was found to be related to a decrease in IQ scores of 7-year-old children.²⁷ The question of whether moderate drinking is a risk factor for the fetus is not altogether settled, because mothers' self-reports of alcohol consumption may be underestimates.²⁸ However, animal research provides additional evidence for adverse fetal effects from low levels of drinking. Nervous system abnormalities occurred in monkeys whose mothers were exposed weekly to low doses of alcohol. An effect occurred at a maternal BAC

as low as 0.024 percent.²⁹ A 120-pound woman might attain this BAC after one drink. Similarly, low prenatal alcohol doses produced biochemical and physiological changes in rat brains.³⁰

Shift to heavier drinking. Recovering alcoholics, as well as people whose families have alcohol problems, may not be able to maintain moderate drinking habits.³¹ Once a person progresses from moderate to heavier drinking, the risks of social problems (for example, drinking and driving, violence, trauma) and medical problems (for example, liver disease, pancreatitis, brain damage, reproductive failure, cancer) increase greatly.³²

The word “*methusko*,” used by Paul in Ephesians 5:18, provides the Biblical basis for rejecting the commonly held idea that “moderation” is an acceptable alternative that allows for some consumption of alcoholic beverages. Whereas *Thayer’s Lexicon* has “to intoxicate, make drunk” as the meaning, *W.E. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* does not conflict when it explains that *methusko* is “an inceptive verb, marking the process or the state expressed” in being drunk with wine and has the definition as “to become intoxicated.” *Methusko* marks the process by which one becomes drunk, and Paul said, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

What is the “process by which one becomes drunk”? The irresistible answer is by drinking alcoholic wine. How then does a person obey the command in Ephesians 5:18? By not drinking alcoholic wine. A balanced understanding of the use of wine is not the pleasurable drinking of wine in so-called “moderation” but respecting the medicinal suggestion and use of wine as in the lessons featuring the good Samaritan and Paul’s advice to Timothy (Luke 10:30-37; 1 Tim. 5:22-23). The Samaritan helped the assaulted traveler from Jerusalem to Jericho by binding

up his wounds pouring in oil and wine. Observe, not wine only but a combination of oil and wine. Additionally note, he did not pour the wine into his mouth but in combination with the oil he poured it into the man's wounds. The alcohol content of the wine would act as a germicide, the oil perhaps as a healing agent. In the next example, Paul instructed Timothy to keep himself pure, a requirement that would have been made more difficult if the result of ingesting wine was being softened or impaired in judgment. And, the wine was for his infirmity that quite possibly was a condition known as dysentery, and can be brought on by drinking contaminated or impure water. Paul's instruction was a "little wine," which obviously would frustrate those who want to drink a whole glass (5 ounces).

In view of verses like Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," where does "moderation" fit in? "Moderation" does not pass the test of Proverbs 23:31, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Did the wise man say, "Don't drink a whole bottle of it? Don't drink a 5-ounce glass of it? Don't taste it? Or, don't even *look* at it?"

A painfully obvious, incontrovertible, undeniable fact is no one living or dead whose life has been wrecked and ruined by beverage alcohol (and the principle applies to all intoxicants) would ever have gotten into trouble had he not taken that first drink. The exercise of wisdom in the truth, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red," stands in opposition to the idea of "moderation" in the use of intoxicants.

Consider the negative and even sinful associations with alcohol and revelry and see if any of them would be welcomed "in moderation."

(1) Poverty in Proverbs 23:20-21: "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the

drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”

(2) Gambling and licentiousness in Joel 3:3: “And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.”

(3) Indecency in Genesis 9:21-25:

And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

(4) Spiritual indifference in Isaiah 5:12:

And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

(5) Mockery, anger, and deception in Proverbs 20:1: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

(6) Woe, sorrow, contentions, babbling, and wounds in Proverbs 23:29: “Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?”

Now, who would welcome any of the items mentioned in the foregoing list “in moderation”?

Decisions Of Character

A contrast of character is presented in two Bible examples where drunkenness and revelling constitute the setting.

Both instances are well known and serve to help separate the options of character for good or evil that have been discussed in this study of drunkenness and revelling.

The first person's character the Word of God reveals is a young woman unnamed in the Bible but known in history as Salome, not the mother of James and John but Herodias' daughter by Herod Philip and, therefore, the granddaughter of old Herod the Great.³³ It is at Herod Antipas the tetrarch's birthday supper to which he had invited his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee that the story unfolds.

The custom in antiquity at such banquets was for the men and women to separately dine. Salome broke custom and "came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him" (Mark 6:22). Bear in mind that Herod Antipas before whom she danced was her stepfather. The king was so taken with her performance that he swore he would give her anything she wanted even if it meant relinquishing half of his kingdom (Mark 6:22-23; Matt. 14:7). Whereupon Salome consulted with her mother Herodias.

Now, Herodias had divorced Herod Philip and married his brother Herod Antipas (Mark 6:17; Matt. 14:3). John the Baptist had told Herod Antipas, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18; Matt. 14:4), and this so inflamed both Herod Antipas and Herodias that they wanted to kill John the Baptist (Mark 6:19; Matt. 14:5). Herod's fear of the multitude, who correctly considered John a prophet, restrained him from killing John, but he did put him in prison.

But, when Salome hastily emerged from her mother's counsel she asked for John the Baptist's head in a charger, or on a platter (Mark 6:24-25). The wording in the KJV in Matthew 14:8, "Being before instructed," suggests a prior conspiracy between the mother and daughter, but the ASV

clarifies the question when it has “being put forward by her mother.”

The king, whose anger toward John the Baptist seems to have abated because Mark says he was “exceeding sorry; yet for his oath’s sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her,” sent the executioner right out to the prison and beheaded John and brought his head on a platter to Salome who presented to her mother the prophet’s severed head on a platter! (Mark 6:25-28; Matt. 14:9-11).

Salome’s family’s disregard and disdain for Divine law regarding sexual purity in marriage lies in the background of her actions at that birthday banquet. The apparent drinking and revelry on that occasion so impaired the judgment of those involved in the proceedings that one of the greatest prophets the world has ever known was murdered (Matt. 11:11). History records that Salome herself went on to marry her paternal uncle Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, and then to marry her cousin Aristobulus, son of Herod, king of Chalcis. What a purely evil manifestation of character from an advantaged young woman. What a sheer, unutterable waste of purity, prestige, and prominence.

The second person’s character the Word of God reveals is Queen Vashti of the Persian Empire of King Ahasuerus (known by the Greeks as Xerxes I, 486-465 BC) who reigned over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia (Esth. 1:1). In the third year of his reign he made a feast to display all his riches and excellent majesty to all his princes and nobles from throughout all the provinces over which he held dominion. The period of 180 days obviously saw great festivities culminating in a feast of seven straight days in the palace at Shushan. The elaborate decorations and dinner details which took place in the court of the garden of the king’s palace are given:

Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure (Esth. 1:6-8).

On the seventh day of this drunkenness and revelling “when the heart of the king was merry with wine,” he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti before him, the specific purpose being “to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on” (Esth. 1:11). The Bible says, “But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him” (Esth. 1:12). She was dethroned and disappeared from the historical record, but her dignity and deportment distinguish her because aside from her regal position all that is remembered about her is her sterling character that she would not sacrifice to the degrading designs of debauchery and drunkenness.

The contrast of character between Salome and Vashti is the contrast between revellings and righteousness, between drunkenness and dignity. The Psalmist wrote, “Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins” (Psm. 7:9).

Departing Thoughts

Three selected passages of scripture are presented to summarize and conclude this study. The first is a warning from Isaiah 5:11-16:

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

The second is an admonition from Romans 13:13-14:

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

The third is an exhortation from 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11:

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

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**The Fruit
Of
The Spirit**

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CHAPTER 13

Love

Dub McClish

Introduction

UNDISCERNING AND UNSCRUPULOUS MEN have “wordnapped,” redefined, misused, and abused several rich and beautiful Biblical words. Among them are “grace,” “faith,” “miracle,” “elect,” and “predestined.” “Love,” which Paul names a “fruit of the Spirit,” is another of these words.¹ Unspiritual men have dragged this word through their secular and sensual gutters, effectively stripping it in the minds of the masses of its pure and altruistic meaning. If order of appearance in listing items implies relative significance, we infer that love is the premiere quality of all lovely character traits, for Paul placed love first in this list of spiritual fruit. One might also consider the implication that love, because of its principal position in the list, is in some sense the root and basis of all of the other traits. The apostle Peter also emphasized the primacy of love, but he did so by making it the final and crowning grace of the eight “Christian graces” (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Paul wrote of the “fruit” rather than the “fruits” of the Spirit. Each characteristic he listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is part of the singular manifold fruit the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of Christians as they develop and mature. One might conceive of this fruit as one with

numerous individual sections, such as an orange has. However, unlike the orange whose sections all have the same flavor, the various “sections” of this spiritual fruit have their own distinctive “flavors.” Love is one of these flavors, joy is another, and peace is yet another, and so with the other characteristics. From the context, it is obvious that God wills that His children partake of every “section” and “flavor” of this fruit that is so universally desirable that “against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23).

We will study this subject under the following headings:

- The Derivation Of Love
- The Defilement Of Love
- The Definition Of Love
- The Demonstration Of Love

The Derivation Of Love

What is the source of the love that Paul in this passage sets before us as so desirable? We will spend only scant space here answering this question since an entire chapter elsewhere in this volume is devoted to it, but it is appropriate to give it some attention here.

Paul identifies love as part of “the fruit of the Spirit,” indicating that it is the **product** of the Holy Spirit. I know of no one who has denied or even questioned this conclusion. It is fair to inquire about the means by which the Spirit of God produces love and its companion character traits. Until recent years, those counted faithful among the saints (regardless of their views on how the Spirit indwells us) understood and clearly taught that the Holy Spirit uses means to produce spiritual fruit in the lives of Christians. That is, He did/does not **directly**, apart from some medium, operate upon the hearts of saints in some mystical way to cause one to be loving, joyful, longsuffering, and so forth.

However, some, once counted among faithful brethren, began teaching a few years ago that the Spirit produces love and its companion traits by **direct impact** upon the spirit/heart/mind of Christians.² This effect the Spirit allegedly causes is an “extra benefit,” **in addition** to the provisions He gives through His Word (Eph. 6:17), and those benefits we realize through the inscrutable workings of God’s providence. Moreover, the chief protagonist of this view asserts that one **must** have the Spirit’s **direct** help in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit.³

In a very limited response to these assertions, I call attention to the following:

1. Galatians 5:22–23 says nothing of the way by which the Spirit produces His fruit, only the fact that He is its source.

2. Neither in Galatians 5:22–23, nor in any other passage, do we read that the Holy Spirit **directly** or **immediately** affects our hearts to cause us to behave in a certain way (e.g., be more loving).

3. In writing to the Colossians, Paul discussed the spiritual fruit we must bear as God’s children (surely this is not some sort of fruit that is different from the “fruit of the Spirit” in Gal. 5:22-23):

Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye **heard** before **in the word of the truth of the gospel**, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world **bearing fruit** and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth...For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be **filled with the knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, **bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God** (Col. 1:5-6; Col. 1:9–10, emp. mine throughout, DM).

Do not miss how closely Paul identifies the Spirit's **Word** with the spiritual **fruit** we are to bear. Paul credits the Word of Truth, the Gospel, God's will as being the cause that produces the effect of "bearing fruit" (twice). The fruit-bearing occurs as one increases in "the knowledge of God."

4. The cause behind an effect is no less the cause when he/it employs means to produce the effect. Though Joab and the Ammonites were the immediate causes of the death of Uriah (David was nowhere near Uriah when he was killed), God assigned the real blame to David: "Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword" (2 Sam. 11:1; 2 Sam. 11:14-17; 2 Sam. 12:9). John recorded that Jesus baptized many, when actually His disciples did the baptizing and He personally baptized none (John 4:1-2). Both David and Jesus produced the respective effects, but they did so through means. The Holy Spirit is no less the source of the "fruit of the Spirit" because He employs means to produce it.

5. The Word of God is the "seed of the kingdom" (Luke 8:11). When those with "honest and good hearts" hear the Word and "hold it fast," it will "bring forth fruit" (Luke 8:15). His Word is the means by which the Spirit produces His fruit in our lives.

6. The Holy Spirit-inspired Word is quite sufficient to produce all of the spiritual fruit God expects us to bear:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

One cannot consistently argue that we must have **direct** help from the Spirit—in addition to the Word of God—to produce spiritual strength, without implicitly denying the adequacy and sufficiency that the Word claims for itself.

7. As previously mentioned, Peter includes love as the final element of the “Christian graces” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Rather than indicating that the Holy Spirit will directly supply love and its companion traits **for** us, Peter instructs **us** to “supply” love in our lives and “do” it (2 Pet. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:10). **We** are to work diligently to produce these traits (2 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:10), rather than expecting the Holy Spirit in some mystical way to produce them for us. Thus doing will prevent our being “unfruitful” and “stumbling” (2 Pet. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:10). Note that Peter connects love with fruitfulness, just as Paul does in Galatians 5:22-23. Peter was obviously not of the persuasion that we could not bear spiritual fruit without direct, supra-literary activity by the Holy Spirit on our spirits.

Those who insist that we must and do have **direct** help from the Holy Spirit, in order to live the Christian life successfully and triumphantly, dabble in Pentecostalism, Calvinism, Wesleyanism, and mysticism.

The Defilement Of Love

There are numerous false concepts of love.⁴ By accentuating some of the things this most wholesome and lovely trait is **not**, we will be able thereby to demonstrate, at least to some degree, what it actually **is**.

Love Is Not Mere Words Spoken

John clearly stated the possibility that one may speak words of love without possessing love: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18). John is not here forbidding or even discouraging the speaking of loving words. We all likely need to do more of this to one another in all of our relationships (e.g., husband-wife, parent-child, among brethren). The apostle is saying that words of love **alone**, apart from loving acts, do not constitute love.

The statement in 1 John 3:18 is a conclusion and somewhat of a summary of what John began discussing in 1 John 3:14:

1. Genuine brotherly love is a signal of spiritual life (1 John 3:14).

2. Brotherly hate constitutes figurative murder (1 John 3:15).

3. Genuine love caused the Lord to lay down His life for us; it will cause us to lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16).

4. Genuine love will cause us to help our brethren in physical need, according to our abilities (1 John 3:17).

5. Genuine love is demonstrated by our deeds, not merely by our words (1 John 3:18).

“Word only” love is as worthless as it is hypocritical. The Pharisees, scribes, and others frequently reviled and blasphemed our Lord. He denounced them as hypocrites on more than one occasion and for more than one reason. However, had they told Him they “loved” Him just after their bitter and hateful words of opposition and accusation, they would have but added to their hypocrisy. They may as well have claimed that they demanded His crucifixion because they loved Him so much!

Some who read these words have doubtless witnessed (and/or sometimes been on the receiving end of) cruel, heartless, and hateful actions merely for trying to be faithful to our Savior. Sometimes even brethren, recklessly and without provocation, spew out strong, loud, and abusive words of accusation and denunciation. Such railings are sometimes either immediately prefaced or followed by declarations of “love” for the subject of the abuse. It would be hard enough to deal with such if it came from associates at work or school, but it is made all the more imponderable and difficult to bear when a brother or sister in Christ is its source. All who so behave

demonstrate hatred rather than love, and they become figurative murderers (1 John 3:15). Such brethren are hypocrites in the fullest meaning of the term. They verily love in word and tongue only, which is all pretense and no love at all.

Theological liberals pride themselves on their “love” for others (in contrast to those mean and hateful conservatives). Some, who will not actively teach error, nonetheless promote it by acting as “bodyguards” for those who do. Not only will these protectors not oppose or expose error and sin, but they do not want anyone else to do it, either. So, when their pet false teachers and their false doctrines are exposed, these same “loving” folk often themselves become very skilled in their use of hateful words toward the teachers of Truth. They remind me of Joab, who with one hand pulled Amasa to him to kiss him and ask of his welfare, and with the other, stabbed him in the fifth rib with his sword (2 Sam. 20:8-10).

Deeds that seem to express love can also be hypocritical and false, as exemplified by the kiss Judas gave the Lord in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:47–50). Thus, we need to remember that John said we should love not only “in deed,” but “in truth,” meaning truly, genuinely. Paul’s exhortation to the Romans is appropriate here: “Let love be without hypocrisy” (Rom. 12:9).

Love Is Not Mere Emotion

Modern culture to a great degree has been caught up in romanticism. It is difficult to find persons today who are willing to think or who are even capable of rational or logical analysis and/or response to stimuli. The common—almost universal—operational procedure is emotional rather than rational. This being so, the definition of “love” for many is some touchy-feely, ooey-goey, superficial, and syrupy feeling or expression of feelings. Unfortunately, this

misconception of love that turns the brain off and relies solely on surface emotions is alive and well among brethren. This flawed philosophy explains how brethren can hear a man entertain them with stories and illustrations while he teaches false doctrine, and they can come away almost enthralled with how “dynamic” he is. Such emotional mush is far removed from love.

Having said that, it would be both foolish and erroneous to deny that love—including *agape* love—involves the emotions. The other common New Testament Greek word for “love” is *phileo*, which actually connotes tender affection, thus strongly involving the emotions. Several passages set forth the emotional factor involved in the love saints are to have for each other. For example, Paul urged, “In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). Peter makes an even fuller statement concerning the emotional ties brethren should have to each other: “Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded” (1 Pet. 3:8).

These passages mention such emotion-seated traits as tenderness, affection, and compassion, all of which are noble and desirable feelings that we should entertain and cultivate toward others. However, until we express them in appropriate words and/or deeds, they remain mere feelings or emotions. Paul makes this plain in his personification of love (*agape*) in 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

We learn from this marvelous passage that, even if we do not possess the emotion-based affectionate love (*phileo*) for a person, we still have the obligation to exhibit the mind/will-based love (*agape*) for him. This obligatory love will cause us to speak and act toward him, even if he is an enemy, so as to seek his good and benefit. Such is the very love that God had for sinful man in the giving of His only begotten Son, as John 3:16 so eloquently and simply

declares. Love does not consist of the mere affectionate feelings or emotions themselves, but of the appropriate expressions of these feelings.

Love Is Not Mere Lust or Sexual Fulfillment

My father was a Gospel preacher, and many years ago he asked a class of teenagers to define “love.” When no one would volunteer a definition, he called on a young man who shrugged and said, “Just sort of ‘huggin’ and kissin,’ I guess.” The entertainment industry (TV, movies, song lyrics, books of fiction) has so corrupted “love” in the minds of the masses over the past forty years that “love,” “lust,” and “sex” have practically become synonyms. Jo Stafford had a hit record in 1954 (before the sexual revolution of the 1960s) with her song, “Make Love to Me.” It was an innocent song about courtship that leads to life-long marriage, as its lyrics indicate. However, to most people the phrase “make love” has gradually been warped to mean sexual activity.

God has made us with sexual instincts, and fulfillment of this desire is wholesome and honorable within the institution and the limits set by God. In marriage alone, and that between a man and woman who have a Scriptural right to be married to each other, may one fulfill one’s sexual instincts honorably and innocently: “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). The expression of sexual love is not only a privilege of marriage partners; it is a duty:

But, because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it

be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

Sexual fulfillment outside of Scriptural marriage is forbidden by God and constitutes fornication and/or adultery, which will cause one to be lost eternally if not repented of: “for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Paul wrote plainly of the eternal cost of sexual sins:

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither **fornicators**, nor idolaters, nor **adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

It is lamentable beyond description to observe the social and cultural crises that have resulted from the misconception and abuse of this beautiful and wholesome trait of love. Over the past four decades, millions of marriages have been based upon the Hollywood concept of sexual lust rather than unselfish love (as defined by the Bible). Most of these were doomed to end in divorce from the start, and conveniently, state legislators came up with “no-fault divorce” laws to accommodate the increased number of divorce cases that increasingly flooded the courts.

The casual attitude toward divorce only intensified the ever-growing casual attitude toward marriage, which has practically become a meaningless “throw-away” contract. The next “logical” step has been to question the need for marriage at all, so now millions are “living together” (a euphemism for fornication), before and without marriage, in open and unblushing immorality. Many, not wanting to be “tied down” to one sexual partner

even without marriage, just drift from bar to bar, looking for a “one night stand,” likely rather easy to find after whatever inhibitions one might have are washed away by a few drinks. Such behavior has come to be not only accepted, but glorified by entertainers, which provides them with a twisted sense of justification for their own barnyard “morals.”

This tortured definition of “love” has produced millions of “one-parent families” in which children are reared by minimum-wage daycare personnel because father is missing (and sometimes unknown) and mother has to fill the role of breadwinner instead of that of wife and mother. These children, far more often than those from normal two-parent families, have problems in school; turn to drugs; become involved in crime; and marry, divorce, and remarry repeatedly. What a terribly successful ploy the devil has used in redefining “love” to mean lust and sex and thus to advance his evil aims.

Love Does Not Give License To Sin Or Freedom From Law

A large block of U.S. citizenry, led principally by some young people on college campuses, began openly defying authority, law, and established moral principles in the 1960s. Such people despise any limits of their behavior. One justification they offer for their philosophy is to drag “love” down from its high and lofty perch to serve their low and sorry goal. Psychologists have pandered to and encouraged these authority-haters. Many parents now excuse their utter lack of discipline because they “love Johnny too much to make him mind,” or they “love little Susie too much to punish or set limits for her.”

In like manner, preachers and elders sometimes say that they “love” their brethren too much to rebuke and correct them. Theologically, many are advancing the idea

that God's love for us cancels His law for us and that these are somehow antagonistic to one another. They admit that God's people in the Old Testament had to keep the law He gave through Moses, but they argue: "We're under grace, rather than the law." If they were speaking only of the Law of Moses, we could not agree more, for it was given only to Jews. But its authority even over the Jews died when the Lord was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Men in every age have always been accountable to the law of God. Rather than the withholding of discipline's being a sign of **love**, it is the very opposite: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). Therefore, children are commanded to obey their parents, and parents (led by the father) are to nurture and admonish their children in the Lord, which includes teaching them to obey (Eph. 6:1-4). The Lord "chastens" and "scourges" His children from time to time because He loves us (Heb. 12:6). The Bible also teaches that the faithful are to reprove and rebuke those who despise the Truth (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

The New Testament nowhere teaches that, this side of the cross, we are without law from God. It rather teaches the opposite. Only false teachers, whether through ignorance or deliberation, would dare assert that God's love has freed men from accountability to law. Those who teach this damnable doctrine often flee to Romans 6:14: "for ye are not under law, but under grace." This statement cannot mean that men are under no law, but are under grace alone, for only a little later in this same letter, Paul wrote, referring to the Gospel, "The **law** of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Furthermore, if grace eliminates law, it also eliminates sin: "But where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Since the need for grace is predicated upon the existence of sin (Rom. 5:20), if there

is no sin, there is no need for grace. Thus, those who would obliterate law logically obliterate both sin and grace in one fell swoop.

What is the meaning of Romans 6:14? In this statement Paul used a literary device in which one denies one element in order to emphasize another. Thus the sense is: “For ye are not under law [alone], but [also] under grace.” John used the same device in a passage earlier noted: “My little children, let us not love in word [alone], neither with the tongue [alone]; but [also] in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18). If we were absolutely and exclusively under grace, then all men would be saved unconditionally: “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Tit. 2:11).

If Paul meant in Romans 6:14 that we are absolutely free from law, then he directly contradicted himself when he wrote that he was “under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21) and that we must “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). Furthermore, James described the Gospel as “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25).

We will do well to notice that our love for God and His Son is measured and demonstrated by our obedience to Their law:

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him... Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me (John 14:15; John 14:21; John 14:23–24).

John repeated this great principle: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his

commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Whatever love **is**, it most certainly is **not** a principle that frees us from obeying God’s law and commandments, nor does it give us license to sin or adopt the fatal and fallacious philosophy of situation ethics. May the learning of what love **is not** help us understand what it **is**.

The Definition Of Love

“Love” in this passage translates the Greek noun *agape*. This word is by far the most frequently occurring “love” word in the New Testament, appearing 116 times. The verb form, *agapao*, appears an additional 142 times. The *agape* family of Greek words represents the very highest concept of love. This word conveys the idea of seeking the very best for others, with or without affection for them, and whether or not they are worthy of our benevolent attitudes and actions. This love arises not from the worthiness of its recipient, but from the benevolent nature of its giver. Thus God **loved** wicked and sinful men although He certainly did not **like** them or approve of their conduct (John 3:16). *Agape* is basically an act of the will that can be commanded (John 13:34; Eph. 5:25; 1 John 3:23; et al.), rather than a spontaneous emotional response of the heart which no man can command. W. E. Vine describes *agape* love as follows:

Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered.⁵

Paul gives us the fullest treatment of the meaning of *agape* in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. Ironically, he did so, not as an isolated definition of the word or as an essay designed to

explain the concept, but in the process of correcting the attitudes and behaviors of the Corinthian saints regarding the exercise of miraculous spiritual gifts. From reading 1 Corinthians 12-14, it is evident that Paul therein addressed and sought to correct serious tensions among some of the Corinthians relating to these gifts. Apparently, those who possessed the gift of tongues acted as if this were the superior gift and were flaunting it (1 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:1-25). They were promoting themselves as being especially important because they possessed this gift. This unloving and unspiritual behavior seems to have moved some to envy and jealousy. Paul's discussion and description of love are against the backdrop of this dissension, and the characteristics of love he presents are likely, at least in some cases, pointers to the unloving behavior these brethren were manifesting toward each other in this controversy.

The spiritual gifts were exceedingly important in the process of bringing the church through its "childhood" period and in keeping it pure until the completed revelation could be written down for all perpetuity (1 Cor. 13:8-12; 1 Cor. 14:1-5; 1 Cor. 14:22; Heb. 2:3-4). Paul first discussed the one source of the many gifts (the Holy Spirit); second, the necessity of maintaining unity among themselves in light of this single source; and third, the importance to the body of those members often considered least significant (1 Cor. 12:1-27).

He then directed their attention to the universally available attribute of love and identified it as more significant than the Spirit's miraculous powers over which they were fussing (1 Cor. 12:28-13:2). Love is so important that, if one should give all that he had to the poor and offer his body as a burnt offering, but did so from some motive other than love, he would not be rewarded thereby (1 Cor. 13:3).

The apostle makes it clear from these powerful illustrations that love—the first-named fruit of the Holy Spirit—is so honorable, beautiful, and powerful that it is absolutely indispensable. **Thus interestingly, this common “fruit of the Spirit” exceeds in importance any spectacular “gift of the Spirit.”**⁶ With the foregoing material for perspective, in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Paul lays out his description of the way love causes one to behave. He personifies love, whereby we see it in action and in its practical application in daily life. He declared that Love...

1. “Suffereth long” (1 Cor. 13:4): One who loves is longsuffering and patient toward others. This includes one’s patient endurance of wrongs suffered from his enemies.

2. “Is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4): Rather than passive patience, love practices good toward others. One who loves is gentle and sweet in disposition, rather than being mean and harsh; character flaws often breed by lack of being longsuffering. Love does not seek to avenge itself.

3. “Envieth not” (1 Cor. 13:4): One who loves does not desire or begrudge the possessions or the successes of others, but is content with what he has. Envy may have become evident among some who desired spiritual gifts that others possessed.

4. “Vaunteth not itself” (1 Cor. 13:4): Love causes one to be humble. He is not a boaster and a braggart. Some who had the coveted gift of tongues may have flaunted the gift and boasted of it before others. One who loves does not in any way promote and extol self. He rather leaves praise of himself to others, while extolling praiseworthy traits in others.

5. “Is not puffed up” (1 Cor. 13:4): Literally, love is not “full of hot air.” This is the opposite of arrogance, pride, pomposity, and vainglory, which are completely incompatible with loving behavior. Again, some of the

Corinthians may have been exhibiting this attitude regarding the gift(s) they possessed.

6. “Doth not behave itself unseemly” (1 Cor. 13:5): One who loves is not ill-mannered, disorderly, or crude. He does not engage in embarrassing conduct. He avoids even the appearance of indecent or vile behavior. Rather, he is courteous and considerate of the feelings of others. Perhaps some of the Corinthians had forgotten the meaning of civil behavior toward one another.

7. “Seeketh not its own” (1 Cor. 13:5): One who loves is not consumed with selfishness, the root of all sin. He does not demand or expect recognition, applause, or even due consideration. He is less obsessed with his own “rights” than his duties. Jealousy over the gifts of the Spirit was provoked by seeking selfish advantage.

8. “Is not provoked” (1 Cor. 13:5): One who loves does not “flare up,” but controls his temper and remains calm under stress. Some of this behavior may have characterized some of the Corinthians.

9. “Taketh not account of evil” (1 Cor. 13:5): One who loves does not look for the worst in others, but for the best. Neither does he keep a list of wrongs, injustices, and wounds others have inflicted for a time of vengeance and retribution. This attitude in no way encourages overlooking sin, nor does it mitigate the numerous Scriptural mandates to oppose and expose evil and error (Eph. 5:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; et al.).

10. “Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness” (1 Cor. 13:6): One who loves does not find satisfaction in discovering the sins or errors of others, even those of his enemies. He grieves when wickedness prevails.

11. “Rejoiceth with the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6): “Truth” here likely stands in contrast with “unrighteousness” above. Thus the statement would refer to joy over the exposure of such things as falsehood, lying, and slander.

However, “truth” may refer to “**the** Truth,” the Gospel. In this case, one who loves delights in each advancement of the Gospel and the kingdom. One who loves is always on the side of the truth, whether in reference to the Word of God or to honor and integrity.

12. “Beareth all things” (1 Cor. 13:7): One who loves makes every possible excuse for the behavior of others to avoid hasty judgment. Concerning love’s attitude toward our fellows, Charles R. Eerdman wrote: “Love...throws a kindly mantle over their faults.”⁷ This facet of love recognizes that human frailties are present in all of us, and “bears with” these failings in others, even as one desires others to bear with his.

13. “Believeth all things” (1 Cor. 13:8): One who loves believes the best about others until he has no choice but to believe otherwise. Love and eager suspicion do not dwell in the same heart. However, let none suppose that there is any refuge for gullibility in this feature of love.

14. “Hopeth all things” (1 Cor. 13:8): Love causes one to hang on even when people disappoint us and situations look dismal. Realistic optimism is a product of Biblical love.

15. “Endureth all things” (1 Cor. 13:8): Love produces perseverance and steadfastness to continue one’s righteous pursuits in spite of a wicked environment and enemy assault. Love keeps us going.

“Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing” was a very popular song fifty years ago. What it stated about romantic love is an accurate assessment of *agape* love as well. As the fruit of the Spirit has numerous facets, of which love is one, so love likewise has its own multiple and marvelous facets.

In his quaint but powerful style, Matthew Henry observed of love:

How lovely a thing Christianity would appear
to the world, if those who profess it were more

actuated and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress!...Blessed Jesus! How few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!⁸

The Demonstration Of Love

It is good to define the moral attributes the Word of God sets before us. Definitions can be abstract at times, but demonstrations of these attributes bring them into the realm of things concrete. When the Bible student begins considering those who have exemplified a superior degree of love, many persons come to mind.

The Bible is replete with examples of unselfish love between human beings. In his love for the unworthy and rebellious Israelites, Moses besought God to remove his name from the Divine record book if God decided not to spare them. The story of Ruth and Naomi furnishes a touching example of dedicated love. It is so appealing that Ruth's loving words have served as wedding vows in millions of wedding ceremonies through the centuries:

Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God (Ruth 1:16).

The tender story of Esther, who so loved her fellow-Jews that she was willing to risk her life for them, is unforgettable (Esth. 4:15-16). David and Jonathan were bound to each other in an exceptionally strong relationship of human love (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 1 Sam. 20:17; et al.). It is near blasphemy that evil-minded and immoral men seek to turn the beautiful and pure love between David and Jonathan into a relationship that justifies their own abominable perversions. David's love for his son Absalom,

even when he stole his father's throne for a brief time, is a study in powerful, unrequited love (2 Sam. 18:33).

We see a superior quality of love in Joseph, who, believing Mary had been unfaithful to their betrothal vows and thereby perhaps having his romantic love for her quenched, still was "not willing to make her a public example," but "was minded to put her away privily" (Matt. 1:19). An unnamed Roman centurion had such an unusual love for the Jews of Capernaum that he had built a synagogue for them (Luke 7:1-5). And who can overlook in such a list the special, loving "father-son" relationship Paul and Timothy enjoyed (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2, 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:2-6)?

We see the perfect demonstration of love in Deity. This includes all of the expressions that Jehovah God the Father has manifested toward us. All of these manifestations flow from the fact that "love is of God" and "God is love" (1 John 4:7-8; 1 John 4:16). Man did not and does not know the meaning of love until he sees God's love: "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). He taught us by example and precept what it means to love someone.

The beautiful world in which we live, with all of its life sustaining powers, is proof of a loving and beneficent Creator (Psm. 19:1-4). But the ultimate statement of His love is the gift of His Son for our sins:

For God **so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

But God commendeth **his own love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Behold **what manner of love** the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are (1 John 3:1).

Herein was **the love of God manifested** in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. **Herein is love**, not that we loved God, but that **he loved us**, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

No wonder Paul described God's love as "his **great love** wherewith he loved us" and ascribed this love to God's "being rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4).

Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father and our Savior, possessed and possesses the same deep and intimate love for the souls of all men. In Paul's words to the Ephesians he revealed the extent to which Christ loved us: "And walk in love, even as **Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell" (Eph. 5:2). A bit later, Paul also wrote: "Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it**" (Eph. 5:25).

Just as the love of the Father taught us the meaning of love, so does the love of Christ: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Shortly before His death, the Lord told the apostles, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He knew that He would soon be doing this very thing for them, but not for them only: "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). The Son of God "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6): "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). If there is no greater demonstration of love than for a man to lay down his life for his **friends**, then we can scarcely conceive of the greatness of the love that moves one to lay down his life on behalf of his **enemies**. All of this becomes the more amazing when

we remember that our Savior had it in His power to halt the action of His slayers at any moment He chose. Surely, Paul had just such things in mind when he wrote: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14).

Conclusion

We have considered the following matters in this chapter:

1. The Holy Spirit does not directly infuse into our hearts “love,” which Paul sets before us as part of the “fruit of the Spirit.” Rather, each of us is commanded to cultivate and practice this characteristic in our own lives as we study God’s Word and associate with those who exemplify love.

2. “Love” has been misused and corrupted in various ways: Some think it consists of mere words, some identify it with mere emotions and feelings, others corrupt it by associating it with sexual passion and fulfillment, and yet others use it as a license to sin.

3. “Love” as a “fruit of the Spirit” is the beautiful *agape* trait that unselfishly seeks the best for others, regardless of their worthiness, comeliness, or likeability. This is the kind of love alone that can be commanded because its source is the human will, rather than human emotions.

4. The ultimate exemplar of this love is Deity, seen in both the First and Second Persons in the Godhead. God so loved the world that He gave up His Son, and the Son so loved the world that He gave up His life. Both the Father and the Son manifested this superior and incomparable characteristic of *agape* love toward men, not because they were likeable, deserving, or righteous, but contrariwise, because they were none of these and were hopeless without that love.

Such matchless love as our God has manifested for us is not something we are merely to admire. After speaking of the motivation the love of Christ was in his life, Paul drove home its practical application: “And he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15). To “live unto themselves” is not possible for those who have inculcated this “fruit of the Spirit” called “love.” As we have seen, love “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own,” all of which describe the lives of those who “live unto themselves.” No, love compels us to live for Him who died for our sakes. When we keep this motivation before us, it will cause us to behave toward both men and God so as to please them both.

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

2 Apostate liberals in the church have taught this “semi-Calvinistic,” “semi-Pentecostal” doctrine for many years. Mac Deaver, once counted a stalwart defender of the faith, has joined the liberals on this doctrine. He first stated his “direct operation” conviction in his 1994 debate with brother Marion Fox on the indwelling of the Spirit. In this debate he referred to the “supraliterary” (i.e., beyond, in-addition-to, the Word) work of the Spirit in our lives. He also stated in the debate that he would be willing to advocate/defend the premise that the Spirit “personally strengthens” (i.e., **directly**) us “in addition to the Word” (**The Deaver-Fox Debate** [Spring, TX: Bible Resource Pub., 1995], pp. 246, 292). After refusing debate challenges from various brethren on his “direct operation” doctrine enunciated in his debate with Fox, Deaver sought out an opponent of his own choice (the once faithful Bill Lockwood) and persuaded him to debate him on the “direct operation” issue in 1998. Brother Jerry Moffitt also debated Deaver on this issue in 2000, in which debate Deaver affirmed the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the saint.

3 Mac Deaver, **Studies in Philippians and Colossians**,” ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 2000), pp. 520–21. Note: this source is not the actual Moffitt-Deaver debate book. However, Deaver used the argument referenced in this source in his debate with Moffitt. A major part of Deaver’s argument was that “the Word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit” and since “the saint must produce the fruit of the Spirit, **then** the Holy Spirit must directly affect a saint’s heart.”

4 I originally wrote the material in this section in a slightly different form as an “Editorial Perspective” in **The Gospel Journal** (July 2003), 4:2–6.

5 W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966 reprint), 3:21.

6 Those who possessed miraculous “gifts of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 12 and 1 Cor. 13) received them because the Spirit divided “to each one severally even as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11). No one ever received these gifts or achieved these powers merely by studiously applying and obeying the Word of God. Men could receive them only as the Holy Spirit chose to give them; they are thus “**gifts of the Spirit.**” Apparently, **not every saint** received one of those gifts (1 Cor. 12: 29–30). In contrast to those gifts, Paul urges upon **every saint** the trait of love, a “**fruit of the Spirit**” (Gal. 5:22). **Love is not a gift**, but an indispensable character attribute that each one must achieve for himself by applying the teachings of the Holy Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:4–8). While they were to “desire earnestly” (1 Cor. 14:1, 1 Cor. 14:39) the miraculous gifts, our brethren of old could not receive them merely by seeking to have them. They had to be miraculously bestowed by the apostles (Acts 6:6; Acts 6:8; Acts 8:6–19; Acts 19:5–6; et al.). The Lord never **commanded** any disciple to possess a spiritual gift. However, He did command us to acquire and practice the attribute of love (Matt. 5:44; John 13:34; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 4:7–8; et al.). Every saint in every age can/must possess this and the other elements that compose the fruit of the Spirit. We will never bear spiritual fruit by expecting the Holy Spirit to **give** us these character traits directly. He produces

these (including love) in us through such media as His Word and through our providential associations with faithful saints who influence us by their noble examples. The fruit is no less the Holy Spirit's thereby. If the "fruit of the Spirit" were **given** to us **directly**, perhaps Paul should have written in Galatians 5:22: "But the **gift of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace...." Some among us would doubtless thus change the wording of this passage if they could, for this is the meaning they seek to impose upon it. Surely, it is significant that the Holy Spirit did not use such terminology.

7 Charles R. Eerdman, **The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983 reprint), p. 135.

8 Matthew Henry, **Commentary on the Whole Bible**, (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 6:575.

CHAPTER 14

Joy

Billy Bland

Introduction

WHAT A JOY IT is to be associated again with the Southaven church of Christ. My heartfelt appreciation is extended to the elders, Con Lambert and Larry Everson, and to the preachers, B.J. Clarke and Wayne Jones, as well as to all the Southaven congregation for the invitation to be a part of this, the 12th Annual POWER Lectureship. This year's theme, "The Works of the Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit," will aid each of us as we face daily the spiritual battles within our lives.

In the Christian life, there is not only a "putting off" of the old man, but also a "putting on" of the new (cf. Eph. 4:22-32). It is not enough to avoid the works of the flesh (although such is indeed essential), but we must also bear the fruit of the Spirit. It is absolutely essential that each child of God bear fruit. Jesus stated; "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:1-2). Not only are we to bear fruit, but in Jesus we bear "much fruit." Jesus said; "I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Peter informs us that if we add to our faith the Christian graces, we shall “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:8). Paul says that Christians are married to Christ and that they should bring forth fruit unto God:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).

Definition

The particular aspect of the “fruit of the Spirit” that I am to discuss is “**joy**.” The Greek word translated “joy,” is “*chara*” and according to Strong means: “cheerfulness, i.e., calm delight.”¹ WordWeb defines “joy” as “the emotion of great happiness.”² Commenting on this word, Garland Elkins observed;

Joy is a marvelous quality of the Christian life. It is listed by Paul with other qualities under the general heading of “The fruit of the Spirit.” Joy is a deep happiness born of a father-child relationship. “Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). This joy includes the sense of both fulfilling and having fulfilled the Father’s will (John 15:11; John 17:13). “Joy” in Gal. 5:22 refers to that resultant relationship between God and man which is based upon grace and appropriated through the obedience of the gospel (Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 19:1-5; Acts 2:14-41). Joy is a quality, and not simply an emotion (Psm. 16:11; Phil. 4:4; Rom. 15:13), which characterizes the Christian life (1 Pet. 1:8).³

Attention is directed to the point that brother Elkins made that “joy is a quality, and not simply an emotion.” It

includes an emotion, but is not simply an emotion. It is a quality of the fruit of the Spirit that the Christian is to possess. Understanding this will help one see that he can have joy even in physical pain and/or emotional distress. One can, as Paul stated, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: [and] again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

Joy In Salvation

The announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ was an occasion of great joy. Luke records:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy**, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:8-11).

Even prior to this announcement, John the Baptist, while still in the womb of Elisabeth, leaped for joy when Mary, the mother of Jesus came unto Elisabeth. Likewise, the wise men were filled with joy when they saw the star that would lead them to the babe Jesus (cf. Matt. 2:10; Luke 1:44). Jesus has continued to bring great joy to untold millions. Millions have rejoiced when they obeyed the Gospel, knowing that all their past sins were washed away by the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The vilest of sinners have been forgiven by the sinless Son of God.

The very first time that the Gospel was preached in the name of Christ, those who were guilty of murder were forgiven when they repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:36-38). The preacher on that occasion was the apostle Peter, and he, himself, had been guilty of denying the Lord, but had repented and been forgiven!

When the Gospel went into Corinth, there were those who were guilty of all types of immorality, (including adultery, fornication, uncleanness, homosexuality, etc.), but were forgiven when they obeyed the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Acts 18:8). Any of these sins will keep one out of heaven and condemn him to a devil's hell. A sinner cannot go back and "un-commit" his sins. The only hope that he has, is to be forgiven of his sins! When one understands this and is obedient to the Gospel, he has reason to rejoice when his sins are forgiven! There are such examples of this in the Word of God.

When the effects of the Gospel were realized in Samaria there was great rejoicing. Luke, the inspired historian, records:

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed [with them]: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was **great joy** in that city (Acts 8:5-8).

Later, this same preacher, Philip, preached Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch, whereupon the eunuch was obedient to heaven's message:

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on [their] way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And

when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way **rejoicing** (Act 8:35-39).

The Philippian jailor went from being a man, who was so fearful and despondent that he was about to commit suicide, to becoming a child of God, born anew, filled with hope and purpose with a reason to rejoice. The Word of God says:

And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and **rejoiced**, believing in God with all his house (Act 16:27-34).

What a difference the Word of God made in this man's (and his household's), life! The Gospel of Christ can lift one out of a state of hopelessness and give him a reason to rejoice!

It is possible for one to forfeit his salvation by turning away from Christ. The Bible warns about falling from grace (Gal. 5:4). It also describes the pitiful spiritual condition of one who has fallen away (2 Pet. 2:20-22, Luke 12:47-48). David, who was described at one time as a man after God's own heart, sinned by committing adultery, and then

murder. However, to his good credit, when he was approached by the prophet Nathan, he repented of his sins and was forgiven by the Lord. During the time from David's sin, until he was forgiven, he must have agonized over his lost condition. In his penitent prayer, he cried out to Jehovah:

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; [that] the bones [which] thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the **joy of thy salvation**; and uphold me [with thy] free spirit (Psm. 51:7-12).

David had lost the joy of his salvation and greatly desired such to be restored unto him. Once restored he knew that he should get back to the Lord's work. He declared that upon being forgiven, "[Then] will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee (Psm. 51:13). David had lost the joy of his salvation and longed for it once again! He proved himself true to God as the Bible records the following words at his death: "And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead" (1 Chron. 29:28).

Not only do the ones who are forgiven rejoice when they are saved from their sins, but heaven itself rejoices. Jesus says; "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). And, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). These verses, (as well as many

others), tell us that heaven is very much concerned with our salvation, even to the point of “rejoicing” when we are saved.

Joy In Tribulation

Life is not always easy nor pleasant. Tribulation, heartache, sorrow, persecution and pain are as much a part of life as is happiness. How does the Christian respond to such negative things within his life? Someone has observed that difficult times within our lives can either make us bitter or better, depending on our reactions. Jesus Christ stated while we are in the world we will have tribulation.

Just prior to His own crucifixion, He stated to His disciples: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”(John 16:33). We live in a world where tribulations exist. Consequently, we will face tribulation. Sometimes this tribulation is brought about due to our being a Christian and opposing the things of the world. Jesus, however, has overcome the world and as a result, we should realize that the tribulation is temporary. Even in this tribulation, Jesus says we can have “peace” in Him.

Jesus is our example in enduring pain, adversity and tribulation. The Hebrews’ writer admonishes:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.** For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and

faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:1-4).

Jesus, our Master, suffered while here on the earth. However, He was able to endure the cross by looking to the joy that was set before Him. None of us will ever have to suffer as did Jesus. Yet, we do suffer while in this life and we too can endure such by looking to the joy that is set before us. Jesus taught His disciples to expect persecution. But He also taught them to **rejoice** in the midst of such persecutions. Jesus did not mean by this that they should enjoy the pain and heartache, but with proper perspectives they could rejoice while enduring the persecution. He stated:

Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10-12).

It obviously takes conviction and courage to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus Himself demonstrated great courage by willingly submitting to the cruel mockings of men and then to the crucifixion. His apostles, no doubt encouraged by seeing the resurrected Christ, also faced opposition that could cost them their lives. Yet, they learned to rejoice in such tribulations. Soon after the establishment of the church in the city of Jerusalem, persecution began. They were commanded not to teach nor preach any more in the name of Jesus. They, however, remained true to their calling and continued to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Because of their continual teaching, they were beaten. Yet the Bible records:

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy

to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

The Thessalonians also knew what it was like to face tribulation for the cause of Christ. But, they, like the apostles, could still have joy in the face of tribulation. Paul wrote them saying; “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1:6). The cause of Christ is right! Paul, when facing imminent death, wrote to his son in the Gospel, Timothy, encouraging him by saying:

I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. 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: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

One should note that even though Paul was facing the sword, he didn't tell Timothy to give up the fight. Rather, he stated the very opposite! He knew that the cause of Christ is right. He knew that even in death, he was victorious through Christ. Consequently, he encouraged Timothy to “stay the course.”

Joy In Association

The greatest joy that one can have is to be in fellowship with God. The beloved John wrote:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full (1 John 1:3-4).

The word “fellowship” means “communion” or a “sharing in common.” It is a matter of great joy to have communion or a “sharing in common,” with God. Yet, that is exactly the blessing of the child of God! Contemplating such, we agree with John: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1).

Not only is it the privilege of the child of God to have fellowship with God, but he also has fellowship with all of the redeemed. The faithful child of God has a common bond with all other redeemed persons throughout the world! This should bring joy to the child of God as he contemplates the fact that he is in fellowship with God and has many brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world. This fellowship is not determined by man but by God. Fellowship is not determined by whom one likes or dislikes, but by whether or not one is walking in the light. John wrote:

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:6-10).

Paul wrote; “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). What a joy it is when we walk in the light and fellowship is had among brethren:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (Psm. 133:1-3).

We should never take lightly our fellowship with God and with our brethren. If we treasure our fellowship with God and one another, we will never allow sin to dominate our lives, knowing that in so doing, we forfeit our fellowship with God and with the redeemed. There is a joy in our fellowship with God and with one another (1 John 1:6-10).

Joy In Our Destination

There is joy awaiting the faithful child of God. To the ones that faithfully discharged their responsibilities regarding the talents committed unto them, Jesus said: “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: **enter thou into the joy of thy lord**” (Matt. 25:21; Matt. 25:23). As stated previously, we live in a world where tribulation, heartache, and pain exist. However, there is a place that is attainable by all who desire to go, wherein these things do not exist. John wrote:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;

and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful (Rev. 21:1-5).

Imagine living in a place where there is no more death, sorrow, crying, nor any more pain! Then, also imagine living there eternally!! Friend, one doesn't have to "imagine" such, for it is real. This place is called "heaven." This certainly should put joy in the heart! Just as Jesus despised the shame and endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him, we too, can endure the trials that come our way, if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the joy set before us (Heb. 12:1-2).

While facing affliction, Paul kept things in proper perspective. He wrote:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

If we keep things eternal (heaven), in our heart, our afflictions here can seem light and but for a moment. They also work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

One does not have to “guess” whether or not heaven is his home. Paul continued his statement by saying: “For we know that if our earthly house of [this] tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). Paul said that “we know” that we have a home in heaven. To the Philippians, he wrote:

For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. But if I live in the flesh, this [is] the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you (Phil. 1:21-24).

Paul knew that if he departed this life, he would be with Christ. This was not simply wishful thinking on the part of Paul. Likewise, John assures us:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:11-15).

The child of God realizes that God, his Father, desires to bless him. He desires our ultimate salvation in heaven. In fact, He gave His only begotten Son that we might be with Him in heaven. He would not give His only begotten Son for our salvation and then bar those that do His will from entering heaven. Paul wrote: “What shall we then

say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Rom. 8:31-32)?

This, however, doesn’t mean that all will go to heaven regardless whether or not they obey God. John wrote:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6).

Jesus is the Author of salvation to all those that obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). When we obey God, we have His assurance that we have fellowship with Him and that Heaven is our home.

Conclusion

Joy, as a part of the fruit that the Spirit produces in us, truly demonstrates God’s desire to bless us (and that eternally). The quality of joy is not only in this life, but in the world to come as well. Truly there is joy in **salvation, in tribulation, in our association and ultimately in our destination**. The way the Holy Spirit produces fruit in us in by means of the seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11). Where the seed is not sown, there is no fruit. We would know nothing of the joy from the Spirit if it were not for the Word of God.

Reader friend, do you have the joy that is produced from the Spirit? You can by being obedient to the Spirit’s directions. He has directed us to hear heaven’s message that produces faith in our hearts (Rom. 10:17). Then we are to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24),

whereupon we are to repent of our sins (Acts 17:30). We are to confess that Jesus is the Christ (Rom. 10:10) and be immersed in water for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). If you haven't started your Christian journey as of yet, why not do so this very hour? The joy of the Spirit can be your's today and forever.

Endnotes

1 **Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary**, (Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc. Copyright 1994).

2 WordNet Database, Copyright 2001, Princeton University.

3 Garland Elkins, "Bearing the Fruit of the Spirit," in **Galatians, The Denton Commentaries** (CD), (Valid Publications, 2001).

CHAPTER 15

Peace

Garland Elkins

Introduction

AMONG OTHER DEFINITIONS, *THE* dictionary defines peace as: “cessation of or freedom from any strife or dissension. Freedom of the mind from annoyance, distraction, anxiety, and obsession, etc.; tranquility; serenity. A state of tranquility or serenity; to become reconciled.”

Peace! What a great subject. All normal human beings have, to a degree, a desire for peace. The Bible has much to say about peace. God is spoken of as “the God of peace” (Rom. 16:20). Christ is “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). The Lord intends for His church to be a kingdom of peace (Rom. 14:17).

The Bible says much about peace. The Psalmist wrote, “The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness” (Psm. 72:3). Some advocate peace while their intent and purposes are the opposites of peace, “Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace, and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him” (Mic. 3:5). The Bible speaks much of giving peace (Lev. 26:6; Num. 6:26; 1 Chron. 22:9; Jer. 14:13; Hag. 2:9). We should seek peace, and pursue it (1 Pet. 3:11). We should desire peace

(Acts 12:20); enjoy peace (Acts 24:2); we are to follow peace (2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14). The Scriptures also speak of preaching peace (Eph. 2:17; Acts 10:36); and sending peace (Acts 10:34). Let us note the following great truths about peace.

God Is A God Of Peace

Paul concluded the great Roman epistle with these words, “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen” (Rom. 15:33). The following Scriptures describe God as the God of peace: “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom. 16:20). “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33). “The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9); “And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23). “Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus Christ” (Heb. 13:20).

Jesus Christ Is The Prince Of Peace

Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be called the Prince of Peace, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). He is our peace: “For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14). He is the Lord of peace: “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all time in all ways. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thess. 3:16). He is King of peace (Heb. 7:2).

The Church Of Christ Is A Kingdom Of Peace

Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). He also wrote to the Christians at Colossae and said, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15).

The Gospel Of Christ Is A Message Of Peace

The Gospel is referred to by inspiration as “the gospel of peace”. “And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). To the Ephesian Christians Paul wrote: “And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15).

Christians Are To Be Peace-Loving

Christians are to be peace-makers. Christ said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). We are to pray for peace, “I exhort therefore first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We are to keep the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), and exhibit the fruit of peace (Gal 5:22). We are taught, “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18).

The Fruit Of The Spirit Is Peace

Peace is the absence of discord; peace is found when one force works with another force in sweet and unbroken fellowship. There is no jar or irritation in the relationship. Peace is not found when every instrument in an orchestra

is silent, but when every instrument is making its own contribution with, and to, each and every other instrument. The result is a rich and melodious harmony. *Thus, it is with life when the “Fruit of the Spirit” is in proper proportion in our lives!*

Paul said, “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). He presents the figure of a siege. Our lives are surrounded by subtle foes seeking to gain entrance. At the door are temptations, errors, deceptions, fears and alarms—all are at the door, cunningly waiting for admission. But, within the heart of the faithful Christian, peace is pictured as a sleepless sentinel and guard. When there is a peace within, there is perfect harmony between the soul and the Lord. There is no discordant element. When we are at peace, the heart—soil—will be kept lovely, and the thought—flowers—will be kept beautiful.

Paul teaches us how and upon what to think and also points to himself as to the result of proper thinking. Correct thinking produces commendable and worthy fruit in the life of any and all who practice these great truths.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phil. 4:8-9).

The Importance Of Peace Is Stressed In The Scriptures

God is the “God of peace” (1 Thess. 5:23). Christ is “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Zacharias, the father of

John the Baptist, prophesied that the Lord would bring peace to the obedient. He said:

Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people In the remission of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us, To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; To guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79).

Shortly thereafter, when Christ was born, the heavenly host sang, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well please” (Luke 2:14).

Peace Is Desirable

It should be noted that there is a type of peace that Jesus did not come to bring, and that is a false peace. He announced that His teaching would bring not peace but a sword (Matt. 10:34). He would never advocate peace at the expense of truth. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable” (Jas. 3:17).

There are those who cry, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). Jesus would have nothing to do with such a false peace. He never compromised with error. Jesus wanted peace, yet, both He and His faithful disciples were, and are, often in the position of the Psalmist when dealing with the wicked: “I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war” (Psm. 120:7).

His mission into the world was to bring true peace which is based upon truth. “But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:13-14).

In spite of the fact that “the whole world lieth in darkness” (1 John 5:19), and to His disciples Jesus said, “In the world ye have tribulation” (John 16:33), yet, He was always characterized by a deep, calm, peace. Just before He went forth to Gethsamane, the judgment-hall and the cross, He said to His disciples, “My peace I leave with you” (John 14:27). The peace of which He was conscious was far deeper than all of His trials and tribulations which He had suffered and was about to suffer. The Psalmist said, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psm. 119:165).

The message of Christ is a message of peace. Paul exhorted the Ephesian Christians to have their feet shod “with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). Peter spoke of “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:36). Jesus said to His disciples, “Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another” (Mark 9:50). The words of the song “Peace, Perfect Peace” very appropriately sets forth this peace:

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin:
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties
pressed.
To do the will of Jesus – this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round:
On Jesus bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown.
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Not All Peace Is Desirable

Men have always longed for peace. It is a universal longing. Peace is not secured by accident, chance nor some

unusual circumstances. It is rather the case that peace is obtained through a recognition and submission to God's law.

God's laws concerning the creation and maintenance of peace are as certain as His laws by which He governs nature. One might defy the law of gravity by jumping from the top of a skyscraper, but he would pay with his life as his body crashes to the pavement below. Neither can one ignore and reject God's laws governing the moral realm without suffering. One may lead a life of dissipation and even ridicule God's laws for morality during all of his dissipation. Nevertheless, sooner or later he will pay the penalty in disease, a troubled conscience, and many come to an untimely death as a result of such violations.

It is just as true that we cannot ignore nor reject God's laws concerning peace without there coming the inevitable "pay day."

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7-8).

How Can We Achieve Peace?

Is it possible to live peaceably with men today? God's answer is an emphatic "yes!" Not only is it a possibility, but it is also a command: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The church is explicitly commanded to be a peaceable institution. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13). Unfortunately, there are a few people with whom it is impossible to live in peace. "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

To achieve peace we must have a genuine deep-seated desire for peace and fervent motivation for it. If we sincerely long for peace, we will think peace, love peace, and work for it in our lives, and the lives of others. In fact, we are commanded, “Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

Once at peace with himself through his obedience to the Gospel. The Christian must accept his role as a peacemaker. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Peter said, “For He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10-11).

Things Which Make For Peace

“So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another” (Rom. 14:19). The “things” which make for peace apply to the home, the church and the nation. When we want peace with all of our hearts and are willing to submit to God’s laws governing peace, we can achieve it.

At the head of any list of things that “make for peace” is love. All acceptable service to God must rest upon love for Him: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-39). “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you” (John 15:12). “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Love will cause one to follow the Lord’s injunction, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

The Christian must develop and maintain a peaceable disposition: "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). It was this disposition which prompted Abraham to propose a peaceable settlement in his dealings with Lot. It is said, "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife...I pray thee, between me and thee and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8). Abraham was willing to take second best. "Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:9). His personal ambitions and wealth he was willing to subordinate in the interest of peace. He knew that it was vitally important to maintain peace. He valued peace above the temporary possession of a certain section of land.

Isaac showed a great desire for peace when the herdsmen of Gerar strove with him for the possession of the wells of his father Abraham. He simply gave up his claim, moved to another place and dug a well. The herdsmen of Gerar came and claimed it, and again Isaac moved. After digging the third well, Isaac found peace, for this time his right to the water was not contested. Then, it was that Isaac said, "For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. 26:22). Isaac exemplified, as opposed to the attitude of the Corinthian brethren many centuries later, that in order to have peace he was willing to suffer defrauding. Paul reprimanded the Corinthians when he said, "Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:7).

Solomon, by inspiration, gave a marvelous promise to the man who pleases the Lord: "When a man's ways

please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7).

Peace is inseparably linked with righteousness. The desire to do right at all times and under all circumstances has a tremendous bearing upon whether peace shall exist or not.

I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

“The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working” (Jas. 5:16).

Micah, the prophet, stated three of the most important requirements, which, if practiced, would produce peace. He said, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8).

I would point out to the alien sinner that, in order to obtain peace, you must: Hear the word of the Gospel and believe it (Acts 15:7); repent of all sins (Acts 17:30); confess that Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37); and be baptized into Christ in order to be forgiven and, thus, to have your sins washed away (Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

As a Christian, one must be faithful as long as life continues (Rev. 2:10). As an erring child of God, one must: repent, confess one’s sins and pray God for forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Jas. 5:16; Acts 8:20-22). My sincere prayer is that all alien sinners who read this chapter will become Christians, and that all erring children of God will be restored. My prayer for all faithful Christians is stated by Paul, “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thess. 3:16).

A Type Of Peace And Unity That God Does Not Approve

And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? (2 Kings 9:22).

The background of this passage is sad, interesting, and instructive. Both Joram's father and mother were exceedingly wicked. In fact their names are synonyms for evil. "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (1 Kings 21:25). Jezebel and Ahab caused Naboth, an innocent man, to be murdered. They did this in order that they might possess his vineyard.

After the death of Naboth, Ahab went into his vineyard to possess it. However, God was observing, and no one ever escapes His scrutiny and knowledge (Psm. 139:7-11; Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:13). God sent Elijah, the prophet, to confront Ahab the king, to point out his sin and predict his death and the details of it.

And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou has sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings 21:17-20).

Note that Elijah said to Ahab, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood,"

even thine” (1 Kings 21:19). Another prophet of the Lord predicted the same fate for Jezebel. “And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled” (2 Kings 9:10). The following passages sum up the exceeding great wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel:

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him (1 Kings 16:30-31).

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up (1 Kings 21:25).

Jehoram was wicked as Ahab and Jezebel:

And he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom (2 Kings 3:2-3).

Not only was Jehoram evil, but Ahab and Jezebel’s influence extended to Judah, for Ahaziah, king of Judah, was their son-in-law. “And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the Lord, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in the law of the house of Ahab” (2 Kings 8:27).

Just prior to the time of 2 Kings 9:22 we are informed, “But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria” (2 Kings 9:15). In the

meantime God had commanded Jehu, “And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel” (2 Kings 9:7).

When Jehu came to Jezreel, Joram and Ahaziah, the king of Judah, who was visiting with him, went out to meet Jehu. We read, “And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” (2 Kings 9:22). Jehu then killed both the king of Israel and the king of Judah. “And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot” (2 Kings 9:24).

But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there (2 Kings 9:27).

When Jezebel heard that Jehu was come to Jezreel, she looked out from a window and lectured him on peace. Jehu commanded his sympathizers to cast her down.

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than her skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of

the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel (2 Kings 9:33-37).

A Unity God Does Not Approve

There is a unity God does approve, a unity based on truth. Just as certainly, there is a unity which God does not approve. Jesus plainly taught this when He said:

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against the mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:34-39).

I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother in law against her daughter in law, and daughter in law against her mother in law (Luke 12:49-53).

Before there can be Christian unity, three must be in agreement – you, your brother, and the Lord, You and your brother can be in agreement, but it is still not Christian unity until you and your brother are not only in agreement with each other, but also both of you are in agreement with the Lord! Let me give you an example. “For they have consulted together with one consent: they

are confederate against thee” (Psm. 83:5). Note that “they have consulted together.” It was “with one consent.” There was real unity between these people. They were “confederate.” *But this unity was not a unity with God, but rather against God!*

In Acts, chapter 5, we see that Ananias and Sapphira “agreed together.” They were truly united with each other, but it was not *Christian* unity because they agreed to tempt the Spirit of God! *So, there can be unity and it not be Christian unity.* In fact, Ananias and Sapphira were united in marriage, in religion, in sin, in death, in the grave, and in eternity and yet here is a perfect demonstration of the fact that two members of the church can be fully agreed in everything and be so wrong that they will spend eternity in the terrible place called Hell!

God condemns “unity” in error (Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Pet. 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 2:11ff). He does not approve unity with those who teach that God approves denominationalism, atheism, agnosticism, infidelity, and evolution. He does *not* approve unity based on the false doctrines of those who teach error relative to marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Matt. 19:3-9). He does **not** teach unity with those who use instrumental music in the worship of God or compromise with those who advocate the “unity-in-diversity” doctrine, i.e., that people who have not obeyed the gospel or who are not faithful are to be fellowshipped. God does not approve of unity with the humanists, the immoral, the rebellious, or with anyone who will not submit to His will.

God Both Desires and Approves A Certain Kind of Unity

One must love the Truth before he can be united with the Lord. When people obey the Gospel plan of salvation, they are “born again” (John 3:3-5). To be “born of water and the Spirit” is as a believing penitent, to be baptized in water for the remission of sins, as the means appointed

by the Holy Spirit in His word (the Gospel) (Acts 8:26-40; Acts 10:47-48; Eph. 5:25-26; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-29).

We can have unity with God and with other faithful Christians if we walk in the light.

If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not have the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7).

Those who fail to abide in the truth are to be marked and avoided.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18).

Those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ do not have God.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

May God bless us to the end that we may always uphold the unity based on truth, but may we ever avoid, shun, and repudiate any and all unity based on error!

CHAPTER 16

Longsuffering

Dan Cates

Introduction

THE WRITER IS HONORED to have been asked to speak on the 2004 **POWER** Lectures. The church here has long stood as a bastion of Truth in this community and, representatively, throughout the world by her mission efforts. It is good, in this day when lax morality is permeating the border between the world and the church, that a lectureship should focus upon the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-24 enumerates the characteristics of worldliness, shows the product (note that the fruit of the Spirit is singular, with the aspects listed being characteristic of what is produced in the lives of the faithful through their obedience) of godliness, and then demonstrates that the righteous produce the latter rather than participate in the former.

The aspect of the fruit of the Spirit with which this chapter will deal is “longsuffering.” This chapter will show what it means to be longsuffering; will identify some of the longsuffering personalities of Bible times; will look at the longsuffering Savior, Jesus Christ; and will examine the need for longsuffering Christians today.

What It Means To Be Longsuffering

While the subject is “longsuffering,” another word carries much the same idea: patience. A simple search of

these word's use in the Bible reveals that longsuffering is used seventeen times, patience 34 times in 33 verses, and patient (a form of patience) nine times. Generally the words are interchangeable with three Greek words, primarily, being translated in one of these ways (others are translated the same or similarly; but as they are used less frequently, the study will center upon these three). These words are *hupomone*, *makrothumeo* and *makrothumia*. The word *hupomone* is translated "patience" 29 times, "patient" twice, and "continuance" and "enduring" once each.¹ The word *makrothumeo* is translated "long," "patience," and "patient" three times each; and "bear," "endured," "longsuffering," "patiently," and "suffereth" once each.² The word *makrothumia* is translated "longsuffering" twelve times and "patience" twice.³

One will note that the latter two are similar in structure with the first being the verb form and the second being its noun counterpart. It is evident from just a cursory glance of the way these words variously are translated, that the words patience and longsuffering are indeed interchangeable and therefore they will be viewed as such in this effort.

As for the definitions of these words, *hupomone*, used as a noun, is defined by Thayer thus:

- 1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance
- 1a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings;
- 1b) patiently, and steadfastly
- 2) a patient, steadfast waiting for
- 3) a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance⁴

Makrothumeo, used as a verb, is defined this way:

- 1) to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart
- 1a) to persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles

- 1b) to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others
- 1b1) to be mild and slow in avenging
- 1b2) to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish⁵

Makrothumia, used as a noun, is defined as:

- 1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance
- 2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs⁶

It is evident from these definitions, in addition to the ways that these words were translated into the English language, that the key ideas in understanding this idea of longsuffering and patience revolve around these things: steadfastness, endurance, perseverance, and forbearance.

Along with this thought must be recognized the circumstances when one must be longsuffering and patient: even when one is being troubled, persecuted, tried, offended, injured; or when one is merely suffering, not because of some other's action but just as part of existence in this mortal realm.

Consider also, that carried in this idea of longsuffering and patience is the idea that the one who is these things should not be vengeful, recognizing that God will reward the wicked. One may remember the call of those who had died for their faithfulness. Their souls cried out from under the altar, ". . . saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"(Rev. 6:10). These recognized that it was God's place to reward the wicked for their deeds, and that their perseverance would likewise be rewarded albeit on God's schedule. As Romans 12:19b presents God saying, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."These things all come together in the meaning of the words translated longsuffering and patience/patient.

Having seen these meanings, it is fitting that one should realize that Christians are commanded to have this trait found in their lives. From the days of the Old Testament, longsuffering has been commanded. David wrote, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass” (Psm. 37:7). While the Old Testament words were not examined, they nonetheless carried the same meanings as their Greek counterparts, and here they even bear an air of necessity.

Likewise in the New Testament longsuffering was commanded. James wrote to the scattered Jewish-Christians:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (Jas. 5:17-18).

As the farmer had to patiently wait for his fruit before he could reap so these scattered brethren were commanded to be patient, to be longsuffering, “unto the coming of the Lord.”

Paul, with apostolic authority, commanded the elect at Colossae, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;”(Col. 3:12). To the Ephesians he commanded that they walk worthy of their calling or vocation or job, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;”that, motivated by unity, such might be the end result (Eph. 4:2). To the Thessalonians he issued this command, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly,

comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thess. 5:14). Paul likewise issued a command to Timothy to be longsuffering, when he wrote, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11). Unto Timothy he later wrote, undoubtedly referring to Timothy as the servant of the Lord, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”(2 Tim. 2:24).

Also, preachers in general were commanded to be longsuffering, when Paul wrote again to Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”(2 Tim. 4:2). The aged men Paul likewise commanded, “That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience”(Tit. 2:2). And to elders likewise goes the command that they must be, among other things, “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;”(1 Tim. 3:3).

If longsuffering is a trait that must be had by those who would be obedient to God, it is only fitting that the Bible should show how such a characteristic could be incorporated into the life of Christians. How is such longsuffering and patience received by the one who would please God? The Bible shows that such comes from multiple locations. Longsuffering is gained from trials, from the very Word of God, from God Himself, and from Christ Himself; and it comes as that added by the Christian as he grows in spirituality and as that which comes by his well doing. Notice how the Bible ties these together.

James wrote concerning the role trials have in the gaining of patience, or a longsuffering attitude, “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect

and entire, wanting nothing” (Jas. 1:3-4). As one endures the ills of this life, whether he is afflicted by others or just as a course of nature, he should grow in patience. Especially Christians who suffer should be able to rise above their pains, recognizing the glory of the land to come and what can be gained through such patient waiting for such deliverance.

Not only does patience come from suffering, but it also comes from the Word of God. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”(Rom. 15:4). Notice that the patience and comfort that produces hope is itself produced by those things “written aforetime.” So therefore, through the Word inspired by the Holy Spirit those who will heed will have patience to await the realization of their hope.

The Bible also teaches that God Himself gives hope to the Christian. Paul wished upon the Romans, “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:”(Rom. 15:5). Paul likewise wished upon the church in Thessalonica, “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5). Notice that the basis of that patience was an anticipation of the coming of Christ.

It is fitting that if an anticipation of the coming of Christ produces patience that Jesus Himself should likewise produce patience. Such is shown to be the case by Paul who wrote to the Colossians: “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;” (Col. 1:11).

The impetus does not fall only upon the suffering or the Godhead to produce a longsuffering attitude in the lives of Christians, for Christians themselves must produce in their own lives patience. Peter told the scattered strangers (Gentile-Christians):

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Considering the way that Peter put his admonition, it is evident that the one who would serve God and have patience can take definite steps in so growing.

Paul helps the Christian to see how he can grow in longsuffering by indicating that such growth comes from doing that which is right. He wrote to the Romans, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:"(Rom. 2:7). The Christian, therefore, must busy himself, continuously and consistently, in doing that which leads to "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."

As for the importance of longsuffering and patience, not only are there commands to have this trait, and examples of those who did (as will be seen shortly), but there is stated such importance in passages such as Ecclesiastes 7:8 ("Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit") and Luke 8:15 ("But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience"). So important is a longsuffering character that it finds its place among the "fruit of the spirit." "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"(Gal. 5:22-23).

Longsuffering Bible Personalities

Having noticed what it means to be longsuffering (and in so doing having noticed its necessity and

importance), this study will now focus upon Bible examples of longsuffering.

One of the best examples of longsuffering is Abraham. One who recalls the life of Abraham will remember that he was called to leave his home in Ur, and—then again—in Haran after his father’s death, so that he could follow God’s lead to a new land. As he traveled, he and his seed were merely pilgrims, sojourners in strange lands. The Hebrews writer recorded:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Heb. 11:8-10; Heb. 11:13).

One today likely could not fathom all that was involved in Abraham’s patience. This great Bible person left a very advanced society to wander through what in his estimate was likely a very primitive world, perhaps never again to have a place to call home, for perhaps the rest of his life, following what to his thought was a new God (Abraham, or Abram as he was first known, would have only known the polytheistic gods of the Chaldeans prior to this). This Abraham did leave his home, “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise”(Heb. 6:15). What promise? That God would make of him “a great nation,” would bless him, would make his “name great,” and would make him “a blessing,” so that

in him would “all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3). In short it was the longsuffering of Abraham that put him as the patriarch of the lineage of Jesus.

The greatest example of a longsuffering spirit is that of Job. James, in urging the scattered to patient faithfulness, wrote concerning their forebearers:

Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (Jas. 5:10-11).

No work on patience, or longsuffering, would be complete without mention of the man whom Satan terrorized in an attempt to show injustice in God. As battles in this realm are fought upon physical battlefields, so battles in the spiritual realm are fought upon personal battlefields. And, as the battlefields of this earth are scorched by the feuding armies, so Job suffered because of the warring of Satan against God. Memory will recall that Job lost his oxen and asses (Job 1:15), his sheep and servants (Job 1:16), his camels and more servants (Job 1:17), his seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:19), and even his health (Job 2:7). And yet in all of this Job could still be remembered by James as God’s patient servant.

As was noticed earlier, patience at times can come from trial, and it surely did in the case of Job. Paul wrote, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:”(Rom. 5:3-4). Because tribulation will work patience, one may bear tribulation with patience, as Paul wrote, “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;”(Rom. 12:12).

Another example of patience was David, who endured physical threats on his life by his predecessor Saul and others and who, throughout his reign, had countless critics. David, in spite of the opposition he faced and demonstrating his godly attitude of heart (1 Kings 11:4; Acts 13:22), wrote, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry”(Psm. 40:1).

Likewise Paul and his fellow ministers were examples of patience, of longsuffering:

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, (2 Cor. 6:4-6).

Of Timothy’s familiarity with him, Paul wrote, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,” (2 Tim. 3:10). To the Corinthians he had said, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12). Truly Paul was an example of this trait.

The Thessalonians also exemplified a longsuffering spirit, for Paul thought of them, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”(1 Thess 1:3). Paul noted again there patience later, “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:”(2 Thess. 1:4).

Two of the seven churches of Asia likewise bore this trait. Ephesus was told by Jesus:

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them

which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted (Rev. 2:2-3).

Thyatira also received such a commendation, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first" (Rev. 2:19).

There were many others who showed such a longsuffering attitude, though they are not specifically named. In general those who inherit the promises of the Gospel are said to possess this quality, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). All who would be saints are spoken of as bearing this ideal in the Revelation, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints"(Rev. 13:10). A similar attitude is seen a chapter later:

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Rev. 14:12-13).

Without question the Bible is replete with such example of longsuffering, of patience, in its great characters. But not only do these possess this trait, for Jesus Christ Himself exhibits such!

The Longsuffering Savior, Jesus Christ

Jesus is not referred to as frequently as the Father is for actually possessing a longsuffering spirit; however, Jesus is as much God as God the Father is, and therefore possesses the same traits as the Father and even if it is not explicitly stated

as often, an examination of His life will show His patience to have been bountiful.

Consider how God the Father is pictured with reference to patience, to a longsuffering demeanor. God attributed this quality to Himself in Exodus 34:6, “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Moses recorded the same reality when he wrote, “The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Num. 14:18). David similarly praised the Father, “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psm. 86:15).

In the New Testament God’s longsuffering is no less evident, as Paul wrote, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). It is interesting that the longsuffering of God is tied to opportunities given to men to mold their lives into God’s form. Peter, referring back to the days of Noah, acknowledged the purpose of the long period of preaching to the faithless multitudes, “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet. 3:20). Peter built upon this fact in his second letter saying, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Effectively, as Peter wrote, “. . . the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15a).

While not mentioned as frequently, the Bible does remark on the patience of the Savior. Paul said, concerning

man's opportunity to enjoy salvation, and in particular his own salvation (his having been a persecutor of the church prior to his conversion), "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16).

Jesus Himself wrote to Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). Jesus was longsuffering and the Bible verifies the fact.

The Need For Longsuffering Christians Today

Since a longsuffering attitude is essential, since there are inspired examples of such, and since Jesus served as a pattern, it is incumbent upon those who are Christians to possess this same quality, to possess this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. This longsuffering attitude should be seen in the Christian's dealing with the world, living in the home, and serving among the church.

In the world, Christians should be patient in their dealings with those who are outside of Christ. Whether it is simply manifested in letting one's light shine before men (Matt. 5:16), whether it is manifested in one's struggling to persevere through physical pains, or whether it is manifested in one's trying to remain joyful in the face of opposition; this trait should mark one's dealings with his associates.

In the home a longsuffering attitude should temper the relationships of husbands and wives through all periods: in times of strength and in times of joys, but also in times of weakness and in times of trials. Such patience should permeate the dealings of parents with children and should be instilled in children as they learn how to obey their parents.

In the church a longsuffering attitude should be possessed by all so that harmony among brethren will be the result. David wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psm. 133:1). The unity that God desires and that is truly pleasant to the Godly can only be had when God is worshipped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24) and when brethren deal patiently with each other!

Conclusion

A longsuffering demeanor is something for which all must strive. As the Hebrews writer recorded, “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”(Heb. 10:36). Such patience should mark our spiritual conversation, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”(Heb 12:1).

It is this writer’s desire that the longsuffering spirit will prevail today as it was seen doing so in the lives of the great characters of the Bible and in the life of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

1 *hupomone* in **King James Concordance**, electronic edition on the e-Sword Bible program Version 7.0.0, (Rick Meyers: available at www.e-sword.net, 2000-2003).

2 *makrothumeo*, in **King James Concordance**, electronic edition.

3 *makrothumia* in **King James Concordance**, electronic edition.

4 *hupomone* in **Thayer’s Greek Definitions**, electronic edition on the e-Sword Bible program Version 7.0.0, (Rick Meyers: available at www.e-sword.net, 2000-2003).

5 *makrothumeo* in **Thayer’s Greek Definitions**, electronic edition.

6 *makrothumia* in **Thayer’s Greek Definitions**, electronic edition.

CHAPTER 17

Gentleness

Lennie Reagan

Commendation

THE SOUTHAVEN ELDERSHIP, PREACHERS and congregation are to be commended for their love for the Lord and their love for His church and both of these loves are evident in the fruit they bear. The theme of this lectureship is relevant and needed as this society crumbles beneath the burden of selfishness and shamelessness. This series of sermons which exposes the error of the works of the flesh and endorses the fruit of the Spirit is in keeping with the work of the grace of God: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12).

Introduction

A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:6-9).

This is in keeping with the saying of our Savior: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away” (John 15:2); thus, our Lord encourages fruit bearing: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8).

The theme of this chapter is the fruit of the Spirit identified as “gentleness.” Paul writes: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, **gentleness**, goodness, faith...” (Gal. 5:22, emp. mine LR). We live in an age when there is a drought of all of the elements which comprise the fruit of the Spirit as listed by the apostle. We are constantly reminded of the breakdown and the faltering application of these qualities as we go throughout our day. Unfortunately, there is sometimes a lack of this moral excellence even among the Lord’s people. Therefore, this timely topic will be examined in four avenues: (1) Definition of Gentleness; (2) Demonstration of Gentleness; (3) Divine Display of Gentleness; and (4) Devotion to the Development of Gentleness.

Definition Of Gentleness

Anthropologist Margaret Mead was once asked by a student for the earliest sign of civilization in a given culture. The student was expecting the answer to be centered around some article in the home such as a clay pot or something like that. Her answer was “a healed femur.” She went on to explain that no healed femurs are found where the law is the survival of the fittest. A healed femur shows that someone cared. Someone defined the gentleness of which we are concerned. The evidence of compassion is the first sign of civilization.¹

Kindness in our society seems to be a small, insignificant concern. Most people probably think of kindness as a single act; it is the least we could do for somebody. There is that form of kindness which is expected

of us; after all, we are a civilized people. We want to have friends and keep our lives running smoothly and we do not desire to be thought of as rude and unfriendly, so there are acts of kindnesses we perform. But, it appears that Paul was talking about more than social kindness when he penned the words of our text.

The English word “gentleness” is translated from the Greek word, “*chrestotes*” (khray-stot’-ace) and it possesses a couple of meanings. It is perhaps difficult for the word “gentleness” to contain all that is included in this part of the fruit of the Spirit which we are to possess and display. The word stems from a verb which means “to take into use” and carries with it the idea of “useful excellence.” It referred to something that was well suited for its purpose. As the word was applied to people it indicated they were worthy, honest and decent in all their relationships and dealings. This term came to signify someone who was all they were supposed to be: decent, gentle, kind, and reliable.

There is something excitingly interesting about this word. It not only describes the nature or disposition that we are to acquire and possess, but this gentleness is to be displayed. It is a serving and productive quality which should saturate all we do and say. Those with whom we come in contact will be affected by this quality we possess. It is certainly true that no man is an island to himself and that is true with gentleness. This quality will put others at ease around us. They will know that our desire for them is of the highest regard. They should feel safe in our presence knowing that we will serve them only for eternal good.

Bible gentleness and kindness is a disposition to be pleasing; it is mildness of temper, calmness of spirit, an unruffled disposition, and a disposition to treat all with politeness. Christianity makes no one miserable and sour. Gentleness corrects an irritable disposition; makes the heart kind; disposes us to make all around us happy as

we serve them. This is true politeness in every situation, even when it would be easy to be impolite.

Please do not misunderstand the essence of this quality. Possessing gentleness does not exclude the firmness which is required of the faithful child of God. Gentleness does not deny the strength of righteousness or the dignity of holiness. It does not indicate the spiritually spineless. Gentleness does not mean that we will “look the other way” in issues or conflicts which need to be resolved. This fruit of gentleness will never compromise convictions. We will not be resolved for a half-baked faith lacking in commitment, fervor and dedication. We will, however, handle delicately the challenges and opportunities which are ours. It describes those who stand for the truth of the kingdom in daily living in a manner which is kind and gentle.

Demonstrations Of Gentleness

Our time will be well invested as we explore examples of some who displayed this godly character of gentleness. These displays are evident in both the Old and New Testaments. We will begin with the Old Testament.

Moses is a man we look up to for his great leadership ability, and rightfully so. Yet, there other qualities which indicate his sterling character and his submission to God, and gentleness is only one of his virtues. One example will suffice. The text reveals the circumstance and situation of Moses’ demonstration of gentleness:

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it* (Num. 12:1-2).

This passage is usually studied to examine the meekness of Moses, as it should be. There is, however, a demonstration of his gentleness in this account. Moses offered no rebuke to the murmuring of Aaron and Miriam, as most people today would argue he had the “right.” Moses may have had the opportunity to hurt Aaron and Miriam with a verbal response; but, he chose to remain silent rather than respond to their unkind attitude. This quality assigned to and descriptive of Moses’ character explains why he did not rebuke the offenders and why God intervened so quickly.

The inspired response recorded in verse three, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3), was prompted by the Holy Spirit and not by Moses in some type of exhibition of self-love or self-justification. This is how God saw the heart of Moses as he chose to show kindness to the duo of dreadful commentators.

The book of Ruth details illustrations of kindnesses which extend beyond the boundaries of social kindness. Ruth serves as an exemplary example of the kindness God would have His children bear and exhibit. When given the opportunity to return to her home after the death of her husband, Ruth revealed the gentleness under consideration in this chapter. Even though she possessed the “right” to depart from Naomi, Ruth made her stand of kindness as she “...clave unto...” Naomi (Ruth 1:14b).

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

Please observe how the kindness and gentleness of Ruth was viewed by others and in this instance by Boaz:

And Boaz. . . .said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore (Ruth 2:11).

The activity of gentleness on the part of Ruth produced the blessings of Boaz as he sought to bless her in the name of the Lord: “The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust” (Ruth 2:12).

When we obey the commandments of our Lord, the blessings will come down. Ruth behaved in a kind and gentle manner toward Naomi. Ruth sought the good of her mother-in-law before her own concern and she actively pursued Naomi’s welfare. She did not simply kiss her mother-in-law in departing as did Orpah (Ruth 1:14). Ruth forfeited what many people may consider to have been in her best interest in order to show kindness and gentleness to Naomi. Her “rights” may have clearly entitled her to return to her home and family; but, her desire to behave righteously achieved God’s approval and Divine accolades. Oh, for the heart of Ruth in the people of God today!

Her actions provided her the blessings of Boaz as he displayed gentleness and kindness to Ruth and Naomi. Boaz instructed his laborers to allow Ruth to glean while they were in the process of harvesting and bundling the sheaves. This was not the normal procedure as others were not allowed to harvest from a neighbor’s field until the barley had been sheaved. Boaz also commanded his men to “let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” (Ruth 2:16).

The kindness of Ruth is again confirmed in her actions toward Boaz and Naomi as she is willing and seeks to marry Boaz. As Ruth approaches Boaz to submit herself to him, and to seek his function as the redeemer-kinsman, he commended her, spoke kindly to her, and spoke honorably of her, as a woman of eminent virtue.

She had shown in this instance more kindness to her mother-in-law and to her late husbands' family than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave her own country and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and help to maintain her. For this Boaz had blessed her (Ruth 2:12); but now he says, "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich" (Ruth 3:10).

She sought not her own pleasure or will, but her husband's family, in marrying again. She received not the advances of young men (much less did she seek them) whether poor or rich, but was willing to marry as the Divine law directed, though it was to an older man. Her concern was not her "rights," her desire was the honor and interest of the family for whom she had a pure kindness.

The kindness and gentleness of Boaz toward Ruth and Naomi continued as he assumed the role of redeemer-kinsmen and purchased the land which at one time belonged to Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion. The role of redeemer-kinsmen, in this situation, also included marrying Ruth to raise up seed to the honor of Elimelech's family and this Boaz did (Ruth 4:13; Ruth 4:17).

The kindness and gentleness demonstrated by Ruth and Boaz marks the unselfishness of their hearts. They desired to seek the best interest of others before themselves. Their desire was surrounded and evidenced

by activity. The kindness and gentleness which we must possess cannot be limited to passive good intentions; rather, following the demonstrations of Moses, Ruth and Boaz, we will vigorously serve others and God.

The New Testament proffers demonstrations of those who did not display gentleness and those who did. Please regard the words of the apostle Paul as he describes the Gentiles who did not demonstrate the quality of gentleness: “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:12). The English word “good” is the descriptive term defined as “gentleness” or “kindness” and those under rebuke from the apostle failed to demonstrate that gentle and kind disposition to their neighbors. Their failure here, at least in part, brought them the condemnation of God.

Again, focus on the words of the apostle Paul as he relays his love for the brethren, not only at Corinth, but for all the brethren. Paul lists attributes which he had constantly displayed even in the midst of the persecutions and hardships he faced: “...By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness...” (2 Cor. 6:6). The term “kindness” is the word which draws our attention to the gentleness which Paul demonstrated as he preached the Gospel of Christ.

It is interesting that Paul was able to express gentleness even in the midst of his trials and difficulties. Certainly, we would concede that facing persecutions and physical abuse, Paul would have been within his “right” to express some concern for himself and to act in a manner more in keeping with our society’s view of selfishness. Paul was willing, as should we, to acquiesce his “rights” for the higher good of obeying the laws of God, seeking the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, and living a fine and faithful demonstration of gentleness.

Divine Displays Of Gentleness

The triune Deity is the origin and fullness of all that is good, and the life of Christ provides us a Divine pattern of gentleness and kindness. The sweet singer of Israel describes the kindness of God as it is displayed in His mercy: “Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psm. 106:1). Again, the psalmist proclaims the goodness of God: “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works”(Psm. 145:9). The praise in both of these passages is not toward the moral goodness of God but is directed toward His good kindness as it is expressed in His mercy. It is the kindness of God which motivates the psalmist’s heart and it should encourage us to worship God as well.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah promised the coming Messiah would be gentle toward the sheep of His fold: “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa. 40:11). The Christ did indeed fulfill that prophecy as He lived on earth and completed His earthly ministry.

The great invitation of Christ is founded upon His gentleness and kindness toward all men:

Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

The word “easy” is our concern in this chapter, for the yoke of Christ is not “easy” in the regular use of the word. The words of our Lord should not be misunderstood to imply that discipleship is easy or that the rigors of the Divine demand are not challenging. The sermon Christ preached

on the mount (Matt.5-7) should eliminate the concept of ease for the faithful child of God. Jesus grounds the nature of his “yoke” and “burden” in the unique quality of His own character. Christ declares that He is “meek and lowly in heart” and this precise self-characterization serves to indicate that His “yoke” and “burden” are not to be found in the pharisaical promulgation of the “saying and not doing version of law keeping,” but in a relationship with one who is filled with compassion and devoted to humble service on behalf of His people.

It is not at all burdensome to follow such a one in devoted service. By doing so, men will experience rest for their souls, meaning an inner well-being and tranquility grounded in the assurance of God’s faithfulness and sustaining power; not the fickleness of hypocritical performance as the Pharisees: “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matt. 23:4). Christ declares His gentleness in contrast to the hardness of the Pharisees who saturate men with their renderings of the laws of God. Jesus is the authoritative analyst of God’s will who cuts through the undergrowth of human rules and regulations and charts a course directly to the heart of the Father.

Our Lord’s gentleness and kindness stand in contrast to the ghastly and calloused Pharisees who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Matthew records the poisonous plan of the Pharisees and the prophet Isaiah’s promise of the gentleness and kindness of the Christ.

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be

fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust (Matt. 12:14-21).

A reed was a hollow stemmed plant that usually grew along rivers and creeks. The reeds would grow anywhere from three to twenty feet high. Biblically, reeds are used to refer to something that is weak and fickle. Jesus describes a reed as “shaken with the wind...” (Matt. 11:7), as He praises the might and valor of John, the Immerser. The Roman soldiers placed a reed in the hands of Christ as they mocked Him and displayed their contempt as they considered Him powerless (Matt. 27:29).

We know the Jews expected the Messiah to be a king and this quotation from Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 42:1-4), showed that the Messiah was indeed a king, but it illustrated what kind of king the Christ would be. He was a quiet, gentle ruler Who brings justice to the nations. Matthew points to vigor of the Lord continuing His work in response to Pharisaic intentions to kill Christ. The Lords’ withdrawal in the face of His rejection, His continual involvement with the people, and His order not to tell His identity all find their explanation in what was foretold by Isaiah. The immediate effect of Matthew’s comment is to validate Jesus’ claim that His actions are in fulfillment of God’s will as expressed in Scripture.

Matthew makes it clear that Jesus’ knowledge of their deadly plot prompted His withdrawal to avoid further provocation. Nevertheless, His withdrawal was not an attempt to hide from His opponents, since large crowds had no trouble finding Him. While He continues to heal

the sick, it is clear that He does not seek undue publicity. The warning not to tell who He is was not motivated by fear of His opponents, but is reflective of the unassuming nature of His work and assignment. It also prepares us for the fulfillment reference of Isaiah where the character of God's Servant and the contours of his mission are described.

Matthew's application of Isaiah prophecies serve to align Jesus' character and work with Israel's depiction of Jehovah's Servant. Contextually, Matthew uses the quotation to emphasize that while the essential features of Jesus' labors evoke God's good pleasure, these same elements have become a source of offense and rejection in Israel. While God delights in His Servant, having chosen Him and purposed Him to carry out His redemptive mission, Israel's leaders have repudiated His authority by attributing His "powers" to the "prince of demons" (Matt. 9:34; Matt. 10:25; Matt. 12:24).

The ultimate goal of His ministry is described as to proclaim justice to the nations, to lead justice to victory with the result that in His name the nations will put their hope. However, it was precisely the character and extent of Jesus' preaching and teaching that stirred hostility and indignation within Israel. The prophetic reference serves to emphasize that a fundamental feature of Jesus' compliance to the Divine will becomes a major source of offense and conflict among the Jewish leaders.

The negatives that characterize the Servant's vocation (Matt. 12:19-20), remind us that the Son Who is gentle and humble in heart is compassionately responsive to the downtrodden in Israel; those who have been characterized as "oppressed and helpless" (Matt. 9:36), and "weary and burdened" (Matt. 11:28). The unobtrusive and judicious character of Jesus' work exhibited by His withdrawals and warnings not to tell who He was is in

compliance to God's will which affirmed that "He will not strive, nor cry..." (Matt. 12:19). Matthew shows that both Jesus' incomparable authoritative power and the humble unassuming nature of His ministry are best understood in terms of His role as God's Servant, who sets His heart on fulfilling His Father's will. Then, we can easily see that it is Christ, not Israel's hypocritical leadership, Who truly understands and obeys God's will.

The kindness of the Godhead is perhaps best summarized in the words of the apostle Paul as he writes to the saints in Ephesus: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us....That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4; Eph. 2:7).

So, Christ became our "Redeemer-kinsmen" and purchased our freedom from sin and its dreadful, eternal consequences. There was none other who could satisfy the price of sin and its wages and serve as the propitiation for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2).

Because of His kindness, Christ "...gave Himself for us; that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14). True love and grace will always find a way to express itself to the benefit of the one loved. While manmade religions have men trying to appease the wrath of their angry gods, these words show us the eager desire of God is to display His loving kindness. Please observe, however, that God's eternal kindness is available only "through Christ Jesus."

Devotion To The Development Of Gentleness

Hopefully, we now have a concept of the kindness and gentleness of the Godhead and how God's people through time have displayed gentleness and kindness to those around them. We are defining gentleness by God's

dictionary and not by the standards of society and not even by how some of our brethren define it. The kindness displayed by God is the brand we should be demonstrating. If not, a change must take place in our heart with repentance leading the way. If our heart is good and honest, we will be producing the fruit of the Spirit, of which gentleness is a part. The Divine examples set by the Father and the Son will show us the way to Bible kindness.

Kindness should begin at home. Please allow a brief reminder of the gentleness and kindness we are emphasizing. We are discussing the type of kindness which is willing to go into action beyond a verbal expression. Bible gentleness and kindness is a disposition to be pleasing; it is mildness of temper, calmness of spirit, an unruffled disposition, and a disposition to treat all with politeness.

Each member of a family bears a personal responsibility to ensure that Bible kindness and gentleness is the only thing which comes out of their mouth, and is the only thing which is seen in their body language; this is especially true in times of tension.

Most likely someone is reading this chapter and saying to himself, "Well, I know I am not perfect; but, at least I am not one of the yelling, 'I am going to have my way' fussers!" Please be aware that we can be just as destructive without all of the dramatic expressions if we do not display gentleness in how we say what we say. As adults, we should have the ability to understand that we choose what we say and how we say it. Even when we are the recipient of unkind words or deeds, we choose how we will respond and we can choose kindness or meanness. Whether it is to our spouse or to our children, we bear the responsibility to follow the example of Christ and walk in His kindness and gentleness.

Husbands, fathers, wives, mothers and children, please weigh these words in **every** aspect of your relationship with your family:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged (Col. 3:18-21).

My dear reader, if we would only instill these principles in our hearts and then enact them within our families, we would produce a harvest of joy and our children would be better equipped to serve and submit to the Lord. They would have witnessed the kindness of their father to their mother, of their mother to their father and they would have experienced and enjoyed the kindness and gentleness received from their parents.

The training we receive in the godly home will directly affect how we treat our Christian family. The Bible teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves and we also are taught to love our enemies. But, do not be misled; our kindness and gentleness do not end there. Paul instructs: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness...(Col. 3:12).

How seriously do we take the command to put on gentleness or kindness? Is this something we actively practice or is kindness applied only in convenience? Or only when we are shown kindness? Let us all choose that it may not be true of the faithful child of God. May we put on kindness as we treat others as God has treated us:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:31-32).

Conclusion

Our heavenly Father has been gentle and kind toward all men. The Divine kindness is evident in nature

(Luke 6:35), and in the provision of salvation in Christ (Tit. 3:4-7). Because God is kind and gentle, His children should follow the pattern and desire to walk in kindness as well.

But, what is in store for those who reject the kindness of God? The just judgment of God is waiting for those who treasure up the wrath of God (Rom. 2:4-11). If we do not continue to walk in the pattern of God's goodness (kindness), and bearing our fruit of gentleness, we will come to know the severity of God (Rom. 11:22). The choice is ours. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3:17).

Endnote

1 R. Wayne Willis, **Leadership**, (Louisville, KY: Vol. 16. no. 4).

CHAPTER 18

Goodness

Mike Vestal

Introduction

HOW WE NEED TO be producing fruit for eternity! As “God’s field” (1 Cor. 3:9), Christians truly should be interested in Divine horticulture. In a context clearly dealing with the struggle for the mastery of one’s soul (Gal. 5:16-26), in “the fruit of the Spirit” there is to be seen the rich and harmonious development of godly character. In fact, the nine-fold description of the Spirit’s fruit ultimately serves as an excellent description of God Himself.

Galatians 5:22-23 actually is an amplification of Gal. 5:16-18, and what it means when it says, “Walk in the Spirit.” No one can make a legitimate claim to spirituality who does not emphasize these matters. The nine virtues are spoken of as “the fruit of the Spirit” because of the definite and singular source of their origin—the Holy Spirit, with Him instructing and motivating us through His Word to yield to God’s will (Eph. 6:17; Gal. 4:6).

Further, these godly qualities are called “fruit” (singular) because they naturally express themselves in the life of one who, in loving and humble obedience, serves the Lord (cf. Gal. 3:16; Gal. 3:29; Gen. 1:11). They are the product of life lived in accordance with the Spirit.

The word “fruit” occurs some seventy times in the New Testament. It is used with reference to people brought

to Christ (Rom. 1:13), to holy living (Rom. 6:22), and to gifts brought to God (Rom. 15:25-28). “Fruit” also is used in connection with good works (Col. 1:10), to the Godward praise of our lips (Heb. 13:15), and to the character God desires to be seen in each of His children (Gal. 5:22-23).

The virtues comprising the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23 are indeed thorough, but they are representative and not exhaustive—something evident from other catalogs or lists found throughout Paul’s writings and elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Eph. 4:31-5:2; Col. 3:12-17; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). Qualities such as thankfulness, forgiveness, and humility are ethical virtues not specifically mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23, yet no one could successfully deny them to be the Spirit’s fruit.

This point is further corroborated in the realization that the same principle holds true in the opposite catalog of “the works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21. “Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Other sinful things are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture that can and will keep people out of heaven. Of “the fruit of the Spirit” it is said in Galatians 5:23, “against such there is no law.” As a final thought regarding the figure of “fruit” or “harvest,” it is worth noting that the terminology may also be applied to what is evil (e.g. Gal. 6:8; Matt. 7:15-20).

To say that the lists in Galatians 5:19-23 are not intended to be exhaustive does not mean that they are merely to be considered as random, because such a view reflects an unhealthy attitude and respect for the nature of the Word of God. It is to say that while the lists are amazingly thorough on the one hand, they are intended to be representative, not exhaustive. They must, however, be dealt with as inspired lists (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). One of the virtues listed among the Spirit’s fruit is “goodness,” and it is to a study of this particular quality that our study now turns.

Goodness Defined

“Goodness” could well be called, “the word everybody uses and no one defines.” To say that the word is capable of being used in a wide variety of ways is to be guilty of understatement. **The Random House College Dictionary** lists forty-three different definitions of the adjective “good.”¹ To say that “I have a good wife,” “You know that I am good for it,” “Campbell’s soup is ‘um, ‘um good,” “That dog sure seems good-for-nothing,” and then to say that “God is good” is to use the same expression in very different ways.

The word “good” in all its forms occurs 619 times in the Bible. However, the Greek word translated “goodness” in Galatians 5:22 (*agathosyne*) occurs only three other times in the New Testament (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:11). Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon state that the word means, “goodness, uprightness; generosity.”² The **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** says of the term, “This is the quality, or moral excellence, of the good person.”³ William Barclay indicates the expression in Galatians 5:22 to mean, “the generosity which springs from the heart that is kind.”⁴

The words “kindness” and “goodness” are close synonyms, with the meanings of both words being somewhat difficult to pin down with exactness due to the fact that they either occur in lists like Galatians 5:22-23 or in contexts where nuanced differences are not at all easy to capture.⁵ Gordon Fee states of the two words, “If there is a difference, ‘goodness’ is the more all-embracing quality, describing one’s character.”⁶

Goodness is kindness in action, and simply cannot exist apart from active, generous and concrete expression. Wendell Winkler accurately summarizes the lexical evidence when he says that goodness is “a very active virtue embodied in a generous and beneficent disposition (heart) and life (hand),” but is “not to be confused with moral weakness which engulfs and endorses both good

and bad, making little distinction between such”⁷ This principle is clearly stated in Matthew 7:15-20, where Jesus indicated that a good (or bad) tree would be known by its fruit. Goodness is being good and doing good. And when you really begin doing that, you start feeling good! (Psm. 16:11; Psm. 43:4).

God is the very personification of good. How blessed our lives would be if only we would focus more on the great goodness of God. It is tragic, and eternally so, how little people think about God in all of His excellence and perfection. No sin or improper attitude has ever existed that did not at its core cast a blemish on the character of God. A better understanding of God’s goodness serves as powerful motivation to “love the Lord” and to “hate evil” (Psm. 97:10; Amos 5:15). God’s goodness is described as abundant (Exod. 34:6), great (Psm. 31:19), satisfying (Psm. 65:4), and universal (Psm. 145:9).

The book of Psalms is full of admonitions to focus on the goodness of God. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Psm. 34:8). “Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psm. 107:8). Psalm 52:1 indicates, “the goodness of God endures continually.” The beloved twenty-third Psalm reminds us that God’s sheep-dogs, “goodness” and “mercy,” can be counted on to follow us all the days of our lives (Psm. 23:6). Even in times of greatest difficulty, something of God’s goodness can be seen. “I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psm. 27:13).

We must respond in an active, concrete way, a “good” way, to the God who is the personification of all that is good. Poor views of God do not lend themselves to high views of life, Scripture, and the Lord’s church. And poor attitudes and actions do not reflect a high view of God

either. Do we have a “honest and good heart?” (Luke 8:15). God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him and all that He is, does, and has promised to do. God’s glory is duly praised when His goodness and grace are duly prized.⁸

Goodness Misunderstood

How different true goodness is from the thinking of the world. Goodness is knowing God and fulfilling His real purpose for us in life. Paul would write, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). This is really what it means to “love life and to see good days” (1 Pet. 3:10). What is the “good life” to the world? It basically boils down to three things: looking good, feeling good, and having the goods.

Much of the world is obsessed with “looking good.” There is no way to calculate the incredibly enormous amount of time, energy, and money spent in the effort to look good. However, there is no real and perfect standard for what looks good physically. It is ever changing with time. Even if there were a universal consensus as to what constitutes physical attractiveness or beauty, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain” (Prov. 31:30). The point made by the wise man in Proverbs simply is that beauty is fleeting, and something else must be emphasized in life—something that lasts. Life, lived apart from God and His goodness, is vain and empty (Ecc. 1:2; John 10:10).

Others stress “feeling good” as their ultimate desire in life. If it brings pleasure, that is all that matters. There are those who are “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Such individuals may even have “a form of godliness” but are guilty of “denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5). Christians certainly are not immune to the subtleties involved in this particular temptation. Jesus spoke of those

who “go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14).

What was true in Micah’s day is even truer for the people of God today: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic. 6:8).

It is common to emphasize “having the goods” as the ultimate purpose in living. The rich young ruler could call Jesus “Good Teacher,” but later proved to have loved his possessions more than he loved His Lord (Matt. 19:16-22). Jesus said on one occasion, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). He also said, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21).

Paul would write to those who were especially blessed materially, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, ready to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Have we gotten into the habit of emphasizing looking good, feeling good, or having the goods more than having a good relationship with the Lord?

Goodness Exemplified

No one has ever walked this earth who exemplified goodness like Jesus Christ. The words of Peter in Acts 10:38 are a virtual summary of the earthly life of the Son of God: “Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good.” We can see four characteristics of our Lord’s goodness from this passage. In the first place, understand that Jesus did more than

exemplify goodness, for as God in the flesh He was the actual embodiment of it (John 1:14; John 1:18). The text also says that Jesus went about “doing.” This is the activity of goodness. Goodness is like faith in the sense that without works it is dead (Jas. 2:14-26; Matt. 7:21). Jesus did not spend His time just talking or dreaming about what needed to be done. The Lord had a profound emphasis upon doing!

The purpose involved in all His activity was to do “good.” This speaks volumes about the value we should place on doing good ourselves (1 Pet. 2:21-22; 1 John 2:6). Jesus believed that good can and should be done. He knew it was desperately needed in this wicked world, and He made its accomplishment the purpose of His ministry (John 8:29; John 17:4). It is astounding how many people go about doing evil. They cause all kinds of harm because of a failure to do good (Jas. 4:17). But Acts 10:38 also indicates the resulting conclusion regarding Christ’s goodness—“for God was with Him.” By speaking and behaving as He did, the inescapable conclusion was that God had to be with Him. Others are to be able to see our “good works” and to be led to the conclusion of praising God (Matt. 5:16).

Nehemiah and the people of God were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem because God was with them (Neh. 2:20). Paul was able to accomplish much for the cause of Christ because God was with him (Acts 14:27; 2 Tim. 4:17). And the same is true of God’s people today. We must keep God where He ought to be in our efforts! (John 15:5; John 3:30). Because of His grace and goodness, we will be victorious! (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:31).

Barnabas is yet another character who exemplified goodness. Acts 11:24 states of him, “for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” Barnabas is known as “Mr. Encouragement” (since his name means, “son of encouragement”), but he could also rightly be called, “brother Barnabas Goodman.”

Three outstanding qualities relative to the goodness of Barnabas come out in a study of the book of Acts. Barnabas' goodness can first be seen in Acts 4:34-37, where he sold a piece of property and brought the proceeds to the apostles for use by the church. Barnabas displayed a goodness that was sincerely active and generous. Most of us as Christians are privileged to be able to think back over our own lives and recall many instances where we have been the blessed recipients of the active and generous goodness of Barnabas types. We can give and not be good, but we cannot really be good without giving.

Another quality of goodness evidenced in the life of Barnabas is that he compassionately saw people's potential, not just their problems. This was true in the case of Saul of Tarsus after his conversion when he first tried to work with the church meeting in Jerusalem. Acts 9:25 indicates that "they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple." Understandably so, since Saul earlier had made havoc of the Lord's church (Acts 8:3; 9:1-6). Some obviously felt that such a dramatic change in Saul ought to be the subject of considerable suspicion. After all, posing as a new Christian might have seemed to be a wonderful way to infiltrate the church and to persecute Christians even more!

"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" is how Acts 9:27 begins. One wonders how accepted Saul initially would have been by the brethren had not Barnabas been such a good man. A "vote of confidence" by a good man like Barnabas meant something! Barnabas compassionately jumped on Saul's bandwagon when everyone else apparently thought it best not to get on board! This does not mean that Barnabas was wishy-washy, undiscerning, or naïve; rather, it indicates his compassion and ability to see the potential and desire of others. And surely such goodness and

encouragement would serve as a lasting memory for the great apostle Paul.

We see Barnabas displaying this same principle later with John Mark (Acts 15:36-40). John Mark had forsaken or departed from Paul and Barnabas during the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5; Acts 13:13). Scripture does not indicate exactly why John Mark left. Even though it eventually led to a sharp disagreement with Paul, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance on the second missionary journey. Paul did not. This ultimately led to a parting of company between Barnabas and Paul. It is safe to say that the goodness and encouragement of Barnabas must have had a positive, maturing effect on John Mark. Years later, Paul himself would write: "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11).

Barnabas displayed yet another marvelous aspect of goodness in that he joyfully and humbly encouraged greater faithfulness in others. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch when they heard "a great number believed and turned to the Lord" there (Acts 11:21-22). The text says of Barnabas: "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord" (Acts 11:23). Realizing that he was not adequate alone for the task of further grounding these new Christians, he brought Paul in to help (Acts 11:25-26).

Not everyone, not even every Christian, would think as did Barnabas on this occasion. Foremost in his mind was the growth and spiritual health of these new Christians. He wanted them to have the best of instruction, and it would have been mighty hard to beat the apostle Paul for helping in that area! There is an interesting footnote in this episode. Until this time, references to the two men typically had been in this order: "Barnabas and

Paul.” But from this moment on, with but one exception in Acts 14:14, the order is reversed. It is now “Paul and Barnabas.” Because both Barnabas and Paul indeed were good men, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, the order of whose name would be mentioned first did not matter one bit to either of them. What mattered was the glory of God, the furtherance of the gospel, and the greatness of spiritual growth and development in the kingdom.

Tabitha or Dorcas is yet another outstanding example of goodness. This Christian lady from Joppa is described in the word of God as “a woman full of good works and charitable deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36). Reference is specifically given to “the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made” for others (Acts 9:39). Tabitha’s goodness is so obvious that if she were alive today, her favorite hymn would likely be, “Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me.”

Consider from Acts 9 several ways Tabitha’s goodness is explicitly and implicitly indicated. First, we can see the beauty of her character. Tabitha literally means, “gazelle” (beautiful and graceful). While we know nothing of Tabitha’s actual physical appearance, we know she had the beauty of holiness (1 Chron. 16:29) and of godly character (1 Pet. 3:1-5) that is far more impressive than mere outward beauty. Her life in Christ was indeed a beautiful one.

Second, we can see the fullness of her deeds. She was “full” of good works and charitable deeds. We are not talking about a few good deeds, or maybe just enough to get by. Neither is it indicated that she simply suggested that others should do good deeds, while she did little or nothing herself. She was actively involved in the full expression of good works. Her good character was not condescending or insulting in doing good to others. She obviously considered herself to be a steward of all that God had entrusted her (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

There is yet another way in which the context of Tabitha's life teaches us something about goodness. There is the impact of her loss. It is true that she died, only to later be raised back to life by the power of God through Peter (Acts 9:37-43). However, it is significant to notice the effect of her death upon the church. They remembered her good life! They remembered good things she had done! It is true that no one is indispensable in God's kingdom, that the Lord buries His soldiers but the cause continues, yet some losses particularly impact us because of the noble nature of those who have departed. One wonders if every Christian alive today would be as missed as Tabitha was upon their death.

Perhaps it is fitting to ask ourselves as Christians, "If I died today, would the congregation of which I am a part particularly miss me?" "Would the congregation remember me as being a person full of goodness?" As we prepare to pass from this life, can we sincerely say to the Lord what is recorded in Nehemiah 13:31, "Remember me, O my God, for good!"?

Goodness Applied

What are some practical areas of life in which we can work to better develop goodness? How can we go about cultivating the soil of our lives to better produce the Spirit's fruit? Since God's Word stresses the importance of exercising ourselves unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8), let's consider some suggestions together.

Get Into God's Book as Never Before. Our lives will reflect either the values of the world or of the Word of God. If we want our lives to be full of goodness, we must lovingly saturate ourselves with the Word of God. "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psm. 119:11). This passage says that God's Word (the best possession) is to be kept in our hearts (the

best place) so that we might not sin against God (the best purpose). God's Word is crucial in helping us to develop goodness in our lives (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, it must be our desire and practice to let God's Word dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). This has to do with appetite (Job 23:12; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4). It also has to do with application (Jas. 1:22). The best translation of God's Word has always been the Word of God accurately translated into our lives!

Understand that Goodness does not Exist Apart from Genuine Holiness. Holiness has to do with loving what God loves, and hating what God hates (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). Uprightness and moral excellence are part of what is involved in goodness, are they not? Nearly every congregation of God's people could use a Bible class entitled, "Holiness 101." There are occasions when all of us as Christians struggle. We end up hating what God loves and loving the very things He hates. But in the pursuit of greater holiness comes greater goodness (Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:1-2). We are to "abhor what is evil" and "cling to what is good" (Rom. 12:9). "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). Doctrine does not exist in a vacuum: what one teaches and practices concerning one area can and often does have an effect in other areas too.

Remember that Compassion and Generosity are Vital. In a world filled with scams, crooks, and sham it is easy to lose a sense of compassion and generosity. The "supreme beatitude" still says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). If there is a lack of goodness, it is because there also is a lack of love (1 John 3:13-18). Goodness cannot exist apart from active, concrete expression in kindness. We will be known as Christians by our love (John 13:34-35). Our faith must work out of love (Gal. 5:6).

Take Initiative. "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those

who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27-28). Isn’t this really part of the “Golden Rule?” (Matt. 7:12). Part of the difficulty some face with the issue of goodness is that we are always waiting for someone to start the practice before we take action ourselves. Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38). And the same type of initiative is needed among those who belong to Christ. “Be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Tit. 3:8).

Do Good to All Because a Harvest is Coming. A passage from the book of Galatians helps us greatly with this point. “And, let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10). Our doing good may result in another soul drawing nearer to God. One of the greatest things any Christian can do for others is to beautifully display the fruit of the Spirit. Are you producing fruit for eternity?

Conclusion

Few words from uninspired men could be as pertinent as these:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

If we fail in the area of goodness, how can we ever expect to hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant?” (Matt. 25:21).

Endnotes

1 **The Random House Dictionary of the English Language – The Unabridged Edition**, Random House, Inc., 1984.

2 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature**, University of Chicago Press: 1952 (4th edition), p. 3.

3 Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, editors, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, (Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, p. 4.

4 William Barclay, **Flesh and Spirit**, Baker Book House, 1981, pp. 102-107.

5 Gordon D. Fee, **God's Empowering Presence**, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, pp. 450-451. Both "kindness" and "goodness" in Galatians 5:22 are Greek words found only in Paul's epistles in the New Testament. "Kindness" occurs in 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Rom. 2:4; Rom. 3:12; Rom. 11:22 (3 x); Col. 3:12; Eph. 2:7; Tit. 3:4; the verb form once in 1 Cor. 13:4.

6 Ibid.

7 Wendell Winkler, **Restoring New Testament Living**, (The Fort Worth Christian College Eighth Annual Lectures), Elm Hall, ed., Fort Worth Christian College Bookstore, 1967, p. 227.

8 These are my own variations of statements common in the writings of evangelical John Piper, to whom I am indebted for spurring my thinking in this regard. A word of caution is in order due to Piper's strongly Calvinistic positions on many matters, but these particular remarks reflect statements of his that are right on target Biblically.

CHAPTER 19

Faith

David P. Brown

Introduction

WHATEVER GOD HAS OBLIGATED man to do to be saved from one's sins the devil has in some way corrupted it (Gen. 3:2-5; John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 5:8). Faith is one of those obligatory matters relating to man's salvation (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). Therefore we may be sure that the devil has corrupted every aspect of it. It is, therefore, the goal of this chapter to understand the true nature, meaning and significance of faith. We will examine its general usage as it relates to one's salvation. In the process thereof, we shall attack, destroy and dispel false views of faith along with other false ideas relating thereto.

We will not define faith at this point in our study. However, we need to understand that in the English sentence the words "faith" and "believe" refer to the same concept or action respectively. For now we will note that "faith" is the noun form of the idea under examination, and "believe" is its verb form.

Knowledge And Faith

"Where knowledge ends, faith begins." The preceding sentence employs the word "knowledge" in a manner that altogether separates it from "faith"—the one concept ends where the other one begins. There is a reason, erroneous

though it is, for this separation of knowledge and faith. Let us note the reason for the separation.

In the minds of many, if not most, when they use the word knowledge they mean by knowledge that which comes through means of sense perception or actual experience. Formally this is called empirical knowledge. We come to have this knowledge through our five senses—tasting, touching, seeing, hearing, and smelling. This is the “knowledge” of science—the knowledge of the laboratory, the test tube, the microscope, the telescope and so on. If this is the limit and extent of one’s definition of knowledge then we cannot know anything beyond what we can perceive or experience through our five senses. Therefore it is important to understand when one steps out of the realm of what can be tasted, touched, seen, heard, and smelled he is no longer operating in the realm of sense perception or actual experience. He has moved into the realm of either religion and/or philosophy. An empiricist, therefore, is one who is not allowed by his own concept of how one comes to know, and what knowledge is, to consider anything beyond what his five senses may examine.

It is interesting, however, to note that very few empiricist scientists are content to remain strictly within the realm of sense perception or their own actual experience. For instance, they routinely comment on the origin of things, but the origin of things cannot be seen, touched, felt, smelled or tasted. In other words, the origin of things is beyond sense perception or one’s own experience. Thus, it goes without saying (but for emphasis I will say it anyway) they have never experienced the origins of the universe. However, many scientists routinely depart from the realm of sense perception and their own experience. Without hesitating, they run full speed into the area of religion and/or philosophy—an area within which some of them are not competent to work. However,

this does not stop them from representing their conclusions about the origin of things as if they were there to experience it through their five senses. There is no better place to observe this blind dogmatism that is completely without adequate evidence than what is routinely manifested in the many TV programs designed to teach organic evolution.

For those who define knowledge to be only what one may learn through sense perception in their own actual experience, faith is placed into the area of assumption, not knowledge. Thus, the sense perception's need for such an expression as "the leap of faith." By "leap of faith" the empiricist means that where he cannot examine things through his five senses he cannot come to know absolutely anything with certainty; thus he must assume thus and so to be. That assumption is what he erroneously calls faith.

Deductive Reasoning, Implication, Sight And Faith

This brings us to the study of how one may come to know absolutely the certainty of something when it is impossible to physically see, hear, smell, taste or touch it. One may arrive at such certain absolute objective knowledge through the correct use of deductive reasoning—the correct intellectual exercise for the contemplation of anything or idea.

In reality, by correct deductive reasoning, a person actually extends his knowledge attained through sense perception. This is possible because there is an implicative relationship between facts. By "implicative relationship" I mean that one fact is relevant to another. This is an "If—then" implicative relationship. For instance, if it is the case that design implies at least one designer, and, if it is the case that design is evident (perceived through my

five senses), then, it is the case at least one designer is implied. Furthermore, if it is the case that anything that evidences a design had at least one designer, and, if it is the case that the computer at which I am working evidences design, then it is the case that the computer at which I am working evidences at least one designer. Thus, I can know absolutely and with certainty that my computer (an empirical fact) had at least one designer (that which I cannot touch, taste, see, hear or smell in order to determine its existence). I can as certainly know through reflection or contemplation (deductive reasoning) that my computer had at least one designer as absolutely and certainly as if I were there to observe through personal experience the designer at his work, as well as personally experiencing those who followed his design to finally produce the specific computer on which I am now working.

Thus, there is a process of knowing and a type or kind of knowledge that is as objective, certain and absolute as is knowledge accrued through sensory perception. To “think” otherwise is to repudiate the rational nature and powers of human kind and to engage in intellectual and “rational” lunacy, which lunacy is the outcome of such inconsistent erroneous and absurd thinking.

We should now understand that sense perception is not the only way one comes to know something. One may also come to know absolutely certain things and ideas through contemplation. That being the case, I want to emphasize that it is through contemplation (deductive reasoning) one proves the existence of God, the Deity of Christ, the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible or anything else that is incapable of being known through sensory perception.

Defining Faith

The simple and forthright definition of faith is taking God at His Word. Thus, once we have proven that the Bible

is God's Word (1 Thess. 5:21), and that it was given to mankind through inspired men by the revelation of the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of leading guiding and directing men in how to be well pleasing to God (Jas. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:3-15), then it is proven as fully adequate to create faith in God and the things of God.

To place our faith in Christ is to place our confidence and trust in Him and His system of salvation. As Peter confessed to Christ: "...thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure (know—ASV, 1901) that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Hence, the Holy Spirit had the apostle Paul to write, "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

The adequate evidence and credible witnesses necessary to prove the Deity of Christ are revealed in the Words of the Bible (John 20:30-31). Therefore, if one's knowledge about God, Christ, the Bible and the things thereof are not correct, then one's faith (confidence, trust) in these matters is wrong.

Consider the words of the inspired writer to the Hebrews when he wrote "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The "hoped for" and "unseen things" are the spiritual things. One cannot know these things by sensory perception. As previously pointed out they are known through the evidence contained in the meaning of the Words God has revealed to man in the Bible. Again, of which words Paul had the following to say, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).

Thus, a scriptural faith is based upon the evidence in the Word of God, which Word testifies to the reality of the things and persons that are incapable of being seen through sensory perception. The Word of God thereby provides adequate evidence and credible testimony for man

to create confidence and trust in himself toward God, His Christ, the Bible, the whole Scheme of Redemption and so on.

Thus, when Paul declares that we “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), he is saying that we live by the confidence and trust created in us by our correct understanding (knowledge) of God’s Word (John 8:31-32); that to walk by faith is to live as the Word of God leads, guides and directs one’s thoughts and actions (Matt. 7:21-28). In being well pleasing to God we do not (yea, we cannot) live our lives solely on the basis of sensory perception, personal experiences and the appetites of the flesh (1 John 2:15-17).

Jeremiah declares to all those who seek to determine right and wrong without the guidance of God’s revelation: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23) Thus, among other things we learn that man’s sensory perception alone is inadequate to take him to heaven. Thus, the wise man of old stated the outcome of a life lived without following the revelation of God: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

This is the reason we are admonished to “do all in the name (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus” and “walk by the same rule” (Col. 3:17; Phil. 3:16). To walk by faith or by the same rule is to do only what the Lord has authorized in His Word for us to do. This means that we reject and repudiate those things not authorized by God’s Word or forbidden by it. Therefore, it is impossible for one to declare something to be a matter of Biblical faith where there is no testimony, proof, evidence or authority from God on which to base one’s confidence, trust, or belief. Therefore, Jesus said: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Does Faith End In Sight?

Keeping in mind what we have learned about knowledge and faith we pose the following question: Does one's confidence and trust (faith or belief) in another person necessarily cease when one comes into the other person's presence and thereby obtains sensory knowledge acquired through one's own personal experience? In other words, when men saw Christ, did their faith (confidence, trust) in Him cease? The answer is no, but to this day well meaning people teach that faith ends where sight begins. Thus, this erroneous doctrine teaches that our faith in Jesus Christ will end when we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

In the case of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, the people of her home country first came to believe in Jesus because of her testimony to them contained in her words concerning Him. Their faith came by her word (John 4:39). Following those events certain of the Samaritans came directly to Jesus. After hearing Him teach (John 4:41), these believers in Christ declared to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).

Please notice that they beheld Him with their own eyes and heard Him with their own ears. They possessed empirical knowledge of Jesus, which knowledge came through their sensory perception. However, that personal experience did not end their faith or belief in him. Thus, where does the Bible teach that faith in Christ ends when we shall see Him?

The same is true in the case of the apostle Thomas' association and involvement with Jesus after the latter's resurrection from the dead (John 20:24-29). Thomas would not believe in the resurrection of Christ unless adequate evidence was provided to him (John 20:25). When Jesus provided said evidence to Thomas he believed and declared

of Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Did Thomas’ faith in Jesus end when he saw Him? To the contrary, the adequate evidence offered by Jesus to Thomas created Thomas’ faith. Jesus plainly said as much to him at the same time Thomas saw and believed in Him (John 20:27). Our Lord then pronounced a blessing on those who had not seen, but believed (John 20:29).

Thus, we learn that there can be faith where there is no sight [sensory perception] (Rom. 10:17). But we also learn that faith can exist along side of sight (John 4:42; John 20:27). Furthermore, I have no doubt that at the end of time our faith in Christ will not cease, but rather be enhanced when we see “see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

With these facts before us regarding faith and sight, I wonder why it is the case that brethren continue to sing the following lyrics of the beautiful song “Only in Thee.” Those lyrics are: “Till in that land where cometh no night Faith will be lost in heavenly sight.” Our faith in Christ is not going to be lost when we get to heaven. The truth of the matter is this: in heaven our “faith will increase in heavenly sight.” And, in order to teach the truth when “Only in Thee” is sung the words of the song previously quoted ought to be revised to read that way.

When Are We Justified Or Saved By Faith?

Before we can answer the question of when one’s faith allows Christ to save him from his sins, we need to note that faith is used in two different senses in the New Testament. We have previously noted in this chapter the first use as it relates to one’s personal belief in God, Christ and so on.

Now let us notice the second usage of the word “faith” in the New Testament. Because one’s faith in Christ is such a fundamental and important element in one’s salvation, the Holy Spirit also used it to stand for the whole

New Testament system of salvation. Grammarians call such usage of a word a synecdoche. This is where a part stands for the whole or a whole for its parts. In the case of faith it is where a part (faith) stands for the whole New Testament system of salvation. This usage is seen in Eph. 4:5 where Paul declared there is “one faith.” Also, it is seen in Jude 3 where Jude admonished brethren to “contend for the faith.”

However, in determining when one is saved by his own personal belief, faith as a synecdoche does not specifically concern us. With these relevant and necessary facts before us we now have the foundation on which to understand man’s salvation by his belief or faith in Christ. It is obvious that one’s individual and personal faith in Christ is essential if one is to be saved from sin by Him. To the Jews Jesus said, “...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24). Paul declared that, “the just (“righteous”—ASV, 1901) shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). Furthermore, regarding the essentiality of faith in the salvation of the Jews and Gentiles, the apostle Peter stated, “And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).

Degrees Of Faith

With the absolute necessity of a correct personal and individual faith in Christ established and how such is accomplished, let us pose the following question: When (at what exact point) does our faith in Christ save us? In order to answer this question we must first note the fact that the Bible records different degrees of faith. We shall now list them. They are:

1. Little faith (Matt. 8:26).
2. Great faith (Matt. 8:10).
3. Weak faith (Rom. 14:1).
4. Strong faith (Rom. 4:20).

5. Dead faith (James 2:26).
6. Perfect Faith (James 2:22).

Allowing for some overlapping in the meaning of some of the terms (Great, Strong and Perfect faith), these are the different degrees of one's personal faith found in the New Testament.

Believing With The Whole Heart

Before we can know what it means to believe with the whole heart (which one must do in order to be saved [Rom. 10:10; Rom. 6:17; Eph. 6:6]), we must understand the meaning of the word "heart." The word "heart" as used in Romans 10:10 is synonymous with a person's inward man, spirit or soul (Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16; Acts 7:59; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). We learn that the heart of man is composed of his

1. Intellectual and rational nature (Matt. 9:4; Mark 2:6; Isa. 1:18; Isa. 32:4).
2. Conscience (1 Tim. 1:5; Titus 1:15; 2 Cor. 1:12).
3. Emotions (Lev. 26:16; Deut. 28:47; Deut. 28:65; Neh. 2:2; Matt. 22:37).
4. Will (John 1:13; Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 9:7; 2 Pet. 1:21; Rev. 22:17).

To know the precise point at which our belief in Christ allows Him to save us, it is very important to understand that many things are accepted as true without involving either the emotions or the will. For example we believe by adequate evidence that the Pharaohs ruled in Egypt. Also, in the same way we believe that there was a monarch who ruled in England named Henry VIII. However, I never loved any of the Pharaohs or Henry VIII. Furthermore, I never have served them and do not intend to comply with the wills of any of the Pharaohs or Henry VIII. However, many people believe in God, Christ, the Bible, and so on in the exact same way I believe in the Pharaohs of Egypt

and King Henry VIII of England. This kind of belief is nothing more or less than mental assent to the evidence that testifies to the fact of the historical existence of the Pharaohs and Henry VIII.

Indeed, regarding Jesus Christ “the devils believe and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). The demons cannot deny the reality of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who He is and what He has done to save man. They know and believe these matters to such an extent that they tremble at the implications for them of these facts. But there is not a demon that loves God or His Christ or anything that pertains to them. Moreover, they have no intention of obeying God. Now get the following point please—this kind of belief (mental assent to the truthfulness of a proposition) is the only belief on and by which the whole sectarian denominational religious world bases its hope of salvation. They have no concept of what it means to believe in Christ with the whole heart. Their whole system of belief is no more than the belief characteristic of devils.

Thus, we learn that the faith that saves a person from sin involves more than mental assent to the truthfulness of a proposition. It involves the will and emotions of man as well. In our list of the different degrees of faith we noted that James mentions a perfect faith (Jas. 2:22). Of course the word “perfect” as it is used here means that which is complete. Thus, in the New Testament’s use of the word we learn that one’s faith must reach the stage or degree that the Bible calls complete before salvation is possible. Let us see if we can learn at what point one’s faith is made perfect or complete. To do this we will go to some Old Testament examples that were written “for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).

The Walls Of Jericho And The Brazen Serpent

In faith’s Hall of Fame of Old Testament worthies, the inspired writer to the Hebrews wrote: “By faith the

walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days” (Heb. 11:30). The Old Testament account of this event is found in Joshua 6:12-20. Let us look at the facts of matter.

1. Joshua and Israel believed (mentally assented to the fact) that God could give Jericho into the hands of the Israelites (Josh. 6:2).

2. They believed in (mentally assented to the fact of) the directions God had given them for taking the city. However, regardless of their “belief,” at this point the city was not in their possession.

3. Notice the fact that only when the Israelites had completed their obedience to God’s commandments and thereby manifested their love of and willingness to do things God’s way, did God bring the walls of Jericho down and thereby give them the city. Thus, by their faith the walls fell down.

Let us now turn our attention to the case of the brazen serpent (Num. 21:4-9). After the Israelites became discouraged because of the way by which they traveled, they sinned in speaking against God and Moses concerning the food God had provided them (Num. 21:4- 5). God punished them for their sin by sending “fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people: and much people of Israel died” (Num. 21:6). The people approached Moses, confessed their sin and asked Moses to pray to God on their behalf “to take away the serpents” (Num. 21:7). After Moses prayed to God for Israel, God instructed Moses to make a brazen serpent and put it on a pole. God stated that everyone who looked at the serpent would live (Num. 21:8- 9). This Moses did. When all those bitten by the fiery serpents looked on the brazen serpent they lived (Num. 21:9).

In the matter of the brazen serpent, indeed the people had to mentally assent to (believe in) the fact of Who commanded the making of the brazen serpent and why it

was made. But such a faith was insufficient to heal them. They were not healed until their faith led them to comply with the directions God had given them. Not until their faith caused them to actually look with their own eyes upon the brazen serpent were they healed.

In both of these cases the people's faith was complete or perfect only when they did what God said do, in the way God said do it and for the reason He said do it. In studying the Bible, regardless of what system of religion God had provided the people, a person's personal faith was not strong enough to receive the blessing unless and until one's faith was made complete in obedience to God's will manifested in his word.

Tests Of One's Faith In God And His System Of Salvation

The previous Old Testament accounts exemplify well how God puts people's faith in Him and His system to the test. Therefore, in order for God to determine whether we will do what He said, in the way He said it, and for the reason(s) He said do it, (complete and full obedience) a certain kind of commandments for man must exist. The nature of these commandments must be such that when man complies with them his compliance with them is for one reason and one reason only—because God said to do them. Thus, God has laws that are right only because God arbitrarily gave them. These laws we shall call positive laws because, as previously stated, they are right only because God gave them. These laws have certain qualities about them, the design of which guarantees that if people comply with them it is only because they desire to be well-pleasing to God.

One characteristic of this first category of these laws is this: between the thing commanded and the blessing received there is no recognizable connection. To illustrate

this characteristic of positive law, please consider that if I tell you I will pay you \$800 to preach a Gospel meeting of five days duration, you can see the connection between preaching the meeting and the compensation for doing it. However, if I tell you to make the most ugly looking face you can make and I will give you \$1000 for making the face, there is no observable relationship between the command and the blessing derived from your complying with it.

A Biblical example of such is found in the command of God to the children of Israel on the night when God instituted the Passover. God commanded them to sprinkle the blood of an animal on the doorposts. In coming to take the lives of the first born of the land the Lord saw the blood He would passover them (Exod. 12:7). Can anyone explain the connection between sprinkling the blood of an animal on the doorposts and God not taking the life of the firstborn? It was right only because God said so.

A second category of positive law is that the demands of compliance with the Divine mandate are actually abhorrent and loathsome in its nature to some people. In 2 Kings 5 we have an example of this second category of positive law. Naaman the leper sought to be cleansed of his leprosy. In his quest to be healed from this loathsome disease he is finally caused to come to the house of Elijah. The servant of the prophet brought the healing words of the prophet to Naaman. He is commanded to dip seven times in the Jordan River. This did not fit his preconceived notions about how his leprosy would be healed. At first Naaman could not see why the mountain streams of his own country would not be better than the muddy ole Jordan River. Finally, when his servant reasoned with him and Naaman was persuaded to comply with the prophets instructions, he dipped seven times in the Jordan and he was cleansed of his leprosy. Question: What logical

connection is there between dipping seven times in the Jordan River and Naaman's leprosy being healed? It was right for Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan to be cleansed of his leprosy only because God said so.

The third category peculiar to positive law is this: under other circumstances the thing the Divine dictum demands of a person would be wrong. The best example I can think of for this kind of positive law is the account of God testing Abraham's faith (Gen. 22:1-19). God commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac's life. Abraham did not hesitate in complying with the Divine edict. While God stopped him from killing his son, Abraham had no way of knowing this would be the outcome of the matter. In fact, Abraham had already reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead. In this manner God would be able to perform through Isaac what God had promised He would do (Heb. 11:17-19). Nevertheless, under ordinary circumstances it is sin to take life. Thus, why did Abraham comply with such a command from God? There is only one answer—because God said so.

The other kind of law, Moral law, is not capable of putting one's faith in God to the test. Such laws are necessary for the orderly conduct of the human race and they have existed from the beginning without alteration. It has always been wrong to lie, to steal, to murder, etc. There have always been laws to protect property and the like. But please notice this about these laws—one may not lie, not steal, or not commit murder for reasons other than one's love of and faith in God. Thus, to test one's faith in God and His system, a kind of law must exist so that when man complies with it, it is solely and only because God gave it and one desires to obey God because He is God.

When it comes to man's salvation God puts man's faith to the test. In becoming a Christian most anyone

can see the need to have confidence or faith in God and Christ; they can see that if one is to follow Christ's teaching one must turn from (repent of) whatever it is that is contrary to Christ's Will. They understand that if one is going to follow Christ he should be willing to publicly confess belief in Christ. Indeed, the necessity of belief, repentance and confession of faith in Christ are subjects that are rarely debated among Bible believers. But that is not the way it is with baptism. Why is this the case? Because baptism in water for the remission of sins is right for one reason and one reason only—God said to do it, in the way He said do it, and for the reason He said to do it. It does not fit the way people think it should. Thus in their rejection of Scriptural baptism they reject God, remain lost and in such condition are destined to be in eternity with those other believers—the devils, who also believed and trembled.

Different Believers Of Jesus' Day

To certain Jews who believed on Christ, Jesus directed the following words. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). If one continues on through the chapter it is interesting to note that in verse 44 Jesus calls these same people children of the devil. If salvation is by faith only, such could not have been the case. But it was. And it was the case because salvation is not by faith only (Jas. 2:24).

It is very important to understand that believers in Christ "have the power ("right"—ASV, 1901) to become the children of God" (John 1:11-12). In other words, by virtue of one's faith one has the right to become a child of God. But having the right and being a child of God is not one and the same thing. The believer has the right or power

to become a child of God—he is on the road headed toward salvation, but unless he continues to comply with the teaching of Jesus he will not become a child of God.

We learn of another class of believers in John 12:42- 43. The Scripture plainly declares that certain Jewish believers in Christ would not confess Jesus for fear of being put out of the synagogue—“For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42). If salvation comes at the point faith only without any other acts of obedience these Jews, who had believed in Jesus but refused to confess Him, would have been saved. They had faith only, but it was not enough.

Faith Plus Baptism Saves From Sin

Jesus’ statement, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), is a complex declarative sentence. In this sentence, according to Jesus, a certain “**he**” “shall be saved.” However, we must ask who that certain he is that shall be saved. Our Lord’s answer is the certain “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Jesus did not declare, “He that is baptized shall be saved.” He did not proclaim, “He that believeth shall be saved.” However, He did pronounce, “He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved.” Where is the person who will explicitly state: “He that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved?”

Indeed, the faith that saves has always been and will always be the faith that obeys. As James wrote, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:17). The writer of Hebrews wrote of Jesus, saying, He is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9).

Conclusion

The inspired apostle Paul declared that one is a child of God by faith (Gal. 3:26-27). He could have meant by the

word “faith” the system of faith that is the New Testament system. However, as we have studied in this chapter, the New Testament system teaches the importance and essentiality of one’s personal faith in Christ. Thus, we may learn from this passage as well as other passages just when one’s faith saves him.

Notice that we learn from this passage that one is a child of God **in** Christ. The preposition “in” shows location or relationship. In this case we ask, Where is one a child of God? Paul answers with two words, “in Christ.” Now a new question comes to the forefront. It is: How does one get into Christ? Paul’s answer is, when one is “baptized into Christ.” He tells us this is the way or the manner whereby we “put on Christ.” Therefore, as faith is essential to becoming a child of God, so is baptism essential in the process thereof. And that is exactly what Christ declared in Mark 16:16.

From our study we have learned that saving faith is more than mentally assenting to the truthfulness of a proposition. It is more than the faith I have (mental assent to the fact) that the Pharaohs once ruled in Egypt. The faith that saves involves the whole heart—intellect, will, emotions and conscience (Rom. 6:17-18). It is the faith of which James speaks and describes in James 2:14-26. It is the faith that takes God at His Word and out of love complies with all God enjoins upon us. It is the perfect or complete faith that carefully does only what God says, in the way He says it, and for the reason(s) He said it. Yes, the way of saving faith cannot be wrong because it guarantees all of us who conduct our lives accordingly the certain knowledge that we have been fully obedient to whatever it is that our Lord requires of us as “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

CHAPTER 20

Meekness

Tom Moore

Introduction

THE WORDS “MEEK” OR “meekness” are possibly some of the most misunderstood words in the New Testament. In modern thought and language meekness is not an admirable quality. In this present day, many associate meekness with spinelessness, being without spirit, or having a lack of strength. The only real alternative which the modern translators offer is “gentleness,” which is better, but by no means a perfect translation. As we study “meekness” we will find there is no one English word which will adequately translates its meaning.

Definitions

“Meek” is translated from the Greek word *praus* or *praos*, and “meekness” is translated from the Greek word *prautes*, or *praotes*. W. E. Vines says that *praus* means gentle, mild, or meek. James Strong says “meekness” means gentleness, and by implication, humility. Joseph Henry Thayer, Marvin R. Vincent, and A. T. Robertson are in agreement with these definitions.

Πραυς (*praus*) is found in three New Testament passages. “Blessed are the **meek**: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, **meek**, and sitting upon an

ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (Matt. 21:5). “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a **meek** and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:4). Πραος (*praos*) is found in one New Testament passage, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am **meek** and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

Πραυτης (*prautes*) is also found in three New Testament passages. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with **meekness** the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with **meekness** of wisdom” (Jas. 3:13). “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with **meekness** and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Πραοτης (*praotes*) is found in nine New Testament passages. “What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of **meekness**?” (1 Cor. 4:21). “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the **meekness** and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you” (2 Cor. 10:1). “**Meekness**, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23). “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of **meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). “With all lowliness and **meekness**, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, **meekness**, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness,

godliness, faith, love, patience, **meekness**" (1 Tim. 6:11). "In **meekness** instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25). "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all **meekness** unto all men" (Tit. 3:2).

"Meek" is found thirteen times in the Old Testament. "Now the man Moses was very **meek**, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). "The **meek** shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever" (Psm. 22:26). "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the **meek** will he teach his way" (Psm. 25:9). "But the **meek** shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psm. 37:11). "When God arose to judgment, to save all the **meek** of the earth" (Psm. 76:9). "The Lord lifteth up the **meek**: he casteth the wicked down to the ground" (Psm. 147:6). "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the **meek** with salvation" (Psm. 149:4). "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the **meek** of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). "The **meek** also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 29:19).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the **meek**; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound (Isa. 61:1).

"That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the **meek**: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my

holy name” (Amos 2:7). “Seek ye the Lord, all ye **meek** of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

“Meekness” is found twice in the Old Testament. “And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and **meekness** and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things” (Psm. 45:4). “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek **meekness**: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

The Hebrew word for “meek” (*anav*; Heb.) and “meekness” (*anvah*; Heb.) carries the idea of being mild, oppressed, humble, lowly, and meek.

Secular Greek Usage

In secular Greek the words “meek” and “meekness” are used with a very definite atmosphere and flavor. They are used with reference to having a soothing quality—the power to soothe, to calm, and to tranquillize. They were also used of an ointment which can soothe the pain of a wound; and are used of words (or, of one’s tone) which will soothe a man when he is in a state of anger, bitterness, and resentment.

“Meek” and “meekness” are also used of gentle conduct, especially in the case and on the part of people who had it in their power to act otherwise. They are used of a horseman, who, in a firm and sympathetic way trains and disciplines a high-spirited horse. Plato uses these words in the sense of the politeness and courtesy which are the cement of society. Xenophon uses them of the atmosphere of brotherly understanding which develops between soldiers who have been comrades in arms for extended period, and who campaigned together and faced danger and death together.

One of the characteristic uses of these words is to describe the right attitude and atmosphere which should prevail in any argument in which questions are being posed and answers demanded and given. The words are used of taking remarks honestly and of discussing things without losing one's temper.

The words were also used of taking things lightly; that is, taking lightly an unpleasant experience—persecution, and even death. They were also regularly used of animals which have been tamed, and which have learned to accept discipline and control. A horse obedient to the reigns and a dog trained to obey the word of command are said to be meek (*praus*). The most characteristic use of these words is to describe the character in which strength and gentleness go together. A great illustration of “meekness” (*prautes*) in Classical Greek is the watchful dog who is bravely hostile to strangers and gently friendly with those he knows. It describes a man who is at once passionate and gentle in the highest degree.

Aristotle says that every virtue is the mean between two extremes. On the one hand there is the extreme of excess and on the other hand there is the extreme of defect and between them there is the happy medium. Aristotle says that “meekness” is the medium between anger and no anger. A meek man has just the right amount of anger in his makeup. The man who is meek is the one who feels anger on the right grounds, and against the right persons, and in the right manner, and at the right moment, and for the right length of time; but, he will err on the side of forgiveness rather than on the side of anger. Thus, according to Aristotle, a meek man is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.

Biblical Usage And Examples

“And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand

shall teach thee terrible things” (Psm. 45:4). As used here, “meekness” seems to carry the idea of courtesy to men of every rank and station—which is the basis of all human relationships. It is the spirit in which a man ought to answer his fellowman and go about his business.

“Meekness” is the basic quality which keeps man from sin. “The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground” (Psm. 147:6). A meek man is one who has special favor with God, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psm. 25:9). Often, the meek are spoken of in exaltation by the Almighty. “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psm. 37:11). “For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psm. 149:4). “The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground” (Psm. 147:6).

“Meekness” is seen in Abraham’s response to the disagreement among his associates. “And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren” (Gen. 13:8).

Isaac manifested the spirit of meekness in Genesis 26:20-22:

And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac’s herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

The Old Testament declares, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the

face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Moses is an excellent example of meekness. Considering the character of Moses will help us to better understand the meaning of “meekness.” Moses was no spineless creature. Moses was a man who could be blazingly angry when anger was needed and could be humbly submissive when submission was needed. No spineless, spiritless, anemic man could lead men like Moses did. Moses had strength and gentleness combined. A good example of this is seen in his dealing with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of

Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?
For which cause both thou and all thy company
are gathered together against the Lord: and
what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?
(Num. 16:1-11).

Moses clearly dealt with this uprising with strength and gentleness—with meekness. Moses was seldom angry, and when he was, it was generally, if not always, when the honor of God was concerned, and not on account of his own person and character; though it must not be said of him that he was perfect in this respect, or free from passion, or from blame at any time on account of it, but, when compared with others, he was the meekest man that ever lived; whereby he became the fittest person to have to do with such a peevish, perverse, and rebellious people as the Israelites were, whom no other man could well have bore with.

Gideon is seen possessing the spirit of “meekness” as he says:

What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that (Judg. 8:2-3).

Hannah is seen with the spirit “meekness” as she was falsely accused:

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my

soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto (1 Sam. 1:13-16).

David clearly sets forth the quality of “meekness” as he confronts the hatred of Abishai:

Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there (2 Sam. 16:9-14).

One way to help us better understand the meaning of meekness is to look at the words with which it keeps company. “Meekness” keeps company with love (*agape*). “What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in **love**, and in the spirit of **meekness**?” (1 Cor. 4:21). *Agape* is that mentality which always seeks another's highest good no matter what they do. There is a connection between meekness and love that cannot be ignored.

“Meekness” keeps company with gentleness (*epieikeia*). “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the **meekness** and **gentleness** of Christ, who in presence am

base among you, but being absent am bold toward you” (2 Cor. 10:1). According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon gentleness carries the idea of being mild and fair. Thus, there is an important connection between meekness and fairness.

“Meekness” keeps company with lowliness and humility. “With all **lowliness** and **meekness**, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, **humbleness** of mind, **meekness**, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am **meek** and **lowly** in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Humility and “meekness” are characteristic of the Christian’s vocation. “Meekness” and humility are void of arrogance, and are found delighting in service.

“Meekness” is the spirit in which we are to learn. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). Meekness is the spirit in which a man knows his own ignorance, and is humble enough to know that he does not have all knowledge. Meekness enables one to have an open mind to the truth of God.

“Meekness” is the spirit in which discipline must be exercised, and in which the faults of others must be corrected. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Correction must be given in such a way that a man is not discouraged—but encouraged. Correction given in “meekness” will help a man to be determined to overcome his faults. “Meek” correction is a stimulant—not a depressant.

“Meekness” is the spirit in which opposition must be met. “In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25). When there are those who disagree with us, or are in error, we cannot batter them into changing their mind. A spirit of meekness will enhance our ability to help others see the error of their ways.

“Meekness” is the spirit of Christian evangelism. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Real Christian evangelism will be far more effective if extended with courtesy; and yet, with conviction.

“Meekness” is the spirit which should permeate the whole Christian life. “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (Jas. 3:13). “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:4).

Meekness commends itself to God and man. But, “meekness” is more than being gentle and gracious – it is the secret to conquest and power. Our Lord declared, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

The root meaning of “meekness” is self control. Meekness is controlling the passionate part of our being. It is when we are meek that we will treat all men with courtesy, that we will rebuke without resentment, that we will argue without hatred, that we will be angry and sin not, and that we will be gentle and yet not weak.

The Perfect Example Of Meekness

Jesus is the perfect example of “meekness.” Four times the quality of “meekness” is used of our Lord in

Scripture. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech. 9:9). “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (Matt. 21:5). It was by the meekness of Christ that Paul appealed to the unruly Corinthians for sympathy and obedience. “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you” (2 Cor. 10:1). This meekness is the very essence of the character of Jesus Himself. The meekness of Jesus was prophesied:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law (Isa. 42:1-4).

Matthew speaks of its fulfillment:

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew

judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust (Matt. 12:14-22).

As meek as Moses was, his meekness pales in comparison to our Lord's. Only a man who was meek could have both cleansed the temple of the foolish who traded in it (John 2:13-17) and forgiven the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11).

The "meekness" our Lord is further demonstrated in Matthew 26:47-54:

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

Jesus is truly our perfect example of "meekness."

The Benefits Of Meekness

There are many benefits to possessing the spirit of meekness. Possessing the spirit of meekness will prompt

us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), and to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12), but at the same time we will be “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and “seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). “Meekness” will allow us to combat error with a Christ-like attitude.

Possessing the spirit of “meekness” will also aid us in evangelism. “Meekness” will enable us to have the courage to confront the lost realizing that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). This is why Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). As we approach the lost with an attitude of “meekness” our speech will be always “with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).

“Meekness” will help us to endure persecution. Jesus exhibited this ability.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

This is why Peter said, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). “Meekness” helps us to patiently endure such hardships.

“Meekness” is crucial in our marriage relationships, in our parenting, in our dealings with our co-workers, and every aspect of life.

Conclusion

The “meek” are those who are not easily provoked to anger, who patiently bear, and put up with injuries and affronts. The “meek” carry themselves courteously, and pleasantly to all, have the meanest thoughts of themselves, and the best of others. The “meek” do not envy the gifts and blessings of other men. The “meek” are willing to be instructed and admonished, even by the meanest of the saints. The “meek” quietly submit to the will of God, even in adverse situations, and ascribe all they have, and are, to the grace of God as one abides by the His commands. Meekness, or humility, is very valuable and commendable.

Meekness is very ornamental to Christians, and of great advantage and use to them. “Meekness” is a benefit in hearing and receiving the word of God, in giving an account of the reason of the hope that is in them, and in instructing and restoring the lost and the backslider. “Meekness,” in either in principle or practice, and in the whole of their lives and conversations, serves greatly to recommend true religion to others. Those who possess meekness, and exercise it, are well pleasing to God. When discontent, the “meek” in spirit are comforted. When the “meek” needs direction, they are given such through the word of God. When the “meek” are wronged, God will do them right.

To the “meek” belongs the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation, and not to embark on revenge quickly, and not to be easily provoked to anger, but to be free from bitterness and contentiousness, having tranquility and stability in the spirit.

“Meekness” must describe every Christian, especially in light of the words of our Lord, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

CHAPTER 21

Temperance

Keith Mosher, Sr.

Preface

AS ONE ENTERS THE “twilight” years of life, one is more apt to reflect on things not done, or on things one wants to do. Perhaps if one had exercised more self-control over the years, one could have accomplished greater things; so one surmises, one’s life would have been more effective in giving something worthwhile to the world. The ancient Greeks assumed that the ethic that **earned** one the right to say one had lived a good, productive life was **temperance**. Yet, the Bible record contains relatively little about this subject. This study is designed to seek some answers as to why Holy Writ is somewhat bereft of information about temperance and what the difference might be between the Bible’s teaching and ancient classical and Hellenistic Greek thought.

Great indebtedness is thus owed to the good elders of the Southaven church of Christ and to the **POWER** Lectureship director, B. J. Clarke, for organizing this in-depth look at the subjects mentioned in Galatians 5:19-23. As in every year, my thanksgiving and love for the Southaven church continues.

Introduction

The apostle Paul insisted that the Christian was to “walk in the Spirit” which required (among nine things)

temperance (Gal. 5:25, 23b).¹ Elkins has correctly deduced from Galatians 5:22-23 that:

Nine things are listed by Paul as the “fruit of the Spirit.” These are not nine different kinds of fruit but rather nine elements in one fruit. The fruit will be perfected only when each of these nine elements is present in its proper proportion. In proportion that any of these is lacking the fruit will be imperfect. If any of these elements are present in their proportion, the character will be what the Lord desires and expects. If one or more of the elements is lacking, then the character will not be what the Lord desires.²

What were the nine elements? Paul instructs that the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s teaching is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). Since the fruit of the Holy Spirit violates no law, that fruit is a spiritual trait much to be desired and is in contrast to the works described as “of the flesh” (against the law of God, K. M. at Galatians 5:19-21):

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

The task in this essay is to study just one of the nine elements of spiritual fruit — temperance. The thrust here will be to (1) Do a word study; (2) Do a connecting study of **how** the Holy Spirit **causes** temperance; (3) Do a listing of some areas where temperance must be practiced by the Christian.

Temperance: A Word Study

Ottley has correctly identified the problem in attempting an etymological, philosophical, and usage review of the term, **temperance** by stating that “There is much difference of opinion among writers on moral theology as to the true relationship between the three virtues of sobriety, moderation, and temperance.”³ Ottley then insists on the preeminence of the virtue of temperance:

Each (of the three virtues mentioned above, K. M.) has had its claims to be the archetypal virtue, which includes the others, advocated by representative writers; but there seem to be very strong reasons why temperance should be regarded as the inclusive virtue, the chief being that it has held a place from early times among the “cardinal” or principle virtues.⁴

Therefore, because of the idea that temperance is a cardinal virtue, to study this ethic is to involve oneself in a review of ancient Greek thought about this term both in common usage and in philosophical application for “. . . Plato seems to accept this grouping (of temperance as inclusive, K.M.) of virtues as based upon some contemporary classification, and it passes through Aristotle and the Stoics into Christian thought.”⁵ That the meaning of temperance just passed from Greek thought into Christian thought is denied by most Christians for to the Greek, temperance was a virtue which **merited** the blessings of the gods.⁶

The Greek term translated temperance at Galatians 5:23 is *egkrateia* (enkrateia) and “the word group *egkrat* takes its sense from the stem *krat* which denotes power or lordship, and which expresses the power or lordship which one has over oneself or over something.”⁷ The term is an adjective at Galatians 5:23 and Grundmann adds that “The basic sense of self-control is most clearly stated

in the adjective.”⁸ This adjectival usage is found at Acts 24:25; “And as he reasoned of righteousness, **temperance** (emphasis mine, K. M.) and judgment to come” . . .; and at 2 Peter 1:6; “And to knowledge, temperance. . .” Purely formally this basic sense of control may be derived from *en kratos* with the implication that the power to control is in oneself or that one has a status of power.⁹

A form of *egkrateis* is found at 1 Corinthians 7:9 (*egkrateuomai*) and is there translated **contain**.¹⁰ The idea in this latter verse is that if one cannot practice sexual abstinence or “contain” one should marry. In fact, the apostle Paul insists that those who work for some goal are **temperate** (*egkrateuomai*) in all things (1 Cor. 9:25).¹¹

One other New Testament verse has the adjectival usage and is a qualification for an elder, who must be **temperate** (*egkratas*).¹² Elders must practice self-control.

Some Greek philosophers (especially Plato) associated temperance or self-control with continence which term is defined as “self-restraint from yielding to bodily desires.”¹³ However, societal definitions often carry the meanings of using “moderately those things that are harmful and use without reserve those things that are good for one.”¹⁴ (Compare those who argue that one should drink with moderation.) The *egkrateis* person, however, shows self-control in **all** areas of life including bodily activities good or bad.¹⁵

Plato’s student, Aristotle, argued that temperance (*egkrateis*) is the idea concerned with pleasure and pain.¹⁶ Most who study temperance like to focus on the moderation of pleasures and vices and hardly discuss how this virtue relates to pain. Aristotle would say “it does not relate to pain, for the temperate person does not feel pain at the absence of desired objects.”¹⁷ In other words whether a thing be good or bad, those who practice self-control feel **no** loss whether they are deprived of some special food,

drink, sexual or other appetite according to Aristotle. He wrote: “In pleasures and pains, though not all types (referring to health issues, K. M.), and in pains less than in pleasures, the mean is temperance and the excess is intemperance.”¹⁸ Aristotle further noted:

[a] the self-indulgent man is so called because he is pained more than he ought at not getting pleasant things (even his pain being caused by pleasure), and [b] the temperate man is so called because he is not pained at the absence of what is pleasant and at his abstinence from it. [c] The self-indulgent man, then, craves for all pleasant things or those that are most pleasant . . . hence he is pained both when he fails to get them and when he is craving for them (for appetite involves pain) . . . [d] The temperate man . . . neither enjoys the things that the self-indulgent man enjoys most—but rather dislikes them . . . [e] nor does he feel pain or craving when they are absent, [f] or does so only to a moderate degree.¹⁹

Aristotle also attempted a definition of the difference between an incontinent person (Plato’s intemperate man) and the intemperate one. Aristotle informs his readers that the intemperate person is **worse** than the incontinent person because the intemperate one **decides** to follow his appetites while the incontinent person decides against such appetites but **fails** to follow through.²⁰ The incontinent person, to Aristotle, could be reformed because he would regret his failure; but the intemperate person is incurable given his mind set.²¹ Aristotle, thus, saw **four** levels of temperance:

Thus, there are four relations of the feelings of pleasure and pain in Aristotle’s ethics: the temperate (*sophron*) who estimates their value correctly and acts accordingly without struggle, the continent (*enkrates*) who also judges

correctly but fails to act accordingly, and the intemperate (*akolastos*) who fails both in judgment and action. In addition, both the temperate and the intemperate person act from habit while the continent and incontinent struggle.²²

So far, the idea of self-control is clearly understood to be the meaning of the New Testament Greek term, *egkrateis*, translated temperance. However, some theologians have objected to temperance's being called a **virtue**.²³ There are three major dissensions from the Bible's view that temperance **is** a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:23).

Objection number one is that no virtue can go against the inclination of man's nature since there is within man a natural aptitude for virtue.²⁴ Objection number two is that virtues are connected to one another and some people have temperance without having other virtues for some practice self-control but are also covetous, et al.²⁵ Objection number three against temperance's being a virtue is that for every virtue there is a corresponding "gift," but no "gift" corresponds to temperance.²⁶

The answer to objection number one is that nature inclines everything to whatever suits it, but man is a rational being and as such his pleasures must be in accord with reason. Temperance, as a virtue, withdraws man from those things which are contrary to reason, and temperance is contrary to animal nature not to man's nature.

Objection number two is that some, in sin, can practice self-control and do lack other virtues, but that **self-control** is not subject to the reasoning that God wants man to be temperate. It is simply the case that temperance can be learned from a certain natural disposition.

Objection number three ignores the "corresponding gift" which temperance does have and that "gift" is **fear**

(Psm. 118:20). When fear of God leads one to avoid offending Him, temperance is the result. And, man stands in the greatest need of avoiding offense to God!

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Well, what has been learned to this point? Note the following:

Temperance is the virtue of moderation and self-control in anything, but especially in indulgence in pleasures. Temperance, in the large sense of moderation or self-control, was the characteristic Greek virtue. For Plato, temperance is one of the four cardinal virtues, both in the state and in the individual. He describes it as a harmony or agreement between the higher and the lower parts—the governing and the governed in the state, the rational and the appetitive in the soul resulting in the obedience of the lower to the higher. While Aristotle’s specific virtue of temperance is still narrower in its range than Plato’s, in his doctrine of the mean he may be said to reduce all virtue to the habit of moderation or temperance in the large sense. Christianity reaffirmed the importance of this virtue, deepening and broadening the Greek conception of it. The new emphasis given by Christianity to the negative element in temperance, through its principle “die to live” led to the exaggeration of temperance into abstinence, which is, in Aristotle’s eyes, an extreme—that of defect—no less than excess.²⁷

The last part of the above quote that abstinence is an “exaggeration of temperance” because of Christian teaching (cf. Matthew 16:24) is denied here. Oftentimes

the Bible challenges one to be **moderate**, but there is also time for abstinence.

For example, intemperance can be illustrated by an event in the palace of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, who had invited his “princes and servants” to a feast (Esth. 1:3). Esther records the fact that those at the tables had “. . .drinking vessels of gold (the vessels being diverse one from another), and royal wine in abundance, according to the bounty of the king” (Esth. 1:7). Those who came to that gala did “according to every man’s pleasure” (Esth. 1:8b). Evidently no one practiced any type of self-control at that ancient party. The result of the drunkenness was that Ahasuerus’ wife, Vashti, was put to shame and their marriage sundered (Esth. 1:10-22). This **Jewish** text stands as an illustration of how the lack of abstinence changed the course of history and one can conclude, therefore, that abstinence is not just a “Christian” idea.

Another Old Testament text that implies abstinence (full self-control) under certain circumstances is Proverbs 23:1-3:

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

Those who envy the rich and cannot control their desires for such, according to wisdom, would be better off if they sliced their throats so that they could not eat! Note also: “Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it” (Prov. 25:16). Temperance is a Biblical ideal, not just a “Christian” one, and because temperance is to be practiced by God’s people the proverb writer prayed:

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity

and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:7-9).

Evidently Daniel was well able to practice self-control as a virtue for he “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat (cf. Prov. 23:1-3 above), nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Dan. 1:8). In fact, Daniel was so intent on being temperate that he struck a deal with his master:

Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse (Dan. 1:12-16).²⁸

Self-denial is, however, a principle also taught in the New Testament, but **not** as just an offshoot of Greek philosophy but as a **command** of God. For example, Paul wrote “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:4; cf. 1 Cor. 9:25 cited above). In fact, Paul daily practiced self-control (1 Cor. 9:27) and commanded that a Christian must let his “moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5).²⁹ Self-control is also implied by Paul in relation to the thought that the Lord could return at any moment: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep in the night;

and they that be drunken are drunken in the night” (1 Thess. 5:6-7).

Too, one of the more important virtues for God’s leaders is self-control. A leader must be **patient** (*epieikees*, gentleness in the face of hostility) and temperate (Tit. 1:8). In fact, aged men **must** have self-control (Tit. 2:2) as well as older women (Tit. 2:3). However, how one today achieves temperance or self-control is much debated, even among brethren.

The “Cause” (?) Of Self-Control

Benjamin Franklin once wrote that “temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, flour in the tub, money in the purse, credit in the country, contentment in the house, clothes on the back, and vigor in the body.”³⁰ A Sydney Smith, also in reference to self-control, exclaimed that “It is all nonsense about not being able to work without ale or cider and fermented liquors. Do lions and cart-horses drink ale?”³¹ Given the millenniums of interest in this virtue, how does one attain to self-control?

First of all, the word studies above seem to indicate that the **aim** of the temperate man (both from the secular and biblical perspectives) is positive not negative. That is one does not simply control some “lower nature,” but one aims for a higher, morally superior state. The temperate person seeks “sovereign mastery” and an “ordered use of every ability.”³² As Paul put it, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12).

Second, the word studies above also imply that self-control held a very prominent place in Jewish **and** Christian studies. One apocryphal writer, in summarizing Paul’s teaching, wrote that “the substance of Paul’s teaching is described as *logos theou peri egkrateias kai*

anastaseoos.”³³ The foregoing Greek phrase means that God’s Word concerns **temperance** and **resurrection** and one is as important as the other!

Third, temperance forms **part** of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22). But, does the Holy Spirit directly impart self-control or as Augustine put it, “The Holy Spirit’s presence in man gives him liberty—to fulfil the will of God?”³⁴ One preacher for churches of Christ, echoing Augustine, has written:

The Christian then, since he now has the indwelling Spirit, can produce the fruit of the Spirit, for the production of such always necessitates spiritual water which is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).³⁵

The above author went on to say that “Christians need more than the word in order to remain faithful.”³⁶ If one needs **more** than God’s Word in order to remain faithful; and since the seed of the kingdom **is** God’s Word (Luke 8:11), then a strange implication arises. For the seed of God’s Word is so powerless, per the foregoing direct operation of the Holy Spirit theory, that the theorists argue that God’s Word needs “zapping.” Such an implication is akin to buying seed, planting it, and then calling for the seller of the seed to come and energize the seed because by itself it cannot grow!

That the Holy Spirit always uses the correct and exact term in the Bible to get across His message is a view that cannot be, successfully, defeated (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-13). The Holy Spirit chose the term *egkrateis*, already defined above. But note Grundman’s comment on how the Greeks (whose language the Holy Spirit chose) viewed *egkrateis* (temperance):

The concept of *egkrateia*, behind which stands the ideal of the free and independent man; **of**

the man who is under no control (emphasis mine, K.M.) which would deprive him of it; achieves its ethical significance from the humanistic understanding of life which has freedom as its goal.³⁷

One who is controlled by another cannot practice **self**-control! If the Holy Spirit must directly impel one (or urge one by some brain manipulation not discussed in the Bible) so that self-control can be produced, it is the case that, by definition, it is no longer **self**-control. Someone may inquire as to the other elements of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23, especially *agapee* (love), and how they are produced. If one fruit is a product of an individual's response to the Holy Spirit's message then all are. Temperance is man's response as are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (especially faith, which is also demanded of sinners, Mark 16:16), and meekness. In fact, those who hold to the literal, personal indwelling view, who are not Augustinian (Calvinistic), recognize that it is the "**realization** of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul" (emphasis mine, K.M.) that moves one to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not some supernatural, **direct** operation.³⁸

Note in Guindman's quote above that one controlled by another loses his "freedom" and that temperance loses its "ethical significance" if one is outwardly constrained. No self-respecting Greek would admire a Christian who needed outside help to control self! The motivations of Greek philosophy and of Christianity are different, and the Greek did think that he **merited** the god's blessings (see above) when practicing temperance; but the Christian maintains self-control not to earn a reward but to reflect the life of his Master about whom the Christian has been instructed by the Holy Spirit: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

In fact, self-control is **commanded** (Rom. 6:12). Did God command a virtue He knew Christians could **not** attain without the Holy Spirit's aid? No Bible verse ever hints that God orders His people to do what He knows is impossible (1 John 5:3).

Temperance And Christians

Some ancient Hellenists went to extremes in defining temperance as asceticism, because their views were dualistic; that is, matter to them was evil.³⁹ It is the case that a Christian is not to love the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17), but it is also the case that Christians must live in the midst of "crooked and perverse" generations (Phil. 2:15). Self-control does not leave the world, but does overcome it (1 John 5:19; John 15:33). Those areas where the virtue of temperance is most needed are:

1. Modesty. This virtue, part of self-control, has as its task the holding in reasonable leash of the less violent human passions and can also be defined as humility. By filling oneself with truth and knowledge of Christ one guards against the malice of pride (Jas. 3:17; Matt. 5:3). Modesty is contrary to a mean-spirit and when applied to man's **exterior** conforms to the demands of decency and decorousness (c.f. 1 Tim. 2:9). Such things as one's attire, speech, living habits, and methods of life are to be **controlled**, which implies not a set of hard and fast rules but a principle of priority determined by modesty.

2. Behavior. Self-control in this area concerns activities and attitudes which would be offensive to one's fellowman (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12). Also, any behavior that leads to addiction is intemperate (1 Cor. 6:12).

3. Moderation. Temperance, or self-control, may also be thought of as **balance** in certain areas. For example, the Christian is to control his thinking (Phil. 4:8), his anger (Eph. 4:26), and his communication (Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8).

Such discipline of mind and speech is said to reflect the power of God in the Christian's life (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

4. Offensive Behavior. Temperance involves being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others as a demonstration of one's love for the other (Matt. 22:39; Rom. 12:9-21; Rom. 13:10; Phil. 2:3-5). In fact, sometimes one has to control an otherwise good behavior so as **not** to offend another (Rom. 14:13-21; 1 Cor. 8:9-13). This kind of self-control does not judge another **just** by outward behavior (2 Cor. 5:16) but will respect **and** tolerate differences of no consequence in terms of salvation (Rom. 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 8:8; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Tim. 4:1-5).

5. Negatives. One of the primary benefits of a Christian's freedom in Christ is one's freedom from the domination of negative forces: "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32-36). Sin does **not** have dominion over Christians (Rom. 6:14; Rom. 8:2). And, a Christian is commanded not to put himself under such sin-bondage: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). Therefore, a Christian must totally abstain from **all** mind-altering drugs or chemical substances that are habit-forming and used solely for recreational purposes. (Medical usage is implied and even encouraged in Holy Writ—1 Tim. 5:23). Further, the Christian must abstain from any **activity** which enslaves such as gambling **or** gluttony (c.f. Prov. 20:1; Prov. 23:20-35; 2 Cor. 7:1). Self-control or temperance is not **just** about alcohol usage, but does include abstinence from such things that have the power to addict. One has written:

The sin of intemperance is wrongly limited to one particular form of excess. It may include want of restraint in work, in recreation, in intellectual speculation, in the pursuit of wealth

or power, in the use of the faculty of speech. On this last point much stress is laid by some Christian moralists. The fact is that the habit of loose, unrestrained speech paves the way for grave lapses from truth, purity, or good faith. It defiles the man (Matt. 15:11). It hinders or weakens that power of controlling the whole body (Jas. 3:2) which is essential to Christian perfection. James implies that the 'sovereign sway of the Christian conscience must be exercised even in what seems a small sphere, and thence gradually extended to the whole field of human nature till man becomes free in self-control.⁴⁰

6. Rashness. Some will make **resolutions** and then fail to keep them. Others will say that they **intend** to diet, quit drinking, etcetera, but never quite make the changes. When hearing of the plight of such folks as the latter, one is reminded of the ancient Rechabites who had enough self-control to obey their earthly father, but God's children had not enough to obey their heavenly father:

But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we

dwell at Jerusalem Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me (Jer. 35:6-14).

When a Christian vows a vow, he should always mean what he says. Such a purpose is the best form of temperance (Matt. 5:37). Surely, God's people can practice as much self-control as the ancient Rechabites (who, incidentally, had no inward help from the Holy Spirit).

CONCLUSION

To walk according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit in imitation of the Christ requires, for one thing, temperance. Temperance is self-control **in** this world not withdrawal from this world (asceticism). Temperance involves every area of life including thought, activity, speech, and habits. Attitudes are driven by self-control.

Temperance, said to be a fruit of the Spirit, is commanded and is practiced by free-will persons. If one were controlled, then **self**-control would be a misnomer.

Finally, the highest ethical standard derives from the nature of being like the Christ. He, after all, left the perfect example (1 Pet. 2:21).

Endnotes

1 The Holy Bible, King James Version (World Bible Publishers, n.d.). All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stipulated.

2 Garland Elkins, "Bearing the Fruit of the Spirit, in **Studies in Galatians**, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications Inc.), p. 212.

3 R. L. Ottley, "Temperance," **Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics**, vol. 12, ed. James Hastings, (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1961), p. 235.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Walter Grundmann, "*egkrateis*" **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, vol. 2 ed. Gerhard Kithel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 342.

7 Ibid., p. 339.

8 Ibid., p. 340.

9 Ibid.

10 Wesley J. Perschbacher, "*egkrateis*" **The New Analytical Greek Lexicon**, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), p. 114.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary**, p. 235.

14 <http://www.eden-valley.org/temperance>

15 The Greek goddess of feminine wisdom was thought to have the skill of **tempering** the intuitive faculties of man rather than his logical or rational processes. She was said to bring together opposites in such a way as to create in essence a whole new way of thinking so that a man could answer the question, "How much is just enough, but not too much?" <http://www.lycrall.cca.org> (MS Collegiate Temperance).

16 <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/papers/anci/angikonk.htm>

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 2.

19 Howard Curzer, "Aristotle's Account of Temperance," in "Nicomachean Ethics," vol. III 10-11, **Journal of the History of Philosophy**, 35 (1997), pp. 5-25.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Helen North, **Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature** (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 203.

23 <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/theologian>

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 <http://www.utm.edu/research/lep/temperan.htm>

28 Abstinence from intoxicating beverages is taught throughout the Old Testament, especially as commands to the priest, but also to others (Lev. 10:8-10; Num. 6:3-4; Judg. 13:4; Judg. 13, Judg. 14; Prov. 23:20, Prov. 31-32; Prov. 31:4; Jer. 35:6-8; Jer. 35:14).

29 “Moderation” is *epieikes* in the original and implies one who can be **patient** even in the face of hostility (1 Tim. 3:3). At Tit. 3:12, Jas. 3:17, and 1 Pet. 2:18, *epieikes* is translated **gentle**.

30 <http://www.dhg.hd.wanderingmind/temperance.asp>

31 Ibid.

32 Ottley, “Temperance,” p. 236.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Mac Deaver, personal letter to Jim Waldron, June 6, 2001. Deaver fails to connect John 7:37-39 to its **miraculous** meaning.

36 Ibid.

37 Walter Grundmann, “*egkrateis*,” pp. 340-341.

38 R. L. Ottley, “Temperance,” p. 236.

39 For example, Walter Grundmann, “*egkrateis*,” p. 341, mentions that to Philo (Jewish Hellenist, K. M.) temperance “aims at the discarding of all material wants which are not necessary to existence.”

40 R. L. Ottley, “Temperance,” p. 236.

CHAPTER 22

How Is The Fruit Of The Spirit Developed?

Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

I *T IS ALWAYS* A pleasure to speak on the **POWER** Lectures. For me, of course, it is an extra special time since I get to be with B. J., Tish, Daniel, Holly and Michael. This great Southaven congregation continues to serve God magnificently in so many ways. We always pray God's richest blessings in Christ to abide with the elders, deacons, ministers and all the families who labor to glorify God in the work being done here.

A multitude of unforeseen matters have limited my ability to produce a manuscript that deals as thoroughly with my assigned topic as I would like, but I have tried to present the positive Biblical teaching on how one develops the fruit of the Spirit and also discuss **some** of the errors circulating around this topic. Please refer to the endnotes for resources available that discuss some of these areas more fully.

The Question

Answering the question "How is the fruit of the Spirit developed?" from the teaching of Scripture is not as difficult as trying to answer the multitude of erroneous responses

to the question from denominational groups and a small number of brethren who vigorously promote their false doctrines about the Holy Spirit.

One can find a variety of beliefs as to the precise meaning of Paul's teaching in Galatians 5:16-25¹ and other Scriptures on the work of the Holy Spirit. Brethren, while differing on several points, have been charitable to one another, not allowing most of these differences to fracture our fellowship with one another. However, when someone's views on the Holy Spirit pervert fundamental and essential teaching of the Scriptures that can cause souls to be led astray and lost, lines must be drawn (Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9-11). False teaching and false teachers must be exposed and repudiated, and fellowship must be withheld until proper repentance is forthcoming.

Differences—Minor And Major

One example of a difference between brethren that has not been allowed to disrupt fellowship is whether or not the Holy Spirit indwells Christians **personally** (some use the term "literally," meaning God's literal Spirit personally dwells in us), or if He indwells us in a **representative** (non-personal) manner through the medium of God's Word. Through the years brethren have not divided with one another on this matter because neither side allowed their view to deny or pervert any crucial Bible teaching. To illustrate, those who believed in a personal indwelling, such as the late Gus Nichols, James D. Bales and others, did not contend that such a manner of indwelling involved any **direct influence** of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit in conversion of sinners or in leading Christians to be faithful. Those who have held to a personal indwelling view generally believed that such **direct influence** would of necessity be of a miraculous nature that was limited by God in scope and time, or that

such would violate the free moral agency of man given by God at creation. Conversely, those who held to a non-personal representative indwelling of the Spirit through God's Word, such as Guy N. Woods, Foy E. Wallace and others, did not deny that the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian and influences and aids us in being faithful. **While differing on the manner of indwelling of the Spirit, both sides have generally agreed that whatever influence the Spirit wrought upon the human spirit, it was exercised through the medium of God's Word.** Brethren Nichols and Woods discussed these matters frequently and showed that neither, though differing, taught doctrines that perverted crucial Bible teaching.

Please note: It is not, I repeat, it is not the manner of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the Christian that is troubling and splitting the Lord's church today! Although some brethren lack discernment, or are ignorant of the facts, or are willfully blind, or are being purposefully deceptive regarding this fact—contending that this is the only issue causing our problems—the manner of the indwelling is **not** the major issue causing trouble in the church over the Holy Spirit.

Here is the major problem plaguing the church regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. Brother Mac Deaver (hereafter abbreviated as MD or Mac) believes in a personal indwelling of the Spirit in a Christian, but this is not the problem. MD and those following him have insisted that a necessary corollary to their personal indwelling view is that the Holy Spirit, within the Christian, operates in a direct manner to lead and aid the saint in living a faithful life. This promotion of the **direct operation of the Holy Spirit** (hereafter abbreviated as DOHS) is the issue that false teachers like MD are promoting and by which they are leading brethren astray.

We will discuss more on MD's doctrines later, but the following material, which appeared in the February and March 2004 issues of the **Fulton County Gospel News**, provides some basic understanding of the Holy Spirit and His relationship to us through God's Word. This material sets the groundwork for understanding much of what will follow. The articles have been edited somewhat from their original form.

The Holy Spirit And The Word Of God

by Ted J. Clarke

Part One

Introduction

One of the most dangerous false doctrines that has circulated among religious groups professing Christianity, including some in the Lord's church, is the idea that there is a **direct** operation of the Holy Spirit upon man's spirit in order to cause him to be saved, followed by a continuing direct operation on the spirit of a Christian to enable one to live a faithful life. Those who teach this error are likely to honestly believe that the Bible presents such to be the work of the Holy Spirit, but we think the Scriptures teach otherwise.

When we say a **direct operation of the Holy Spirit** upon the human spirit, we refer to the idea that God's Spirit comes in direct contact with one's human spirit, the result being that the human spirit is brought to act in a manner that it would not have otherwise done. An example of this can be seen in the Calvinistic concept of how one is saved from sin. Calvinism teaches that all mankind is so totally depraved in mind that no person can simply hear the gospel of Christ preached or read it from the Bible and respond to the gospel in a saving

obedient faith. See the Westminster or Philadelphia Confessions of Faith. Accordingly, denominations that embrace this teaching say that an unbelieving person must have the Holy Spirit of God act directly upon the human spirit **to enable one to believe and obey** the gospel. However, the Bible nowhere teaches this type of activity by the Holy Spirit in order for people to be saved. The apostle Paul said:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

There is not even a hint of any direct action of the Spirit upon the human spirit in this or any other New Testament (NT) passage. We will show that the Holy Spirit is active in every instance of one becoming a Christian, but that He operates **indirectly** through the means of God's Word to influence a person's spirit to believe and obey the gospel.

Some likewise teach the need of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart (spirit) of a Christian to enable him or her to resist temptation, obey God's commands and understand what the Scriptures teach. This too is a teaching of Calvinism, although there are some teaching this doctrine who do not believe that the Holy Spirit must act directly upon an **unbeliever** to enable one to believe and obey. The claim is that God has promised the Christian a direct empowerment from the Holy Spirit that is not available to the non-Christian. Again, there is no question that the Spirit of God teaches, leads, and strengthens Christians to live the victorious life. The question is **how** does the Spirit do this? By directly acting upon the human spirit and forcing knowledge, guidance and power upon and action by each individual; or by using

the means of God's Word to instruct, motivate and persuade? We believe the latter. Keep these verses in mind throughout this study:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly [completely, American Standard Version] furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If the inspired Scripture furnishes us "completely unto all good works" what is lacking that we need a supposed direct influence of God's Holy Spirit? Can one be more complete than complete?

The Holy Spirit is not the Word of God, but the Word is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to wield His influence upon the hearts of men. "And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**" (Eph. 6:17). Suppose a man wishes to cut down a tree. He goes to the woods carrying an axe or a saw. The man is not the axe or the saw, but those are instruments he may use to accomplish his purpose. The Holy Spirit desires to influence the heart of every unbeliever to believe and obey the gospel, and He desires equally to influence the heart of every Christian to be faithful. If He exercises this influence through the Word of God it is still the Spirit working to accomplish these goals. He is simply doing this through a means or instrument, as the woodsman cutting down a tree uses his saw or axe. The instrument of the Spirit, His sword to cut into the heart of man and procure his obedience, is the Word of God:

Now **when they heard this**, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37).

For the word of God is quick [living, ASV], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

This is the power of the Spirit working through the **“word of God.”**

The Holy Spirit Makes Christians

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:7-15).

These are promises Jesus made to His apostles, assuring them that the Spirit would reveal His complete will to them and inspire them to teach this truth without error. These are not general promises to all Christians, but words of comfort and promise to the

apostles of Christ because He would soon be leaving them (John 14:16-20). Actually, John 13-17 is a section of Scripture spoken by Christ to His apostles on the night of His betrayal when they observed the Passover and Last Supper. There are a few general statements of Christ in this section, but the passages quoted above are not promises to all men.

The fulfillment of the promised Holy Spirit's coming to the apostles (repeated again in Acts 1:5; Acts 1:8) occurred on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-47. You will notice from a reading of this chapter that the Holy Spirit fell directly upon the apostles, empowering them to speak in languages they had not studied and inspiring them to preach the gospel of Christ for the first time. There was no direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts (spirits) of those who heard the gospel preached. Peter did not tell them to "pray through" asking for a direct operation of the Spirit of God to enable them to believe. Peter told the audience: "hearken to my words" (Acts 2:14); "hear these words" (Acts 2:22), indicating that they had the ability to understand and act upon what he preached. Peter told them Jesus had been made "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), and they obviously believed him, for Acts 2:37 says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were "pricked in their heart" when they "heard" the Holy Spirit's inspired Word in the mouth of Peter, not by a direct operation of the Spirit upon them. They believed because they heard and understood God's Word, not because the Spirit made them believe. They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and then they would receive a promised gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). [More on this gift of the Spirit later.] Acts 2:40-41 continue to show the power of God's Word on the hearts of honest hearers:

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Did the Spirit “convict” these men of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). Indeed! How did He do His work? Through the Word of God preached by the Spirit inspired apostles.

Acts 2 is the pattern for all subsequent conversions to the gospel. While it is true in Acts 10 that the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his family directly from heaven, the Spirit **did not** come upon them in order to make them believe or to save them. The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and family to convince the Jewish Christians that God was accepting Gentiles into the Lord’s church. Carefully read Acts 10:43-48; Acts 11:15-18 where this is stated. Cornelius was told to send for Peter for

he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do (Acts 10:6);

to hear words of thee (Acts 10:22);

we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God (Acts 10:33);

who [Peter] shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved (Acts 11:14).

The Holy Spirit influenced Cornelius and his family through the Word of God preached by Peter. That is the same means used throughout this Christian age to win men’s hearts to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit And Man’s Free Moral Agency

The free moral agency of man simply means that God created us with a free will, that we can make moral

choices to believe and obey God or to disbelieve and disobey Him. In the Garden of Eden, God sought to influence Adam and Eve to do right through His spoken words with the promise of rewards and fear of punishment (Gen. 2:15-17). He did not place his Holy Spirit directly upon the spirit of man to force him to do right. Genesis 3 shows us that Adam and Eve could have obeyed God, but they chose to be swayed by the words of Satan rather than the Word of God. Satan's influence was not his evil spirit directly upon Adam and Eve, just as God's influence was not direct, but he influenced them through words to motivate and persuade. When they gave in to Satan's temptation and failed to do what God told them to do, God held them accountable. **If they could not have done what God commanded and obeyed Him rather than disobeyed Him, God would not have punished them as He did.** If they had needed a DOHS to remain faithful to God but God did not give such to them, does not this indict God as being responsible for their sinning? God is a just and righteous God. "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments" (Psm. 119:137). Obviously, they could have remained faithful without a DOHS or God would not have punished them.

God wants our obedience, praise and service to Him to come from our free will to choose to adore Him over all other options. God does not want robots that have no free will to honor Him. What glory is there in that? He does not require the impossible nor does He do for us what He has equipped us to be able to do—hear, believe and obey.

To bring about our salvation from sin God did something for us we could not do ourselves, but this did not affect our free will. He gave His only begotten Son as the perfect sacrifice for sins (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-9). This loving act by God and Christ appeals to our emotion, intellect and will and begs us to trust and obey. The Calvinistic

ideas that man cannot believe God's Word without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart actually puts the blame on God and His Holy Spirit if any are not saved. If the ability to believe the gospel requires a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon man's heart and the Spirit does not enable that individual to believe, whose fault would that be? In fact, God is not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9), but it is not all up to God. We are commanded to hear (Acts 13:46); believe (Mark 16:16; John 3:16); repent (Luke 13:3; Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30-31); confess (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10); and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). These are all things we can read about in the NT and things we can do—without any direct operation of the Holy Spirit on our human spirits.

The Holy Spirit speaks to mankind through the Word of God. In writing letters to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus prefaced each letter He dictated to John with the word, "Write," and He closed each letter with the statement, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:7-8; Rev. 2:11-12; Rev. 2:17-18; Rev. 2:29; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:6-7; Rev. 3:13-14; Rev. 3:22). What other conclusion can one draw than the fact that God's Holy Spirit speaks to us through the written Word of God? The Spirit's influence which He seeks to bring to bear upon the heart of man is mediated through the Word. That is why the Word is Spirit-filled and full of power (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). Yes, the Holy Spirit makes Christians, but He does not do it by a direct operation upon their hearts (spirits). His influence and power come through God's Word.

Some Comparisons Of Spirit And Word

In studying the work accomplished by the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God there are some amazing parallels.

[1] In Nehemiah 9:20 God instructed Israel through His good Spirit and in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are instructed by God's inspired Scripture. [2] In John 3:5 we are born of the Spirit and in 1 Peter 1:23 we are born by the Word of God. [3] In John 6:63 the Spirit quickens [gives life] and the words spoken by Jesus are Spirit and life. Psalm 119:50 also says God's Word quickens. [4] In John 16:8 the Spirit convicts and Titus 1:9 says the faithful Word convicts. [5] In Acts 9:31 the Holy Spirit provides comfort and in 1 Thessalonians 4:18 the inspired Word brings comfort. [6] The Spirit sanctifies in 1 Peter 1:2 and Jesus prayed that God would sanctify His apostles through the Word of truth in John 17:17. [7] In Romans 8:2 the law of the Spirit of life sets us free and in John 8:31-32 Jesus taught that abiding in His Word sets us free. [8] In Ephesians 3:16 the Spirit strengthens the inner man and in 1 John 2:14 we are strong because the Word of God abides in us. [9] In Ephesians 5:18-19 we are to sing praise to God and speak to one another in song because we are filled with the Spirit and in Colossians 3:16 we are to do the same by letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. [10] Romans 8:14 says we are to be led by the Spirit of God and, in Psalm 43:3 and Psalm 119:105, God's truth and Word lead and guide us (cf. Psm. 73:24).

There are others, but these ten comparisons/parallels illustrate the way the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to accomplish His work. In fact, all together the Scriptures presented in this article, and many more that could be cited, show that in the Holy Spirit's work to influence the conscious mind of every accountable human being, He operates only through the medium or means of God's Divine Word. That does not mean that the Holy Spirit is only the Word of God; He is a Divine Person Who uses the Word of God as His instrument. God has chosen to channel the Spirit's power to convert the sinful spirits of

unbelievers and to strengthen the inner being of Christians only by the appeal of that Word upon the conscious minds of those who hear or read it. Remember the passage cited near the beginning of this lesson:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly [completely, ASV] furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Christians should always desire every gift God has given us to convert unbelievers and be strengthened ourselves. However, there was no promise of a **direct aid** of the Spirit upon the minds of unbelievers or Christians, even during the limited age of miracles in the first century, in order to effect their conversion or to impose a strengthening. The **direct influence** of the Holy Spirit upon a human spirit to force obedience would be a miraculous influence and miracles were not for that purpose.

Part Two

The Holy Spirit And The Miraculous

God sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles to equip them to receive by inspiration His revealed will for mankind in the New Testament (John 14:26; John 16:12-15; Acts 1:5; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-47 et al.). Additionally, the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to perform miracles of various kinds, just as Christ had done, to prove they were God's chosen messengers:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it

shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen (Mark 16:17-20).

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands (Acts 14:3).

For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:2-4).

It is also true that the Holy Spirit was given for a time through the laying on of hands by the apostles (cf. Acts 8:12-22). However, when the last apostle died the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit would cease (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Cor. 13:8-13). Note that these miraculous gifts were for revelation of truth and confirmation by miracles. But Jesus promised that “all truth” would be delivered to the apostles (John 14:26; John 16:13). There were no more revelations needed when the NT was completed in the first century (cf. Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3). Paul also said that Christ’s new covenant had been confirmed by His death (Gal. 3:15) and the Hebrews writer said it had been confirmed by miracles (Heb. 2:2-4). Once fully revealed and confirmed there is no need for more miracles to reveal or confirm it.

We have shown that God chose the Holy Spirit inspired Word to be the means He uses to influence the conscious minds of people to obey the gospel (Rom. 1:16). The gospel contains facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed and promises to be enjoyed. The unbeliever and Christian can respond to these elements of the gospel of their own free will, without any **direct** operation of the Holy Spirit. For God to bypass this free will by imposing faith and obedience by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit would be for God to act contrary to His established laws of the creation of man. He has always sought our freely given praise and obedience.

Why does God command our obedience if we cannot do what He says? Not that we as Christians always do all God says to do, for we do not, but God made provisions for us when we sin (1 John 1:7-10). If we have to have a direct operation of God's Holy Spirit to keep us from some sin, as some people contend, then why not have a **continual** direct operation of the Spirit so that we never sin?

While we do not know the ways of God's working in providence in answering our prayers and providing for us as He has promised, we can be sure that He does not impose upon us by a direct operation of His Spirit anything that would negate our free will as it relates to our initial and continuing salvation. To believe that He does, puts one's own thoughts and actions in a totally subjective realm, where you cannot know if you are doing God's will or following your own whims and desires. God's Word protects us from such dangerous subjectivity. Scripture is the objective standard of God's truth and will for us.

The Claim of "Direct" Help Today

Those who make claims for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirits of people today warp the time frame God set for the duration of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and the purpose for

those gifts as well. They may deny they are contending for the miraculous operation of the Spirit, but that is exactly what such claims imply.

The apostle Paul told the brethren at Ephesus that they were able to understand God's revelation to them by reading what he wrote:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5).

To contend, as some do, that we need a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon our spirits in order to receive an inspired understanding of what God revealed in the Scriptures makes Paul's statement to the Ephesians false. True, there are some things that are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:15-18), but through diligent and prayerful study we can learn the truth (John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Why give the Scriptures at all if one needs the Holy Spirit giving us more inspired information in order to understand them? If the Holy Spirit gives us a direct understanding of the Scripture, He is giving us more information (which is additional inspired revelation), and thus He is implanting directly in our minds an inspired explanation. However, the Holy Spirit most certainly does **not** work in this manner.

Those today who make the claim of being directly influenced by the Holy Spirit to have an inspired understanding of the Scriptures are unable to prove their claims by miraculous signs, as were those who received God's revelation in the first century (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 14:3; Heb. 2:2-4). They can only produce a subjective feeling

that says, “I feel that God spoke this understanding to my heart.” Such uncertainty has given rise to all sorts of false doctrines and unauthorized denominations.

Scripture Is The Standard

God has channeled the power of His Holy Spirit through His revealed will in Scripture. This is God’s permanent arrangement. Direct revelation and miraculous ability to prove the revelation was from God were temporary provisions of the first century. The effectiveness and power of that Spirit inspired Scripture are seen in the following passages:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12, NKJV).

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If those who make the claims for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in their lives cannot prove these claims as the first century Christians did by miraculous powers (and they cannot), then let them cease to make such claims and get back to the objective standard of God’s Word as our only source of God inspired information, equipping us for every good work.

Conclusion

We do not limit God when we follow the teaching of Scripture presented in these two articles. We simply recognize that while God has the power to do anything He desires, that He has chosen to inform, motivate and empower people to become Christians and live faithful lives by the influence of the Holy Spirit upon our spirits only through His Word. We have shown by these Scriptures that we can understand, believe and obey God's will for us, without a direct operation upon our hearts.

Fruit Of The Spirit—Whose Spirit?

One of the difficulties involved in interpreting passages relating to the Spirit is that the Greek word *pneuma* can refer to more than the Holy Spirit. We can know that God's Spirit is meant when there are qualifiers such as **Holy Spirit**, **Spirit of God**, **Spirit of Christ**, etc. (cf. Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18; Luke 11:13; Rom. 8:9). Other times, where there are no qualifiers, the context of a passage makes it clear that "Spirit" refers to the third person of the Godhead (cf. Eph. 4:4-6). There are other times that the word spirit can refer to the inward being of a person (1 Cor. 2:11; 2 Cor. 7:13). "Spirit" can also refer to angelic beings (Acts 8:26; Acts 8:29); demons (Luke 9:39; Luke 9:42); and an attitude or disposition (2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Cor. 2:12).

Capitalization of the word "Spirit" in our English Bibles is a matter of interpretation by the various translators. As such it does not always mean that they have properly understood the meaning that should be attached to the word "spirit"/"Spirit" in a particular passage.² Some translators have the word **Spirit** in a passage where another translation has **spirit**. For examples, see Genesis 6:3 in the KJV and the NASB, and

John 6:63 in the KJV and the NKJV. The earliest Greek manuscripts of the NT were written in UNCIAL style, meaning that they were written in all capital letters, so they are of no help determining which spirit is meant. Consequently, the context of a passage (immediate and remote) must determine which of the meanings above are appropriate for the word spirit in a particular verse. Berry's Interlinear says, "[I]n some places it is really doubtful" as to whether it is the Holy Spirit or man's spirit that is intended.³

In our passage in Galatians 5:16-25, some brethren have serious doubts whether the phrase "fruit of the Spirit" refers to fruit prompted by the Holy Spirit. Instead they believe that the proper translation should be the lowercase "spirit" of man. David Brown notes:

Most people believe that "fruit of the Spirit" is the product in the life of a Christian that is produced by the Holy Spirit. Some believe [such as Mac Deaver, TJC] that the Holy Spirit cannot produce such fruit except that the essence of Deity in the person of the Holy Spirit is **directly attached** to the substance of the spirit (inward man) of the Christian. Is it possible that we have read into the text of Galatians 5 what has not been there? [emp. added, TJC].⁴

David goes on to note that Z. T. Sweeny⁵ and Homer Hailey⁶ take the same position on Galatians 5, that the reference is between man's flesh and man's spirit; so that man can either allow himself to be given over to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) or allow his spirit to take control and produce the fruit of the spirit. Marion Fox, who just released an expanded edition of volume one of his treatment, **The Work Of The Holy Spirit**,⁷ takes the same view of the spirit in Galatians 5. While he touched on the subject of the fruit of the Spirit in the first volume, the forthcoming volume two of Fox's work contains an entire chapter on the topic.⁸

Galatians 5:16-25 and Romans 8:1-16 are parallel in several ways and provide a challenging study to the Bible student as to whether Spirit or spirit or a combination of the two is meant in these passages. If the human spirit is meant in Galatians 5 instead of the Holy Spirit, that certainly removes a major text from MD's promotion of the DOHS and destroys his major self-styled "direct" argument. We'll discuss this argument of his later. As enticing as it is to take away one of Mac's supposed sugar sticks, I am not convinced that the seven occasions of "Spirit" in Galatians 5:16-25 should be understood as the spirit of man in place of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:16, when Paul encourages them to "Walk in the Spirit," he uses the present tense verb for "walk." This is an admonition for them to keep on doing what they had already been doing. In the context of the book I believe this relates back to what he said in Galatians 3:3-5, especially Galatians 3:3:

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

In this passage Galatians 3:5 indicates that the reference to Spirit is the Holy Spirit who revealed the **"faith"** through Paul and confirmed it by the miracles done by him, likely including his imparting spiritual gifts to the Galatians by the laying on of his hands (cf. Acts 8:14-17). It seems very probable that the contrast between flesh and Spirit in Galatians 5:16 is the same as that mentioned in Galatians 3:3.

Some have said that while they can understand the flesh "lusting," they cannot conceive of the Holy Spirit "lusting" (Gal. 5:17). The word translated "lusteth" is from

the Greek *epithumeo*, which “denotes ‘strong desire’ of any kind”⁹ and can be used of either good or bad desires and has the same twofold meaning in nouns and verbs:

Notes: (1) In Gal. 5:17, in the statement, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh,” the Holy Spirit is intended, as in the preceding verse. To walk by the Spirit involves the opposition here referred to. The verb “lusteth” is not repeated in the second part of the statement, but must in some way be supplied. Since in modern English the word “lust” is used exclusively in a bad sense, it is unsuitable as a translation of *epithumeo*, where the word is used in a good sense. As the rendering “desire” is used of the Lord Jesus (as mentioned above [cf. Luke 22:5, TJC]), it may be best so understood here in respect of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

The meaning is that the Spirit of God has strong desires against the strong desires of the flesh of man. Thus, the desires of God’s Spirit are directed against the sins of fleshly man, noted early in Scripture in Genesis 6:1-6, especially verse 3. Galatians 5:17 says that to keep on following either the flesh or the Spirit will keep us from doing the bidding of the other.

Since the commanded “Walk in the Spirit” is a reference to the Holy Spirit, to be “led of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18) is the same Spirit. **The question of how we walk in the Spirit, are led by the Spirit, and produce the fruit of the Spirit is the key to our inquiry!** The statement that we are led by the Spirit or that we should bear the fruit of the Spirit does not tell us **how** these things are accomplished. The one who is to be in control of the Christian is not the flesh with its sinful desires. Rather, Christians are to let the Spirit of God control our thinking and our actions, with the guarantee that doing so will keep the flesh from causing us to miss inheriting God’s kingdom. One being led by God’s Spirit is not any

longer under the bondage of the Old Testament (OT) law (Gal. 5:1-14), for the Holy Spirit is the Revealer and Confirmer of the NT law of Christ (cf. Gal. 5:18).

I just do not believe that interpreting the references to Spirit in Galatians 5 as the human spirit properly captures what Paul intended in this section of the book; nor do I believe that accepting this as the Spirit of God gives any credence to MD's insistence that the fruit of the Spirit in this passage demands a DOHS upon the human spirit to produce it.

How Is The Fruit Of The Spirit Produced?

How does the Spirit produce fruit in the lives of Christians? Fruit comes from good seed being planted in fertile soil and nurtured through its growth till the harvest. The work of the Holy Spirit in this process is set forth in a number of passages. In speaking of the coming Holy Spirit's work, Jesus instructed His disciples about the Spirit's role and how He would accomplish His duties. We previously outlined, under the section, "The Holy Spirit Makes Christians," how He was to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment in bringing unbelievers to come to faith in Christ (John 14:26; John 16:7-16; John 17:14-21). The Spirit would complete these actions through His inspired Word that was given to the apostles and through them to the world. You will search the Scriptures in vain to find an example of the Spirit exerting a direct influence upon the human heart apart from God's Word (cf. Acts 2:14; Acts 2:22; Acts 2:40-42). God's Word reached the vilest, most depraved, vulgar hearts of men and brought them to obey the gospel through His Divine Word (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as

the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13).

The Spirit saves us through the Word of God.

Does the Holy Spirit equip Christians to live faithful lives, strengthening them to resist sin, helping them understand His Word and grow in the “Christian graces,” and produce the fruit of the Spirit? Yes, indeed! Does the Spirit accomplish by directly impacting each Christian’s spirit, or by operating upon our spirits indirectly, through the medium of God’s Word? Truly it is the latter. The sanctification of the Spirit operated through the word of truth. See the passages just quoted and John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

Do people need more power to remain faithful than they did to become Christians in the first place? Mac says yes and states this as a universal principle to try to bolster his contention that saints need a direct power of the Spirit upon our spirits to live holy and fruitful lives. However, it is not a universal principle that it is easier to be converted than it is to remain faithful, although in some cases it may be relatively true. One who has never been immersed in the depths of sin, as I was, but rather was raised in a Christian atmosphere might think that conversion is easier than faithfulness. However, such people have not experienced the struggles to believe and abandon a sinful way of life to which one was addicted for many years. The sad fact is that most people will not believe and obey the gospel. If it is so easy why do they not obey? If God offers direct power from the Holy Spirit to Christians to enable

them to continue to obey, why does He not offer a direct power equal to the needs of the unbeliever to empower them to obey the gospel initially? Mac believes in the former but denies the latter. The facts are that it is easier for some people to obey the gospel than others and easier for some to remain faithful Christians than others. For some it is more difficult to obey the gospel than to remain faithful and vice versa. In reality this argument for the need of a DOHS in the lives of Christians proves nothing. It is an assumption without merit or proof.

The Parable Of The Sower

In giving the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-8; Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:3-9; Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:5-18), Jesus provided principles that instruct us in the matters of fruit bearing. He described a sower sowing seed on different types of soil, the result being that only the soil identified as “good ground” brought forth fruit with varying degrees of success. When He explained the parable to His disciples He noted that the earthly part of the parable had a vital spiritual meaning. The sower “sowed the word” (Mark 4:14), and “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Note also that the various types of soil were likened unto the different types of hearts of men. Those who finally bring forth fruit from the Word of God being sown in their hearts are those identified as “good ground; such as hear the word and accept it” (Mark 4:20); “he that heareth the word, and understandeth it” (Matt. 13:23); and “these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

This parable does not merely describe the conversion process by which one becomes a child of God, though that is surely part of Christ’s teaching here. Other than the wayside hearer, who never initially obeyed, the parable includes the developmental part of the lives of those in

whom the seed sprouts and begins to grow. Some “endure for a while” (Mark 4:17); or “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Others hear the Word and “other things [of the world] entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:19); or, “as they go on their way they are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit unto perfection” (Luke 8:14).

So the parable describes those who hear the gospel but do not initially obey it; those who believed and initially obeyed but soon fell away; those who obeyed but then over a longer course of time allowed influences of the world to render them fruitless; and those who heard the Word of God, understood it, held it fast, and then brought forth fruit to the degree they were able. You will please note as you read these accounts in the three gospel records that **“the word of God”** is the **“seed”** that was either rejected, abandoned, choked or held fast.

Notice too the influences emphasized in the parable. Are the victories of “Satan, the evil one, the devil” a result of his ability to directly affect the hearts of the different types involved? Certainly not! God would not permit Satan to have power to directly steal the Word that can save souls out of the hearts of any who would cherish its influences to save them (cf. Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12). It is because the wayside soil is hardened against receiving the Word that it is rejected and Satan is able to snatch it away. I agree with McGarvey that the wicked influence of Satan is not directly exercised upon our hearts but indirectly through medium:

Satan snatches the word away by means of all those worldly allurements through which men are led to be inattentive to the word of God. The class of persons represented are those whose ideas of Scripture teaching are too crude for an

intelligent faith, or who allow good impression made by the word to speedily pass away.¹¹

The same type of influence is noted in the rocky ground and thorn infested soils. These are influences Satan wields through temptations addressed to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17).

Unfruitfulness in all these cases is attributed to the rejection of or neglect of nurturing God’s Word of the kingdom. Conversely, fruitfulness is credited to one initially embracing the Word (which implies becoming God’s child), and then patiently holding it fast till it produces fruit, the labors and blessings of faithful Christian living. This is the fruit of the Spirit—produced by the Spirit’s influence through God’s Word. Although the Spirit is not specifically mentioned in the Parable of the Sower, the principle of the Spirit’s working through the Word is emphasized time and again in the Scripture. We have already in this lesson cited numerous passages that demonstrate this. The Word of God and Christ is full of the Spirit life He imparts through it. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63, NKJV). They are “the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). “The sword of the Spirit...is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

Just as physical seed has life in it to produce fruit, the spiritual seed of God’s Word has life in it through the Holy Spirit. Notice again Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (NKJV). The Word’s living and life-giving power comes from the abiding presence of the Spirit and His ability to reach into and affect the depths of a man’s spirit. The Spirit **affects** a man’s heart through

the Word of God, and thus **effects** the development of His fruit within us. There is no Scriptural teaching that avers a DOHS to produce this fruit. The Holy Spirit is actively working through the Word in every case of the conversion of an alien sinner and in all the fruit bearing of each Christian, but not in any direct influence upon our spirits in addition to His influence through the Word of God.

The Parable of the Sower was so named because it was given and explained to Christ's disciples, who were to be the sowers of the seed, the Word of God's kingdom, in all the world (Matt. 13:19; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). The parable was to impress them with the power of God's Word to convert men to His kingdom and to empower those converts to be fruitful through the Word. The Word, understood and held fast, clearly defeats the designs of Satan to steal men's souls and produces fruit to God's glory (cf. John 15:1ff). Christ's use of Scripture during His own temptations by Satan also demonstrated this tremendous power of God's Word (Matt. 4:1-11; cf. Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Anyone who sows the seed of God's Word can know that the power to bring men to fruitfulness does not reside in the sower, but in the life-giving Word held fast. We can plant and water, but the increase (fruit) comes from the effect of God's Spirit filled Word (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

The Parable of the Sower sets the tone for us to understand the major elements involved in obeying the gospel and becoming a fruit bearing Christian. The fruit borne by those who hear, understand, accept and hold fast the Word is unquestionably the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit generated by the Spirit through the Word is not confined to just these nine items in Galatians 5:22-23. When Paul mentioned the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 he concluded with "and such like," implying that there were other works of the flesh not named here that were of the same type or kind he did mention (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor.

6:9-11; Eph. 4:25-31; Col. 3:5-9 et al.). Likewise, in his closing comments on the fruit of the Spirit he does not profess to have named them all, but says, “against **such** there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). “Such” is an adjective from the Greek *toiouton* meaning, “such, such as this, of such a kind, of this sort.”¹² The Spirit’s fruit are those characteristics that the Christian demonstrates as a result of being led by the influence of the Holy Spirit as opposed to being led by the desires of the flesh (cf. 2 Pet. 1:2-8; Rom. 6:16-22; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 Cor. 16:13f; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 5:22-23; Gal. 6:1-10; Eph. 3:16-4:1; Eph. 4:17-24; Eph. 4:32; Eph. 5:1-23; Eph. 6:1-18; Phil. et al.). These passages and many others that could be cited show that fruit bearing through the influence of the Spirit is not limited to the nine items of Galatians 5:22-23.

MD insists that the conversion process is no part of fruit bearing, for he does not believe that persons in the process of being converted can demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, since these people do not have a DOHS—and one must have a DOHS in order to bear the Spirit’s fruit, according to Mac. The apostle Paul said that the Colossians began “bearing fruit and increasing...**since the day you heard of it**, and knew the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:6). The “it” that they heard was “the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5). The seed of God’s Word was sown in their hearts and began bearing fruit and increasing the very day they heard and knew the grace of God in truth, implying that the process of fruit bearing began with their obedience to the gospel and increased as they held fast “the word of the truth of the gospel,” submitting to it and teaching others to do so. Since their attitude toward God’s Word was one of receptivity, Paul’s prayer was for them to

be filled with the [full] knowledge of [God’s] will
in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That
ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all

pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col. 1:9-11).

Knowledge, wisdom and understanding produce a walk worthy of the Lord and fruitfulness in every good work. This leads to being strengthened with God’s might by His glorious power. The context indicates that this power to bear fruit is through the influence of God’s Word and it is through the Word that the Spirit wields His power. Again, there is no mention or implication of any DOHS upon the spirits of the Colossians in producing this fruit.

Mac Deaver’s “Direct Argument”

MD has said, regarding his contention for the DOHS on the heart of a saint, “I’m willing to rest the whole case on this argument.”¹³ The argument he referred to is the one he calls his “Direct Argument,” set forth in his charts labeled “M-174a, M-174b, and M-174c.”¹⁴

1. If (1) the word of God can directly affect the human heart, and (2) the Holy Spirit indwells a saint’s heart in conjunction with the word, and (3) the word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit, and (4) the saint must produce the fruit of the Spirit **then** the Holy Spirit must directly affect a saint’s heart. [chart M-174a]

2. (1) the word of God can directly affect the human heart (Psa. 119:11; Acts 2:37), and (2) the Holy Spirit indwells a saint’s heart in conjunction with the word (Acts 2:38; I Thess. 4:8; Eph. 5:17-19; Col. 3:16-17), and (3) the word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit (John 15:1ff; Rom. 8:9-11; Matt. 7:16-20), and (4) the saint must produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25). [chart M-174b]

3. then the Holy Spirit must directly affect a saint’s heart. [chart M-174c]¹⁵

Mac considers that this is his unanswerable argument and in spite of the fact that others have already shown one or more points to be incorrect,¹⁶ he repeats it over and over.

While I personally feel that much of his “direct argument” has been answered already in the material presented, we will respond to his major points. When MD says, “(1) the word of God can directly affect the human heart,” he has not made it clear what he means by that statement. Considering this in relation to his point three, “(3) the word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit,” he appears to mean that “the word alone,” without any powerful influence of the Holy Spirit working through the word, “can directly affect the human heart.” **I deny that!** There is no such thing as the Word of God stripped from the power of God’s Spirit. The words of Deity are spirit and life (John 6:63). Without the Holy Spirit it is not the Word of God. How could it be? Only Mac Deaver has said that such a word exists. Consider the passages MD used. Are Psalm 119 and the rest of the Psalms spiritless? Were the words of Peter without the power and influence of the Spirit when they pricked the hearts of those on Pentecost to ask, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). It is absurd to contend that the “word alone” apart from the Spirit can directly affect the human heart to do God’s will. Mac’s “word alone” is an invention that serves his cause, but we have shown in this entire lesson that it is the Spirit inspired and power-filled Word that reaches the hearts of men.

MD’s point “(2) the Holy Spirit indwells a saint’s heart in conjunction with the word,” is also vague and misleading. Mac says he never says that the Holy Spirit operates on the Christian separate and apart from the Word, but that is what the phrase “in conjunction with” comes to mean. In his debate with Jerry Moffitt, Mac said:

He gets on me for saying “in conjunction with the word.” He says, well, it’s an addition. Well, if it’s in conjunction with, I guess I could understand that. If I do something with somebody else, I guess my part is an addition to what they are doing, too. That’s what the expression means.¹⁷

Mac acts like he contends that the Spirit and the Word are doing the same things together. However, if the Spirit is doing something to us that the Word cannot do, then the Holy Spirit is acting upon us apart from what the Word does. Remember the section earlier that compared the work of the Spirit and the Word? What the Word does the Spirit does for it is the Holy Spirit of God working through the medium of God’s Word.

I think that part of the problem with some who are still defending Mac’s teaching on the Holy Spirit is that they believe that Mac is merely talking about the Holy Spirit **indwelling** Christians in conjunction with the Word. Those who believe in a personal indwelling of the Spirit, but not in a DOHS on the human spirit, might properly say they believe that the Holy Spirit indwells a saint in conjunction with the Word because they accept **one indwelling for the Word and another for the Spirit**. Those who believe in a personal indwelling do not believe the Spirit indwells us **through** the Word, but in **addition** to the Word. However, what Mac means when he says the Spirit indwells in conjunction with the Word is that the Spirit indwells the heart **and directly works to influence (affect) us in ways the Word cannot do so**. This latter part is what separates MD from others who believe in a personal indwelling, and I hope those still supporting Mac who do not believe in a direct influence will come to realize what he is really teaching and call on him to repent.

Although MD will not agree, I am one of a number of brethren who believe that the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 refers to the miraculous powers that were bestowed upon first century Christians by the hands of the apostles, to aid them in knowing God's will and teaching it to others (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Acts 6:6 with Acts 8:4-20; Acts 19:6 et al.). These gifts were temporary and provisional. It does not matter that the promised gift is in the same passage as salvation (forgiveness of sins), for the fact is that the gifts were only needed for a while and salvation will be needed until Christ comes again. Mark 16:15-20 is a parallel situation. The fact that those miraculous gifts followed those who believed (in connection with being saved) does not mean those miraculous gifts are still being given, or that we cannot preach verses Mark 16:15-16 as still valid if we do not also preach verses Mark 16:17-20 as necessary today. That this is a view worthy of your study can be seen from the following quote from brother Robert R. Taylor's excellent book, **The Bible Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**:

This View Is Neither New Nor Novel

It is really as old as Acts 2:38! I advanced this view in an Open Forum in California some twenty or more years ago. The ablest preachers in California were there. One of them said he had NEVER heard such a view expressed among us though he had preached for nearly fifty years at that time. Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb and T. W. Brents favored this view. So did H. Leo Boles in his *G[ospel] A[dvocate]* Commentary on Acts. As I write this chapter an article from the pen of Joe S. Warlick (1866-1941) lies before me. It appeared in the *Gospel Guide* in 1920 [in which Warlick took the same position]...Franklin Camp held this view for many years and was an able defender of it. This has long been the view of men like Guy N. Woods, Alan Highers, Bobby Duncan, Harrell Davidson and Garland Elkins.¹⁸

Of course we do not count whether a doctrine is correct by the number of men who hold to it, but this should encourage your study on this important topic and this truth is devastating to MD's errors on the Holy Spirit. Study what these men have had to say about the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38. Even if Acts 2:38 refers to a non-miraculous gift or measure of the Holy Spirit, it would not imply a personal indwelling or DOHS in and upon our spirits.

First Thessalonians 4:8 does not teach a personal indwelling or a DOHS. Even if it did imply a personal indwelling it says not one word about a DOHS upon the heart of a saint. The parallel passages cited (Eph. 5:17-19; Col. 3:16-17) show that the Spirit's work in influencing the heart of a Christian is exerted through the Word of God, not by a DOHS. Otherwise, in one case the Holy Spirit was doing for the Ephesians what the Word in the other case was doing for the Colossians. If the Word could do the same thing for the Colossians that the Spirit was doing for the Ephesians, then the DOHS of the Spirit would not be necessary at all and Mac's position falls. The truth is that the same things were being done for both congregations in the same way—the Spirit was indwelling and influencing Christians through the medium of the Word.

The next point in Mac's argument is "(3) the word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit." As previously mentioned, this is a straw man that is a concoction of Mac's position. I know of no one who has ever proposed such. Let Mac tell us what brethren are promoting the view that "the word alone" in one's heart can produce the fruit of the Spirit. We will oppose such a position as vigorously as we oppose Mac's. The proposition that MD opposes is that "in the conversion of alien sinners and the sanctification of Christians (which naturally

includes bringing fruit to perfection), the Holy Spirit operates upon and influences the human spirit only through the Word of God.” **Please note that it is the Holy Spirit *through* the Word of God—not the Word alone!** The whole tenor of this lesson has been to show that the Word of God is what it is because of the Spirit’s ministry through that Word! That is according to God’s plan.

Nothing in John 15:1ff contradicts the concept of the Holy Spirit sanctifying by His influence only through the Word. The disciples of Jesus were cleansed through the word (John 15:3); their abiding in Christ depended upon them allowing His words to abide in them (John 15:7) and keeping His commandments (John 15:10). Is this not the very meaning of Paul’s later statement, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16), which is equivalent to being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:19)? This same section of Scripture (John 15-17) mentions Christ giving His disciples God’s Word and His prayer to the Father to: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:6; John 17:8; John 17:14; John 17:17; John 17:19-20).

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

The Word of truth is the instrument that the Spirit uses to effect our sanctification and this “is begun at conversion and is to continue through life.”¹⁹

Romans 8:9-11 does not teach explicitly nor imply what Mac teaches about a DOHS to produce fruit in a Christian. Even if Mac is correct about Romans 8:11

referring to the Spirit's influence upon our present lives and not to a future final resurrection, there is no justification for insisting this must be a personal indwelling **and** a DOHS. We have repeatedly shown the Spirit's influence to be through God's Word, not direct. Does the passage teach that a Christian must have the Spirit of God to belong to God? Yes. Does the text say **how** the Spirit indwells us, whether personally or through the medium of God's Word? No, it does not. Does the passage teach that the Spirit gives us life and helps us to put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:11-13)? Yes, it so teaches. Do these verses teach that this giving of life and help is by a DOHS upon our spirits? No, they certainly do not.

Frequently an influence of Deity upon man is stated without giving a specific mention of the manner in which this influence is brought to bear. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a classic example. Pharaoh hardened his heart when he refused to honor God's demands through Moses and Aaron to let Israel go into the wilderness and worship the Lord (Exod. 5:1-14). But the magicians of Pharaoh's court also seem to have hardened his heart by apparently duplicating some of the signs of Moses (Exod. 7:10-13; Exod. 7:20-23; Exod. 8:5-7). It is also said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 7:3, Exod. 7:13; Exod. 9:12; Exod. 10:1; Exod. 10:20; Exod. 10:27; Exod. 11:10).

Did God operate directly upon the heart of Pharaoh to make him sin against God by rejecting His demands to let Israel go? Since this type of action would have contradicted God's creation of man with free moral agency—one's personal freedom to obey or disobey God—this cannot be the means God used to harden Pharaoh's heart (cf. Gen. 3; Gen. 6:1-9; Josh. 24:15; Eccl. 7:29). The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart through the medium of the demands He made of Pharaoh and the signs and

wonders that repeatedly challenged him to yield and soften his heart to do God's will (Exod. 5:1-3; Exod. 8:25-28; Exod. 10:8-11; Exod. 10:24-27; Exod. 11:10).

In like manner God seeks our initial obedience to the gospel and our continuing faithfulness and development in response to His demands upon us (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-42; Rom. 12:1-2 et al.). However, He does not secure our initial or continuing obedience by a DOHS upon our spirits. In every case of conversion or growth into fruitfulness in the NT these were responses to God's appeal to our human hearts through the facts, commands and promises of His Holy Word, the instrument of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:22-42; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 6:17). God appeals to our free will through instruction to inform, encourage and motivate us. We cannot find a DOHS by which God makes us do bad or good when we are determined to be the opposite. As has been asked before, "What demands or commands does God require of us that we cannot obey without a DOHS upon our spirits to accomplish God's will and receive a blessing?"

If a Christian cannot do God's will without a DOHS, then how is any saint to blame for his/her sins? If avoiding sin is something that one cannot do without a DOHS, and Christians have the promise of a DOHS to enable them to do with it what they cannot do without it, then how does any saint ever sin? But we do (1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10). If a Christian can resist a DOHS not to sin and goes ahead and sins, then how is that DOHS any more effective or powerful than God's appeals through His Word to not sin? It appears that Mac's claim for a DOHS upon the saint's heart is either ineffective or unnecessary.

Matthew 7:16-20 proves nothing about needing a DOHS to produce good fruit. The fact that good trees produce good fruit and corrupt trees produce evil fruit says not one thing about the need for a DOHS upon the saint's heart to produce good fruit.

Mac's point (4) is merely a statement of Galatians 5:22-25—"the saint must produce the fruit of the Spirit." Neither these verses nor any others Mac used justify his conclusion—"then the Holy Spirit must directly affect a saint's heart." MD rightfully cannot draw any conclusion not warranted by the facts and he did not produce the facts necessary to warrant this conclusion. His "direct argument" is full of assumptions, imprecise language, equivocation, improperly applied Scripture and faulty reasoning. It only works if you think like Mac and there are no good Scriptural reasons for doing that. Admittedly, Mac has other arguments he links to his direct argument to try to bolster his case for a DOHS upon the Christian, but we have not the space and time to deal with them here. These are matters that have been answered in his debates with others and in the resources we have listed in the footnotes.

Ephesians 3:16

Paul wrote that he prayed to the Father, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). MD claims that this passage is proof that the Holy Spirit literally and personally indwells each Christian and by that indwelling **directly works upon our spirits to strengthen us**. In their "CONVICTION IN A CAPSULE" statement, the Deavers state:

WE BELIEVE...4. A Christian is strengthened by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his inner man as he complies with the word of the Spirit (Eph. 3:14-19; Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16).²⁰

Mac wants to key on the words "his Spirit in the inner man" and insists this is an explicit reference to the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, implying a DOHS of the Spirit within us.

Paul is praying for a strengthening to take place “by his [God’s] Spirit,” and the strengthening is to take place “in the inner man,” but the apostle is not saying that there is a personal indwelling of the Spirit in a saint and that the Spirit **directly** strengthens the saint’s spirit by His personal presence there. Admittedly, the wording of most translations, including the KJV, ASV, NKJV and NASB, might lead one to conclude that Paul is speaking of an immediate and direct presence of the Spirit within us, if we just focus on the phrase “his Spirit in the inner man.” However, Paul is not speaking of the location of the Holy Spirit as being literally “in the inner man.” Paul’s point is that he is praying for the Christian’s inner man to be strengthened by the Spirit, which does not imply a personal indwelling nor a DOHS upon our spirits.

The **strengthening** was to take effect by means of **power imparted** or infused, and this impartation of power was to be made through the Spirit of God.—[*eis ton eso anthropon*]: **into the inward man**. The “inward man” is viewed here as the **recipient**, that **into** which the strengthening was to be poured, or the **object towards** which the gift was directed. The [*eis*], therefore, has its full force of “into,” and is not to be reduced either to “in” (RV), or to “in regard of” (Mey[er]).²¹

Lange’s Commentary also notes that “in the inner man” does not refer to the location of the Holy Spirit. “[*Eis*] here is not = [*ev*, in], nor in regard of...but ‘to’ and ‘into,’ marking ‘the direction and destination of the prayed for gift of infused strength’ [Ellicott].”²²

Kenneth Wuest gives part of the **Expositor’s Greek Testament** quote above and adds:

The preposition ‘in’ is *eis*, ‘unto’ and is a preposition of motion....Translation: That He

would grant to you according to the wealth of His glory, with power to be strengthened through the Spirit into the inward man.²³

There are also some Bible translations of Ephesians 3:16 that strive to make the distinction here clearer.

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Holy Spirit” [**New Revised Standard Version** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989)].

[T]hat he would grant—according to the riches of his splendor—that you may be strengthened mightily in the inner person by his Spirit [Hugo McCord, **McCord’s New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel** (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1988)].

While we should lament the inaccurate renderings of a passage in any version, we should be open to study translations that provide a clearer statement of the Bible author’s original intent. Quoting this passage from the translations above certainly is not intended to imply endorsement of the entire translation. It simply shows a greater recognition of the statements of the commentaries and word studies also cited.

Ephesians 3:16 does not necessitate a personal indwelling and it certainly does not imply a DOHS upon the human spirit to strengthen one. What this verse does teach is perfectly compatible with the previous parts of this lesson, that the Holy Spirit of God informs, strengthens and enables us in living the Christian life, and a multitude of other passages show that He does so through the Word of God. The late brother Winfred Clark’s remarks are, in my mind, right on target:

Such a man is to be “strengthened with might by his Spirit.” This is Paul’s prayer. Does this

mean a direct operation upon the inner man or the heart? Is that the way they are to be strengthened? If so, such would be an operation of God in answer to Paul's prayer apart from the exercise of their own wills. If they were not strong, whose fault would it be? Would it not be the Holy Spirit's if he didn't make them strong by the direct operation?

What then does he mean? Note what he says in Ephesians 6:10-11. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." As one continues to read he will note that Paul says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:13-17). It becomes obvious that such a person would be made stronger by doing what the Spirit through Paul admonishes him to do, wouldn't he? Now, does this differ in effect from the prayer he prays in Eph. 3:16? Surely not. The inner man is strengthened by the Spirit as he learns from the Spirit's teaching how to be stronger. His convictions are made stronger leading to stronger determination (Col. 1:10-11).²⁴

Conclusion

Mac says he is "tired" of brethren who get up and act like they know the truth about the work of the Holy Spirit when they don't know it. He says he is "tired" of being misrepresented, tired of being abused and accused, tired of this and tired of that. He's tired of brethren who will not respond to him when he berates them and challenges them to debate, and so on. I can assure you that MD is no

more tired of this mess he started than those of us are who have to oppose his error! Really, Mac ought to tell God he is tired of all the furor, for Mac has said, “It is my opinion, that in the providence of God, we have come to a point in the history of the church when God wants the error taught for years by the ‘Word only’ advocates (on the Holy Spirit issue) corrected.”²⁵

Obviously, from his actions, Mac believes that he is the one whom God providentially selected to “correct” what he calls this error, so why is he complaining?! Mac’s self-proclaimed mission reminds us of another brother, Rubel Shelly, who promoted a new restoration and seemed to think of himself as a new type of Alexander Campbell. Shelly has done much to destroy the church and he professes the same type of Holy Spirit influence as does Mac Deaver. While Mac does not agree with Shelly’s designs to restructure the church of the Lord into another denomination, he has no more ability to prove himself right and Shelly wrong on those matters than you or I do. Neither of them can prove their claims to have a direct operation of the Holy Spirit operating upon them to guide or illuminate them, but they both refuse to be totally led by the Spirit through the Word of God.

Mac knows that his characterization of the position we have set forth as “the Word only” is not accurate. We have shown, clearly I hope, that the Word of God (heard, believed and held fast) produces fruit in the lives of those of good and honest hearts (Matt. 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15). The Word is able to do that for us because the life and power of God’s Holy Spirit works to influence us through that Word (Eph. 6:17; John 6:63; Gal. 5:22-23). We contend for **the influence of the Holy Spirit through the Word—not the influence of the Word alone**. There is no Word of God minus the Spirit. Neither is there any Scripture that teaches a DOHS upon the spirit of a Christian in the ways Mac contends.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

And take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17).

Endnotes

1 Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted. Other translations used may be the American Standard Version (ASV); New King James Version (NKJV); and New American Standard Bible (NASB). Quotations from any version should not be taken as a blanket endorsement of the total text of that translation.

2 George Ricker Berry, **The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. iii.

3 Ibid.

4 David Brown, "The Work of the Holy Spirit and Salvation," IN: **Sin and Salvation**, ed. Bobby Liddell (Memphis: Memphis School of Preaching, 2004), Vol. 1, p. 187.

5 Z. T. Sweeny, **The Spirit and the Word** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., n.d.), pp. 144-145.

6 Homer Hailey, **God's Eternal Purpose and the Covenants** (Louisville: Religious Supply Co., 1998), p. 75.

7 Marion R. Fox, **The Work of the Holy Spirit** (n.p.: Five F Publishing Co., 2003), vol. 1, 2nd edition, pp. 135, 163, 491, 494.

8 Marion Fox, "The Fruit of the Spirit," Unpublished manuscript he shared with me that will be part of his Volume 2 on **The Work of the Holy Spirit**.

9 W. E. Vine et al., **Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), p. 384.

10 Ibid.

11 John W. McGarvey, **The New Testament Commentary—Matthew and Mark** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1875), p. 119.

12 Timothy & Barbara Friberg, Neva F. Miller, **Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), p. 382.

13 Mac Deaver & Jerry Moffitt, **The Deaver-Moffitt Debate: The Work of the Holy Spirit Within the Christian** (Marietta, OH: Therefore Stand Publications, 2002), p. 132.

14 Ibid., pp. 105-106. Mac has used these charts in other debates he has had.

15 Ibid.

16 Curtis A. Cates, **Does the Holy Spirit Operate Directly Upon the Heart of a Saint?** (Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1998); Jerry Moffitt in the previously noted **Deaver-Moffitt Debate**; Marion Fox, **The Deaver-Fox Debate: The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit—Literal or Figurative?** (Spring, TX: Bible Resource Publications, 1995); see also Fox's two volumes on **The Work of the Holy Spirit** noted above; Bill Lockwood, **The Deaver-Lockwood Debate** (Austin, TX: Biblical Notes, 1998); Cornelius C Abbot, III, **Deaver's Direct Doctrine Disputed** (Privately published, 1998); David Brown, see above reference to MSOP Lectureship book on **Sin and Salvation**; see also the **former Annual Denton Lectures on Ephesians; Philippians & Colossians; 1 & 2 Peter & Jude; Mark; 1st Annual Schertz Lectures on Luke**, all edited by Dub McClish. Gary Summers has written a number of lengthy bulletin articles in response to Mac's arguments. You can reach him at 5410 Lake Howell Rd., Winter Park, FL 32792, or garysummers@spiritualperspectives.org. The entire February 2004 issues of **The Gospel Journal** and **Contending for the Faith** (and a host of other brotherhood publications) were given to exposing the errors of Mac Deaver's position on the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

17 **Deaver-Moffitt Debate**, p. 89.

18 Robert R. Taylor, Jr., **The Bible Doctrine of the Holy Spirit** (n.p.: Robert R. Taylor, Jr., 1996), p. 99. The chapter in the book on "The Gift of the Holy Spirit" will richly reward your study. See also Franklin Camp, **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption** (Birmingham, AL: Roberts and Son, 1974) for a detailed Biblical study on this topic.

19 Robert R. Taylor, Jr., **Studies in First and Second Thessalonians** (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, 1977), p. 100.

20 **Biblical Notes Quarterly** –Special Issue, Spring 2004 (Sheffield, TX: Mac Deaver), p. 32.

21 S.D.F. Salmond, “The Epistle to the Ephesians,” IN: **The Expositor’s Greek Testament**, ed., W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990 reprint), p. 313.

22 Karl Braune, “The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians,” trans. by M. B. Riddle, IN: **A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical**, ed. John Peter Lange, trans. by Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1870), p. 124.

23 Kenneth S. Wuest, “Ephesians and Colossians,” IN: **Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 88.

24 Winfred Clark, “Paul’s Prayer for the Gentile Saints,” IN: **The Book of Ephesians**, 9th Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship (Memphis: Getwell Church of Christ, 1984), pp. 73-74.

25 **Biblical Notes Quarterly** (July-September, 1998), p. 11.

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**Expository
Sermons On
Flesh
vs.
Spirit**

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CHAPTER 23

They Which Commit Such Things Are Worthy Of Death

(Rom. 1:20-32)

Jerry Martin

Introduction

WHAT A MARVELOUS HISTORY and reputation this good congregation has. What great good you have done through this annual lectureship. Such a history and reputation isn't possible without faithful Christians, great leaders, and sound preaching, all of which this congregation has. I am honored to be part of your 12th annual **POWER** lectureship and hopefully I can contribute in some small way to the continued good you are striving to accomplish. This year's theme, **The Works of The Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit**, is a timely one.

My specific topic is, *They Which Do Such Things Are Worthy of Death*, taken from the last verse of my assigned test, Romans 1:20-32. It will be obvious from our study of this text that those who participate in the works of the flesh are guilty of sin and shall receive the wages due, which is death (Rom. 6:23). It should be equally obvious from this context that just because man may declare

himself free from God's law doesn't remove him from accountability to that law. These Gentiles referred to in this passage were guilty of sin and sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4); therefore they were under law whether they acknowledged it or not.¹

They Which Do Such Things Are Without Excuse

Romans 1:20: The visible world that God has created is His evidence for two invisible attributes: "His eternal power" and His Divine nature or "Godhead." When one honestly views the beauty and order of an environment perfectly suited to sustain life how could he deny that it is a demonstration of the Divine power of the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent One. No rational person would say that what they see in creation happened by chance. Those who say such are without excuse and worthy of death.

Romans 1:21: Even though the existence of the Creator is demonstrated in the creation they do not honor Him as such. They offer no respect, praise, glory, or gratitude. Their futile thoughts produced empty hearts devoid of God's light. Those who choose to ignore the evidence are without excuse and worthy of death.

Romans 1:22: When man closes his eyes to reality and devises Godless answers, he proclaims his own ignorance. A faulty premise will always produce a faulty conclusion. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Psm. 14:1). How sad to begin with the overwhelming evidences of God's existence and end up an atheist. God is not far from any who will seek after Him (Acts 17:27). A Godless man is one by choice, therefore he is without excuse and worthy of death.

Romans 1:23: Man, created by God and surrounded by a demonstration of all His creative power, defames the Divine by attempting his own creation. The creature has often wanted to make the invisible Creator look like the visible creation. While at Athens, Paul told the worshipers of idols at Mars Hill:

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:24-25).

Those who poorly and tragically choose corruptible idols over the incorruptible God are without excuse and worthy of death.

They Which Do Such Things Are Without God

Romans 1:24: When there is a habitual disregard for Gods righteous principles He will eventually let the practitioners of unrighteousness pursue their own sinful desires. Though God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) He allows man to choose for himself. Those who reject God, suppress truth, and worship objects they have shaped with their own hands will be given up by God. Such foolish people use the body that God gave them in lustful impurities that dishonor Him and themselves. In their present state of mind they will never change and are worthy of death.

Romans 1:25: When one has the knowledge of God on one hand, and wooden idols on the other, and chooses idols, they will have chosen a lie. They in essence make up their own rules and become their own god. Man's disregard for the God of heaven does not negate the fact He is the true Creator and deserving of mankind's praise forever.²

Those who refuse to give God proper acknowledgment and praise are worthy of death.

Romans 1:26: After the power of God being so clearly revealed in His creation and His Will being consistently taught since the creation, anyone who rejects such evidence God will turn over to their own unrestrained passion. Here, an example of vile affection is women allowing their bodies to be used in unnatural acts. Such unnatural behavior is worthy of death.

Romans 1:27: Like women, men who aren't governed by God's design or laws for the use of the body will use it in unnatural ways. Men will gratify their sexual desire by having unlawful and unnatural intercourse with other men. Homosexuality is one of the most unnatural and indecent acts of which any reasonable person could think. They ignore the obvious differences in the male and female bodies. They ignore the obvious means of procreation with the natural use of the sexuality of the male and female. Any unnatural use of the body is a perversion of God's design and is an act worthy of death.

Romans 1:28: It is repeated here that when one habitually rejects the knowledge of God and refuses to live by His righteous principles he will be given the opportunity to see what a life governed by a Godless mind is like. Though the evidence of God and His design is inescapable, these Gentiles denounced and discarded such evidence to their own demise. When there is no God there is no righteous standard. When there is no standard there is no conscience. When there is no conscience everyone is left to their own depraved mind to practice those things that are morally and spiritually impure and degrading. When one revolts against God he has no conscience of impropriety. Anyone practicing such lawlessness is worthy of death.

They Which Do Such Things Are Without Restraint

Romans 1:29: Verse eighteen declared that unrighteousness will be the reason the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven. Here these Gentiles are, full of unrighteous thoughts, and it is impossible for them to restrain such thoughts from gushing forth and expressing themselves in vile actions. The trees of unrighteousness in the orchard of disobedience will always produce the fruits of death. Those choosing to partake of such fruit are worthy of death.

Fornication is illicit sexual intercourse or giving one's self to unlawful sexual intercourse; to commit fornication. To taste of this evil fruit will cause one to lose all spiritual consciousness of lawful sexual bounds.³ They committed fornication by satisfying their sexual passions in unlawful and illicit ways.

Wickedness: The Greek word translated wickedness expressed the active exercise of the vicious disposition intended to inflict harm.⁴ Satan is called the wicked one so it shouldn't surprise anyone that eats the fruit gathered from his orchard that they will have ingested wickedness.

Covetousness: An intense lust for that which belongs to another that is an outgrowth of a soul filled with discontent.⁵ Those who taste of the fruit of covetousness will become idolaters (Eph. 5:5). Such a person exalts his own desire to become his own god.

Maliciousness: An intense inward desire to have the opportunity to viciously harm another.⁶

Envy: A disposition of constant pain at the happiness and success of others.⁷ Even the heathen governor, Pilate, knew envy was the motivation of the Jews who wanted to crucify Christ. "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matt. 27:18). We, like the Jewish leaders,

can become so obsessed with gaining a possession or achieving a position in life that we become blind with envy.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation (John 11:47-51).

Murder is the taking of the life of another human being unlawfully. Denial of God produces disrespect for human life. A self-centered wicked person, who unlawfully desires what another person possesses, who is malicious and full of envy, will think nothing of ending the life of another in order to take what they have.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:11-15).

Debate is contentious wrangling, quarreling, or fighting intended to breed strife. When a person is “filled with all unrighteousness” they not only refuse to listen to God, they reject input from anyone.

Deceit is a crafty scheme or cunning treachery intended to ensnare, like bait used to catch a fish. It looks real, may even be real, but it has a hook hidden inside.

Malignity is “a baseness of nature by which we take things by the wrong handle, and expound things always in the worst sense.”⁸ One with a malicious disposition will always be looking for opportunities to place the worst motives to others’ actions.

Whisperers are those who slander others and destroy their reputation in cowardly secrecy. Such individuals may never be “found-out” in this life but be assured such deeds are not hidden from God, and He will properly reward in due time. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:14).

Backbiters are those folks that openly make charges against another but never in their presence. They are first cousins to the whisperers.

Haters of God are those who have reached the depth of depravity and have a disdain for God. The Son of God Himself warns that if God is not one’s master that person will be a hater of God. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

Despiteful: One who has eaten of the tree of unrighteousness will develop a hateful attitude toward others and spew out insults intended to harm the innocent. The insolent feels he is superior to others and holds them in contempt.

Proud: describes a person who is filled with egotism who struts about with a swagger of contemptuous arrogance. In modern terminology we would call such a one a show off.

Boasters are braggarts who like to talk about themselves. Whiteside calls such a person “a little man swelled up.” When a person has to boast of his own accomplishments the things of which they boast are generally non-existent or at best greatly exaggerated.

Inventors of evil things: Those who deny that God exists and hate the standards He has revealed will live without restraint. Their focus will be the pursuit of new ways to gratify their sinful desires. As “old” ways to sin grow stale to them they will seek out “new” ways of fanning the flames of their out of control passions. The wicked of Noah’s day embodied such an obsession for evil.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (Gen. 6:5-6).

Disobedient to parents: Those who disregard God and His rule of law for the governance of their life begin early by refusing God’s charge for children to obey their parents. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3). Such individuals respect no form of authority, not even that wielded by those who gave them life and who would give their life for them.⁹ What a contrast to the mindset of Christ and those who follow His example of respect and obedience. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

Without understanding: The poisonous fruit of unrighteousness will cause spiritual stupidity. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). It isn’t that these folks do not have the mental capacity to understand, but they deliberately hardened their own hearts, stopped their own ears, and closed their own eyes to prevent spiritual insight that would place any demands on their lives (Matt. 13:13-18).

Covenantbreakers: People who quickly and frequently make agreement with others to gain personal advantage without any intention of keeping their part of the agreement. When one recognizes no authority, except their own, there is no such thing as a binding covenant.

Without natural affections: One who eats of this fruit will experience the hardening of his heart. Such a one cannot express the natural feelings which freely flow from a Christian’s heart.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:31-32).

Implacable: the inability to be satisfied. This is one of the side effects of eating of the fruit of unrighteousness. That person kills their spiritual brain cells rendering them incapable of changing their mind or actions. They are controlled by insatiable addictions to unrighteous living.

Unmerciful individuals are those who have lost their sensitivity to the needs of their fellow man, for mercy requires sympathy that responds to such needs with compassionate action.¹⁰ God’s mercy is promised only to those who extend mercy. “Blessed are the merciful: for they

shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). The unmerciful will find no mercy in the Day of Judgment (Jas. 2:13).

Romans 1:32: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” There are those who know the ordinances of God and yet disregard them. Despite knowing the penalty of disobedience these folks are disobedient anyway and revel in others’ disobedience. Because of their deliberate, open, and contentious sinful lifestyle they will receive the wages due such behavior. “For the wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23).

Those who are aware that such evil is taking place and do nothing to expose and extinguish such sinful behavior will be counted as participants in it. There is a valuable lesson to be learned from the warning given to Old Testament Israel.

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:18-19).

Similar warnings are given in the New Testament.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:6-16).

Those who disrespect, disdain, and dethrone God from their lives do so without excuse, proceed without God, live without restraint, and are worthy of death, both physical and spiritual death. It is God Who is the giver and sustainer of both life here and here after. The Hebrews writer sums these truths in the following words:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31).

The following comments by William Barclay should serve as fitting concluding remarks as to why they which do such things are worthy of death:

There is hardly any passage which so clearly shows what happens to a man when he leaves God out of the reckoning. It is not so much that God sends a judgment on a man, as that a man brings a judgment on himself when he gives no place to God in his scheme of things. When a man banishes God from his life he becomes a certain kind of man, and in this passage is one of the most terrible descriptions in literature of the kind of man he becomes.¹¹

Endnotes

1 James William Boyd, "System of Salvation," **Comments on Romans**, (Nashville, TN: Williams Printing Company, 1990), p. 14.

2 B. J. Clarke, **Studies in Romans**, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Pub. Inc. 1996), p. 58.

3 Adam Clarke, **Adam Clarke's Commentary**, Volume VI, (New York, Abingdon Press), p. 44.

4 Robertson L. Whiteside, **A New Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Saints at Rome**, (Denton, Texas: Invys Whiteside, 7th ed. 1945), p. 39.

5 Clarke's Commentary, p. 44.

6 W.E. Vine; **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, Unabridged Edition, (McLean, VA , Mac Donald Publishing Company), p. 714.

7 Bob Winton, **Commentary on Romans**, Revised 1997 (Gallipolis, Ohio), p. 23.

8 Whiteside, p. 43.

9 Robert R. Taylor, Jr., **Studies in Romans**, (Ripley TN), p. 30.

10 Whiteside, p. 46.

11 William Barclay, **The Daily Study Bible Series, the Letter to the Romans**, revised edition, (Philadelphia, PA, The Westminster Press), p. 33.

CHAPTER 24

Ye Are Bought With A Price

(1 Cor. 6:9-20)

Don Walker

Commendation

I *T HAS BEEN MY* privilege to participate in the annual **POWER** lectureship for the past few years, and without exception I have been overwhelmed by the magnificently high standard that has been set and met each year. The lectureship itself, each individual lecture and the preservation of these lectures are all top notched. Your hospitality and kindnesses shown while we visit your area for these few days is outstanding. Words are inadequate to express the joy we feel and the thanksgiving we owe for all that the Southaven congregation does to make this time of the year one of the highlights of our year.

For the past few years I have had the opportunity to get to know brother B. J. better, and I have certainly been blessed with these opportunities. Our paths cross occasionally through the year (some briefly and some for more extended periods) and I have personally enjoyed each visit we have had. It is no surprise that this lectureship maintains such a high standard of quality when we consider that he plays such a large and significant role in its production. May our God richly bless him and give him many years of continued service and opportunity.

Introduction–In General

Adam’s and Eve’s choice boiled down to one of two results–life or death. They could obey God and live in communion with Him in the garden– life. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17)–death. In the lives of men, no matter how complicated the matters or circumstances of those lives may become, it ultimately boils down to a choice between one of two–life or death.

Moses showed clearly the fact that after it all was settled, there were two choices from which Israel would choose one. Notice his declaration in Deuteronomy 11.

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known (Deut. 11:26-28).

Joshua’s proclamation at the conclusion of his farewell speech showed **his** understanding of this point.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

In Joshua’s eyes, it was an “either/or” proposition.

Jesus also taught in such a way as to call attention to the fact that it finally boils down to one of two choices as far as men were concerned. His parables were often of such a nature as to show the two sides clearly and

succinctly. Whether it is the two builders mentioned at the close of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7), or the five, two, and one talent men, there was either reward or punishment. There could be only one of two results. This Divine truth was also evident in an earlier statement of our Lord in Matthew 7.

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” (Matt. 7:13-14).

In the Bible it is God or the devil, Heaven or Hell, right or wrong, or as Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). This is the case with the theme of this book and the lectureship that it accompanies. “**The Works Of The Flesh vs. The Fruit Of The Spirit**” puts one style of life at odds with the other. The thoughts of this theme could be brought to its most common denominator if we were to say the flesh vs. the spirit.

It’s A War Out There

Within each individual there is a battle being waged, a civil war of sort. This seems to be Paul’s whole thrust in the seventh chapter of Romans.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members,

warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:18-25).

This inner battle that rages is why Paul spoke so plainly and boldly concerning sin and our being dead to sin in the sixth chapter of Romans. We dare not allow the physical man to overpower the spiritual man, lest we open our eyes in the worse of the two destinations.

Paul puts it so well in the verse which begins the context from which the theme of this book was taken. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that **ye cannot do the things that ye would**” (Gal. 5:17). This thought was not one that was exclusive to the writings of the Apostle Paul. John wrote, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). Do not miss the point of these two passages. They speak of determination rather than an inability. The point is, the child of God will allow the spiritual man to reign supreme and thus will be so determined to stand against that which separates him from God that it is simply unthinkable to commit such an atrocious act. The ability is still there, and sad to say, on occasions will rear its ugly head even among the strongest of us (1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10). However, it must not dominate our lives. It must be dealt with properly so that we may continue to war (1 John 1:9).

We can be thankful that our God has provided us the means by which we can be victorious. In our study for this chapter, we are going to learn much about what is necessary to win the war that rages within each of us. Let us now turn our attention to the assigned context.

Introduction –The City

To say that Corinth was a prosperous city is an understatement indeed. Strategically located, she flourished in many significant ways. As impressive as her location and military were, “her position of wealth and pre-eminence as a commercial city was even more so.”¹ Brother Bert Thompson goes on to write these words:

Hundreds of years before Christ it was known for its wealth and power as a leader among Grecian cities. The Corinthians fared well until they made the mistake in 146 B.C. of, as leader of the Achean League, revolting against Rome.²

Because of this revolt Rome came and destroyed Corinth and all her majesty. Brother Thompson continues:

The city remained in ruins exactly 100 years, at which time Julius Caesar (46 B.C.) rebuilt the city and turned it into a thriving metropolis of some 600,000 to 700,000 people. It became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia and was even governed by a proconsul residing at Corinth (Acts 18:12). The city became more wealthy than ever. Corinthian brass was of great value. Corinthian architecture was renowned. For intellectual development, commercial skill, architectural skill, navigational skill, great wealth, and great luxury this city was well-known. But it was equally well-known for its vice and immorality.³

Paul’s entrance into and his work in Corinth began with hesitancy and trepidation on his part. In his own words Paul said, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). In fact, Luke records these significant words.

Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall

set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city (Acts 18:9-10).

This courageous apostle went into this sinful city with fear and trembling. The reputation Corinth possessed of being a quagmire of sin must have been well earned. One writer described Corinth as San Francisco ten times over. Paul Butler writes these descriptive words of the sinful city:

In Paul's time Corinth was a city of wealth, luxury and immorality! To "live like a Corinthian" meant to live a life of profligacy and debauchery. All over the Roman Empire, women who were promiscuous or of loose morals were often called "Corinthian girls."

The reason for this is that at the temple of Aphrodite on the Acropolis there were 1000 "Corinthian girls" employed as *hierodouloi* (lit. temple maiden servants), actually prostitutes. Aphrodite was the goddess of love (*eros*). Worship at the temple involved sexual intercourse with one of these "priestesses."

Young male homosexuals were also used by the Corinthians. This "worship" formed a great temptation, even to the new Christians at Corinth, as evidenced from Paul's exhortations against it (I Cor. 5:1 ff., 1 Cor, 6:9-19). This attracted "worshippers" from all over the Roman world. To become "corinthianized" meant a person was living the most licentious, debauched life possible. It was customary in a stage play in the theater for a Corinthian actor to come on the scene drunk. Much drunkenness, homosexuality, fornication, robbery, thievery, idolatry and immorality of all kinds went on here. Strabo quoted the proverb, "All the people of Corinth gorge themselves."⁴

While in Corinth, the apostle wrote the epistle to the Romans. In chapter one, when he chronicled the sins of the Gentiles, it is interesting to note that he could very well have looked out his window and have seen the very qualities of degeneration he was writing of first hand.

Introduction–The Book

Taking all of this into consideration, it stands as no wonder to us that the Book of 1 Corinthians is known for Paul’s dealing with the many problems this congregation had. It was true then, and it remains true today, that society far too often influences the church more than we would like to admit.

The problems at Corinth were many and they were varied.

1. Division (chapters 1-4).

2. A lack of brotherly love and love for the church in general (chapters 6 & 13).

3. Idolatry and those things associated with it (chapters 6, 8 & 10).

4. A misuse of the miraculous gifts (chapters 12-14).

These are but a few of the matters that Paul was compelled to address in this epistle.

Yet, with all that Paul dealt with in this letter, immorality was one of the prominent problems that must have existed in this congregation of the Lord’s church. In chapter five there was a transgression so grievous that Paul described it as “such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles” (1 Cor. 5:1). The transgression was “that one should have his father’s wife.”

Tolerating the sin was not the only problem. Note their response in verse two. “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2). The inconsistency should have been obvious, but in chapter six, Paul was duty-bound to point to their contradiction of that which was right and holy.

The Unrighteous Shall Not Inherit The Kingdom Of God

Beginning in 1 Corinthians 6 we read concerning one brother taking another brother to court. In 1 Corinthians 6:8,

Paul says such conduct is wrong and it defrauds the brother. From there, Paul broadens his discussion by naming those that will not inherit the kingdom, and by proclaiming the inconsistency of such conduct.

Jesus plainly taught that there is a standard of conduct expected from those that would be called His brethren. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour proclaimed:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16).

Paul knew that these brethren knew, or at least should have known these Divine truths. Notice how many times he asks “Do ye not know?” Out of the ten verses in the book where Paul asks this question, six are found in this chapter (1 Cor. 6:2; 1 Cor. 6:3; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Cor. 6:15-16 & 1 Cor. 6:19). The other four passages are found in 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 5:6; 1 Cor. 9:13; & 1 Cor. 9:24.

Not all will go to Heaven. We live in a society where it is out of place to point to any behavior as wrong or out of place. To call anything sin, or to even hint at the thought that sin exists, is taboo. However, Paul did not subscribe to such foolishness. He did not hesitate to call sin, “sin” and make the issues “black and white.” There was no waffling, watering down or apology from this apostle. He knew that the unrighteous would not inherit the kingdom. The Corinthians knew this fact also. The only way they

would not be aware of this great truth was if they deceived themselves, and Paul warned them against doing that.

In this context, Paul enumerates many of the sins that will keep men from eternal communion with the Father. He begins this list mentioning sexual sins: "...Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ..." (1 Cor. 6:9). Before we present definitions for our terms, let's first notice Paul's inclusion of "idolaters" in this list of sexual transgressions. To some it may appear to be out of place in this list. However, "in the Gentile world of that day, idolatry often was a source of sexual perversions."⁵ Eating a meal and illicit sexual activity were both a prevalent part of the idol worship in that day. So closely linked were the sexual sins and idolatry, Paul chose to list them together in this record.

Now, let us turn our attention to defining these terms.

Fornicators—(πόρνος) fornicator, whoremonger. Usually it speaks of illicit sexual activity where at least one of the parties is unmarried. Fornication is a broad word that denotes all veins of illicit sexual intercourse.

Idolatry—(ειδωλολατρησ) an image worshipper.

Adulterers—(μοιχος) It speaks of illicit sexual activity where the party is married

Effeminate—(μαλαχος) soft, effeminate, luxurious, dainty

Abusers of themselves with mankind — (αρσενοχοιτης) sodomite, homosexual

Most of these definitions are self explanatory. In defining the word we are well aware of what conduct Paul has in mind. However, we wish to elaborate some on a couple of the terms and their relationship with each other at this time. Paul proclaims the wickedness of the "effeminate" and the "abusers of themselves with mankind." Both of these terms have reference to

homosexuality. The “effeminate,” as noted earlier literally means luxurious, soft or dainty. The same word is used when Jesus asked what the expectation was when they went out to see John the baptizer. Jesus asked, “But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?” (see Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25). Did you expect to see some one dressed in soft raiment, luxuriously attired? That of course was a far cry from what they actually found upon meeting John. The word, however, had a “darker and more horrible sense, to which there may be an allusion here.”⁶ That allusion is highlighted by Paul T. Butler. He writes:

The Greek text here includes the word *malakoi*, literally meaning, “soft to the touch,” but used metaphorically in the New Testament to mean male effeminacy in a practicing homosexual. The word *malakoi* was used by classical Greek writers near the first century A.D. to denote *catamites* (men and boys who allowed themselves to be misused homosexually).⁷

The metaphorical use is in reference to the passive partner in the homosexual act. The “abusers of themselves with mankind” are the sodomites. Butler writes:

The Greek word *arsenokoites* is a combination of *arsen*, male, and *koite* (Eng. coitus), sexual intercourse, and is translated homosexual.⁸

No matter how lax or tolerant a society may become to this behavior, God’s word still labels such conduct as an abomination that will keep one from the kingdom of God. Brother Wendell Winkler has this to say concerning homosexuality:

Homosexuality – According to Lev. 18:22, homosexuality is an abomination in the sight of God. Too, Lev. 20:13, prescribed death for the homosexual. In Rom. 1:18-28, we read that God

“gave up” on those who were characterized by this sin. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 teaches us that those who are guilty of this sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God. According to 2 Pet. 2:6-8 we can learn that homosexuality is ungodly, lascivious, wicked, and lawless! However, in spite of the abundance of these observations, there are movements underway in our nation to glorify and sanction this gross perversion. America must learn from the fate of Sodom!⁹

1 Corinthians 6:10 continues with that conduct which is unacceptable for those who would inhabit the kingdom of God. Let’s take just a moment and briefly define our terms.

Thieves – (χλέπτης) a stealer, a thief

Covetous – (πλεονέχτης) holding (desiring) money, eager for gain

Drunkard – (μέθυσος) tipsy, a sot, drunkard

Revilers – (λοιδοροσ) abusive, railer

Extortioners – (ἄρπαξ) extortion, ravening

Again, the definitions are fairly well self explanatory. It is also quite evident that such conduct is inconsistent with right thinking people. Paul’s stance, which is the Holy Spirit’s stance, is that these traits are inconsistent with those that will dwell in the kingdom of God.

These Qualities Are In The Past

Referring to the sins he had just mentioned, Paul told the Corinthians, “And such **were** some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11). Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Paul himself spoke of his past: “This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief**” (1 Tim. 1:15).

The Corinthian Christians once were among those of the world. As was Paul and each one that departed darkness and entered into light. To the Ephesians Paul wrote these powerful words:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: **Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past** in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, **even as others** (Eph. 2:1-3).

There is no room in the religion of Christ for “spiritual haughtiness.” Notice Paul’s words to Titus:

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. **For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.** But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:1-7).

Christians have been rescued from the realm of darkness. The contrast is obvious when Paul uses “but” before each of the three verbs. We no longer dwell in this realm, because we have been washed, sanctified and justified.

But ye are washed – Saul of Tarsus was questioned and commanded, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Again, to Titus, Paul wrote, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration**, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit. 3:5). We must also consider the words of the apostle to the Ephesians: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**” (Eph. 5:25-26).

Denominationalists try to downplay the words of Paul in this context in an attempt to divorce the necessity of baptism from salvation. Yet, a careful study of God’s Word will bring us to no other conclusion but that Paul has baptism in mind here. Concerning baptism, Paul wrote,

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Later in this same chapter Paul drew a line separating being lost and being saved. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). The line is drawn right down the middle of the watery grave, baptism. We go down into the water a lost sinner, and we come up out of the water washed from our sins and saved. The Corinthians were to no longer live in the old man because they had been baptized into Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27)

But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified – Being cleansed from our sins sets us apart, that is, it sanctifies us. In contacting the blood of Christ, our sins are washed away and the alienation that was caused by sin is replaced by fellowship because the separating force of sin has been removed. Therefore we are sanctified, or set apart, or holy. Also, there is justification at this point, that is, to say acquittal or pardon, because of the power that is in the blood of Christ. Paul wrote:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Rom. 5:9-11).

All of this was done by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was done in His name.

The Holy Spirit also played a role in all of this. Jesus taught Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3; John 3:5). In Acts 2 we see the Spirit’s work in man’s conversion. When Peter spoke, he spoke the words the Holy Spirit gave him to speak. When they that responded obeyed the words to “repent and be baptized,” which were given by the Holy Spirit to Peter, they were born again of the water and the Spirit. Thus it is in this way that they were washed, they were sanctified, and they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.

Our Liberty Must Be Measured

In considering 1 Corinthians 6:12-14, we must remember the context in which Paul’s statements are

made. Paul is not saying that there is nothing illegal. He is speaking of things that are legal within the boundaries of God's law, but not always best to exercise. There are times when we as Christians must be willing to lay aside our liberty lest we hinder the Gospel of Christ, or cause our brother to stumble. In chapter 8, Paul wrote:

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend (1 Cor. 8:8-13).

Not only must we take into consideration our brethren concerning matters of judgment, such as eating meat, but we dare not allow a liberty to rule over or dominate us.

There are certainly those things that heaven has provided for a blessing, which if taken out of context or abused can become a curse to us. There are things that are not wrong, and sometimes these are things that are even necessary, which can be abused and become a transgression because they were not kept in their proper context. Notice the following example given by T. R. Appleyby:

For example, there is a purpose for the appetite for food, but that appetite is not to be allowed to degenerate into the sin of gluttony. There is a divine purpose in sex, but the desire related to

it is not to be perverted into the sins of fornication and adultery. God intended man to follow His instruction as to the purpose and use of food, sex, and all other powers with which man is endowed. Clear and specific regulations on all these matters are given in the Word of God for man's own good.¹⁰

New Testament Christianity is diametrically opposed to the epicurean philosophy of “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” It is true that this physical body shall be destroyed, but the right thinking man will take eternity into consideration. While we inhabit this physical body, we must recognize the Divine responsibilities we have to our Sovereign God. How we conduct ourselves here will certainly affect where we dwell there. Therefore, we should take the resurrection into our thoughts as we pursue our course here. It is this fact that links us to Christ, and serves as Paul's second argument concerning proper and holy conduct. One day, we will possess a glorious body like unto the spiritual body which our Lord possesses (Phil. 3:21).

The Sin Of Fornication

In 1 Corinthians 6:15-18, Paul deals with the sin and inconsistency of fornication. Earlier we defined the term when Paul listed it in verse 9. Here he addresses the subject in much greater detail. He begins with the familiar “know ye not?” This Divine truth was something of which they should have been well aware.

Let's take just a moment to notice the two arguments that Paul uses in these verses against fornication. First, fornication is a sin against Christ. “Your bodies are the members of Christ” (1 Cor. 6:15). Secondly, fornication is a sin against your own body. “He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). Paul's

conclusion is strong. To be pleasing to our God, and thus fit to dwell in the Kingdom of God, we must put the spiritual man above the physical man.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian brethren, he also addressed the topic of fornication. Notice his instruction to them:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:3-8).

Paul goes beyond the arguments he presented to the Corinthians and teaches that fornication is a transgression not only against Christ and against our own bodies, but it is also a transgression against others. “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” (1 Thess. 4:6). When an individual commits fornication, they sin against the one with whom they are sexually involved. If it is adultery, they sin against the spouse of the individual. If it is between unmarried individuals they sin against their family and against the family of the one they are sinning with in the act. It is impossible to rightly conclude that it is our body and we are hurting no one but ourselves. It is true that it is a sin against one’s self, but there are many, many others that are affected also.

You Are Not Your Own

For the last time in this chapter Paul asks the rhetorical question, “What? know ye not?” (1 Cor. 6:19; see

also vs. 1 Cor. 6:2; 1 Cor. 6:3; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Cor. 6:15 and 1 Cor. 6:16). The assumed answer is “Yes, we do know.” What was it they were to know? “That your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you.”

In chapter 3 Paul wrote, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3: 16-17). Collectively the Corinthians made up the church which met in Corinth. Yet, each one of them had to be diligent to keep their own body, for various reasons, one of which was that the Holy Spirit indwelled them.

The Holy Spirit, according to Paul, was “in you”, because God had given Him. Such conduct as outlined above would be inconsistent with the nature of Deity and thus inconsistent for one indwelled by Deity. John wrote, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). This would, of course, apply to the Holy Spirit who is God.

The second reason for our diligence in keeping our bodies under subjection is “ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6: 19-20). When Paul spoke of the church in Ephesians 1:14 he referred to her as a “purchased possession.” In addressing the elders of Ephesus he charged them boldly by saying, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

We are the bond-slaves of our Saviour Jesus Christ. He paid the redemptive price that has set us free to be His servant. Peter wrote:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not
redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and

gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

For this reason it is inconsistent for any Christian to live in such a way that would not bring glory to his God.

Finally, we see Paul's concluding statement to a discourse that emphasized the abomination of sexual immorality.

1. "Therefore" introduces the logical end to his arguments.

2. "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" is the only reasonable response to all that Paul has said.

It is very similar to Solomon's conclusion concerning the whole matter. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). Solomon also wrote, "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (Prov. 23:17).

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). One of the glorious traits of New Testament Christianity is its reasonableness. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul wrote:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, **which is your reasonable service**. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Indwelling Spirit

That the Holy Spirit indwells Christians is undeniable. In fact if one were to deny this point, he would be denying plain Bible truth. It is also clear in Scripture that the Holy Spirit works on the spirit of men, whether Christian or not, only through the medium of the Inspired Scriptures. On these two points we must be agreed. To teach otherwise is to teach false doctrine.

Through the years, the preceding points have been agreed upon by faithful brethren. It is true that through the years good men have disagreed on exactly how the Holy Spirit indwells Christians, but fellowship has been maintained. Extremes in either direction not only jeopardize fellowship among brethren, but also the souls of those who propagate such.

Our passage asks plainly, “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God.” This was a fact of which the Corinthians should have been well aware. In Acts 5:32, we find this utterance of Peter and the other apostles. “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” It was in this way that the men of Acts 6 would meet the qualification of “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3). Later, the apostles would lay their hands on them (Acts 6:6). It is after this fact that we see a non-apostle “doing great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). It is interesting that the Bible makes a distinction between that which was given by the laying on of the apostles hands (Acts 8:17-18), and that which was given because of obedience to the Word of God (Acts 5:32 & Acts 2:38).

In Acts 19 Paul, by the question he asked, indicated that the Holy Spirit and Baptism are linked. When he learned that the Ephesian disciples had not even heard “whether there be any Holy Spirit” he asked, “Unto what

then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3). When men are baptized into Christ Jesus, they receive the Holy Spirit, “whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

Conclusion

Christ has paid a high price for man’s salvation. Even if men of the world take that for granted, Christians should certainly appreciate what sacrifice has been given. Because we are cleansed and holy, we can not participate in those things that are so common among the unbelievers. Sanctified lives are such because they have separated themselves from the pollutions of the world.

If we give anything less than purity of life and conduct we will not inherit the Kingdom of God. May we each one live in such a way as to show that we understand and appreciate the provisions that God has made, and may we all study our Bibles more and more.

Endnotes

1 Bert Thompson, **Studies In 1 Corinthians**, ed. Dub McClish, (Valid Publications, Denton, TX, 1982), Compact Disc Version.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Paul T. Butler, **Studies In First Corinthians**, (College Press Publishing Co.: Joplin Missouri, 1985), p. 4.

5 Simon J.Kistemaker, **1 Corinthians**, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993), p. 188.

6 Rick Meyers, **Vincent’s Word Studies**, E-Sword, (Copyright 2000-2003).

7 Butler, p. 102.

8 Ibid.

9 Wendell Winkler, **Studies In 1 Corinthians**, ed. Dub McClish, (Valid Publications, Denton, TX, 1982), CD Version.

10 T. R. Appleby, **Studies In 1 Corinthians**, (College Press Publishing Co.: Joplin Missouri, 1963), p. 108.

Chapter 25

Set Your Affection On Things Above

(Col. 3:1-15)

Paul Sain

Introduction

APPRECIATION IS EXPRESSED FOR the invitation to participate in this outstanding annual series of lessons. What a joy to be associated with those “of like precious faith” throughout the world, and join hands in the proclamation and defense of the gospel of Christ.

God’s people have always faced a vicious battle against Satan and his powerful forces. The war rages on today. The fight will continue until we depart from this earthly existence. Whether we fight for the right cause, serving the right Commander-in-Chief, opposing the enemy, serving in every capacity and opportunity possible, encouraging others, remembering we are on “foreign” land (this is not our home), and remaining faithful until the end—will determine our eternal destiny.

As the theme of this series reflects, the war is between the **flesh** and the **spirit**. Satan seeks to capture and keep us ensnared in the affairs of this world, the carnal pleasures of life, the sensual involvements of sin. God has called all to leave the world and come to a spiritual and righteous life. Truly, the battle continues!

In this lesson, our goal is to examine the valuable instruction, found in Colossians 3:1-15, to Christians in the first century and applicable to all today. The author is Almighty God. The human writer is the apostle Paul. He wrote these words to the church at Colossae, approximately A.D. 55-57.

The great soldier of the cross wrote more than a dozen epistles contained in the New Testament. It is logical and obvious that similar great truths would be addressed as he wrote to each one. Let us notice a few similarities between Colossians and Ephesians.

	Colossians	Ephesians
Christ reigns	3:1	1:20-23
Upward living	3:1-2	4:23-24
Christ is our life	3:4	5:23ff
Put away evils	3:5-6	5:3-5
Character defects	3:8-9	4:25-29
Put on new man	3:10	4:23-14
Christ-like virtues	3:12	4:1-2
A forgiving spirit	3:13	4:32
Love	3:14	1:15; 4:2
Peace	3:15	2:14-16

Our Text — Colossians 3:1-15

Christianity had spread, at the time of this writing, far and wide in the twenty five or so years since the church was established. Some Jews who had converted to following Christ felt that a person would be approved of God only if first circumcised. They contended that one should keep the Law of Moses, as well as follow Christ. The apostle Paul was setting the record straight; he was correcting their false views.

The inspired writer gave tender exhortation to brethren whom he loved. He exhorted them to seek, set, and pursue things above. While this was positive in nature,

he further emphatically pled with those to whom he was writing to reject any involvement in the ways of the world, the works of the flesh. He explained the consequences which would result from continuing in sin. The vices of their former life could not exist if they were to follow Christ. God's people are required to add Christ-like virtues.

Let's read again the treasured words:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Col. 3:1-15).

Verse 1. "If ye then be risen with Christ" parallels "if ye died with Christ" of Colossians 2:20. The Christians at Colossae had been raised with Christ from

the waters of baptism. Paul rhetorically is provoking their thoughts. The word “if” (Col. 3:1) does **not** question the fact of the Colossian brethren having been raised with Christ. They had been baptized, died to the world, risen with Christ (Col. 2:12). Macknight stated:

In baptism the Christian dies and rises again. As the waters close over him, it is as if he was buried in death; as he emerges from the waters, it is like being resurrected to a new life.

The word “if” literally means “inasmuch” or “because.” Paul declares that “Because ye have been risen with Christ,” you do not seek things below, but things above. A Christian concentrates on and puts forth great effort to obtain his/her eternal home, realizing this life is brief (Jas. 4:14), and soon will pass (Job 14; 1 Cor. 15:42-52).

Christ was raised from the dead, by the Almighty Father (Acts 3:15; Acts 13:30). Paul refers to Christ who “sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). We serve a risen Lord and Saviour, who now resides at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).

“Seek those thing which are above.” Our desire, longing, and passionate craving are to develop on spiritual matters. To “seek” means we are pursuing, focused upon, actively striving to obtain that which is the desire of our heart.

The Son of God invites (calls) everyone (Matt. 11:28-30), and will deliver any and all from “the power of darkness,” translating obedient followers “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13; Eph. 1:7). To be a disciple of Christ, we must “put off” certain things, and “put on” (add) virtues which represent our Saviour. We must leave the world, with its enticements and snares. We must cease living in a worldly manner. Christians no longer allow sin to reign in them, but instead have charted their course toward the prepared heavenly home (John 14:1-3). Their affections are now set

on things above, because they are new creatures with a new relationship in Christ (Col. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17). Children of God have a new name (Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26). They have a new standard (John 17:17; John 8:32). They know they are complete in Him (Col. 2:10). God's people are a light to the world (Matt. 5:16) as they daily endeavor to eliminate sin in their lives and passionately strive to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7).

Verse 2. "Set your affections on things above."

The affections (interests, concerns, thoughts, actions, values, loves) of the faithful child of God, the New Testament Christian, must be on heavenly matters; thus Paul urges them to "Set your affections [mind, ASV] on things above." Paul could just as easily have exhorted them to "Delight in those things above" or to "Ponder and yearn for things above." The word "above" suggests spiritual things, not carnal; spiritual things are of much greater importance than earthly matters. Our affections are eternity determining. The citizenship of the Christian is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

A change in inward attitudes will be reflected in our outward behavior. The Lord spoke of carnal versus heavenly interests, and that where one's treasure is, his heart will be also (Matt. 6:19-21). All the things of the earth will dissolve, melt (2 Peter 3:9-10), while "things above" (heavenly) will last forever (Rev. 20). Those who set their affections on things of the earth will receive indignation and wrath (Rom. 2:8-9).

"Set your affections" indicates a decision, a conscious choice to be made. The Lord requires us to seek first the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 6:33). Unless we love Him with all of our soul, body, strength, we cannot be His disciples (Luke 10:27). Parents and children can not come before the Christ in our lives (Matt. 10:37). Recreation, jobs, friends--nothing is allowed to replace God in our lives, to

take a position of priority before Jehovah. He demands total commitment from His followers. Otherwise, He will not accept us as a disciple of His. Unless we determine to follow Christ, coming to Him on His terms, and continuing on that faithful road unto death (Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22), we tragically will not reach our desired destination, heaven's glorious home.

Verse 3. "For ye are dead." When the Colossians (and all individuals) obeyed the gospel, culminating in baptism, becoming a follower of Christ, they died to sin (separated from sin and its guilt) and to the world. As mentioned earlier, when one is converted to Christ, he/she willingly puts off the filthy, world-stained garments of sin and eagerly puts on the new, pure, "unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27) garments found in Jesus Christ. The old man of sin ceased to exist, thus the word "dead" is appropriately descriptive. The aorist tense that is used would better be interpreted "you died," thus having Paul state "Since you died, your life is hid in Christ." But to eliminate confusion, Paul reminds them of their new spiritual life "in Christ" and how treasured it should be to each child of God.

"Your life is hid with Christ in God." In ancient days, especially to the Greeks, when a man was buried they considered him as being hidden in the earth. A Christian died to sin, a spiritual death in baptism. He is thus hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3).

Our life is "hid with Christ" at this time. When our Lord returns to claim His own, then all of his saints will appear "with him," and to remain with Him forever in glory.

Verse 4. "When Christ ... shall appear..." The Colossian brethren are reminded that one day, ("the day of the Lord"), our Redeemer will return to claim His own. He will come to receive His faithful disciples, who have

made the Son of God their life, their all. He will return, as He promised (John 14:1-3) and we will rise to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-17). He will appear (reveal Himself, show, be revealed).

In the first century, the majority rejected the Lord and His offer of salvation. Today, the majority refuse the pardon for their sins He has made available. But we hasten to add, when the Lord returns in His glory, there is coming a day when every tongue will confess and every knee will bow before Him, acknowledging Him as Lord (Phil. 2:10).

“Christ, who is our life.” John records the words of the Lord, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Christ is the source of our spiritual life. Without the shedding of His blood, we could not receive remission of sins (Heb. 9:22), and thus could not have been reconciled to God, redeemed, heirs of the promise (Rom. 6:16-18). Christ demands first place in our life (Matt. 6:33). If we will but pause and consider that without Christ, we have no hope, lost, doomed eternally (Eph. 2:12), and with Christ we can enjoy all spiritual blessings, presently and eternally in heaven (Eph. 1:3), then surely we grasp a portion of understanding as to what we must pursue.

For years I have thrilled to sing with small children (and adults alike) the treasured song, “He is my everythng, He is my all, He is my everything, both great and small.” By the faithful life of the servant Paul we know Christ was his life, as he stated to the Colossians 3:4.

“Appear with him in glory.” The Scriptures abound in noting the Lord’s return, in His glory and that we will be raised and glorified with him. Note Paul’s statement to the church at Rome:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also **glorified together**. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:17-18).

Our Lord stated the following truth in Matthew's account of the gospel:

When the Son of man shall come **in his glory**, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon **the throne of his glory** (Matt. 25:31).

John stated:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Paul further informs us:

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body... (Phil. 3:20-21).

Verse 5. "Mortify therefore your members...."

In view of these facts, therefore, the inspired Paul exhorts them to take immediate action and "mortify" (put to death, ASV and NKJV; to utterly slay, destroy) your members upon the earth. Obviously he does not speak of the physical mutilation of the body, but rather the purging out, and eliminating of sinful actions and works. "Members" indicates every involvement, facet, portion of our existence which might hinder us from completely and acceptably serving our Master. It is understood that people sin in various ways (actions, words, attitudes, etc.). Paul is clearly informing Christians that whether physical, vocal or attitudinal, "kill" that which is contrary to Jehovah.

Paul proceeds to itemize "sins of the flesh," the evil propensities which develop into a carnal nature, the old life, which must be put from them, killed, mortified: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness and idolatry (further details are given on these sinful practices later in this chapter).

An examination of the lifestyles of the Colossians in the first century (from which converts to Christ had departed) reveals they had been guilty of these sins, most of them. The city of Colossae was renown for its gods and goddesses. During their drunken, sexual orgies, often in the worship of idols, men and women would put off any semblance of decency and riotously involve themselves in immoral and depraved behavior. Whatever felt good, they did it (sound familiar?).

God requires that we put to death anything, and everything which is against Him and keeps us from accomplishing His will. The Lord said:

That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matt. 5:28-30).

The Colossian brethren (as others do) began their journey toward heaven as “babes” (1 Pet. 2:2). They were redeemed (forgiven, made clean, washed), reconciled (brought into fellowship), sanctified (set apart, made holy) at the time they obeyed the gospel, being baptized into Christ. They put on the new man, and were instructed to be “renewed unto knowledge” (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:12-13); add Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-11); grow in the grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). Their sins were washed, but they were to continue purging. They were sanctified and holy, but they were to sanctify the Lord in their heart (1 Peter 3:15) and were to practice holiness in their lives. They died with Christ, but they were continually required to put to death anything and everything that was contrary to “walking in the light” (1 John 1:7).

Verse 6. “For which things’ sake the wrath of God....” Followers of God who participate in such activities (itemized in verse 5) will suffer the wrath of God, His displeasure with evil. Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). One cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). Jehovah God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Ones who foolishly believe or suggest that God is too loving to execute wrath, justice, and bring destruction upon disobedient ones do not know the truth and do not reflect the absolute truths of the Word of God. The Bible clearly declares that God has a score to settle with evil and one day He will settle it. God is pure, holy, good. Melick defined God’s wrath as “the active reaction of his nature against all that is contrary to his nature.” God’s nature is totally good and thus cannot tolerate evil. Habakkuk conveyed this thought precisely:

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously.... (Hab. 1:13).

Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and thou canst not look on wickedness with favor (Hab. 1:13, NASB).

“...cometh....” The present tense is chosen to confirm that God will definitely bring vengeance (2 Thess. 1:7-9) upon those who know not God or have refused to obey the gospel. The time to which Paul refers is the Judgment Day. Note a few statements of Scripture about that Day:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

...the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. 2:5-6).

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of

our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

Verse 7. “...ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.” Paul speaks of the former life of the Colossian brethren. Some of the ones who were now following Christ had not merely lived in the same area as occasional participants of evil, but had previously lived sinful, sensual, worldly lives, and had “walked” and “lived” in these sinful practices. It has been suggested that “walked” indicates their outward conduct, while “lived” implies the attitudes and feelings they possessed (which contributed to their actions).

May I digress for a moment and establish, according to Scripture, that it is possible to “live in” sin (adultery, malice, etc.). Paul wrote to brethren who had been guilty of doing that very thing.

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Verse 8. “But now ye also put off...” Christians are those who have taken off the “old” way and replaced it with the “new life.” In a similar way, after working around one’s house, in the yard or garden, we take off old dirty garments, shower, and then put on clean fresh clothing. They had put off some things, and by inspiration Paul encourages them to also put off additional sinful involvements, “sins of disposition.”

There is no such thing as a big or little sin. Any and all sin will keep us out of heaven (Jas. 2:10; Rev. 22:17). They had ceased certain sinful ways, but needed to go

further in becoming more like their Saviour (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 11:1).

Verse 9. “Lie not one to another.” The old man had been put off (died). Christians are spiritual beings, and must always speak the truth, not lying one to another. Lying is connected to the old man and his sinful ways. Liars shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Rev. 21:8). The literal translation of “Lie not one to another” would more correctly be rendered, “lie not to yourself.” Likely we know of those who have lied, again and again, until they came to believe their own lies. Such is ungodliness and will one day bring our eternal destruction (unless we repent and seek God’s forgiveness).

Verse 10. “...put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge...” The new spiritual man has been “put on,” at the time of the new birth (John 3:3-5), which results in a new manner of life. Obedience to Christ, true conversion to the Lord, always requires a change in life. “Renewed” (renovated is the footnote of the New American Standard Version) indicates continuous, ongoing action. “Renewed in knowledge” suggests growth. One is not full grown and mature when they began their life in Christ. They are to grow in knowledge, grace, virtues (2 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 1:5-11). Note also that it is “after the image of him that created him” which implies the direction of our growth. We have left the practice of sin; we are diligently endeavoring to become more like our Savior each day.

Verse 11. “Where there is neither ... bond nor free...” In every culture and age there seems to have been those who considered another race as “lower” or “inferior.” To many in the first century the Scythians were the scum of the earth. They were savages and warlike nomads. The mere mention of their name brought thoughts of dread and horror. Likewise, the Greeks felt superior to the Jews.

“Christ is all, and in all.” Paul points out that “in Christ” we are all one, all enjoying the spiritual blessings available (Eph. 1:3). When we fall humbly before our Lord and Master, as it were, at the foot of the cross, all are on equal ground.

Verse 12. “Put on therefore...” Words of inspiration now admonish us to put on certain attributes and qualities that reflect Christ. We are to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), as we endeavor to walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). “Bowels of mercies” refer to the inner part of physical man. His reference is to the heart of man reflecting kindness, humbleness, meekness and longsuffering.

Verse 13. “Forbearing ... forgiving...” Two key terms mentioned in this passage are closely associated: “Forbearing” indicates a willingness to suffer, without rendering evil for evil. “Forgiving” is an attribute that Christians exhibit, especially when they remember that Christ has forgiven them.

Verse 14. “...put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Above everything else, we must have charity (love), the glue that holds everything together, the foundation of all Christian behavior. In 1 Corinthians 13 the great soldier of the cross defines the quality of love in many ways and then summarizes with “faith, hope and love, these three, but the greatest is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

Verse 15. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts....” The “peace of God” reigns and rules the heart of children of God. When we obey the gospel, the Lord adds us to His church, and we are blessed with a peace that is not available from any other source.

“...ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Further, note again how a small phrase, a mere few words, contains so powerful and great a truth, when he says, “ye are called in one body.” All are called out of

darkness (Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:7). There are many members (1 Cor. 12:20ff) in the one body of Christ. There is one body (Eph. 4:4), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23) in which God wants all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Paul encourages the brethren at Colossae to be thankful for their spiritual blessings and continue to grow in Christ.

Paul Tells Christians What To Do

Let's notice again the words of Paul regarding qualities Christians should exhibit, and demonstrate in their lives.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Col. 3:12-15).

God has spoken (Heb. 1:1-2), providing man with instructions regarding how we live acceptable lives in His sight. As is often the case, we must **not** do certain things, while at the same time we must **do** certain things. Notice the specific qualities detailed in this portion of inspired Scripture that we must do, if we are seeking those things above and have our affections set on things above (Col. 3:1-2).

1. Bowels of mercies. The inner part of man.

2. Kindness. The opposite of rudeness, hostility and inconsideration. An examination of the frequency in which kind or kindness is mentioned in Scripture would further emphasize its' importance in the Christian's life.

3. Humbleness of mind. Opposite of proud, puffed up, haughty. One of the seven things itemized that God hates (Prov. 6) is a proud look.

4. Meekness. Strength under control. Meekness does not suggest weakness. Moses was a meek man, yet a strong and courageous man. I have been awe-struck by the giant Clydesdale horses. They are huge in size and awesomely powerful. Yet they have been broken by the bridle and bit. They are no less powerful and strong, but their power is under control.

5. Longsuffering. Longsuffering would be the opposite of impatience and being out of control. Patience and tolerance with the frailties and weaknesses of ourselves or others.

6. Forbearing one another. Bear **with** one another, as well as bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:1-6). It involves being patiently willing to help, over and over, even when others would become frustrated and give up.

7. Forgiving one another. The Lord has forgiven us. We must be eager and willing to forgive another, when they repent. We cannot forgive another until they repent, any more than the Lord will forgive us until we repent (Luke 17:3-4). But this does not prevent our praying for another to repent, longing for them to cease their practice of sin, and when they repent, being always ready and willing to forgive them. If we failed to forgive one who repents, then we are the one who is guilty of sin.

8. Charity. The crown of all Christian virtues is love (*agape*). The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians offers great information regarding love, including the grand summation in verse 1 Cor. 13:13:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ... Charity never faileth ... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (1 Cor. 13:4; 1 Cor. 13:8, 13).

Notice love's prominent position in the list of Christian virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Robert Taylor wrote “Love is like the outer garment that holds all other virtues in proper place. It is the eloquent and excellent epitome of all other virtues.”

Paul Pleads For Us To Choose The Right Course Of Action And Involvement

God has spoken (Heb. 1:1-2), providing man with instructions regarding what we should **not** do in order to be acceptable in His sight. Notice the specific qualities detailed in this portion of inspired Scripture that we must **not** do, that we must **put off, mortify**, if such is present in our lives.

The first five are sexually oriented actions and thoughts.

1. Fornication. The word “*porneia*” is a general term which includes all illicit sexual intercourse (prostitution, adultery, whoredom, homosexuality, lesbianism, unchastity). Nothing is more clearly declared than the fact: an unforgiven fornicator can not inherit the kingdom of God.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate ... shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry ... and such like: ... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Paul told the Thessalonians to “abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3); as well as the Corinthians were admonished to “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18).

2. Uncleaness. The term is likewise general in scope including all sexual impurities in thought, language and deeds. It commonly meant moral impurity. A direct application to our lives would include sexual immorality in movies, videos, music, magazines, internet, pornographic materials of all kinds, sexual telephone conversations (900 numbers), etc.

3. Inordinate affection. Somewhat overlapping with “uncleaness,” this term is addressing out of control passion. Any type of lust-provoking activity is included (internet, pornography, movies, television, videos, music, and such like). They who are guilty are often “out of control” and without restraint, regardless of the consequences. A mate of many years is no longer a consideration. Tragically, neither are the children (or even grandchildren) a sufficient deterrent. Such an individual wants what they want and they are determined to obtain it, no matter the cost.

4. Evil concupiscence. Simply stated, the apostle Paul is describing evil desire. Overlapping with “inordinate affection,” (it is often hard to distinguish between the two) he now speaks of the actual desire to fulfill any and all evil involvements, longings or pursuits.

5. Covetousness (idolatry). A major portion of the warnings in the New Testament addresses anything that replaces our love, loyalty and devotion to Jehovah. Covetousness is passionate, intense, aggressive desire to have that which belongs to another. It is greed. It is the state of never being content, and always wanting more and more.

Unbelievable and tragic circumstances exist when we are blessed so richly, much more than 95% of the world’s population, and yet we still crave more and more. Why do people want to win the lottery, receive a large inheritance, receive a huge prize? Covetousness! Greed! Never satisfied, and always wanting more!

The significant examples we have (Old and New Testaments) require us to stop and take inventory, learning from the mistakes of others. Eve was not satisfied, likely thinking she was missing something of value. The price for her greed was great. Achan took the accursed thing, though explicitly forbidden. He and his entire family perished as the consequence. Judas, for a mere thirty pieces of silver, betrayed the Lord. He hung himself.

Paul warns that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10). The Lord urges us to lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth (Matt. 6:19-21). Simon Peter informs us that the things of the earth will melt and dissolve (2 Peter 3:9-10).

6. Anger. Paul speaks of that within mankind that often develops into sinful actions toward others. The word translated “anger” is from the same word that is translated “wrath” earlier (Col. 3:6). When anger is coupled with provocation, resentfulness, and revenge, it is always evil (of Satan). Consider: What is the motive for the anger? Is it because sin is done or because sin is done to me?

Anger within itself is not sinful. We are instructed to be angry, and sin not (Eph. 4:26). It is Christ-like to hate sin. Yet, when anger is not toward evil, but is manifested wherever or whatever, and is not restrained, nor channeled with godly parameters, it can quickly become sinful.

7. Wrath. If we allow anger to boil within us, sometimes erupting in ungodly actions or words, we are guilty of the “wrath” of which the inspired writer details. He speaks of a deeper, even more serious condition than anger.

8. Malice. A broad term that is inclusive of anger, wrath, and other sinful practices mentioned. First, we often begin in anger. If not restrained we allow our emotions to explode into wrath. Malice is a step further, deeper, and

more ungodly. It is when one becomes vengeful, cruel, and malicious (obviously derived from the word malice). Consider how the one without control of his anger, and temper, allows what has been termed “road rage” to develop and consume him.

9. Blasphemy. The sin of the lips, to speak against the good character of another (whether against God or man). In Ephesians 4:31, the same word is translated “evil speaking.” The wise one of old said that as a man thinketh, so is he (Prov. 23:7). It is naturally understood that the sin one commits with his lips (cursing, filthy communication, blasphemy) has its origin in the corrupt and sinful heart.

10. Filthy communication. Obscene, filthy, dirty talk. Bad language, the type that a few decades ago would lead to one having his mouth washed out with soap (if you had the type of precious mother I enjoyed). One does not have to be as bad as Howard Stern, as ungodly as Hefner, to be guilty of these damning practices. We may be guilty of passing along a funny, yet filthy, joke. We may participate in immoral conversations. The apostle, by the inspiration of God, declares that the Christian must not allow such to exist in his life, since they have been crucified with Christ. Sin must not reign in them (Rom. 5:21; Rom. 6:12).

Consider how we have been “numbed” and thus have changed through the years. I recall clearly the first time I heard the word “damn” on television. My Dad turned the television off, and it stayed off for days. Tragically, today there is hardly a program that is aired without such filth heard over and over. Even more horrific is the multitude of words, suggestive, sexual, and garbage talk that we hear. Sadly, most fail to teach and counter this work of Satan to our small ones.

11. Lying. Deception, falsehood, being misleading, and failing to speak the truth, are descriptive of lying.

Being deceitful or failing to tell the truth is **not** to be a part of the new life in Christ. We are to be honest in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17), which should include honest actions and words. In a parallel thought, Paul writes to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:25) to “put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor.”

Satan was the first liar (Gen. 1–2). He is the father of lies (John 8:44). The impact of the seriousness of lying is found in Revelation 21, which refers to heaven and hell. Revelation 21:8 states that liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (eternal punishment). Revelation 21:27 specifies:

There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

We often hear references made to “white” lies, “little” lies, gossip, slander against another, boasting (stretching the truth), telling just a part of the truth, implying the words of another are true or sanctioning a lie from another, remaining silent when the truth is not spoken, and many other means of lying. Though there are many forms of lying, all lying is evil, and from the father of lies.

Practical Lessons We Note From This Text

1. We cannot live worldly, carnal lives and be acceptable to God. We are called out of the world. We cannot serve God and Satan at the same time. We are either for our Lord or against Him (Matt. 12:30).

2. In Christ, we are richly blessed. Out of Christ, we are hopeless, miserable and lost. The Colossian brethren had left the sinful state, and were now in Christ. Likewise, we have begun that same journey. We can not, we must not, allow ourselves to return to the beggarly elements of the world.

3. Conversion is complete, full, requiring total commitment. Changes must take place in our life. We cannot serve God and live worldly lives. We cannot limp between the two sides (Amos 4:12). We will simply serve Satan if we attempt to serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

4. Sexual temptations are one of the strongest tools of Satan. From long ago, and certainly continuing today, sexual sins ensnare and destroy millions. From the man after God's own heart, to elders and preachers today, people are often so weak and yield to the lusts of the flesh. We must resist and guard ever so carefully against Satan's wiles.

5. Sexual immorality, greed and covetousness, and all such things (if not corrected in God's sight) will damn one's soul to eternal torment. That which dominated the lives of tens of thousands in the first century is still the obsession and lifestyle of millions today.

6. Living for Christ is a continual process; developing Christ-like qualities until we depart in death. We are to grow (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). We must go on toward perfection (Heb. 6:1), pressing toward the prize of the mark (Phil. 3:12-14).

7. The world will remain a temptation, a tool of ensnarement by Satan, to those who allow him. We must resist Satan (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). Scripture will assist and strengthen us (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan cannot tempt us beyond our power to resist (1 Cor. 10:13), if we are willing to stand strong.

8. The early stages of ones spiritual development is a critical time. We can fall away (Gal. 5:4). We must continually take heed, lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12). Satan did not want to lose us, and will try to recapture us.

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CHAPTER 26

Come Out From Among Them

(2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)

Kevin Beard

Introduction

JESUS DEMANDS A COMPLETE sacrifice and the utmost loyalty from His followers, so that He has absolute priority in their lives. He commands those who would follow Him to deny self and take up the cross (Luke 9:23). Paul calls this process a crucifixion of self that allows Christ to live in the Christian (Gal. 2:20). This self-crucifixion results in unswerving loyalty to Christ alone. There can be no other suitor for the Christian's loyalty, for Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).¹

Maintaining this level of allegiance is not always easy because in the course of life, Christians face many challenges to their commitment to Christ. These challenges take various forms: temptation to sin, physical problems, opposition, financial setback, discouragement, and many others. Life is full of these kinds of obstacles to faithfulness, but each Christian must commit himself to keeping God and His kingdom first in his life. That obstacles to

faithfulness offer no excuse for giving up is made clear by the Lord's statement to the church in Smyrna: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). He told those Christians that they would suffer, but that the suffering would be for a limited time. To receive the promised crown of life, they were to be "faithful unto death." That admonition remains true for Christians today.

In addition to the multitude of challenges to complete allegiance to the Lord, there is the cunning of the devil. It may be that he understands the depth of commitment that is necessary in serving God better than many people do. He knows that it doesn't always take something that is inherently sinful to separate the Christian from his Lord. Because of this, he deceives many into thinking they can divide their loyalty between the Lord and other things, and when they do, he wins the battle.

However deceptive Satan's tactics may be, to succeed in his deception he must depend on Christians themselves because God has provided the truth in all matters pertaining to His service. Paul addressed the matter of allowing things to compete for the devotion that belongs to God.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch

not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

This section of Scripture admonishes Christians not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” This chapter will examine what it means to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, the reason such an unequal yoking is forbidden, and what actions God’s children ought to take as they seek to prevent such unholy relationships in their lives.

The Unequal Yoke

The principle upon which Paul based this teaching originated in the Mosaic Law. The Lord commanded Israel: “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together” (Deut. 22:10). The Law of Moses gave no explanation as to why the Israelites were not to plow with these two different animals together. Some Bible commentators suggest that it had something to do with the concept of maintaining a separation between the clean and unclean.

For example, Wiersbe noted, “The concept of the ‘unequal yoke’ comes from Deuteronomy 22:10, ‘Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.’ The ox was a clean animal to the Jews, but the ass was not (Deut. 14:1–8); and it would be wrong to yoke them together.”² Keener suggested a similar intention behind the law, stating that the regulation “may have been meant to reinforce the law’s prohibition of interreligious marriage with pagans.”³

Another view is that the different sizes of the ox and the donkey would make their plowing together unfair on both animals. Jamieson, et al, pointed out:

An ox and ass, being of different species and of very different characters, cannot associate comfortably, nor unite cheerfully in drawing a plough or a wagon. The ass being much smaller and his step shorter, there would be an unequal and irregular draft.”⁴

In his comments on Leviticus 19:19, Wiersbe observed:

Hebrew scholar R. Laird Harris translates the first clause, ‘Do not make your animals fall down with an unequal yoke.’ This would parallel Deuteronomy 22:10. It would be cruel to yoke to the same heavy load two animals of unequal stature and strength.⁵

Gower and Wright said the law was given, “presumably because there would be an unequal pull that would cause suffering for the weaker animal.”⁶

Which view is the right one? It may be that God had both ideas in mind when He gave that ordinance. The Mosaic system is replete with commands to maintain a separation from the pagan people of the surrounding territories. He forbade the Hebrew people from making any covenant with the people of Canaan and from intermarrying with them, demanding that the Jews completely destroy every aspect of the Canaanites’ idolatry (Exod. 34:10-16).

But God also enacted laws to protect those who might otherwise be exploited, including livestock. An example of such a law says, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deut. 25:4). So by commanding Israelites not to yoke together an ox and a donkey, God may have been reminding them of their unique relationship to Him and their distinction from the pagans in the lands around them, while at the same time instilling in them the concepts of fair and equitable treatment of everyone and everything in their lives.

But what does this have to do with Paul's instruction to the church? The nature of the unequal yoke between the two disparate animals illustrates the kind of problems that result when Christians seek out inappropriate relationships with unbelievers. Disregarding the distinction between the "clean" and "unclean" attitudes of the child of God and the child of the devil can lead to situations for the Christian where he is overmatched in his struggle to keep the Lord first and to serve Him faithfully. Such relationships are what Paul termed unequal yokes.

The key to understanding the kinds of relationships Paul says Christians ought to avoid is understanding the phrase, "be not unequally yoked together." The phrase, "unequally yoked together" translates the single Greek word, *heterozugountes*, which, according to Swanson, means, "be mismatched, formally, be unevenly yoked (2 Cor. 6:14)."⁷ Rengstorf noted of this word, "It occurs for the first time in 2 Cor. 6:14, where Paul uses it to describe the abnormal situation that results when Christians fail to maintain their distinction from unbelievers."⁸ In his *Expanded Translation* of the New Testament, Wuest rendered the first part of the passage this way:

Stop being joined as with a yoke to unbelievers in a common state or endeavor which latter are of a character different from and diametrically opposed to the state of a child of God and any endeavor in which he may properly engage.⁹

The unequal yoke describes a relationship in which the Christian is compelled, or at least strongly tempted to diminish his loyalty to Christ for this other relationship. As the ox is larger and stronger than the donkey, and would certainly exert its will on the donkey by means of brute force, so the unbeliever in an unequal yoke would be able to overpower the Christian in a spiritual struggle.

So what kinds of relationships should Christians avoid, so as not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? Does Paul forbid all relationships with non-Christians? Certainly not. In his previous letter to the Corinthian church, Paul said, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:9-10). Some relationships into which Christians may enter with unbelievers present a greater difficulty. At least two factors must be considered: the nature of the relationship and the interplay between the unbeliever and the Christian within that relationship.

Relationships differ from one to the next, depending on what is required to maintain them. Business partnership, employment, membership in clubs, in civic organizations, or on athletic teams, involvement in political organizations, and so forth, all require certain things from those involved in them. Whether a Christian can enter into these kinds of relationships without becoming unequally yoked together with unbelievers depends upon the requirements the particular relationship demands from those involved in them. If one cannot maintain the relationship without violating the will of God, he is in an unequal yoke, and must terminate that relationship if he is to be pleasing to the Lord.

For example: could a Christian operate a liquor store, or work as a bartender? No, he could not, because the nature of that work demands that he take part in the sin of drunkenness, even if he, himself, does not drink. This would be a clear violation of Ephesians 5:11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Some relationships are inherently wrong, and must be avoided. Other relationships may not be inherently wrong, but may put the Christian in the

position of constantly making choices between doing what the Lord expects, and doing wrong. Suppose a Christian works for an employer who constantly pressures him to behave unethically, and threatens to fire the employee if he does not participate in the unethical activity. What should the Christian do? Doubtless Paul would classify this as an unequal yoke and demand the Christian leave it behind. Any relationship that requires sinful activity for the continuation of the relationship is an unequal yoke.

With all of this in mind, what application, if any, does this passage have on marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian? Some have applied this teaching to such marriages, saying those marriages are inherently wrong. For example, McGee wrote, "Certainly marriage is the yoking together of two people. An unbeliever and a believer should not marry."¹⁰ Though he, himself, did not limit this injunction to marriage, Barnes said, "It has been usually supposed by commentators to refer particularly to marriage."¹¹

If Paul intended for this teaching to apply to every marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian, then every marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian would be sinful. But that does not seem to be the case. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul addressed the issue of Christians who were married to non-Christians. He said:

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy (1 Cor. 7:12-14).

If a Christian is married to an unbeliever who is content to remain married to a Christian, Paul said they should remain together. Obviously that situation does not involve an unequal yoke. Peter also addressed this kind of situation: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Pet. 3:1-2). Only the Lord knows how many men were brought to Christ because their godly wives followed Peter’s instruction, but certainly the number is great. Such marriages cannot be described as unequal yokes.

On the other hand, some marriages between Christians and non-Christians might be considered as unequal yokes. In the same passage cited above, Paul went on to say, “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). In some of these marriages, the unbeliever might not be content to be married to a Christian, and may put pressure on the Christian to compromise his or her faith to maintain marital peace. In circumstances like that Paul said the Christian is not so bound to the unbelieving spouse that he or she should forsake Christ for the sake of the marriage. Thus, allow the unbeliever to depart if it comes to that. Those circumstances would constitute the unequal yoke Paul addressed in Second Corinthians.

The Child Of God Is Incompatible With The World

There is a fundamental difference between the children of God and the children of the world, and that difference precludes the children of God from being yoked together with unbelievers. That fundamental difference makes a yoking together of believers with unbelievers

“unequal.” To stress this fundamental difference Paul asked a series of five rhetorical questions (2 Cor. 6:14b-16a), in each of which he used a different synonym for partnership. The subtle differences in those five synonyms turn the reader’s attention to the various aspects of the relationships in which they are involved.

1. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” In this question, Paul used the word *metoche* (“fellowship,” KJV), which suggests the idea of partnership. One definition of that Greek word is, “a relationship involving shared purposes and activity—‘partnership, sharing.’”¹² Such a partnership would demand cooperation between the partners to bring about a mutual benefit. Since they share a common purpose, they share common activities.

But how can that kind of relationship exist between righteousness and unrighteousness? The two concepts are mutually exclusive. Righteousness, or the state of being right with God, comes as result of submission to the law of God. “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness” (Psm. 119:172). But unrighteousness is the exact opposite. In fact, the word translated “unrighteousness” is *anomia*, which Thayer defined as, “the condition of one without the law,—either because ignorant of it, or because violating it.”¹³ One who is living in submission to God’s law has no mutual purpose for working hand in hand with one who is living outside of God’s law.

2. “What communion hath light with darkness?” The word translated “communion” is the familiar Greek word *koinonia*, which is elsewhere translated “communicate,” “communication,” “contribution,” “distribution,” and “fellowship.” It has been defined as, “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement.”¹⁴ This word is very similar in meaning to

metoche, but seems to emphasize more the relationship that results from the joint participation in a common interest. Such a close association and joint participation can never exist between light and darkness, for by their nature they work against each other. John addressed the same idea: “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:5-6).

3. “**And what concord hath Christ with Belial?**”

The name Belial literally means, “worthless or wicked,”¹⁵ and is another name used for Satan. Once again Paul uses the most striking contrast to make his point. He used the Greek word *sumphonesis* in this question. That word is related to the Greek word from which comes the English word “symphony.” It means, “to come to an agreement with, often implying a type of joint decision.”¹⁶ The New American Standard Bible translates it as “harmony.”¹⁷ Barnes said:

This word refers properly to the unison or harmony produced by musical instruments, where there is *a chord*. What accordance, what unison is there; what strings are there which being struck will produce a chord or harmony? The idea is, then, there is *as much* that is discordant between Christ and Belial as there is between instruments of music that produce only discordant and jarring sounds.¹⁸

4. “**What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?**”

The word “part” connotes the idea of the contribution that one’s participation makes to a whole. It is something like a play. The production of the play depends upon the various “parts” the actors perform. Thus, the cast members of the play share a common bond in that they

work together to accomplish a common goal. The word may also be used in the sense of having a right or responsibility to be involved in some endeavor. When Simon tried to buy the gift of God, Peter rebuked him, saying, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter" (Acts 8:21). Simon had no place in the giving of miraculous gifts. Believers and unbelievers have no part in anything together. The believer could not contribute anything beneficial to the cause of the unbeliever, and the unbeliever could not contribute anything beneficial to the cause of the believer.

5. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" This kind of agreement (*sugkatathesis*) is reached by the mutual consent of all parties involved. Robertson said it means, "Approved by putting together the votes."¹⁹ How could the temple of God and idols come to such an agreement? On what would they agree? They stand opposed to one another on the identity of the true God, on the requirements for a proper lifestyle, on the nature of worship, and on every aspect of what it means to serve God.

Because of the nature of the things of God, there can be no partnership, communion, harmony, part, or agreement between them and the things of the world. Paul wanted his readers to understand this fundamental difference. The wrong kind of relationship with those outside of Christ will produce a strain on the Christian as the two opposing forces pull against each other. The Christian is caught in the middle and must decide which force will win out.

So the Christian faces decisions of eternal consequence when he enters into relationships with those outside of Christ. He can stay on track spiritually by keeping in mind the disparate nature of the things of God

and the things of the world. It just is not possible to live a little in the world and a little in Christ.

To accentuate this principle even further, Paul went back to another Old Testament passage: “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12). This describes the relationship between God and His people in even more intimate terms. It is not a casual acquaintance that Christians have with Jehovah; they are the temple of God. There is no man-made structure that serves as God’s temple on earth today. His temple is made of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

How can the children of God, who are those living stones, bring the corruption of the world into the temple of God? By unholy alliances they do just that. Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings Judah ever had, erected idolatrous altars and graven images in the temple (2 Kings 21:4-7). The faithful few in Judah must have been horrified to see such things in the temple of the Lord.

Even worse, God did not forget the desecration of His temple. Jeremiah prophesied that God would destroy the stubborn, sinful people: “And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for *that* which he did in Jerusalem” (Jer. 15:4). Will God be any more lenient toward those who desecrate His temple today? Paul addressed this issue in his first letter to the Corinthians: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Preventing Unequal Yokes

As with all things in Christianity, both attitudes and actions must be addressed when striving to prevent those relationships Paul forbade. Proper actions without proper

attitudes are worthless and are the hallmark of hypocrisy. But in the same way, no matter how good one's attitudes and intentions are, they are meaningless without the accompanying actions. Paul's instruction here addresses both attitude and action.

How can Christians ensure that they will not be caught up in a relationship that would threaten to pull them away from Christ? Paul addressed the attitude first:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Christians must maintain the proper attitude toward their relationship with the world. They cannot look at Christianity as just another part of their lives, but as the entirety of their lives. God has called Christians out of the world. Peter said, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). This produces a changed person whose relationship with the world is totally different.

Jesus told His apostles, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). So the Christian ought not be surprised or caught off guard by the fact that their personal relations with those who are outside of Christ will not always be friendly ones. This is not because the Christian seeks out controversy and strife, but because the world loves its own and Christians are not of the world. Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus

shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Why did he say that? Is it because Christians are hard to get along with? No, but because the standards and priorities of the world are opposed to the will of God.

Knowing these things are true should help the Christian maintain an attitude of separation from the world. Notice that this is an attitude of separation, not a literal, physical separation from the world. God never intended for His children to hide themselves from the world and cut off all interaction with those outside of Christ. When Jesus prayed for His apostles and all those who would eventually believe on Him, He said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16). If there were no Christians interacting with people in the world, how would anyone ever be saved? The challenge for Christians is to be in the world but not of the world. This is a matter of attitude.

How seriously should children of God take this command of separation? Think of those five questions Paul asked concerning relationships between righteousness and unrighteousness. Every one of those five things is as incompatible as oil and water. Should the Christian then think he could have a little bit of allegiance to or affinity with the world? How could he? Those things of the world are opposed to the things of God. They work in contradiction to every principle of righteousness and salvation. The only proper attitude is one of complete spiritual separation.

To motivate Christians to have this attitude of spiritual separation from the world, Paul reminded his readers of the promise attached to this command: “I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” An

intimate relationship with God can exist only when people make such a clear distinction in their hearts and minds between those things of the world and the things of righteousness.

God is not a cruel taskmaster, withholding benefits and threatening harsh punishment for failure to comply with His wishes. He offers a familial relationship to those who submit to His will. He offers to receive all who come to Him; but coming to Him requires coming out from the world. The sacrifice is well worth it because the Lord Almighty will be a Father to those who make it. What could the world offer that would compare to what the Creator of the world offers?

As a Father to His children, the Lord has promised to provide for their needs. Jesus said:

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:31-33).

While the world tries to dazzle people with the idea of riches and luxury, God has promised to provide the necessities of life. From a worldly point of view, God's promise seems inferior, but from a spiritual point of view, the world's offer pales in comparison. Whatever the world may have to offer is limited to this earth, and this earth one day will be completely destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10).

But God offers life beyond this world. For those who sacrifice in this life, there is in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30). Serving God faithfully on earth lays up treasure in heaven that will not decay, devalue, or be stolen away (Matt. 6:19-20). God's children look forward

to a place that has been especially prepared for them in their Heavenly Father's house (John 14:1-3). The journey through life toward heaven may be difficult and riddled with dangers, but God has promised to provide His children what they need to overcome: a way to escape temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), peace through the troubles of life (Phil. 4:6-7), strength to accomplish all things (Phil. 4:13), hope as an anchor for the soul (Heb. 6:19-20), and every spiritual blessing at His disposal (Eph. 1:3).

The Heavenly Father has promised to protect His children from danger. This is not a promise of freedom from physical harm; the brutal treatment of faithful Christians throughout the ages bears testimony to that. The world might like to make that sound like an empty or worthless promise. To them a promise of protection, but not from physical harm, might seem useless. But the Lord knows there are worse things to fear than physical harm: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). The soul is worth more than the entire world (Matt. 16:26) and losing it is the greatest danger man can face. Because of this, God has promised His children protection from this greatest of all dangers:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

When children of God live faithfully, the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse them from their sin (1 John 1:7) and

they can enjoy the assurance of God's promise: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11).

That attitude of spiritual separation motivated by the promises of God must produce in the Christian a holy lifestyle. Paul's instruction did not end with the call to a changed perspective; he continued the admonition with a call to a changed lifestyle: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Thinking of oneself as being separate from the world is one thing, but applying that mindset to the daily walk of life is another. Applying that mindset requires two basic activities: cleansing and perfecting.

When Paul said, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" he made it perfectly clear how much sinfulness the Lord will tolerate in His children: none. This sinfulness is the continued practice of sin, not the occasional mistakes everyone makes. No one can say truthfully that he has no sin (1 John 1:8, 10); but the child of God must not continue in the practice of sin. John said he cannot do that: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

There is a natural repulsion between faithfulness and sinfulness. The child of God cannot continue in the willful, habitual practice of sin because God's seed abides in him. The seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) and it is by that seed, the Word of God, that men are begotten again (1 Pet. 1:23); but the Word of God teaches against a life of continual, habitual sin. Therefore, one cannot be a child of God and continue in willful, habitual sin. Woods put it this way:

But why cannot he continue to live such a life? The seed, which is the word of God, and which is in him, forbids it. How did David recognize and apply the principle taught here? ‘Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.’ (Psm. 119:11.)”²⁰

Repentance results in the cessation of sinful practice. Christians must strive to put away everything from their former lives that does not conform to the will of God. Phrases like, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col. 3:5), “...put off all these” (Col. 3:8), and “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*” (Heb. 11:1) remind Christians of the need to cleanse themselves from “all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.”

But the job is not done. Removing sinful practices is only the beginning. The task of coming out from among them is completed in “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Holiness must be understood both positively and negatively, that is, it must be seen as the presence of positive acts of righteousness and not just the absence of negative acts of unrighteousness. To perfect means, “to bring an activity to a successful finish.”²¹ Holiness is not finished or perfected until righteousness has taken the place of sinfulness.

Paul told the Colossians to “put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9), having listed many of the sins men often commit. However, he went further to say:

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:12-14).

The true mark of having come out from among those in the world is seen in the Christian's actions. God intends for His children to fill their lives with good works: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). He wants them to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58), and "fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10).

To equip His saints to this end He provided the Scriptures: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is not until he reaches heaven that the Christian can cease from his labor. John said, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

Conclusion

Loyalty to Christ is more than paying lip service to Him; it is the true sacrifice of self for His cause. Because of this, Christians must be especially mindful to guard their allegiance to the Lord and not let anyone or anything take His place in their lives. This means examining every relationship to ensure that there is no threat of being pulled away from Christ.

Paul called those kinds of situations being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and he demanded that those who were engaged in such to cease. Any relationship that requires a decreased loyalty and faithfulness to Christ for the continuation of that relationship is an "unequal yoke." To illustrate the importance of this concept Paul showed how there is a natural incompatibility between the things of God and the things of the world. Trying to

walk with God and live like the world is a spiritual impossibility.

Christians must remember the great promise the Lord has made as they evaluate the relationships and practices of their lives. He has promised to be a Father to those who separate themselves from the world. Trusting that precious promise of God will cause the child of God to seek a holy lifestyle by putting away the practice of sin and filling his life with good works of righteousness.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 27

Love Not The World

(1 John 2:12-17)

Wayne Jones

Introduction

WE HAVE ALL HEARD it said, “you can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy.” I suppose that principle is true. You can remove a person from something he has always known, but simply removing him will not insure he will not still long for it and/or seek to have it again. Satan relies on this principle when it comes to the Christian’s involvement in the world. Satan wants us to assume that you can take the Christian out of the world, but that you cannot take the world out of the Christian. Through lust, temptation and negative influences, Satan has convinced many in the church that they are not capable of living holy, separate lives. Satan has tricked some into believing that God’s call to be “peculiar” (1 Pet. 2:9) is an impossibility. Further, he has taught that God’s charge to live “soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:12) is unimaginable to the “average” Christian. Satan tells our young people that the command to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” is only reserved for those who are older and stronger. In turn, they are convinced that the pull of the world is too strong to resist. Some parents have even bought into this idea. Have you ever

heard someone say, “boys will be boys” or “kids will be kids?” These statements are often used by parents to excuse the sinful actions of accountable teenagers who choose to live like the world. Satan has deceived the hearts of many into believing that you might can take the Christian out of the world, but there is no way to completely take the world out of the Christian.

As a result of these assumptions, worldliness has crept into the hearts of many. Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers facing the church today. Since the truth is, man cannot serve God and the world, many have forsaken God in pursuit of this world. All we have to do is look around in our local meeting houses and remember those who used to sit here or there. Why do they no longer fill those pews? It may be that a love for the world and the things that are in the world led them away from their service to God. Still others suffering from worldliness may be the same people who regularly attend worship services and are involved in various church-related activities. Some may be song leaders, Bible class teachers, deacons, preachers or even elders. Worldliness is sin which sprouts in the heart, and it may take years and years before it causes us to completely desert our Master.

Knowing the approach Satan would take and knowing the damage that worldliness can cause the soul, John wrote: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). John is not the only Biblical writer to offer warnings regarding this subject. In fact, a reading of similar New Testament passages will reveal the series of steps that, if they are followed, will lead the Christian back into the sin of worldliness. The first step into worldliness is to befriend the world. That is why James warned us “that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of

the world is the enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). Once a man has made friends of the world, he will eventually become spotted by the sinful practices of the world. Again, that is why James described a Christian as one who keeps “himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). The third step into worldliness is described by Paul in his letter to the Romans: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). Conformity is a natural progression once a man has made friends with the world and has made the habits of the world his habits. Once a man has made friends with the world, obtained the habits of the world and adjusted himself to think like the world, he will no doubt have a strong, intense desire to be a part of the world (1 John 2:15). The commitment that this man, woman or young person once had for God will be replaced by a love for the world and for worldly things. Thus, God was serious when he commanded all Christians to remove the world from their actions, habits and desires. God was serious when He commanded the Christian to “love not the world.”

Since the word “world” is used in the Bible to refer to many different things, we need to briefly identify to what John was making reference when He used this word. Certainly, John was not forbidding us to love the wonderful creation of God. Paul described God to the Athenians as the One Who “made the **world** and all things therein” (Acts 17:24, emp. mine throughout). Furthermore, we are told that through the beauty and power of that creation we can know God is real and alive (Rom. 1:20). It would not be reasonable for John to forbid us from loving the world that God created.

By the word *world* John did not mean the
sunshine and the rain, the mountains and the

seas, the sunset and the stars, the loveliness of the night, the sparkling freshness of the morning, the sweet song of the birds, or the fragrance of the flowers. He did not mean the dust from which our bodies are composed, the earth which supplies us with our food, and in whose gentle embrace we must at last eventually rest.¹

We also know that John was forbidding the church from having love for the people in the world. It was John also who penned these words: “For **God so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Would God forbid us from doing what He has already done? It is obvious that John was not forbidding us from loving the people of this world. After all, it is love for the people of the world that promote us to go “into all the world” and preach unto them the message of salvation (Mark 16:15).

The world to which John is referring is a sphere, a system or an order. We understand this usage of the word “world” when we speak of the “world of sports” or the “world of finance.” It is the world that has its own interests, its own agenda and its own lifestyle. Again, brother Woods writes: “The ‘world’ of this passage is a sphere or cosmos (*kosmos*) of evil, an order which is opposed to God, and to whose pursuit those who abandon the Lord have dedicated themselves.”² This word is used to describe “the present condition of human affairs in alienation from and opposition to God.”³ This is the problem with which Demas struggled and for which Demas forsook Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). A love for the evil order of this world was characteristic of the Ephesians **before** they were converted (Eph. 2:2). Consider briefly a few features of this system, this order or this world.

1. This world has a prince. His name is Satan (John 12:31; Eph. 2:2).

2. This world has a pull. Its strength is in temptation (Jas. 1:13-15).

3. This world has a philosophy. Its practice is not new (Judg. 17:6).

4. This world has a price. Its cost is enormous (Rom. 6:23; Mark 8:36-37).

Within the text of 1 John 2:12-17, John lists three different reasons for adhering to the divine prohibition against loving the world. For the remainder of our space, we will consider each of these reasons and make application to our current battle against worldliness. John writes that we should “love not the world” because...

Because Of What Has Already Happened (1 John 2:12-14)

Within the first three verses of our assigned text, John makes it very clear that he is writing to Christians. Furthermore, John was writing to those who had already been approached by Satan with various forms of temptation even after their conversion. Many commentators spend a great deal of time addressing the three groups to which John refers (i.e., fathers, young men and little children). This author read many theories and suggestions regarding who John had in mind when he addressed each of these three groups. Perhaps that is a valid discussion, but we did not feel it necessary to address it at length in this manuscript. The conclusion of the discussion would be this—John was writing to Christians of all ages who had battled Satan in the past and would continue to battle him in the future. When he addressed these Christians, he reminded them of what God had already done for them and what they had already become. Subsequently, John uses these historical facts to encourage their separation from the world and to enforce his prohibition against loving the world.

“[Y]our sins are forgiven you” (1 John 2:12). At some point in their history, the recipients of John’s letter had been lost in sin. At some point in their history, the recipients of John’s letter stood worthy of death because of their involvement in the things of this world. God, then, wiped their slate clean and forgave them of their transgressions. Thinking logically, why would these individuals go back into that from which God delivered them? It was the pollutions of this world that had stained the souls of those reading this book, but God had removed those pollutions. In the process God delivered them from a sure death in the next life (Rom. 6:23). Because of this deliverance and the fact that their sin was no longer on their record, they should earnestly strive to remain free from earthly, sensual defilement.

In the book of Colossians, Paul addressed those who had been delivered from the darkness of this world into the glorious kingdom of God (Col. 1:13). In this deliverance, they too, had received the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). Paul appealed to that deliverance as a reason for not desiring the things of this world, but rather to long for those things above. Paul encouraged those who had been raised with Christ (which is a direct reference to baptism for the remission of sins) to set their “affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). In other words, Paul told them that, since they had been saved, they needed to refrain from placing too much emphasis on earthly things. If they heeded this advice, they would be walking in the light and would continue to receive the forgiveness of sins as they repented of them (1 John 1:7- 9). To balk on that commitment and to redevelop a love for the world and the things therein would be no different than forfeiting their redemption. No, God would not hold them accountable for things for which He had already forgiven them. However, they would once again stain their souls and as Peter stated:

if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning (2 Pet. 2:20).

Not only had they been forgiven, but these individuals were battle tested. Twice John referred to them as those who had “overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:13-14). Even after these individuals had become Christians, Satan tried to entice them to return to the world. He had sought to destroy their souls, but they had overcome his advances. They had resisted the devil, and he had fled from them. They had given no place to the devil. They had used their shields of faith to defend themselves against the fiery arrows of the tempter. They had overcome the prince of this world.

Their ability to overcome the wicked one is attributed to their strength (1 John 2:14). If you continue reading that verse, John attributes their strength directly to their knowledge of the Word of God. Such principles are reiterated by a study of Christ’s battle with temptation. As you recall, Satan approached Christ with each avenue of worldliness, but Christ, through strength supported with Scripture, was able to overcome the wicked one. In order for these individuals to rekindle their love for the world, they would need to forget or ignore what they knew about the Word of God. Such is the case with anyone who has withstood Satan on one occasion, but fallen into his snare on another.

For the purpose of removing the world from our lives, our homes and our churches, we need more preaching about **who we are** as members of the body of Christ. We need sermons that explain how blessed we are because our sins have been covered by the precious blood of Christ (Psm. 32:1; cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). We need lessons that explain

our responsibility towards the temptations of this world (2 Tim. 2:22) and our ability to overcome those temptations (Jas. 1:12). Paul dealt with these ideas in his first letter to the Corinthians. After Paul had listed many works of the flesh, he then pointed out that they were no longer a part of those things:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you:** but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

Like the Corinthians, we are a people who have the stain of sin removed from our record and we have the power to overcome Satan placed in the “palm of our hands.” We will be without reason or excuse if we fail to obey the prohibition to “love not the world.”

Because Of What Is Now Happening (1 John 2:15-16)

Satan has always targeted man from three different, but very effective approaches—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These points of appeal are all based on the here and now. They all depend upon man’s craving to satisfy his immediate, physical desires. History had shown that this three-point plan of Satan is extremely potent. In fact, you can trace Satan’s usage of these three temptations all the way back to the beginning. During Satan’s conversation with Eve as recorded in Genesis 3, he appealed to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (Gen. 3:5). On that particular

occasion, Satan won and sin entered into the world. Thousands of years later, as Satan stood face to face with Christ, he again used these three points of attack. Satan first appealed to the lust of the flesh by tempting Christ to turn stones to bread for no other reason than to satisfy his physical hunger (Matt. 4:3; Luke 4:3). Satan then appealed to the pride of life by tempting Christ to fling himself off of the temple and thereby access angelic protection (Matt. 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11). Satan then appealed to the lust of the eyes by offering an exchange: worship for all the kingdoms that Christ could see (Matt. 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7). On that particular occasion, Satan lost and Christ went on to provide the only way for man to close the door of sin that was opened in the garden of Eden.

John assures that Satan's plan of attack was alive and well in the lives of those reading his epistles. The language of 1 John 2:16 implies that the threat of Satan's three-pronged attack was prevalent in the time of this writing. John assured his listeners that those things were not merely in the past, but that they were a real threat to them and their families. Likewise, we can rest assured that Satan's method of attack has not changed with the times. As much as we would like to assume that Satan is not as active or persistent in appealing to the physical, immediate desires of the human race, he is. Just like in the days of John, all that is in the world or system in which we live is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

What is in our present world? Personally, this writer is not convinced that our present-day problems are worse than any other generation. In all reality, what could be worse than for every man to continually dwell on wickedness? That was the case in days of Noah (Gen. 6:5). The only exceptions were Noah and his family (Gen. 7:7). Similarly, what could be worse than reading of a man who

was later called “just” (2 Pet. 2:7), offering his virgin daughters to the ungodly and perverse people of Sodom (Gen. 19:8)? What could be worse than living in a day and time when the earthly leader of God’s people would murder his own son in sacrifice to an idol (2 Kings 16:1-3)? What could be worse than living during a time in which the supposed moral and religious leaders concocted an evil scheme (by using greed, bribery, and lying among others as tactics) to murder an innocent man because they envied his popularity (Matt. 26:4; Luke 22:3-5; Matt. 27:18)? What could be worse than a town wherein lived fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners (1 Cor. 6:9-10)?

In each of these times, God demanded that His people remain true to His Word and remain separate from the world. The message of 2 Corinthians 6:17 was expected of each generation mentioned above: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” In all honesty, we cannot claim to live in a time that is worse than any other in history. We have only lived in this historical period. Although we cannot claim it to be worse than any other, we can agree that the times in which we live are not better than the aforementioned times. This can be directly linked to Satan’s attack and defeat of God’s people through the physical, immediate desires of the flesh.

On the other hand, we should not feel better about this present world simply because other generations were as bad as this one. We live in a sin-laden, evil world. What is happening now that makes our day and time such a horrible time? What makes this present world so deplorable? Collectively, those things that require us to be different can be summed up in John’s description of the world of his day—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. However, a collective treatment

of such issues is not always enough. We need to know the individual battles we are up against. We need to know, personally, what our young people are facing. While all of Satan's approaches can be filed under one of those three headings, he does target each age group or generation with different temptations. We need to be aware of some of Satan's specifics in this present world.

A complete study of many other manuscripts in this volume needs to be completed by every preacher, elder, deacon, Bible class teacher and parent in the world today. We need to know the dangers associated with alcohol, dancing, immodesty and sexual sins (i.e., pornography, adultery, fornication and homosexuality). We need to be aware of the jeopardy that accompanies pride, wrath, hatred and malice. We do not need to simply paint with a broad brush when it comes to subjects of immorality or the works of the flesh. We need to be able to address these subjects on an individual level and deal with them as the real, current problems that they are.

We also need to be honest and realistic about the current tools Satan is using to infect us with a love for this world. Television, movie theaters, the internet, music and the media have proven to be very successful weapons in Satan's attack against the world and especially against the Lord's church. Some have the strange and deadly notion that if it is on television or in the movies that we have the right to watch it and be entertained by it. Others judge their standard by the standards set by Hollywood. Many parents will allow their teenagers to go see a movie simply because it is not rated "R." Others will not even stop there.

Truth is, some parents have no idea what their children are watching and they seem as if they do not care. According to statistics, one of the top ten grossing movies two years ago was the latest installment of the

Austin Powers movies. This one even contained a sexually suggestive reference in the title. Teenagers flocked to movies theaters and the video stores to watch these 94 minutes of what amounted to nothing more than garbage. This author has personally never seen the above mentioned movie. However, according to www.screenit.com, there are more than 50 vulgar words and phrases. The list includes curse words, taking the Lord's name in vain and a host of phrases that make explicit references to private parts of the male and female anatomy. In this review, under the heading sex/nudity, there are **39** scenes described that make vulgar and tasteless sexual references. Even with this information at our fingertips, parents still allow their children to watch these things.

Personally, I wonder this: if a 16 year old boy and a 16 year old girl are allowed to go watch this movie or similar movies filled with sexual overtones and dialogue, what do you suppose is on their mind when they leave that movie? While answering that question, keep in mind that no parents are there to supervise that ride home. Parents who continue to allow their children's minds to be saturated with sexual and vulgar thoughts will one day reap the consequences of those decisions. They may reap those consequences when their daughter is faced with bearing a child out of wedlock or when their child contracts AIDS because they thought that sex was merely fun and games. Or they may reap those consequences on the day of judgement when they and their children are lost in a devil's hell because they "loved this present world."

In conclusion of this point, we need to realize that getting caught up in the things of this world causes our priorities to shift and our allegiance toward God to wane. Consider again John's words: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. **If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him**" (1 John 2:15).

Satan is well aware that God does not want half or even three-fourths of our heart. Satan knows that God demands first place and that he will not settle for second or third. In order to accomplish his purpose, Satan does not need for us to completely reject God. All he wants to do is divide our allegiance. Why? Because Satan knows that “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Certainly, because of what is currently happening and the effects it will have our souls, we should heed the warning of John and “love not the world.”

Because Of What Will Happen One Day (1 John 2:17)

The temporal nature of this world is a common theme among Biblical writers.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1).

Not only do we live in a temporal world, but the things that accompany it are also temporal. Even many of the wholesome, enjoyable aspects of our physical lives are only temporal. Hobbies that we enjoy and godly entertainment in which we engage is limited to this life. Such is also the case with the evil pleasures of this world. This thought is what promoted Moses to choose the people of God over the palace of Pharaoh:

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin

for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:25-27).

We need to consider even further that these things will not simply fade into oblivion. When they do pass away, it will be with “fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Just after making reference to these events and the uncertainty of their timing, Peter gave this warning: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet. 3:11). What Peter is saying in the previously mentioned passage is the same thing that John is addressing in the text under consideration this hour. Because these things are temporal and they provide no immediate or long-term spiritual value, we should refrain from laying up treasures therein (Matt. 6:19-21).

Conclusion

John gives us a threefold reason to withstand the threefold attack of Satan. (1) Remember who you are and what God has done for you. (2) Consider all that is currently in the world and the shame that it brings to the creation of God. (3) Consider what will happen one day with this world and things that are therein.

Friends, young people, parents and brethren, it is not only possible, but it is expected that the Christian be taken out of the world and that the world be taken out of the Christian. If that does not happen, heaven cannot be our eternal dwelling place. We are assured by another of John’s writings that God will not allow into heaven “any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” (Rev. 21:27). Let us heed

John's words: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Endnotes

1 Guy N. Woods, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles**, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1991), p. 238.

2 Ibid., p. 238.

3 W. E. Vine, **Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words**, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), p. 685.

CHAPTER 28

Let Not Sin Reign In Your Mortal Body

(Rom. 6:1-23)

Lester Kamp

Introduction

IT IS AN HONOR and a great privilege to be with the Southaven church and to participate in the great **POWER** Lectures again this year. The elders of this congregation are esteemed “very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5:13).¹ The wonderful fellowship of this week along with the powerful, Biblical lessons on the great theme of “**The Works Of The Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit**” will impact our lives and change us for good. The warm hospitality of this congregation and their united, strong stand for Truth and on the Truth will enable this congregation to lead many souls to Christ and to strengthen countless saints as they prepare for eternity.

This study will be another valuable one in this series of yearly lectures for all who are privileged to be present, and for all who read this book and/or view and listen to the tapes. Brother B. J. Clarke continues to do an outstanding job in directing this lectureship. He is a busy man in the kingdom. He is using his great talents in the kingdom, and we are all benefitting tremendously from his labors!

The study of Romans 6 is vital regarding the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. Most Christians are familiar with this text because of its teaching about baptism, but many are unaware of the great lessons contained in the remainder of the chapter regarding the impact of baptism on the life of those baptized.

I have been privileged on several occasions to be present when this entire chapter was read or quoted during the time when preparation was being made for baptism in the assembly of the church. The first time I heard these words quoted in this connection it made a profound impact on me. Usually, in situations like this congregations sing appropriate songs, but how profoundly appropriate it is to use the very Word of God to remind all of those present about the act of baptism and the effect (and purpose) of baptism.

Often, I am afraid, we fail to emphasize the results that should take place in the life of the one who is immersed into Christ. Certainly, it should be clear in the mind of the one being baptized that the “newness of life” for the Christian means severing ones relationship and involvement in a life of sin (i.e., the works of the flesh). The one being baptized should, therefore, realize the need to make a determined effort for the remainder of one’s life to abundantly manifest works of righteousness (i.e., the fruit of the Spirit). Failure to understand the lessons of Romans 6 will cause many to be baptized without being truly converted to Christ. **Christianity is a way of life!** Being a Christian means recognizing the difference between one’s former life and his life “in Christ.”

Baptism’s Obligation– Death To Sin (Verses 1-11)

When one becomes a Christian his life is different—sometimes radically different. Note, for example, the radical

changes that had occurred in the lives of the Corinthians when they were converted to Christ as described by Paul:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Paul wrote of this change again in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new**” (emp. added, LK). The apostle Peter’s vivid description is also helpful here:

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (1 Pet. 4:2-4).

It should be observed in these verses that the former companions of those who are now Christians clearly recognized the difference in the behavior that had taken place in the lives of those who had put on Christ. They “think it strange” that their friends no longer enjoy the pursuit of sin. In fact, they “speak evil” of their Christian friends because of this change that had occurred.

This change is stressed by Paul in the discussion of the implications of baptism here in Romans 6. In the closing verses of chapter 5, Paul had observed, “But where

sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20). Paul then anticipated a misapprehension of this concept in chapter 6. He begins, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom. 6:1). “God forbid” literally means, “May it never be so!” This is an emphatic negative response to that which was previously stated. It may be thought of as “Absolutely not!” Those who become Christians are not to continue to live in sin. The content of Romans 6 explains in some detail the reasons why this is the case. Indeed, the theme of the chapter can be stated as: Christians are **dead to sin!**

Let’s pause here to make an important distinction. Paul is not claiming that the Christian is never going to sin; he is claiming that Christians will not live lives characterized by and dominated by sin. Christians may lapse momentarily and sin. John wrote to Christians, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Christians will sin; in fact, sometimes they can become lost. The New Testament gives several examples of Christians who again became lost because of their involvement again in a life of sin. Among these are: (1) The Corinthian fornicator (1 Cor. 5); (2) Simon the former sorcerer (Acts 8); (3) Demas who had worked with Paul (2 Tim. 4:10); (4) the Galatian Christians who had returned to the Law of Moses (Gal. 5:4); (5) some whose faith had been overthrown (2 Tim. 2:18). Children of God can apostatize and become lost (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4; et al).

Because of the change of mind (i.e. repentance), that has occurred in the process of conversion, sin is no longer desirable. When one severs his relationship with sin in baptism, his life becomes characterized by righteousness and not by sin. Indeed, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:2). The obligation of the Christian is to live unto God!

Paul then tells us that we are baptized “into Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:3). In other words, we enter Christ in the act of baptism. In order for baptism to have this result it must be preceded by a number of other God-given requirements. To be a Scriptural candidate for baptism a person must believe (i.e., have faith) in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24); repent (i.e., change his mind about sin and determine to the best of his ability to avoid sinning) of his sins (Acts 17:30); and confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37). Then, it is the case that baptism puts one into Christ where all spiritual blessings reside (Eph. 1:3). Faith, repentance and confession are, according to Scriptures, “unto” salvation; but baptism is “into” Christ and salvation. The obedience of baptism is the transition point from being outside of Christ to being in Christ and enjoying the salvation He provides. This is a point that the religious world in general has not understood!

Furthermore, Paul states that we “were baptized into his death” (Rom. 6:3). Forgiveness of sins is impossible without the shed blood of Christ (i.e., without the death of Christ). Note carefully the statement of Jesus, when instituting the Lord’s Supper, regarding His blood, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

Put this verse beside Acts 2:38 and you will see the beautiful harmony between the shed blood of our Lord and contact with it in the act of baptism enabling the benefit of “the remission of sins.” “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is the contact point with the death of Christ. The power of the blood of Christ is applied in baptism. How can one be saved, forgiven of sins, without contacting the blood of

Christ in His death? Impossible! Baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins.

In the next verse, Paul's point first is concerning the act (mode) of baptism and then, secondly, regarding the newness of life which results. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

There are, according to Paul, three essential parts to Scriptural baptism. There is a death, then a burial, followed by a resurrection. These essential parts are referred to later in Romans 6:17 by Paul as "that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The meaning is that the action of baptism follows the form (pattern) of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It is significant that only immersion follows this pattern – sprinkling does not, pouring does not. It is also significant that those that are alive are not buried, only those who are dead.

Those baptized must, therefore, die to the love of and the practice of sin (works of the flesh). When one begins to love God, he stops loving sin. The love of God and of the world cannot exist in the same heart at the same time (1 John 2:15-17). The person who has died to the love of and the practice of sin is the penitent believer. Being Scripturally baptized requires being "buried with him...into death." A person must be baptized to actually become dead to sin. The final separation from guilt and the eternal consequences of sin does not occur until baptism. Before baptism he is dead in sin and then dead to the love of and practice of sin, but baptism puts the guilt of sin and its eternal consequences to death.

Then, just like Christ was raised from physical death, in baptism we are raised out of spiritual death to live a **new** life. Roy C. Deaver put it this way:

As Christ *died*, so one dies to sin in becoming a Christian. As Christ was *buried*, so the one dead to sin is buried in the waters of baptism. As Christ was *raised*, so one is raised in baptism. As Christ, after His resurrection, *lived a new life unto God*, just so – those raised in baptism are obligated and privileged to *walk in newness of life and unto God*.²

For the sake of emphasis and clarity, let me make the point again here that the obligation of the new life emphasizes that Christians are not to continue in sin! The works of the flesh are not to characterize the new life in Christ! The general conduct of life has changed because in the act of baptism one has personally died to the guilt of sin and been raised to a totally new form of life – a life unto God. Christians have an obligation to “walk in newness of life” and not to continue in sin.

“For if we have been planted (“united,” ASV) together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:5). The uniting with Christ clearly occurs in baptism, not prior to baptism. The unbaptized believer is, therefore, not a Christian.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). “Our old man is crucified” and “the body of sin might be destroyed” both refer to the same thing. The “old man” is the pre-Christian man, unforgiven of sins.

When we are baptized “our old man is crucified,” “the body of sin” is “destroyed.” Sinners are servants of sin, in bondage to sin; those baptized into Christ are set free from this bondage and, therefore, should not serve sin. The idea is not that sin’s power is completely removed but that it is so weakened that it no longer is in control.

“That henceforth we should not serve sin” is rendered in the ASV as “that we should no longer be in bondage to sin.” Moses E. Lard well observed:

The object of our being crucified with Christ is to render inactive the sinful body; and the object of this inactivity is **that we may no longer sin**. Not to serve sin is not to commit it. From all of which the conclusion again results that we can not continue in sin.³ (emph. added, LK).

Thomas B. Warren described it this way,

If a truck which is used in hauling is disabled, the hauling must stop for the instrument necessary to carrying it can no longer be used. So it is with sin. When the instrument which is used in the service of sin is rendered powerless the service to sin must stop. So when the “old man” is crucified with Christ, there remains no instrument which can be used in the service of sin. (Of course, this does not mean that he child of God *cannot* sin, 1 John 2:1.) Of necessity, such service ceases. Men “cannot continue in sin that grace may abound.”⁴

Service to sin is to cease **when** one becomes a Christian.

Sinners are in bondage to sin as Israel was in bondage to the Egyptians. Using 1 Corinthians 10, Roy Deaver draws these useful parallels:

Egypt was a type of sin. Those in bondage were a type of those now in bondage to sin. Pharaoh was a type of the devil. Moses was a type of the Christ (Acts 3:22-23). As God sent Moses to deliver Israel from the Egyptian bondage, so He sent Christ to deliver men from the bondage of sin. The angel said to Joseph: “...and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). As Moses enacted the plagues to convince Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Israelites that “God’s hand

was in it all,” just so Christ performed the great miracles to convince men that He had been sent by God. Aaron was a type of the apostles. God spake unto Moses; Moses spake unto Aaron; Aaron spoke unto the people; and the people believed (Exod. 4:29-31).

Today, God speaks to the Christ; the Christ speaks to the inspired apostles; the apostles (by means of the written Word of God), speak to the people, and the people are required to believe. As the people listened to Moses, so we must believe on the Christ. As they turned to follow Moses, so we must turn to follow Christ. The Bible calls this “repentance.” As they crossed the waters of the Red Sea, and were thus baptized unto Moses (1 Cor. 10:2), just so we are commanded to be baptized into Jesus Christ. As they received God’s law, just so we must be concerned about God’s law. As they failed (so many of them) to live according to God’s Will, just so it is possible for us to fail to live according to God’s Will (1 Cor. 10:1-12).

Hence we are warned to take heed lest we fall. As they came finally to cross the waters of the Jordan, so we come finally to cross the Jordan of death. As they “rested” in their Canaan, just so the faithful shall rest eternally in the heavenly Canaan of bliss and glory. “Let us fear therefore, lest haply a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it” (Heb. 4:1).⁵

“For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Deliverance from the bondage and dominion of sin comes from dying to sin and being baptized into the benefits of the Lord’s death. When a servant dies, he is no longer under the obligations of the commands of his former master. So, when the servant of sin dies, he is no longer under the rule and control of sin. Sin is no longer his master! The Christian would do well to recognize this truth. The Christian must not “continue in sin.”

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him” (Rom. 6:8-9). “Now” those who have been baptized—those who have died with Christ—have an obligation to “live with Him.” This does not refer to the literal resurrection. Earlier in Romans 6:4, Paul had described this as walking “in newness of life.” Our obligation now is to live righteously. We are not to continue in sin.

When Jesus was resurrected, He overcame the dominion of death. In the same way, when we die to sin, we overcome the dominion of spiritual death. We are now obligated to live unto God, according to His Will. We are not to continue to live sinful lives. “For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (Rom. 6:10). He died unto sin once and for all. Sin could no longer tempt Him or cause Him to die. The life that He lives is unto the honor, glory and praise of God. There is the same sacred obligation for all those who have died to sin in baptism – to live no longer under the bondage of sin but unto God’s honor, glory and praise.

Our knowledge of the fact that Christ died once, and never faced death again, causes our faith to be strong enough to enable us to “walk in newness of life” unto God. All who faithfully obey Christ (Heb. 5:9; 1 John 1:7) have been placed beyond the clutches of sin and are now alive unto God. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). A faithful child of God can no more continue to live in sin than Christ can live in His earthly state again. Deliberate sin ought never to be committed by those who realize that they are dead to sin and “alive unto God through (“in”ASV) Jesus Christ our Lord.” Those who are in Christ have passed through death into life.

Life is in Him (John 3:15). Deliberate sin, engaging voluntarily in the works of the flesh, is not to be even considered. Death to sin means to be wholly separated from it. Alive to God means to be wholly surrendered to and devoted to Him and His service. Christians should not and must not continue to live in sin, doing the works of the flesh.

Reigning And Yielding (Verses 12-23)

“Therefore” suggests that what is stated is based upon the argument of the previous verses.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:12-13).

Christians are not to allow sin to reign; they are not to yield themselves in the service of “unrighteousness unto sin.” The individual is responsible for what he does. It is up to the individual as to what reigns in his life; he is responsible for yielding himself in service to some master.

The admonition here is not to let sin gain control. When sin gains control of one’s life, sin “reigns.” The realm of the rule is the body, including the mind. The body is subject to the mind; it is an instrument for what the mind decides to do. The inner, spiritual man is admonished here not to allow the outer man to get control. Obeying the lusts of the body evidences the reign of sin. Lust is strong desire. These desires are “not evil in themselves. They are God-given, and become evil only when they become the master, and thereby lead us into sinful thoughts and deeds.”⁶ Having died to sin, we need to keep the deeds of

the body inactive and certainly not in control. Self-control is imperative.

The parts of the body (hands, mouth, feet, etc.) are not to be yielded to sinful purposes. "There is nothing that a human being can do, either good or bad, that does not involve the use of the body. If the members are properly used, the body is properly used."⁷ Evil proceeds from the heart (Matt. 15:19-20). The body acts according to the directions of the mind. Clearly then the inner man is responsible for what the body does. It is a false notion to suggest that the Christian's spirit cannot sin, only his body. The spirit of man, the inner man, is responsible for what is done by the body. The body is a mere instrument for good or evil.

Becoming "alive from the dead" happened when we rose from the waters of baptism. The choice for those "alive from the dead" is to yield their members in the service of righteousness.

The *brain* must contemplate those things which are honorable, pure, lovely, and of good report, and must not give lodging place to lascivious thoughts, to deceit, to envy, to malice. The *hands* must be used to work for God. The *feet* must be quick to carry one to the place of service. The *ear* must be "tuned in" to that which is pure and upbuilding and to the cries of lost and suffering humanity.⁸

Brother Deaver put it slightly differently but profoundly when he observed that Christians must have:

[E]yes that look out upon the fields white unto the harvest; ears that listen to the great Macedonian calls that constantly come "ringing o'er the restless wave"; tongues that are used in teaching and preaching God's soul-saving message to man; hands that constantly minister to those in need; minds that study and learn and

love and feel with regard to God and His Will among men; feet that go forth in carrying the Gospel message, and in running the great errands of mercy.⁹

The admonition here is to yield yourself entirely to God's service, to present your body as a living sacrifice in the daily service of righteousness (Rom. 12:1), and to dedicate and consecrate your body to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The obligation of the Christian, therefore, is not to let sin reign over him, but to give himself totally to God!

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). By the power of the Gospel, Christians are freed from sin's dominion. This should be the vigilant, determined cry of the Christian: “Sin shall not have dominion over me!”

Paul's statement regarding our not being under law does not mean that we are not under any law (rules, regulations, commandments) before God. It rather means that under the Law of Moses there was no means of obtaining forgiveness of sins. Under that Law, sin dominated life and, because there was no avenue of permanent forgiveness, sin dominated and caused them to be lost in hell.

Presently, however, Paul states that those who live under the law system of grace in Christ hate sin and turn away from it. When such individuals sin occasionally, they have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). But sin does not dominate because of the availability of the grace of forgiveness which is always pursued when sin occurs. Bear in mind that Paul later wrote to the same brethren, “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13).

God's grace plan, the Gospel, places upon us the obligation to use our bodies in righteousness. But, Paul has just stated that we are not under the Law of Moses. Does this mean that Christians are to be unconcerned about their involvement in sin. Paul poses the question and then answers it. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15). The immediate and emphatic response is: "God forbid" which means "may it not be so." Then the reason is given for this answer.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). The simple truth is that we become servants to whomever we present ourselves in obedience. This is true whether we are servants of sin or servants of righteousness. Remember that being the servant of sin has its consequence—death; being a servant of righteousness, however, brings eternal life. In consideration of these consequences, who would choose to be a servant of sin?

Next, Paul thanks God that these Romans had changed their allegiance and their master. The KJV is not as clear as the ASV in this verse. Paul is certainly not thanking God that the Romans had been sinners, but Paul gives thanks to God for the change these Christians in Rome had made. They were servants of sin, but are now servants of righteousness unto God.

But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18 ASV).

Note also in these verses that the obedience that caused them to become servants of righteousness involved two

things. First, it was “from the heart.” True obedience comes from the heart; it is not merely outward compliance to God’s instructions. Obedience that results in a change of spiritual masters is genuine and sincere – from the heart. In the Bible, the heart is the part of man that thinks (Matt. 9:4), reasons (Mark 2:8), believes (Rom. 10:10), and understands (Matt. 13:15). Here, in Romans 6:17, the heart is what prompts proper obedience.

Second, this obedience is “to that form (pattern) of teaching.” As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is a reference to the fact that one’s obedience in baptism (the act of obedience in which one ceases being a servant of sin and becomes a servant of righteousness) follows the pattern of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). This is obedience to the Gospel. Without that obedience salvation is not possible. When Jesus comes to judge the world, it will be “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8). Furthermore we are told that Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). If we are going to be saved, we must be obedient to the Gospel.

In Romans 6:18, stress is again given to the fact that Christians are “servants of righteousness.” Christians are no longer under the law of their previous master; Christians have the responsibility of serving only their new Master. Dividing one’s service between sin and righteousness is not possible (Matt. 6:24). Once a person has obeyed from his heart the pattern of doctrine, and has entered into the service of righteousness unto God, he is to concentrate on serving only God by doing only righteousness.

Paul then gives an illustration of this truth “after the manner of men” (i.e. by using something familiar in everyday life). He uses this illustration because he realized

their difficulty in understanding because they were in the flesh. The illustration he uses here is about slavery and the recognition of ownership. He wrote:

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness (Rom. 6:19-20).

If a slave is sold from one master to another, he no longer has any responsibility to serve his old master. His obligation now is to his current owner, not his previous one. Formerly these Christians were the servants of sin which persistently grew worse and worse (“from iniquity unto iniquity”), but now they are servants of righteousness which leads consistently to holiness (“sanctification” ASV; i.e. being set apart from sin unto righteous). Paul is saying that since our master has changed we need to act like it. Our lives will reveal whom we recognize as our master.

As long as we served sin, we had no concern or desire to practice righteousness. In that condition we were still accountable before God, but we at that time had no regard for doing what was right before God. When we became servants of righteousness, we should have had no longer any concern or desire to practice sin. As servants of sin, we were free with regard to righteousness. As servants of righteousness, we are free with regard to sin.

Paul closes this sixth chapter of Romans by urging the Romans to recognize the catastrophe which would result were they not to devote themselves to serving righteousness. Paul wants these brethren to think about the consequences of their behavior. All behavior has results. Paul told the Galatians:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

To think that it does not matter what we do is to deceive ourselves. Behavior always has consequences. A life characterized by the works of the flesh (sin) will result in eternal consequence. A life devoted to righteousness in service to God will be eternally rewarded. Think about how we live and what we do! Give this serious thought!

Paul wrote here in conclusion:

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:21-23).

These Romans Christians were now ashamed of the things they formerly practiced. While they were servants of sin, shame was not present. They had formerly enjoyed the temporary pleasures of sin. But now as servants of God they recognized the shamefulness of their former deeds. A return to their former way of life would be assuredly fatal. Sin is deceptive. It promises benefit, life and happiness, but it surely brings death. Even the pleasures of sin are fleeting. Moses chose to endure the trials of the people of God rather than to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25-28).

The result of righteous living is “fruit unto holiness” (“sanctification” ASV; a distinct, clear severing of our involvement in sin and a distinct and clear setting apart unto doing what is right). The end of this holy living is **eternal life**.

Sin on the other hand has wages. That which is earned by living in sin is **death**. There are some other results from a life of sin which may occur. There may be mental, emotional, or physical consequences in this life that result from sinful behavior, but there will always be the eternal consequence of death – eternal separation from God and all that is good.

We know the result of a life of sin; it is death. We also know the result of a life of righteousness. How strange it is, knowing these end results, that so many willingly enter into lives of sin but few pursue the way that leads to life everlasting (Matt. 7:13-14)! Why is it that we have to beg and plead with so many men and women today to leave their lives of sin and become obedient to the Gospel of Christ that they might have life?

“The gift of God is eternal life through (“in” ASV) Jesus Christ our Lord.” Gifts are not earned, but something needs to be done by the recipient to enjoy the blessings of the gift. Untying the bow, tearing the wrapping paper, and opening the box certainly are not acts by which one earns whatever is given. Obeying the commands of God in the Gospel of Christ does not earn salvation, but obedience is the only way we can begin to enjoy the spiritual blessings which are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Salvation is a gift offered by God’s grace to all who will obey (Heb. 5:9). It cannot be earned, but man needs to respond in obedience to enjoy the salvation God has given. Because God loved humanity He willingly gave His only begotten Son on our behalf and for our salvation. It is now up to us (me) to leave our (my) former master of sin and to submit totally to doing the pleasures of Him who loved us (me) and gave Himself for us (me) (Gal. 2:20).

Conclusion

We are not predestined individually to be saved or lost. We choose whom will be our master in this life. But when we choose we must be aware of the consequences of

our choice. If we choose to be a servant of sin, we must know that this choice means death (eternity in hell). If we choose to be a servant of righteousness, we must realize that this choice brings the unfathomable blessing of eternity in heaven in the presence of God and His holy angels.

We must make our choice. We will make our choice. We cannot be neutral. The way we live, what we do (or do not do), and how we behave determine clearly the choice we have made. We cannot persist in sin (works of the flesh) and have eternal life. We must, as Jesus urged, work the works of God while we have life to live on this earth (John 9:4). We must realize that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). We must teach the Gospel to others and plead earnestly with them to make their choice wisely in view of eternity (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:11a).

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Roy C. Deaver, **Romans: God’s Plan for Man’s Righteousness**, (Austin, TX: Biblical Notes Publications, 1992), p. 193.

3 Moses E. Lard, **Commentary on Paul’s Letter to Romans**, (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, reprint n.d.), pp. 203-204.

4 Thomas B. Warren, “Romans 6:1-14 (No. 3),” **Gospel Advocate**, (7 June 1973), p.361.

5 Roy C. Deaver, pp. 194-195.

6 Robertson L. Whiteside, **A New Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Saints at Rome**, (Clifton, TX: Mrs. C. R. Nichol, 1948), p. 135.

7 Roy C. Deaver, p. 201.

8 Thomas B. Warren, “Romans 6:1-14 (No. 4),” **Gospel Advocate**, (12 July 1973), p. 442.

9 Roy C. Deaver, p. 203.

CHAPTER 29

To Be Carnally Minded Is Death

(Rom. 8:1-14)

Wade Webster

Introduction

THE CONTEXT THAT HAS been assigned to me is Romans 8:1-14. The title for the lesson is taken from the first inspired phrase of the sixth verse. We read, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). Within this verse we see a great contrast between the sensual and the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind is life and peace, and the sensual mind is strife and death. Within the context (Rom. 8:1-14), Paul gives two reasons why the carnal mind is death:

First, it is death **because it walks after the flesh** (Rom. 8:1-6).

Second, it is death **because it wars against the Father** (Rom. 8:6-14).

Please note that Romans 8:6 serves as the hinge upon which this context and both of Paul’s points swing. The words “for” (Rom. 8:6) and “because” (Rom. 8:7) link Paul’s two points together. Let’s now turn our minds to the text and the two reasons that Paul put forth to support his inspired argument that the carnal mind is death.

The Carnal Mind Is Death Because It Walks After The Flesh

The book of Romans was written to those “beloved of God” and called to be “saints” (Rom. 1:7). It was written to those who were at peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and alive (Rom. 6:11; Rom. 6:13). The fact that those to whom this book was written were at peace with God and alive makes clear, as Paul will argue in this context, that they were spiritually minded. Remember that Paul wrote, “To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 6:7). The context of Romans 8, from beginning to end, is one long shout of victory (Rom. 8:1; Rom 8:31; Rom. 8:35-39). In the first verse, Paul wrote, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). The saints to whom Paul wrote were not in condemnation or death because they had been baptized into Christ and were walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). They had been set free from condemnation by Christ and His Word (Rom. 8:2-4; John 8:32).

In the context of the book of Romans, Paul was establishing the fact that the Law could condemn the sinner, but that it could not justify him (Gal. 3:21). It was given to bring man to Christ where he could be justified (Gal. 3:24). The saints to whom Paul was writing in the book of Romans had been brought to Christ. They were now enjoying the freedom and other blessings found in Him (Eph. 1:3). The word “now” in Romans 8:1 not only reveals their present condition but also suggests their past condition. In times past, they had been “walking after the flesh” (1 Pet. 4:3; Col. 3:7). Likely, the diligent Bible student is reminded of what Paul wrote to the saints of Ephesus. We read:

**And you hath he quickened who were dead
in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times**

past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also **we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **Even when we were dead in our sins, hath quickened us together** in heavenly places with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus...For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that we should walk in them. **Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; **That at that time ye were without Christ**, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: **But now in Christ Jesus** ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our **peace**, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the **enmity**, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making **peace**; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the **enmity** thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. **Now therefore** ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:1-6; Eph. 2:10-19, emp. mine throughout, WW).

Please note that the Ephesians had at one time been dead in their trespasses and sins. They had been at outs

with God. However, they were now (Eph. 2:13; Eph. 2:19) quickened or alive (Eph. 2:1; Eph. 2:5) and at peace with God (Eph. 2:13-15). They had been out of Christ, but now they were in Christ. They had been governed by a sensual (carnal) mind, but now they were governed by a spiritual mind (Eph. 4:17-20). In like manner, this same change had taken place within those to whom Paul was writing in the book of Romans. They had been “transformed” or changed by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2). Once the mind changes from sensual (carnal) to spiritual, a person’s walk (life) will also change.

As you know, the mind is the control center. In the long ago, Solomon wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...” (Prov. 23:7). It is important to note that the word “thinketh” has the suffix “eth” on it. This suffix suggests ongoing action. Thus, as a man continues to think in his heart, so is he. Obviously, there will be times when the wrong kind of thought pops into our minds. If we deal with it quickly and effectively, we can prevent it from going any further. However, if we continue to entertain the evil thought, it will work its way out into our lives. To the Pharisees, Jesus said, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). As you know, this is the reason why the wise man Solomon urged us to keep our hearts with all diligence (Prov. 4:23).

Notice that, in the context of Romans 8, Paul spoke of how that “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). While Solomon speaks of how carnal thoughts produce carnal actions, Paul speaks of how carnal actions produce carnal thoughts. Solomon approaches the matter from the front and Paul approaches it from the back. When you combine their words, you get a vicious, vice-filled cycle. Carnal minds produce carnal actions and

carnal actions further produce carnal minds. The mind feeds the flesh, and the flesh in turn feeds the mind. As you know, such is the nature of sin. James wrote:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

Notice the process: lust, sin, death. If you take the first three letters of these words, you have LSD. As you know, LSD is an illegal, addictive, and mind-altering drug. Individuals who fall under its power will walk after it. In like manner, those who have carnal minds will walk after the flesh. Their carnal thoughts will bring forth carnal actions, which, in turn, will give rise to additional carnal thoughts, with the ultimate fruit of these thoughts and actions being death. Paul's point in Romans 8 meshes perfectly with the point that James was making in the passages that we just considered: that is, "to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6). In Romans 6, Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23; cf. Rom. 6:16). Paul knew that carnal minds would produce carnal actions that, in turn, would produce condemnation or death. Now, can you see why Paul was encouraging the saints at Rome to "walk not after the flesh" but to walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1; Rom. 8:4-5)? Today, we must try to get the same message across. We must get individuals to get their minds off of the earthly things and on heavenly things. If we can change their minds, then we can change their behavior. To the Colossians, Paul wrote:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the

right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on the things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which we also walked some time when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (Col. 3:1-10).

Do you see any fornication among people today? Do you see any covetousness? Do you see any anger? Do you hear any blasphemy or filthy communication? Surely, you will agree that these things are in abundance in our world. Sadly, they are from time to time even named among the saints. Their existence is proof that men are walking after the flesh rather than after the Spirit. How do we change men's minds from being sensual to spiritual? For sure, we start by making clear that "to be carnally minded is death."

The Carnal Mind Is Death Because It Wars Against The Father

Not only does the carnal mind walk after the flesh, but it also wars against the Father. In explaining why the carnal mind is death, Paul wrote, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The word "enmity" refers to hostility, opposition, or hatred. Literally, Paul is speaking of the fact that the carnal mind wars or rages

against the Father (Acts 5:39; Acts 23:9). Because the carnal mind walks after the flesh, it is naturally against God, Who prohibits such a course of behavior. In writing to the Colossians, Paul spoke of how that they at one time were “alienated and enemies” **in their minds** “by wicked works” (Col. 1:21). Because they chose friendships with the world and worldly things, they were aligning themselves against God. There was simply no way that they could walk after the flesh and with God at the same time. The Spirit and the flesh are opposed to one another. To the Galatians, Paul wrote:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:16-17).

To love the Father is to hate the flesh, and to love the flesh is to hate the Father. Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). In a context that begins with “wars and fightings” (Jas. 4:1-2), and refers to “the lusts that war” in our members, James wrote, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend to the world is the enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). It seems clear that James was speaking of spiritual rather than physical adultery. Although they may have been guilty of physical adultery, it seems likely that James had a far wider range of fleshly sins in mind (Gal. 5:19-21). No doubt, he was speaking of all fleshly lusts which “war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). Those to whom James wrote were evidently in love with the world (1 John 2:15-17). They were carnally minded;

and, as such, they were the enemies of God. When one aligns himself with the world, he is aligning himself against God. No doubt, this is the reason why James counseled the brethren to submit themselves to God (Jas. 4:7), to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7), to draw nigh to God (Jas. 4:8), to cleanse their hands (Jas. 4:8), and to purify their hearts (Jas. 4:8).

Getting back to the book of Romans, it is interesting to note that Paul referred to a time at which those to whom he wrote were the enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). In fact, he even spoke of how their ancestors had not liked to “retain God in their knowledge” (Rom. 1:28) and who were, in fact, “haters of God” (Rom. 1:30). Please recall that the word “enmity” refers to hatred. Those to whom Paul was writing came from a long-line of God-haters. At one time, they themselves had even been among His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Although they were now at peace with God (Rom. 5:1), they were in danger of developing a carnal mind which again would put them at enmity with Him. Although they were of necessity “walking **in the flesh**,” they were not to be walking or warring **after the flesh**. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

It seems clear that it is the nature of the fleshly mind to be puffed up. In writing to the Colossians, Paul spoke of the man who was “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” and who in that state did not hold or retain “the Head” (Col. 2:18-19; cf. 2 Pet. 2:10). When the fleshly mind becomes puffed up, it rises up in opposition to God. Those who are

carnally minded seek to put themselves as head instead of Christ. In the context of Romans 8, Paul says that the carnal mind “is not subject to the law of God” (Rom. 8:7). “Subject” is a military expression that means to be under obedience. Thus, the carnal mind is guilty of insubordination. It ignores the orders of its superior—God. It does what it wants rather than what God wants. The Jews, who tended to have a fleshly focus, well illustrate this point. Of them, Paul wrote:

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, **have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God** (Rom. 10:1-3).

What does Paul mean when he says that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God and neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7)? Denominational writers and preachers often interpret this statement through the teachings of Calvin. They argue that it refers to the non-elect’s inability to respond to God due to total hereditary depravity.

Rather than following Calvin and his doctrine, I want us to follow Christ and His doctrine. What Paul by inspiration is saying is that those with a fleshly mindset cannot be under obedience to God. Man simply cannot love God and the world at the same time (Matt. 6:24). Those who believe that they can have a carnal mindset and be at peace with God at the same time are deceiving themselves. James wrote, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (Jas. 1:26). Until an individual renews his mind from a sensual mindset to a spiritual mindset, he cannot be in subjection to God. I might

also add that, contrary to Calvinistic teaching, man has the power to change his mindset through repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10). God does not have to overpower man through unconditional election to bring this about. Paul continues his argument by stating that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). “Please” refers to that which is agreeable. Thus, those who have carnal minds, and who walk and war after the flesh, are in a continual state of disagreement with God.

Please understand that merely being in a fleshly body does not make one disagreeable to God. After all, Enoch in his fleshly body received testimony that he “pleased” God (Heb. 11:5; cf. Matt. 17:5). As you recall, he “walked with God” (Gen. 5:22; Gen. 5:24). He pleased God because he walked after the Spirit rather than after the flesh. What Paul is saying in Romans 8 when he says that those “that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8) is that those who are walking and warring after the flesh are unacceptable to God (1 Thess. 2:15; 1 Thess. 4:1). To Timothy, his son and fellow soldier, Paul wrote, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:4). To be acceptable to God and received by Him, man must come out from among the world (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

In the context of Romans 8, Paul continues his argument with a number of conditional statements. The word “if” appears six times in the next five verses (Rom. 8:9-13). The reason why Paul used the conditional word “if” was because the salvation of the saints to whom he was writing was conditional. It was conditioned upon their maintaining a spiritual mindset and allowing Christ and the Spirit of God to abide in them (Rom. 8:9-11). Please note that the passages before us merely say that the Spirit and Christ dwell in the Christian. They do not say how

they dwell in the Christian. We must turn to other passages to determine this (Eph. 3:17; Gal. 3:3; Gal. 3:5).

Turning back to the text assigned to us, Paul continues his argument by stating that, if the saints at Rome allowed their minds to become sensual, then they would die. Those who had a carnal mind, and thus did not have the Spirit of Christ in them, were “none of his” (Rom. 8:9). As you recall, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

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 done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

Jesus was speaking of those who claimed a relationship with Him but did not really have one. They had never renewed their minds by submitting to God’s will (Rom. 12:1-2). They were still in Satan’s kingdom (Col. 1:13-14) and were doing the lusts of their father (John 8:44). Because they were not with Christ, they were of necessity against Him (Matt. 12:30).

Paul continued his conditional argument in Romans 8 by speaking of whether or not Christ was in those to whom he was writing. Clearly Paul’s point was that Christ would remain in them as long as they were spiritually minded. However, if they were carnally minded, and became reprobates, Christ would not dwell in them. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5). “Reprobates” has reference to one who is unapproved. As you recall, Paul had already argued within the context that the man who walks after

the flesh “cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). Paul wanted the saints at Rome to know that they were not to be “debtors” to the flesh (Rom. 8:12). They owed the flesh nothing. They owed God everything. After all, they had been “bought with a price” and they were to glorify God in their bodies and spirits which were God’s (1 Cor. 6:20). Their bodies were to be the temples of the Holy Ghost which was in them (1 Cor. 6:19). They were not to live after the flesh but were to “mortify” the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13; cf. Col. 3:5). “Mortify” means to put to death. We either put the carnal mind to death, or it will put us to death. In Galatians, Paul wrote, “And they that are Christ’s **have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts**. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25).

They were to be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and not by the flesh. Please note that the passage before us says that we are led by the Spirit but it does not say how. We learn from other passages that the Spirit leads men through an instrument (His sword), the Word of God (Eph. 6:17; Phil. 3:16). Let us conclude this section of our study by pointing out that warring against the Father is certain death. There is no way that we can possibly win such a war. Just as surely as we cannot lose if God be for us (Rom. 8:31), we cannot win if God be against us.

Let us never forget that to be carnally minded is death. After all, the lusts of the flesh can be very alluring (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Pet. 2:18) until you consider the end of those who walk that way (Psm. 73:2-3; Psm. 73:16-17; Prov. 7:21-23). May we strive to have within us the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) Who did always those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29).

CHAPTER 30

Lovers Of Pleasure More Than Lovers Of God

(2 Tim. 3:1-17)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Introduction

IN A DOZEN YEARS the **POWER** Lectureship has taken its proper place as one of the premiere lectureships among the solid and sound. Truth-filled themes are on the August agenda each summer. B. J. Clarke is an expert in putting together a good and great lectureship on paper and then in execution. Thanks to him, the Southaven elders, Wayne, and a great congregation, for another prudent and powerful **POWER** Lectureship now on our threshold. It continues to be a deep delight and high honor to speak on each one and write a chapter for these yearly classics in rich Biblical material. B. J., Wayne, the elders, and all the congregation are to be commended highly for this educative exercise in that which is high and holy in its noble nature.

If Paul wrote Hebrews, as I believe he did, he penned fourteen books and one hundred chapters of the New Testament. My assigned subject is taken from his final epistle and next to the last chapter that he penned—2 Timothy 3. This was his ninety-ninth chapter for the Divine Document that we know as the Holy Bible. Momentous

themes weighed deeply upon the holy heart of this grand old veteran who stood in the shadows of imminent martyrdom at the impious hands of notorious Nero in Rome. These punctuate his final two chapters for a surety.

In the early verses of 2 Timothy 3, Paul projected perils that the future would unfold for the faithful. However, the eight words of our title describe most of humanity past, present, and future. It would be difficult to find an extended period in the past but what pleasure lovers outnumbered Deity devotees by the greatest of odds. This is surely the disproportionate picture presently in our evil era. Lovers of God are surely in the minority today. Nothing appears on the horizon to alter the same prospects between now and time's end. Jesus once asked, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"¹ (Luke 18:8). Regardless of when He comes, He will find a world filled with pleasure seekers and pleasure lovers, just as the flood found people in Noah's age (Luke 17:26-27).

Pleasure Lovers Are In Perilous Company (2 Tim. 3:1-9)

2 Timothy 3:1: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Paul made no open break between what we have in the latter part of 2 Timothy 2 and what he depicts in 2 Timothy 3. In 2 Timothy 2 he wrote of vessels of honor and dishonor. The former will not trigger the coming of perilous times; the latter will trigger such for a surety. Paul wanted Timothy to be in the know relative to these sure-to-come perils and to be ever alert in avoiding them. Ignorance is no fortification against being influenced by such and even imbibing such deadly forces. The expression "the last days" is co-extensive of the Christian Age. We are included in this time interval. The last days will end when Christ makes His second

advent. Paul is not talking about events near the end of time itself but from his day till time's end. "Perilous" is "grievous" in the ASV. Both terms refer to times of danger, distress, intrigue, and persecution of the good by the bad. Saints must be extra-watchful and ever alert, lest we be overwhelmed with vice, degradation and corruption.

2 Timothy 3:2: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." Love for self is exclusive, warped, and one-sided. It is selfishness personified. It allows no room for loving God and others. It crowds out every other affection and does it permanently. Self is all important; no one else is! It breeds covetousness, which is greed in unholy action. The rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21 exemplifies this devilish disposition. So do Achan and his family in Jericho's capture (Josh. 6-7). The ASV has this as "lovers of money." Covetous people are idolaters, as per Colossians 3:5. Money and earthly possessions become their all-engrossing idol. It is their golden calf. The rich young ruler is a familiar example of covetousness.

Men, women also included, will be boasters and proud. The former reflects in the verbal department. I, me, my, and mine dominate their speech patterns and language content. The latter portrays their haughty actions, their egotistical decorum. They are total strangers to lowliness, meekness, and humility. Their favorite topic in attitude, speech, and action is self—first, last, and always.

They are blasphemers and railers. Abuse and harshness punctuate them in the verbal department. They speak against God and men. If all blasphemy and railing were eliminated from daily language, we would live in a much quieter climate! Communication would improve promptly and permanently.

Perilous or grievous times will witness parental disrespect and disobedience. This sin permeates those **in** the church and those **out** of the church as well. Parents have let it get out of control. Ephesians 6:1-4 needs to be restored in today's home. Parents need to **wake up** and **make up** for this daring deficiency which is in epidemic proportions. Children need to **wake up** and **look up** to Dad and Mother before this perilous practice becomes even more acute. Parents need to be worthy of such respect, honor, and submission, and their offspring needs to be diligent in exhibiting such. When disobedience toward parents is tolerated in the home, it produces waves of disobedience throughout the ocean of humanity. It is a sure feeder of hell. This is how filled with gravity this perilous practice is.

Producers of perilous times are lacking in gratitude. They manifest it toward parents and then extend it to every layer of society. Look where Paul placed this sin in Romans 1:21ff. It is one of the most devilish of all Satanic traits. The unthankful person is most unlike the very thankful Saviour and the ever-grateful Paul, such as is reflected in precious Philippians.

Unholy persons are irreligious, impious, and irreverent. They breathe no likeness to the God of holiness, the holy and undefiled Saviour, and the Holy Spirit. Holiness becomes the Timeless Trinity.

2 Timothy 3:3: "Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good." Men will be lacking in the very affection nature demands. Husbands and wives abuse and even kill each other. Parents and children do the same. Abortion on demand murders the unborn in mass form—multiplied millions worldwide annually. Mothers' wombs become babies' tombs in our cold, cruel, and calloused society.

Men will break their word **whether** orally given or in written form. Honesty is a forgotten or ignored trait in their ill-ordered and dysfunctional lifestyles. By false accusations they undermine character and massacre sterling reputations that others have built up by long years of honorable decorum. Their venom is vicious and worse than the bite of an adder (cf. Rom. 3:13-14).

They shall be “fierce.” This means violent, brutal, minus all sympathy and no sensitivity of soul. December 7, 1941 and September 11, 2001 were brought about by fierce, brutal, and violent people. They celebrate when calamity strikes objects of their hate. It is a sure feeder to their violent and brutal mindset.

They despise the good. Goodness in others is a turn-off for them. They want no part of that which is good or of those who pursue and promote the good and true. Jesus was good in an absolute or perfect sense, and they hated Him minus any and all justification (cf. John 15:25). He told His four skeptical brothers in the flesh that the world hated Him because He testified of its evil works; the world did not hate them (John 7:7).

2 Timothy 3:4: “Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” This is the very verse from which our title is taken. Note the company pleasure lovers keep just in this verse (to say nothing of 2 Tim. 3:1-3).

Traitors are those who feel no loyalty to a relative, a friend, a cause, or a trust. Treason has been and still is one of the most despicable of all crimes. Judas Iscariot personified it in religious history. Benedict Arnold is remembered in infamy for betraying the American Revolutionary cause to British interests during the 1770’s. Jesus knew that there would be traitors in family frameworks, as some would love Him and others would hate and kill even close family members (Matt. 10:34-35; Luke 12:52-53).

Heady people are headstrong, rash, impulsive, thoughtless, and determined to have their way regardless who is hurt in the process. It is rule or ruin, much like the daring Diotrefres in 3 John 9-10. To them, two heads are not superior to one if their head is in the comparison. Their heads are all that matter or that should be consulted and considered.

High-minded people are puffed up and filled with their own self-importance. They are balloon people filled with hot air. They have a grossly exaggerated impression of themselves. Doubt their greatness, and they will be only too happy to set the record straight, and will do it promptly and proudly! They can strut while sitting!

They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Pleasure is of top priority with them. It has no close competition. Pleasure is in—way in; piety is **out**—way **out**. “If it feels good, do it” is their noxious norm, their sensual standard. Liquor, deadly dope, and illicit sex are in; sobriety, temperance, and moral purity are **out**—way **out**! Violence is in; respect for human life and the property of others is **out**. Earthly pleasure is behind co-ed dorms on college and university campuses. College men and women demand convenience for their fornicating frameworks. One college administration built dorms only to be told that students would not live in them unless men and women could visit the rooms of each other at will. Pleasure-loving students won the battle, and collegiate corruption became more deeply entrenched on that campus. Such is not an isolated case by any means. Pleasure has been given the green light in our day. Millions now ride the roller coaster of earthly and sensual pleasure with hell as the bottom destination. Hell is far removed from the hearts of pleasure-lovers. They resist and ignore any red-flashing lights signaling dangers and destruction ahead. God, Christ, the Bible, the church, the Gospel, and absolute

moral standards are relics of a forgotten or ignored past with literally multiplied millions in our day. Paul predicted it accurately. He hit it dead center as he analyzed what the pleasurable future would unfold.

2 Timothy 3:5: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away.” To all such, religion is a pretense—never genuine. It is a sham; it does not touch the inward. It is play-acting—not the real thing at all. Such people can be profane Monday through Saturday and put on a parade of piety come the Lord’s Day. They talk the talk but do not walk the walk. Such people are not wholesome and helpful associates by any stretch of the imagination. Pauline wisdom says to turn away from all such corruptible company.

2 Timothy 3:6-7: “For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers sins. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Pleasure-loving men are sly and suave. They invade houses by sinister strategies. They do not come in with an above-board approach. They creep, which is not honorable at all. Quite likely, they come when these women are alone and quite vulnerable. These are little women and enjoy the male attention extended them. Already laden with past sins, they add more with these false teachers who peddled falsehood and immorality. Laxness toward truth leads inevitably to laxness in morals. These women have leisure and no doubt money. They are duped and made ready for false teachers. False teachers are fond of selecting little, lascivious women and naive men for their errors. They peddle privately here and there and then go public when they have a following sufficiently strong for the takeover of entire congregations. Fleshly indulgences and false teaching are compatible in such people. Truth is not their quest. This is why they are ever learning and never able

to come to the knowledge of saving truth, truth that is definitive. They love pleasure—not God, not truth.

2 Timothy 3:8-9:

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Apparently, these were Egyptian magicians who aided Pharaoh and seriously obstructed Mosaic efforts to free Israel of Egyptian tyranny. By inspiration Paul rescued their names from oblivion, as they are not given in Exodus (much like he gave the tenure of Saul's rule in Acts 13:21). They withstood Moses, seeking to thwart Jehovah's will in freeing Israel from Pharaoh's iron-clad control. False teachers of Paul's day duplicated such, as they resisted truth by their corrupt minds. They were reprobates relative to the faith. They hated truth and led others to follow their pernicious practices. The future would unfold their folly sooner or later—either in this life or in judgment's final hour. It is not likely that Jannes, Jambres, or these false teachers in 2 Timothy 3 will occupy Christ's right hand in judgment. Unless they changed prior to death, we know they will not! It will be the left hand for them.

**Paul, A Lover Of God,
In Bold Contrast To The Foregoing
(2 Timothy 3:10-11)**

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

Paul's fidelity toward truth and purity of daily decorum stand out boldly, beautifully, and brightly against the lovers of pleasure and purveyors of falsehood just portrayed in 2 Timothy 3:1-9. He was what they were not; he did not what they did; he did what they did not.

Timothy was a close, diligent follower of what Paul had said and done. His doctrine was what he taught—truth and nothing but truth. His manner of life was holy, devoted, and consecrated. His purpose was to preach Christ and Him crucified, declare God's whole counsel, win life's crown, fight the good fight of faith, finish the prescribed course, and keep the trust God had given him (1 Cor. 2:2; Acts 20:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:7-8). His faith was mountain high. It was the victorious brand of which John would later write in 1 John 5:4-5. He had suffered long with enemies outside the church as well as within the church. He was longsuffering toward babes in Christ who needed careful nurturing to keep them secure in the Saviour. His love was three-dimensional—vertical toward God, horizontal toward others, and inward toward himself. He lived well this attractive acrostic:

J—esus

O—thers

Y—ourself or Paul.

His patience would challenge and even exceed that of Job's in the Old Testament.

Acts 13-14 portray well the persecutions and afflictions that he faced heroically in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Adament Jews dogged his every step in these three cities of ancient Asia Minor. He was even stoned at Lystra. Yet the Lord allowed him to be the victor among all such.

Lovers Of God Will Be Persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12)

2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Lovers of pleasure

are of the world. Therefore, the world does not persecute them but applauds their lascivious lifestyles. The world majors in fleshly lusts; eyes that are filled with ungodly thoughts, words, and deeds; and the pride or vainglory of life. Jesus once said to His unbelieving brethren, James, Joses, Judas and Simon, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). More than thirty years ago, the versatile Guy N. Woods wrote:

Paul did not want the young evangelist to feel his case was exceptional; all, in that day, who lived vigorously for the Lord, suffered because of it. Religious people, through the ages, have been persecuted in proportion to the loyalty they showed to God. If the church were less worldly today, perhaps persecution would be heavier.²

Evil And Evil Men Will Get Worse And Worse (2 Tim. 3:13)

2 Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Timothy need not be deluded into thinking that such was to be of short duration. Evil was not about to vacate earthly scenes. It was not! Satan was not about to retire. He has not! Evil men and seductive advocates will wax worse and worse. They have; they do; they will in the future. There is more evil in the world today than any of the 72 years I have lived or the 60 years I have been a Christian. My spiritual birthday was August 10, 1944, which fell on Friday that year. Such men, as depicted by Paul, would not only deceive others but would be deceived in turn, which is rather ironic. They would reap what they sowed. This passage is a sure death knell to the cold, cruel, and calloused Calvinistic concept of total hereditary depravity, which is one of its five foundational planks.

If a person at conception and birth is **totally** depraved, as per the theory, then it is obvious that he could not wax worse and worse. Did John Calvin forget this verse or simply ignore it in the formation of his God-denying doctrine? Paul, not a Calvinist in any degree of this egregious error, affirmed that these evil men and seducers would get worse and worse. Hence, they were **not** born **totally** depraved. Neither has any other from Adam's firstborn to the present. By one mighty stroke of his inspired pen, Paul anticipated this mammoth error and refuted it in rousing form. By means of this one pungent passage, down, Down DOWN goes **total hereditary depravity** world without end! **Good riddance!** Why **any** of our brethren allow Calvinism to become a magnet to draw them, entice them and enslave them is amazingly amazing!

The Holy Scriptures: God's Answer To Lovers Of Pleasure (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

People in love with the Bible will not and cannot become lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. The Bible has to be repudiated before they can become the former and cease to be the latter.

2 Timothy 3:14-15:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

By continuing in the things he had learned and had been given ardent assurance in the same, Timothy would remain a lover of God—not a devotee of pleasure. He had not learned these things from pleasure-lovers but from lovers of God—his mother, grandmother, and Paul while

on the apostle's first missionary trip to his home area (Acts 14). From his earliest youth, he had been taught the holy Scriptures. An unfeigned faith first dwelt in Lois and Eunice, and this lovely legacy was transmitted to him by his godly grandmother and his marvelous mother. What a holy heritage he had received from his pious progenitors! Lois and Eunice knew that a young man like Timothy could cleanse his way by taking heed to God's power-packed Word (Psm. 119:9). The Scriptures would make him wise, leading him into the realm of redemption. Faith in Christ was his intense imperative. Redemption is positioned **in** Christ—never **outside** Christ. All of these would combine to keep him a lover of God and never to descend into being a pleasure-lover.

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

What an attractive affirmation—**all** Scripture is God-inspired or God-breathed! To coin a word, can one get any “aller” than all? Paul subscribed to Scriptural inspiration both verbally and plenary, as we see in 1 Corinthians 2:13 and here, respectively. So did his esteemed son in the Gospel. The Scriptures are potent and profitable. They teach or instruct. They reprove when one goes wrong. They correct when the straight and narrow is not followed. They instruct us in righteousness—righteous thoughts, righteous speech, and righteous deeds. They keep us lovers of God. They guard us from becoming and remaining pleasure lovers. These add up in marvelous fashion to all-sufficiency—a doctrine odious to every creed maker, claimant of so-called modern revelations, and even some among us who have opted out for the direct operation of

the Holy Spirit upon sinner/saint (or just the saint). The first one is full Calvinism in this department, and the second is **delayed** Calvinism. Every person who hops on the Calvinistic bandwagon claiming the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon sinner, saint, or both is a rebellious rejector of the all-sufficiency of sacred Scripture. The Scriptures **fit** us and **outfit** us. They fit us in character and reputation development. They help us remain God-lovers and not pleasure-seekers. They outfit or equip us for all that God has commanded us to do. Majoring in this will be a built-in blockade against becoming, remaining, and dying while a pleasure-lover.

Ancient Lovers Of Pleasure

Lamech, of Cain's bloodline, became the first recorded person to depart from monogamy and into polygamy (Gen. 4:19ff). He loved the sexual pleasure of more than one mate rather than being a God-lover who honored Jehovah's ideal in Genesis 2—one man for one woman for life. He had many marital descendants throughout the Old and New Testaments.

In Genesis 6 we are introduced to sons of God (righteous men) marrying daughters of men (profane and impious women) for ill-mated relationships. The formerly righteous men ceased to be lovers of God and became pleasure lovers and practitioners of violence in Noah's age (Gen. 6:5ff). The flood showed the end result of loving pleasure rather than loving God. Only one family in Genesis 6-7 loved God and hated pleasure-loving thoughts, speech, and decorum.

Pleasure lovers inhabited Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim (Gen. 13; Gen. 18-19; Deut. 29:23). They were homosexual lovers going after strange flesh (cf. Jude 7). They were perverts of the deepest dye. Not even ten lovers of God could be found in sinful, sensual Sodom. Even Lot's

family was terribly deficient as God-lovers. His two daughters showed that they were not God-lovers; else they would not have resorted to getting their father drunk on two different nights and each one having an incestuous relationship with him. Lot was deficient also; else he would not have allowed himself to become drunk and thus vulnerable to the incestuous intents of his depraved daughters. Palestinian neighbors to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob loved idolatrous pleasures. Their system encouraged sexual orgies minus restraint, more than they did the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joseph lived most of his illustrious life in the land of the Nile. Egyptians were not lovers of God but were devotees of pleasure. Their idols encouraged sexual promiscuity—not moral restraints and sexual integrity. In Genesis 39 we see a God-lover in moral combat with a pleasure-lover—Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. Purity won out with Joseph when it had failed with Reuben and Bilhah and Judah and Tamar in Genesis 35 and Genesis 38. His older brethren favored sexual misbehavior over moral loyalty as God-lovers.

At the Sinaitic base, wayward Israel violated the Decalogue given in Exodus 20, thus engaging in idolatry and sexual orgies (Exod. 32; 1 Cor. 10:5ff). Near the end of their stay in the wilderness, many committed flagrant idolatry and adultery with the enticing and seductive daughters of pagan Moab at the instigation of covetous Balaam (Num. 25). Thousands were involved. They loved pleasure more than God.

Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They committed adultery with the hordes of women who turned the sacred area of the tabernacle into a framework of fornication, an arena of adultery (1 Sam. 2:22-24).

Gomer loved the pleasures of her illicit lovers in the book of Hosea much more than she valued loyalty to her holy husband Hosea.

The prodigal in Luke 15 yearned for the far-off country of sin with all its alluring, seductive pleasures. He was sick of home and longed for a place where there would be no moral restraints. He wasted his substance in **riotous** living. That forms a peephole, enabling us to surmise what his mindset and lifestyle were in the land of unrestrained lasciviousness.

Gnostics in John's day contended that they could sin freely with the body minus any contamination to the spirit. Men in Jude's era turned the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). John and Jude fought this in their sunset years.

Modern Lovers Of Pleasure

Liberal religionists promote such. In his historic debate with the princely N. B. Hardeman, Ben M. Bogard, dean of Baptist debaters in the twentieth century, stated:

Jesus Christ remains in us! That prevents sin.
My soul sin? No. "Has Brother Bogard sinned?"
In my soul I do not. I am as perfect as God
himself as far as my soul is concerned. Then what
about my body? It does sin.³

This breeds contempt for holiness of heart and purity of soul. With one sweep of his pen, Paul refutes this by stating, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1), Flesh and spirit are not separated in the sinning process.

A man of modern times once declared that he could die in the arms of another man's wife, committing adultery with her, and the grace of God would still save him. One man said that he could die drunk and the grace of God

would not allow him to go to hell. Had he never read Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10? This is cheap grace; it is convenient grace; it is irresponsible grace. But this is the modern mindset of pleasure-lovers: enjoy any desired lustful action and still possess a comforting conscience.

“Lovers of pleasure” is the golden calf of men, women, and youth en masse. The Epicurean spirit of eating, drinking, and being merry today for tomorrow we die has many adherents today. Philosophy promotes it. Organic evolution outlaws God and encourages it. Modern media is an avid supporter. Movies; TV; the computer with unlimited access to the sensual and salacious; pornographic offerings in slick magazines; and the laxity of sexual conversations between men and women, boys and girls all add their corruptible contributions to the pleasure-crazed society in which we live. “If it feels good, do it” sums it up for those who love pleasure more than God. Such is stupidity to the nth degree!

Conclusion

Lovers of pleasure are headed for a devil’s hell with breakneck speed. Lovers of God walk a sure route to heaven. We decide our current purpose and ultimate destiny. Reader friend, which shall it be for you?

Endnotes

1 All quotations are from the KJV.

2 Guy N. Woods, **Gospel Advocate Adult Quarterly** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, September 6, 1970), p. 48.

3 N. B. Hardeman & Ben M. Bogard, **Hardeman-Bogard Debate** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1938), pp. 309-310.

CHAPTER 31

The Christian Graces

(2 Pet. 1:3-11)

David B. Jones

Introduction

ONCE AGAIN GOD HAS richly blessed us through His good and great providence with another opportunity to participate in the annual **POWER** Lectures. We continue to thank God for this congregation of His people. From this place we were allowed the opportunity to attend the Memphis School of Preaching. It was from here also that we received much strength and edification through the preaching of the Gospel and the fellowship of saints. Time will not allow us to repay the brethren for all that was done to make our journey through life possible. However, we remain indebted to so many for all that was done.

We are thankful today for the good work which continues to go forth from this place. The elders which oversee this good work are those who can be followed by God's people. They set forth a good example for other elderships in that they are compassionate toward the lost and they are convicted by the Lord's Word. We have appreciated the fact that we work in close proximity to B. J. Clarke and have for more than thirteen years. B. J. has always been known as one who stands for truth in an

uncompromising manner. We also are grateful to live and work close to our son, Wayne Jones. Wayne has set a very high standard for other young men who wish to preach the Gospel. He has always stood as tall as any Gospel preacher can stand. We are grateful for both of their families and for all that they mean to the Lord.

The theme **“The Works of the Flesh Versus The Fruit of the Spirit”** is a timely one indeed. We are daily bombarded with the works of the flesh via the television, Internet, radio, magazines, and newspapers. Satan has his avenues and allies to help him in his attack on God’s creation—mankind. Over the past two generations in particular, Satan has been very successful in dulling the senses of many Americans as to the deadliness and destructive nature of sin. In our day sin has taken on new names which help many to justify themselves and to draw away the sting of the vice in which they find themselves engaged. For example, drinking alcohol is now referred to as “social drinking.” This helps make it more tolerable for some, particularly for those in the business world. Drunkenness is now referred to as “alcoholism,” which helps some justify it on the basis that it is a disease which is not their fault. On and on the list could go. Hopefully and prayerfully, this year’s lectureship will help reveal the ugliness and utterly destructive nature of sin.

Our subject for this lesson is “The Christian Graces.” The list of Christian characteristics in 2 Peter 1:5-8 has been called “The Christian Graces” for obvious reasons. If one has these eight attributes in his life, he will be pleasing to God and will have a reservation awaiting him in heaven. We will investigate the context of our subject as it applied to the first-century readers, we will notice the characteristics individually, we will inspect the consequences of not adding the graces, and then we will notice the challenge for us today.

Context

Peter writes to those in the first century who had obtained like, precious faith: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1). These were those who had obeyed the truth through the Spirit (1 Pet. 1:22) and who had been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). Peter implies that this epistle was written to the same people as his first was, as we read:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour (2 Pet. 3:1-2).¹

Since he wrote this second epistle, that implies there was a first epistle. In that first epistle, he had written to those who had obeyed the truth and purified their souls. That also implies that they were being persecuted for the faith:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

The aged apostle had encouraged them to remain faithful even in the face of persecution and death. Since they were being tried by their persecutors, they might have developed the mind to waver from their faithfulness because of the danger. Peter writes this second letter to

stir their minds so they will remain faithful to their calling and to secure their salvation in heaven. He was going to use their remembrance of Scripture to stir them up. It is in this context that we find our text for this chapter:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (2 Pet. 1:3-9).

Notice that Peter begins this section by reminding them of the great and precious promises they had received through the Word of God. These promises probably seemed great when they first heard the Gospel and obeyed it to the saving of their souls. However, because of the persecution, perhaps they had started doubting God and maybe had the mind to leave this Gospel for theirs and their family's safety. The possibility exists that God knew this was a real danger and so He inspired Peter to write to them hoping to keep them from falling into Satan's trap.

Peter begins in 2 Peter 1:5 to exhort his readers to "add to" their original faith some additional Christian characteristics, even in the face of opposition and persecution. Coffman comments about this Greek word used here:

Also, there is another word of very great interest in the passage, the one here rendered “supply,” which comes from a word suggesting lavish provision, the word *epichorigeo*, and “used in classical Greek to describe the munificence of rich citizens who would finance a theatrical performance or fit out a warship for the state they loved.” It had a special reference to the abundant supplies provided for a chorus, a term which is derived from this word, as is also choreographer. From this, it is suggested that Peter’s list here is a chorus of Christian graces, the manner of his linking each with the others being like their holding hands!²

The Greek word depicts a chorus leader or a choreographer as he or she stands before a group, hoping to arrange this group in perfect harmony. Therefore, the readers to whom Peter wrote were urged by the apostle of patience now to arrange their lives in harmony with God’s will by adding these characteristics. They would thus be patient and steadfast in the face of this severe persecution and they would bring God glory in the process. Interestingly, the musical standard or scale upon which our music is based today has eight notes, known as an octave. When these eight notes are played correctly and are linked correctly, the musical piece is in harmony, and the sound is pleasant to the ear. However, when notes are out of order or tune, the piece sounds unpleasant to the ear. There are eight “Christian graces” listed in this text. When we have all eight linked together as God’s Word instructs us to do, our lives are pleasant to God’s eyes and ears. However, if we fail to grow and add these characteristics to our lives, then our lives are out of order before God. Each person then is his own “choreographer” before God. It behooves each person to add these to his life as God desires and demands.

Characteristics

The first trait or characteristic the readers needed was **faith**. The faith under consideration to which they are to add the other seven was their initial faith to obey the Gospel. The Bible records that faith is developed by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). We must have this faith to please God: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The initial faith will lead one to have the confidence that God is real based on the evidence He left for us. This faith will then serve as our evidence of the unseen: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Believing that God **is**, will then direct a man to obey what God has said in His Word. True Bible belief demands obedience to God’s Word. The Philippian jailor is an example of one such person. Luke recorded for us the account of the conversion of this man. We read of this account beginning in Acts 16:16. Paul cast out an unclean spirit from a damsel (Acts 16:18). This infuriated her masters because they made their living through her divinations. Paul and Silas were carried before the authorities and beaten, being placed in the inner stocks in prison. At midnight, as they sang praises to God, an earthquake occurred and all the bands of all the prisoners were loosed, but none escaped. The jailor came before Paul and asked what he must do to be saved. Paul’s answer has been the battleground of much controversy in the denominational world, but a clear understanding of God’s Word reveals the simple truth about faith and belief in God. We read:

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of

the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (Acts 16:30-34).

Paul instructed this man to believe in God and then Paul gave him evidence for his faith because he taught him the Word of God. Once this man had heard and seen by faith that God was God, he obeyed the Gospel by repenting of his sins (washing their stripes) and being baptized the same hour of the night. Acts 16:34 is the “nail in the coffin” of those who say all one has to do is simply believe in his heart without any acts of obedience to be saved. In that verse, we see this man “believed in God,” but we ask, “When did he believe?” He is said to have believed **after** he had obeyed the Gospel! Truly Bible faith and Bible belief demand obedience to the Gospel.

Peter’s readers had already obeyed the Gospel. But Peter informs them further that more is required than just being baptized. They had to continue to add.

Second, Peter exhorts them to add **virtue** to their character. Strong’s says about this word that it means proper manliness or valor, excellence.³ Coffman says the word, “primarily means courage, a grace particularly needed in the hostile world of the period when Peter wrote.”⁴ Adam Clarke writes, “Courage or fortitude, to enable you to profess the faith before men, in these times of persecution.”⁵ Adding these definitions together, we find that virtue is the moral courage to do what is right, no matter the odds or the obstacles. First-century Christians would need this courage to face the trials and tribulations of their day and remain faithful to God. Even in the face of death, God expected them to have the moral courage to do what was right regardless of the situation.

Peter had given already given them admonitions along this line in his first epistle:

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God (1 Pet. 2:12-16).

Even though Nero, Rome's wicked ruler, was on the throne, Peter revealed that the Christians had to be obedient to the government. God ordains governments and suffers them to exist (Rom. 13:1-4). Those of the first century truly had a difficult task at hand, and Peter informs them they must add virtue (moral courage) to their character in order to be steadfast to God.

Third, Peter reveals that they must add **knowledge** to their armor so they can be faithful to God. Coffman correctly summarizes this knowledge:

This is a different word from the full knowledge mentioned above, a possession the Christian already had; and it therefore refers to a faithful continuation of their studies. It is also very likely true, as Plummer pointed out that, "Knowledge here means spiritual discernment as to what is right and what is wrong in all things."⁶

The knowledge under consideration here is the ability to make application of what God has told us to do based on the amount of virtue or moral courage which we have. When one studies the Word of God, which creates faith,

he will gain strength (virtue) if he applies it to himself. When he applies it to life, practical wisdom or knowledge as used here, will be the result. This knowledge would have allowed those in the first century to have gained wisdom, which would help them overcome their trials and would give them the strength to endure even under such circumstances.

Fourth, having had initial faith and adding the courage to do what was right, and gaining the knowledge or wisdom which that provided, Peter's readers were then to add **temperance**. Simply stated, temperance is self-control, according to Strong's.⁷ It is so simple and yet so profound as to how God has designed man and given him His Word, which can make man complete before God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). When we apply God's Word to our lives, we receive wisdom and knowledge of how to overcome the wickedness of the Devil. Adam Clarke adds concerning temperance, "A proper and limited use of all earthly enjoyments, keeping every sense under proper restraints, and never permitting the animal part to subjugate the rational."⁸ We learn how to control ourselves using God's Word as our shield and stay.

This is exactly what James told his readers to do some twenty years earlier:

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (Jas. 1:2-5).

The outward trials and temptations of life can make us stronger and more patient before God if we use the Word of God as our standard and canon of our lives. When we

trust God and properly obey His Word, we will shield ourselves from the hurts and heartaches caused by sin. We will build up a self-control which can be maintained under any situation. Paul used this idea when he spoke to Felix:

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee (Acts 24:25).

Notice that Paul “reasoned” with him—tried to cause Felix to use his brain and see that obedience is a reasonable thing (Isa. 1:18). Paul told him of righteousness (God’s commands—Psm. 119:172), temperance (Felix’s responsibility to obey and maintain self-control), and judgment to come (based on God’s Word as the standard—John 12:48). When Felix heard of this, he trembled but refused to submit himself and humble himself before God.

Peter did not allow his readers to think they had a free ticket because they were under persecution. He revealed that God demanded temperance or self-control on their part—no matter what.

Fifth, Peter urges them to add **patience**. The patience under consideration here would be steadfastness or faithfulness—a consequence of temperance. Pertaining to patience, Coffman writes, “In the New Testament, this word carries the thought of endurance and steadfast continuity in faithful service. Jesus said, “In your patience ye shall possess your souls.”⁹ The Hebrew Christians were admonished to look to Jesus for patience:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the

author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

In order to run the race to completion, one must have a goal or target. Our goal is to look to Jesus and not take our eyes off of Him and His example. He endured what man brought against Him and was faithful to His Father. We, too, must keep our eyes on Him, studying and applying His Word, and we will make it to our target as well. We must see that joy and rejoicing await us on the other side. Our joy and rejoicing is possible because Jesus endured and has already partook of His joy and rejoicing. We need this same patience to endure what we must in order to have the reward of heaven.

Sixth, Peter exhorts them to add **godliness** to their lives. Godliness is being more and more like God. The more we are steadfast to His Word, the more we will emulate our Father in heaven. Jesus used this very principle in the Sermon on the Mount. Notice this profound teaching:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:43-48).

Jesus taught them that those in the kingdom had to have the same kind of love for their enemies as God had for

His. The point we want to apply to our study in 2 Peter is that Jesus told them that, when they had this kind of love, they were being more and more like their Father in heaven. He concluded this section by demanding that His subjects be complete (perfect) in their love for their enemies as God was in His.

Peter wants his readers to set forth the example of godliness when they are persecuted. They will do this by being patient under trial. When they were patient and steadfast under fire, then they were being more and more like God in heaven. The more they were like God, the more God was glorified in their sufferings. The more God was glorified in their sufferings, the more God was revealed through them. This was **not** a new point made to them by Peter:

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. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Pet. 4:12-16).

God receives glory when His subjects reflect His teachings in their lives, especially when they are tried and persecuted.

Seventh, Peter exhorts them to add **brotherly kindness** to their lives. Strong's says of this word: "fraternal affection:—brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren."¹⁰ Given the situation of being pressed and persecuted, it might have been easy for them to blame each other or to show no compassion for their brother's

problems, seeing they had their own troubles. Peter reveals that they need to add brotherly kindness to their character so they will have a genuine love and concern for their brethren. This love would involve having a brotherly affection or attraction to each other. It would not involve sexual affection, but it would involve the emotions that brothers and sisters should have for each other because they are of the same family. All Christians are born again by the water and Spirit and thus are added to the same family of God. Therefore, since we are all of the “same womb” or born the same way, we ought to have a bond of affection which we share.

Eighth, Peter urges them to have **charity**. This type of love is the highest form of love known. Gill writes of this word *agape*: “Charity is more extensive in its objects and acts than brotherly kindness or love. As faith leads the van, charity brings up the rear, and is the greatest of all.”¹¹ *Agape* love will lead us to do what is best for the other no matter how we are treated or what they do for us. This is the type of love God had and has for mankind (John 3:16). Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). God did for us what we needed even though we were God’s enemies because of sin and its practices. Charity is sacrificial in its nature. Due to their persecutions, first-century Christians would have been tempted to be more concerned about themselves than others, including their enemies. However, Peter informs them that they must show the highest form of love amidst their problems and persecutions. If they are to glorify God, they must have charity for all men, even their enemies.

Consequences Of Not Adding the “Graces”

By adding these eight “graces” to their lives, they would help ensure that the blessings of God rest upon them. The consequences of not adding these are

enumerated in the text. First, the one not adding them is blind, not seeing afar off and not seeing behind either. One who stops studying God's Word will soon take his eyes off Jesus and lose the hope that is set before him. He will be like Peter was on the water, taking his eyes off the target and looking at the trouble all around. When one takes his eyes off Jesus and His Word, he loses sight of the important issues in life. He concerns himself with the affairs of this life and is choked by them (2 Tim. 2:3-4). His blindness causes him to lose sight of heaven as his home. He settles for this world as his home and hell as his eternal abode. His selfishness will cause him to care for self and not for others. He will lose the passion he had when his sins were remitted, and he will give himself over to the pleasures of this life.

A second consequence is shown us in our text: he will be barren in his remembrance of what Jesus has done for him. He will forget that he has been purged from his sins. The cost of that purging was the precious, innocent blood of the Lamb. Jesus gave His life a ransom for all: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). How sad it will be on Judgment Day for those who were once redeemed by the blood and then lost their remembrance of that to face the Lamb in judgment. On that day He will be the Lion of Judah against those who obey not the Gospel and to those who have turned away, having once been saved (2 Pet. 2:20-22). By adding the graces to our lives, we will always have before us the picture of our Savior dying on the cruel cross of Calvary for the sins of the world—yea, our sins personally!

Challenge Presented To Us Today

We do not live in the same circumstances as did the first-century Christians; however, we are faced with the

same challenge today to add these “Christian graces” to our lives. Although we are not faced with the same persecutions, we do face problems and pressures from those in Satan’s camp. We do have to battle the error of our day, and we have to battle the lusts which war against our soul. We still need all eight of these graces in our lives in order to reach our home in heaven. In the text, Peter says that by adding these we will never fall. Obviously, if we do **not** add these, we **will** fall. God has given us the prescription for heaven: obey the Gospel and then add these “graces” to our lives. If we do so, an abundant entrance shall be given to us into the everlasting kingdom.

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

2 James Burton Coffman, **James Burton Coffman Bible Study Electronic Library**.

3 **Strong’s Bible Dictionary**, provided by e-Sword Version 6.5.0, (Copyright 2000-2002, Rick Myers), <http://www.e-sword.net>

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5 Adam Clarke, **Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible**, provided by e-Sword Version 6.5.0, (Copyright 2000-2002, Rick Myers), <http://www.e-sword.net>.

6 Coffman.

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9 Coffman.

10 Strong’s.

11 John Gill, **John Gill’s Exposition of the Whole Bible**, provided by e-Sword Version 6.5.0, (Copyright 2000-2002, Rick Myers), <http://www.e-sword.net>.

CHAPTER 32

What Manner Of Persons Ought Ye To Be?

(2 Pet. 3:9-14)

Brandon Britton

Background

AT THE OUTSET OF this study of 2 Peter 3:9-14, it would be beneficial to us to briefly take note of how Peter began the final section of this letter. Certainly the main point of this closing section is his rhetorical question, “What manner of persons ought ye to be?” which will be the main focus of this study, but it would also be helpful for us to understand what preceded this question.

In 2 Peter 3:1-2, the apostle echoes his own words from earlier in the letter, stating clearly for the readers his purpose in writing:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which **I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance**: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour (emp. mine throughout, BB).

This same message had been emphasized by Peter from the beginning of the epistle:

Wherefore I will not be negligent **to put you always in remembrance of these things**, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, **to stir you up by putting you in remembrance**; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease **to have these things always in remembrance** (2 Pet. 1:12-15).

The aged apostle, obviously drawing near the end of his earthly tenure, placed a tremendous amount of emphasis on remembering what they had been taught. What makes this truly interesting is his insistence upon reminding them of what they already knew and were presently doing (2 Pet. 1:12). If we consider for a moment some of the events from **his** past, we can quickly understand why Peter stressed remembrance, even though they were serving faithfully at the present time.

There had been a time, many years earlier, when Peter was zealous, knowledgeable and faithful, but he was also forgetful. He knew enough and was devoted enough to be the first of the apostles to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). He was the only one of the apostles to step out of the boat onto the torrential waters of the sea in an attempt to walk to Jesus (Matt. 14:28-29). He was the apostle who drew his sword to fight off those who came to arrest Jesus (John 18:10). When many of His followers were abandoning Him, the Lord asked, "Will ye also go away?," to which Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:66-69). Despite all of this, the Lord had warned him:

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I

have prayed for thee, **that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren**" (Luke 22:31-32).

Peter knew what was right. Peter was doing what was right. Peter had even been given a direct, face-to-face, explicit warning from Jesus, yet his faith still failed and he denied the Lord (Luke 22:57-58; Luke 22:60). Peter had learned the hard way, from firsthand experience, that a person who knows what is right and is currently doing what is right, must be continually reminded of what is right. Now, he was doing what the Lord had told him to do; he was strengthening his brethren. Perhaps this is why the Holy Spirit chose Peter to issue the warning:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

No doubt, both his past mistakes and faltering faith qualified and motivated him to continuously remind and warn his beloved brethren to remember what they had learned. It was the Lord's tremendous love for Peter that was behind His rebuke and warning the night before Peter denied the Saviour. Love was also the motivation for Peter to continually teach, remind and warn these brethren. In his two letters, Peter refers to them as "beloved" no less than eight times. Six of those times are in this particular letter and five times in this chapter alone. His devotion was so great that he pledged to continue stirring them up

as long as there was life in his tabernacle (2 Pet. 1:13). Again near the close of this letter, as he did in the beginning, he expresses a strong desire to stir them up: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2 Pet. 3:1).

Great wisdom can be seen in this declaration. Stirring up something will prevent it from settling. When applying this to Christians, it can be understood that he was seeking to prevent the tendency in so many Christians to become complacent. He did not ever want them to get to the point where they were “going through the motions.” When faith becomes routine, ritual or habit, apostasy lingers near. The word translated “I stir up” is *diegeiro*, and literally means “to rouse or waken from sleep.”¹ This is the word used in Matthew 1:24: “Then Joseph being raised from sleep.”² It is also used of Jesus waking up and rebuking the wind and waves during the storm on the sea (Mark 4:39).³ The audience to whom Peter was writing was not comprised of wicked and deviant people in need of rebuke, but faithful yet discouraged Christians who had been lulled to sleep. The character of the recipients is exposed by Peter’s use of the word *eilikrines*, which signified something that was unalloyed or pure.⁴ The word referred to unmixed substances, and, in the New Testament, it spoke of moral and ethical purity.⁵ The word was also used to describe something that had been examined in the sunlight and found to be pure.⁶ While this was the nature of their character, it did not assure them of lasting faithfulness if they failed to keep these things in mind.

Although most of those who will read this volume are faithful and devoted in their service to God, these thoughts are pertinent to us because even faithful Christians can fall away. Yet those who heed the warning

of this apostle will always remember, will never settle and will not be deceived. They will in fact be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

Introduction

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men (Tit. 2:11).

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

The preceding verses are very well-known, comforting and pleasing Scriptures. They remind us of the love of God, His grace, His mercy and His immeasurable forgiveness. However, these verses do not give us the complete picture of the God of the Bible. They only reveal to us one aspect of His Divine Nature, yet far too many people are content to go no further in their understanding of the God revealed in the Scriptures. Take for example Joseph Spong (former Bishop of the Episcopal Church) who said in a television interview, concerning the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, “I do not want to serve a God who would do that.” While there may be only a few people with the audacity to make such an egregious statement, the fact is, there are many who are willfully ignorant of the true nature of God. They are content with the goodness of God alone, ignoring the severity that is joined with it (Rom. 11:22). They are not unlike the men and women of old, “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:10).

Recognizing the willful ignorance of many of His people, the Lord once lamented:

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? (Jer. 5:30-31).

Those words could have been spoken by the Lord today and would be just as truthful and relevant as they were nearly three thousand years ago.

Whether studying the world in the days of Noah, Isaiah, Peter or today, we understand there have always been, and will always be, skeptics who deny or question the promises and warnings contained in the Scriptures. The audience to whom Peter was writing faced skeptics who denied the second coming of Jesus. Roughly a generation had passed since Jesus ascended back into heaven, and there was no visible sign that His return was imminent. Many of those first-generation Christians had died without having seen the return of Christ. While these things are not cause for alarm to Christians living nearly two thousand years after His ascension, it was very nearly traumatic for those in the time of Peter. Many of them had the misconception that Jesus would be returning right away. When the number of Christians dying, due to natural

causes or persecutions, began increasing, and the years since Jesus returned to heaven began adding up, the fears and doubts likewise began to accumulate. Add to these fears the increasing numbers of comments from the critics, skeptics, unbelievers and persecutors, and suddenly there were many of the faithful who were ripe for apostasy. The problem was great enough that not only Peter, but also the apostle Paul addressed the situation on more than one occasion:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Apparently, the dissension and skepticism were widespread and effective in planting seeds of doubt in the

minds of the faithful, which is why Peter reminds them of what they know to be a fact.⁷ Instead of heeding the words of mockers, “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Pet. 3:2).

Peter gives us tremendous insight into the actual content of the slander that the believers were having to endure:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, **Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation** (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

It is likely that most all Christians have encountered a belligerent skeptic, at some point in their lives, who asked questions they could not answer. It is often the case that a babe in Christ, motivated by his newfound zeal, will get into discussions where questions arise that he cannot answer. Many times the non-believer will mock and deride the babe in Christ for his belief in that which he cannot prove. When this happens for the first time, it can be somewhat traumatic for the young Christian. However, if this new believer has a strong church family and concerned overseers who nurture and guide, this experience can help them learn and grow. The brethren to whom Peter was writing had such a blessing. In his writing he takes them aside and uses the scoffers questions as a means of renewing their faith. The wise and experienced apostle quickly dissects the foolish “logic” of the mockers and shows the fallacy of their arguments.

Willful Ignorance

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth

standing out of the water and in the water” (2 Pet. 3:5). Willful ignorance is nothing less than self-deception. Willful ignorance is the foolish notion that if I deny something, or simply ignore it, then it is not real and will not affect me. When I was a child, my dentist had a picture of a man smiling with no teeth. The caption above the picture read: Teeth: ignore them and they will go away. Even an eight-year-old boy could understand this message. If you ignore a problem it does not mean it is not real; it will only make it worse.

When thinking of willful ignorance one cannot help but be reminded of the Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf (nicknamed “Baghdad Bob” by the media). The daily press conferences conducted by al-Sahaf became a running joke worldwide because of his willful ignorance. Even as the American soldiers were taking control of Baghdad airport, Saddam Hussein’s palaces and toppling the statue of the ruthless dictator, al-Sahaf stated:

There are no American infidels in Baghdad. Never!...They’re coming to surrender or be burned in their tanks...Be assured. Baghdad is safe, protected...they have started to commit suicide under the walls of Baghdad. We will encourage them to commit more suicides quickly...I triple guarantee you, there are no American soldiers in Baghdad.

Quotes like this could literally go on for lines and lines. The evidence, the proof, was obvious and insurmountable, yet he chose to ignore the truth.

While al-Sahaf may be an extreme example of willful ignorance, one can only imagine how the scoffers in the first century were laughing, joking and promising that there was nothing to fear concerning the punishment and judgment of God. The literal translation of “scoffers” (*empaigmonei empaikai*) is “mockers mocking”⁸:

The idea is to make sport, jest, play or deride. They would ridicule and hold up to contempt the idea that the Lord would return and that His return would signal the end of the world.⁹

It was not the case that there was no evidence available to indicate that God punishes sin. They simply chose to pretend it did not exist:

The word ‘forget’ in the text [forget in ASV, ignorant in KJV, BB] is from *lanthano*, to escape the notice of, to be hidden from. That these facts had escaped them was not due to inadvertency; they had willfully and purposely allowed them to pass.¹⁰

Peter reminds his brethren that the skeptics were intentionally and knowingly ignoring that there was a notable catastrophic event in human history that could not be denied: “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet. 3:6). As in the days of Peter, there were skeptics in the days of Noah. It could be argued that, before the flood, virtually everyone doubted the coming judgment of God upon an increasingly wicked world. Only eight souls were saved from the judgment of God inflicted upon the earth and its inhabitants (1 Pet. 3:20). Rather than being discouraged by the rhetoric of the unbelievers, who obviously did not know what they were talking about, the Christians should look to the past example of Noah, and to the testimony of the Scriptures that God keeps His promises and punishes the wicked for their sins.

Walking After Their Own Lusts

While it may be true that the number of people who will publicly and verbally mock God and His promises is relatively small, there is no shortage of people who scoff at the judgment of God by “walking after their own lusts.”

This statement by Peter is nearly identical to the words of Jude, who quoted Enoch on the subject of false teachers who deny the promised judgment of God:

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of **all their hard speeches** which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. **These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words,** having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, **beloved, remember ye the words** which were spoken before **of the apostles** of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that **they told you there should be mockers** in the last time, **who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.** These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 14-19).

The skeptics, who were “walking after their own lusts,” did not want to think about being held accountable for their wickedness:

There is a link between conduct and conviction. If men don't believe the day of the Lord will come, they are apt to live lives that are loose and degrading. However, if men know they must meet their Maker, there will be a difference.¹¹

Sadly, the Christians were being influenced, persuaded and discouraged by the mocking skeptics. Paul had warned that Christians should turn from these boastful scoffers and their self-serving lustful lifestyles:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:1-7).

Even still today there are many who confess faith in God, yet mock Him with their lifestyle. How many Christians profess with their mouth that Jesus is the Christ, yet deny Him with their actions and lifestyle (Matt. 15:8)? Most of the world lives as if there will be no day of reckoning. Those who follow this path do so to their own peril. However, it cannot be said that there is no evidence of judgment in the past, or warning that punishment will come in the future:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

Of all people in the world, Christians have the greatest responsibility to live in accordance to the will of God and make it known to others. The church has been warned repeatedly of the wrath of God toward the unrighteous and that Judgment Day is coming. Earlier in this same letter, Peter had mentioned that it would have been better to have never known the way of righteousness than to have known it and turned away from it (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Willful ignorance, demonstrated by a lustful lifestyle, is a grievous sin that mocks the righteousness and truthfulness of God.

Longsuffering Of God

Another foolish argument of the scoffers against the second coming of Christ, destruction of the world and judgment, was the amount of time that had passed since His ascension back to heaven. For some of the recipients of this letter, nearly an entire lifetime had passed and yet the Lord had not returned. No doubt the mockers regularly reminded them of this fact, yet Peter points out to them an even more significant fact: time means nothing to an eternal God: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8). The mockers were willfully ignorant (2 Pet. 3:5), but Peter calls for the Christians not to be ignorant. Just as a single day is but a very brief amount of time for a human, a thousand years is merely the blink of an eye to the eternal Jehovah. If a person knows, understands and believes this, the time that passes between the promise given and promise fulfilled will be insignificant.

Due to their self-inflicted ignorance, the mockers did not understand the purpose of God allowing so much time to pass before the end comes. What was intended by God

to be a blessing, they had turned into a derision and stumblingblock. Not unlike the false teachers of whom Jude spoke, they too were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (“unbridled lust” in Jude 4).

Peter wants to make certain that his brethren do not fall into this line of thinking, which would promote such ungodly behavior:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

The reason for the delay of the judgment of the Lord was His longsuffering, His patience with man, and His desire that all be saved and none perish. Contrary to what many seem to believe, God is not the Almighty enemy of man. It is not the will of the Lord that men suffer, in this world or the world to come. To encourage repentance, obedience and faithfulness, He is patient, providing ample time and opportunity for His prodigal children to return.

What the scoffers failed to understand was that the patience of the Lord was a virtue, not a sign of weakness. As a means of reinforcing this fact, Peter emphasizes that the Lord is not slack in keeping His promises, as man tends to be. Every parent can recall times when he made promises he did not keep. Even the best parents can make a rash threat/promise in the heat of the moment. When emotion gets the best of us, we make promises we never intend to keep, cannot keep, or will forget about when we calm down. Many a parent has declared he will throw away all of his children’s toys because they were not picked up, though I doubt few ever have. People are known for making promises they do not keep, but it is not the case with God. Consider how much time passed, in human years, between the giving of the three-fold promise to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3)

and its fulfillment. Consider how long it was from the promise in the garden of the defeat of Satan (Gen. 3:15) until Jesus rose from the grave, having paid for our sins. Time has no bearing on the Lord's ability, intention or willingness to keep His promises.

When God declared the condemning judgment upon the world in the days of Noah, it was not an emotional outburst, fit of anger or empty threat. The Lord did not lose His temper one day because His children kept messing up, and then in a tantrum declare that He would destroy them, only to calm down and change His mind later. It was perhaps one hundred years before the promise was fulfilled, but it was fulfilled. When the Lord is angry, it is always a righteous indignation. The scoffers would be foolish to assume that God threatened to destroy the world, but that He would not keep this promise.

Lest anyone have the false notion that this patient and longsuffering God, Who is not willing that any should perish, would not punish anyone, Peter immediately warns, "But the day of the Lord will come" (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter did not write that this would possibly happen, that it was likely to happen or even that he was very confident it would happen. For the apostle, there was no question as to the certainty of destruction, although when it would occur was unknown. Although Peter describes it for us, I doubt our imaginations can fathom the spectacular scene that will be displayed when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). Time has passed, God is patient, but judgment will come.

The Earth And Its Works Shall Be Burned Up

Those words are somewhat difficult to comprehend when one stands on the shore and gazes across the rolling

waters of the ocean, looks up at a mountain peak disappearing into the clouds, or gazes into the vast depths of space. The sheer size and majesty of the created material universe makes it difficult for us to imagine it all going away. Prior to September 11, 2001, how many of us would have believed we would see the World Trade Center towers fall to the ground? Those two skyscrapers, which took years to design and build, were obliterated in minutes by mere men. Peter speaks, not of men, but an all powerful-God Who created the entire material universe in six days, Who will destroy it in a moment.

Having called attention to the catastrophic results of the global flood, Peter reminds his readers of a few facts concerning that judgment and the one to come:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:6-7).

It was by the power of the Word of God that the first global judgment came, and it is by this same Word that the second will come. For now, the Word of God is keeping this destruction in store, but there is a reservation with fire.

The righteous need not be worried about this day that is stored up because it is preserved for ungodly men. This day is reserved for those who walk after their own lusts, as these scoffers were doing. It will not only be the physical creation of God and man that will be destroyed, but also the works of the flesh will be burned up. Fornication, idolatry, witchcraft, murders, drunkenness and such like will all be done away when all things are incinerated.

The story has been told many times concerning Marshall Keeble being shown around the large ranch of a brother from Texas. When asked by the rancher what he

thought of all he had seen, brother Keeble replied, “The Lord’s going to burn it all up.” On a similar subject I can recall hearing B. J. Clarke tell a group of young people to take notice whenever they passed a junkyard. He explained to them that each rusted and smashed heap of metal was once a new car to someone. Someone was so proud of the shining paint, spotless interior and enjoyed that “new car smell.” Now it sits broken, destroyed, rusted and useless amid others just like it in a scrapyard. The point of both illustrations is that of so many Bible passages: the physical is temporary:

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun (Eccl. 2:11).

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2).

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matt. 6:19-20).

The works of the flesh will be burned up, but the fruit of the Spirit will remain. Since everything “under the sun” is temporary and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, Peter poses the question, “What manner of persons ought ye to be?”

What Manner Of Persons Ought Ye To Be?

The Scriptures are filled with powerful, terrifying and thought-provoking questions. Many of these questions were asked by those who were seeking wisdom, guidance, instruction or justice from God:

Lord what wilt thou have me to do? (Acts 9:6).

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30).

Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (Matt. 19:16).

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Rev. 6:10).

Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? (Gen. 18:23).

Other questions were asked in order to teach, rebuke or provoke thought in the hearers:

Where art thou? (Gen. 3:9).

Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?...Where is Abel thy brother?...What hast thou done?" (Gen. 4:6; Gen. 4:9-10).

What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? (1 Sam. 15:14).

Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?...But whom say ye that I am? (Matt. 16:13; Matt. 16:15).

Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? (Luke 17:17).

There were some questions that were asked, not sincerely, but in an attempt to trap Jesus or get Him to contradict the Law or traditions:

What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not? (Matt. 22:17).

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? (John 8:5).

Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? (Matt. 12:10).

In 2 Peter 3:11, the aging apostle asks a sobering question of his readers. For two and a half chapters, he has shown them they are without excuse concerning the judgment of God. They have knowledge (2 Pet. 1:3), he has encouraged them to grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5-10) and he has warned them that judgment is real and will come (2 Pet. 3:1-10). If this were a sermon, 2 Peter 3:11 would be the invitation, extended in the form of a rhetorical question: “What manner of persons ought ye to be?”

Peter had given them the necessary knowledge, but his purpose was not just to inform them, especially since they already knew these things (2 Pet. 1:12). He intended to cause them to take action based upon what they knew. This should be the aim of every sermon preached. If the hearer comes away with knowledge alone, it will do him little good. Knowing is only half the battle. James prompts us to “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jas. 1:22). Along these same lines, a brother once challenged a group of preacher students by saying, “We can preach a lot of good and true things about the Bible, but what difference does it make if we don’t cause people to say ‘Where am I going?’”

The mockers and scoffers knew nothing (by choice), and Peter has dealt with that. Peter has shown that God has the power to destroy the world; God has destroyed the world in the past; time means nothing to God and He is patient; judgment is guaranteed to come, and it will mean the destruction of all the physical universe. Having established these things, Peter asks his readers to consider themselves: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” (2 Pet. 3:11). Before allowing his readers to even entertain a thought in response to this question, Peter declares they should be holy, godly and anticipating the return of Jesus and the

dissolution of all things. Contrast this behavior with the scoffers who were mocking God with their words and by their lustful lifestyle. The faithful were to bear the fruit of the Spirit, while the scoffers were partaking of the works of the flesh. When this great day came, they should “be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:14). Because they were walking after their own lusts, the scoffers wanted to ignore the reality and certainty of the last day, whereas the faithful could be “looking for and hasting (earnestly desiring) the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. 3:12).

I would dare say there is not a one of us who has not heard those stinging words of rebuke from our parents, “You know better than that.” It happens when we do something, or fail to do something, that our parents have taught us. With knowledge comes responsibility and obligation. All Christians know that God keeps His promises, not just the positive ones that are a blessing to us, but also the negative ones that warn of destruction and punishment. Instead of viewing the long time that has passed since God promised to destroy the earth as a sign of weakness or slackness in God keeping His promises, understand it the way the Lord intended it: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15). Had the Lord returned five, ten, twenty or fifty years ago, many of us reading these words might be suffering in torment right now. Because of His patience and longsuffering in fulfilling this promise, many of us are now enjoying the blessings of salvation.

Endnotes

1 World Video Bible School class notes on 2 Peter.

2 W. E. Vine, **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), pp. 73-74.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., pp. 231-232.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Guy N. Woods, **Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John & Jude**, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1991), p. 182.

8 WVBS class notes on 2 Peter.

9 Ibid.

10 Woods, page 182.

11 Winfred Clark, **Expositions of the Expositor Volume 1**, Michael R. McDaniel, editor (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2001), pp. 335-336.

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**Lectures
For
Ladies**

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CHAPTER 33

Women Professing Godliness

(1 Tim. 2:9-10)

Annette Cates

Introduction

THE TEXT ASSIGNED GIVES a description of a person very different from the kind of woman the world sees as admirable. The Godly woman dresses modestly; the worldly woman bares her flesh. The woman of God blushes when her sense of propriety is broached while the woman of the world knows no shame. God's woman recognizes the seriousness of living a righteous life while her worldly sisters fill their lives with empty vanity. Her focus is not on the materialistic, outward show of wealth and beauty, but rather it is on the joy of good works. The woman who professes Godliness will radiate with the serenity that comes from within. All who know her will see Christ living in her.

It is obvious that we cannot look to the world to help us achieve Godliness. In fact, those in the world think the Godly person is somewhat odd, to say the least. They think it strange that she eschews sinful activities, reads her Bible, and, GASP!, actually "goes to church" regularly. They call her an old fogey and nickname her "Miss Goody Two-Shoes." They feel awkward in her presence, as if she, not

God, is the judge. The Christian woman finds herself lumped together with those who make a production of their religiosity, but are as far from God as the rest of the world.

The attributes that the world values lead only to sorrow and death. Young people are especially vulnerable to the influence of the “stars” whose lives seem so glamorous. They want to dress like pop entertainment figures. They want to try the illegal drugs and alcohol they hear about those people using and laughing about the euphoria they produce. They think they want the “freedom” of sex without marriage and without responsibility. What do they get? Boys assume that girls who dress like Britney Spears are as loose morally as they appear. Drugs and alcohol lead to addiction and a loss of judgment or control of oneself. “Free love” leads to untimely pregnancy, and incurable, even deadly, sexually transmitted diseases. Yet, these tragedies are overlooked in the desire to be popular and accepted by others. The young so attracted by the world today are the basis of tomorrow’s society; they will carry their misguided concepts of success and fulfillment into the future.

The drawing power of the world is not limited to youth. The world sees nothing wrong in unethical dealings. Abortion is promoted as an acceptable form of birth control. Minds are filled with the filth of “adult” television programming and X-rated movies. No one thinks anything of having extramarital affairs and entering into adulterous marriages. We are facing a push to legalize same-sex unions. Gambling is seen as no more than just another form of entertainment. Any immorality is all right as long as one does not get caught. Compromise with the world seems to many to be the only way to achieve success.

The drawing power of the world is not limited to our age. It plagued the past and will continue to do so in the future. Great nations such as Babylon and Rome have

fallen because of immorality. Israel and Judah went into captivity because of their acceptance of the world and rebellion against God. Satan thought he could use the appeal of the flesh to tempt Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11).

We live in a time where society is not all that different from the world Jeremiah knew. The prevalent immorality had so influenced God's people that Jeremiah wrote, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" (Jer. 6:15). None of us is exempt from worldly temptations. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

When God created us, He gave us free-will, the power to choose good from evil, right from wrong. Therefore, **WE** choose how much influence the world has over us. The beloved apostle John wrote:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

When Paul, through inspiration, penned the words in our text, he gave us encouragement that we can choose successfully to profess Godliness. He gave us two areas that will demonstrate Godliness in the Christian woman—our deportment (1 Tim. 2:9) and our good works (1 Tim. 2:10).

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided [braided] hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly

array” (1 Tim. 2:9). This verse indicates a modest demeanor, not only in the way a woman dresses, but also in the way she conducts herself. This is **not** telling us that we should drape ourselves in black with only enough opening around the eyes to see through, moving about with bent-over posture several steps behind a male. It **is** telling us that we are not to draw undue attention to ourselves through appearance or attitude. This verse includes both outward and inward behaviour.

“But (which becometh women professing Godliness) with good works” (1 Tim. 2:10). From this verse we learn that it takes more than modesty to be Godly. We must also be pro-active Christians. We are to look beyond ourselves for ways in which to be of service to others. For example, the Bible does not tell us how Dorcas looked, rather we are informed as to what she did and the impact her actions had on her community (Acts 9:36-42).

Godliness In Appearance

While it is true that styles change, standards of right and wrong do not. The use of clothing as a covering for nakedness goes back to the Garden of Eden. In addition to 1 Timothy 2:9, there are other verses that offer the same principles, especially 1 Peter 3:3-4. “Modesty” may well be defined as not drawing undue attention to oneself. Since the Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), not only will we not abuse it, we will clothe it accordingly. Further, the Christian will deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (including causing others to lust), and will “live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:12).

Using the definition of “anything that draws undue attention to oneself,” what is immodest apparel? It is that which is too revealing, not appropriate to the occasion, and that which is either so flamboyant or so drab as to give others the wrong impression.

What is too revealing? Anything that is too thin, too tight, too clingy, too short, too low cut, or lacking in appropriate underwear, is immodest. Clothing that allows our underwear, or the imprint of our underwear to show through is too thin and/or too tight, and/or too clingy. A garment of lightweight fabric might fit well and cover completely, yet reveal what is underneath, thus is immodest. Too short reveals the thigh. A skirt should fit generously enough to allow a woman to sit without having to tug at it to keep from exposing her upper leg.

One might object, "What is the significance of the thigh? That's cultural. One hundred years ago, it was considered immodest for the calf of the leg to show. In some societies today it is considered immodest to have bare arms." The Bible answers this question in Isaiah 47:2-3, where Isaiah links uncovering the thigh and "thy shame shall be seen."

A garment that is too low cut uncovers the upper area of breast. While cropped tops that expose an inch or more of the waist are popular, these, too, would come in the same category. The wearer of such clothing is guilty of lasciviousness, which includes causing others to lust after her, and is condemned in Galatians 5:19. A woman should be aware of the effect her clothes may have on others and dress in such a way as not to cause others to sin. We cannot know what others are thinking; thus we must realize that if our clothing fits the description of immodest, then it is indeed immodest.

Mothers need to take care in selecting the clothes their children own and wear. The importance of dressing even our youngest children modestly was underscored when the news reported a convicted child molester/murderer as having testified in his trial that he was drawn to the little six year old by her short shorts and lack of undergarments. To shop in a little girls' department in our major stores is

shocking. Much of the clothing offered for sale looks as if it belongs in a street-walkers' specialty shop! This would not be if mothers were conscientious about how they allow their children to dress. Clothing manufacturers produce what sells; we do not have to buy. When I taught in a Christian high school in the mid-70's, it was the **mothers** who were upset by a dress code that required modest clothing for the students. While teenagers continue to need guidance as they learn to shop for their own clothes, much of the battle has already been won if they have grown up with the emphasis on dressing appropriately.

Another category of immodest apparel is that which is not appropriate for the occasion, even though it might otherwise be modest. This is the type of clothing included by the excess described by Paul as "braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." There are times when properly fitted slacks are more modest than a dress. Clothing fit for a picnic is not modest apparel for a funeral or a wedding. Our appearance indicates the importance we place on any given activity. Appropriate attire is a must when we come together to worship God. Not only does inappropriate clothing distract others and hinder their worship, it reflects an irreverent attitude on the part of the wearer. One area of giving our best to the Master involves taking care to dress our best when we worship the Lord. What we wear to worship is not that important to God, but what it represents in our attitude is.

Clothing may be modest in coverage, but inappropriate for the occasion if it is characterized by gaudiness or drabness that draws attention to oneself. Flaunting one's wealth or "humility" is not a characteristic of the woman Paul describes as "professing Godliness." Clothing that intimidates or otherwise makes others uncomfortable is not modest apparel. The opposite is an equal problem. It seems there are some women who pride

themselves on **not** doing anything to make themselves look better. Some young people today dress in the grunge, or Gothic, or “heroin chic.” Their intent is shock value. Some women use no make-up, have no hair style, and wear ill-fitting, colorless clothing. The dress need not be expensive, but the color and style should be attractive. Our appearance reflects pride and self-esteem. Can others see that we have the abundant life as Christians when our hair is unkempt and our clothing is prison drab?

Godliness In Conduct

As with our clothing, our manner of life must be modest. Using the same definition of not drawing undue attention to oneself, we conduct ourselves in such a way that Christ is reflected in us. “Shamefacedness and sobriety” could be restated as gentleness, humility, and purity. Micah 6:8 tells us, “...what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” These qualities should form one’s first impression when meeting a Christian. Her clothing should not draw attention, and her good works will become obvious.

The Godly woman has a gentle spirit, a tender-heart, and is concerned for the cares of others. She is the opposite of the selfish worldly woman. “And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another...” (Eph. 4:32). We, too, must be gentle and considerate when dealing with other people. The worthy woman spoke with “the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26). How we speak to others is one of the most obvious ways in which we demonstrate gentleness. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11). Proverbs 15:1 reads, “A soft answer turneth away wrath...” Treating others with gentleness, doing so in order to encourage and lift up, and not to put them down and attempt to destroy them indicates a person with the compassionate spirit of Christ.

The Godly woman is marked by humility. In fact, she cannot become a Christian without submitting her will to God through her obedience to the Gospel (Rom. 1:3-6). She continues thereafter in recognition of her dependence upon God; without Him, we are nothing. The world seeks to be served whereas the life of a Christian is one of service (Matt. 18:4; Matt. 20:25-28).

The worldly woman seeks to be the one in authority; the Christian woman recognizes God's line of leadership in the church (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 11:8-9). The one professing Godliness has "...a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4). There is no haughtiness or snobbery in the Christian woman, materially, intellectually, or spiritually. It is as if she is "...clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). Through her humility, she demonstrates to the world the lowly, suffering Saviour.

The Godly woman lives a life of purity (Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:22). "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). In addition to moral purity, she is pure in heart and mind. The books a woman reads, the television and movies she sees, the jokes she tells and listens to, the music she hears, have a strong influence on her inner life and spiritual development. The world feasts on garbage consisting of filthy language and obscene pleasures. "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). Living a life of purity shows others that there is a higher standard of living than the baseness of the world.

Godliness In Good Works

Godliness is exhibited not only by our appearance and by our inner qualities, it is shown by a life of service toward others.

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (Jas. 2:15-17).

In Mark 12:28-31, Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment of all. He responded by giving two commandments. The first is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second, Jesus said, is to love the neighbor as oneself. We cannot teach others the Gospel, if they do not see its fruits in us. There is a saying that “God has no hands but our hands.”

There are many avenues of service. Sometimes it is dirty work, certainly not glamorous. Usually, it is done behind the scenes, without notice or attention. The Godly woman is unlike the political candidate who shows up at a widely advertised charity function, gets his/her picture taken, and is gone. She is there for the long haul, and not for the publicity. But, that is part of humbling ourselves. If our good works are done for the glory, then they are meaningless. The world does not understand the concept of a life of service and sacrifice.

Jesus tells us in His Sermon on the Mount, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Each of us has, on average, a direct influence of substantial degree on some 250 people in a lifetime. We never know who is watching us and is being impressed by the life we are leading, whether that impression is

favorable or not. There may be an elderly neighbor who could use a hand with the yard work. Some young mother may be struggling on her own in rearing her children, and needs some help. What about those people who are caring for an elderly relative or a sick mate? Could they use some respite? Can we take a dish of food over; or spend an hour or so while the caretaker gets out for a while? Perhaps during the funeral, a grieving family needs someone to house-sit in order to discourage a possible break-in.

Our talents are unique, and there are always opportunities to use them in good works. Does the local congregation need some help with office work? What about helping with the production of the bulletin; or with developing a new church directory; or keeping the bulletin boards changed and attention-grabbing? Teachers are always needed, both for classes and for individual Bible studies. Newcomers and the erring need someone to visit and encourage them. The Apostle Paul was grateful to have the help of Godly women in carrying out his work (Rom. 16; Phil. 4:3). Usually, there is more to be done than hands to do the work.

The things we do for others do not have to be major activities in order to have value. Corinne Elkins once stated, "God is more concerned with our availability than with our ability." In his poem, "On His Blindness," John Milton penned these words, "They also serve who stand and wait." We serve when we write notes and send cards. Our prayers for others will uplift us as well as impart strength to the ones for whom we pray. A visit to the hospital is a day-brightener for the sick and for those who are staying with them. There are those who are lonely or discouraged, and in need of no more than a caring listener. A woman professing Godliness will step in wherever she can, doing whatever she can to make life better for others, thus being known for her good works.

Women professing Godliness stand in stark contrast to women of the world. This callous old world needs Christians who quietly, humbly go about lifting their lives to God. As noted earlier, Micah 6:8 asks, "...what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

How would the average woman measure up to this standard? Does living in purity, exhibiting the qualities of gentleness and humility, and doing good works for others typify someone of the world? The answer would be an unequivocal "no," for it is the Godly woman who has risen above the world's standards to adorn herself in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, going about doing good works.

CHAPTER 34

Holy Women

(Tit. 2:3-5)

Maggie Colley

Preface

IT IS A HUMBLING experience for me to be a speaker on this great lectureship program. We are grateful to the elders and brother B.J. Clarke, director, for planning this lecture on the theme “**The Works Of The Flesh versus “The Fruit Of The Spirit.”** Our decision to live a worldly (living according to the principles of the world) or a spiritual life (by the Holy Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God) determines whether we produce in our life the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit. It also determines our destiny.

Being a holy woman today is a challenge indeed. The pressures of daily living with the erosion of moral standards, has robbed our generation of peace and happiness. Men and women are searching for answers that will fill the void and enrich their lives.

Introduction

Every day we are faced with the decision whether we will produce the works of the flesh (worldly life) or the fruit of the Spirit (Spirit’s teaching). In order to produce the fruit of the Spirit, we must be taught. Jesus said, “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of

God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). It is not compulsory. Our own stubborn will is the only obstacle that will keep us from coming to the Father. We learn to do things in two ways: by seeing others do them, and by being taught in words how to do them. Older, holy women are commanded to teach younger women. Holy women of God in ancient time trusted and obeyed God (1 Peter 3:5). Having been taught we have the obligation to teach younger women.

Deplorable Conditions

These are critical moments in the CULTURE WAR between the “God is” and “God isn’t” segments of our society: Read Romans 1 to get a description of what is happening in America right now when God is “not glorified as God” (Rom. 1:21). The results are catastrophic problems. Here are but a few:

1. In June, a decision of the Supreme Court, voiding a Texas sodomy law, paved the way for changing the definition of marriage and legalizing same sex marriage. A main-line denomination, the Episcopal has split over homosexuality. In August, the U.S. Episcopal Church confirmed the election of its first openly gay bishop. Both of these decisions send a signal that no Biblical concepts of sexual morality are shaping the standards of contemporary society.

2. The Supreme Court has decided to take the case of “under God” out of the pledge.

3. Republicans have succeeded in outlawing partial-birth abortion. Whether the House and Senate will approve it is doubtful.

The lines between good and evil are getting more blurred every day. David Limbaugh in his new book **Persecution: How Liberals Are Waging War Against Christianity**, stated:

It has been said that TOLERANCE is the last virtue of a degenerate society. I think that many times people don't realize it, but when you begin to allow every kind of immorality and degeneracy and perversion imaginable, the one thing you will not allow is to have anybody criticize you for doing these things. Extraordinarily successful people can admit to any kind of immorality, depravity, perversion of any sort on any talk show on T.V. and nobody will so much as lift an eyebrow and certainly will not find fault or criticize them for what they say. Christianity has withstood the onslaught of attacks throughout history, but will America itself survive as the world's torchbearer of liberty against the incessant assaults on its Christian foundation?

There is a sad commentary on the children of Israel after faithful Joshua died. He was the successor to Moses and was a great leader, but listen to what can happen to just one generation: "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, **which knew not the Lord**, nor the works which He had done for Israel" (Judg. 2:10, emphasis mine, MC). Of many families it could be said as of Israel of old, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hos. 4:6).

Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Where Is Our Strength Found?

We must study and allow the Scriptures to guide us and give us strength. (2 Tim. 2:15). The holy woman knows

where her strength lies. The word strength occurs over three hundred times in the Scriptures.

Webster lists some of the synonyms of strength: Might, power, stronghold, ability, preeminence, prominence, hardness, force, support. If we only realized how much strength could be gained from a study of God's Word.

In the long ago, Habakkuk, the prophet of God uttered a prayer that we need to be **reminded** of today: "The Lord God is my strength..." (Hab. 3:19). As we study God's Word today we pray that we gain maximum strength. (2 Tim. 2:15).

Home Influences

Possibly we will never be able to determine to what extent the home influence shapes the life of the child. And further, we may never see just how much the home moulds the ideals of the nation, and reflects itself in society, and the church. In the home the mother wields the greatest influence over the child. How true it is that some mothers have never been known, save through the child she bore, and trained in its infancy to become a faithful Christian. The mother is a **constant** and **shining** example of sacrificial service before her children.

Does one ever get away from the influence of **home and mother**? Do you as a mother find that the lessons your mother taught you, as a child, are constantly cropping up in your life? It is to her influence that we look in days of gloom, and hours of sorrow; from her we draw the inspiration of **strength** in time of trials, and on her we rely for sympathy and comfort.

Queen In Your Home

It is in the home that women rule with a strength and grace! God's woman's courage knows no limits. We

were made to be a companion, wife and helper (Gen. 2). A woman can turn a one room apartment into a place of beauty by her love, devotion and fortitude. A woman brings cheer to the sad heart, gives courage to the drooping spirit, and strength to the burdened soul. She shows the way. **One never travels so far that he gets away from the influences of home!**

Let no one mistake **a house for a home**. A home is where love rules; where there is food for the heart, culture for the soul, stimulus for the mind and reverence for the spirit. It is God's order that she rule the home under the rule of her husband (1 Tim. 5:14).

Faith Established

Faith must be developed and established in our lives, all of our lives. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The holy woman knows that no step can safely be taken in the service of God without faith.

Faith consists of two elements: (1) conviction and (2) confidence. Conviction is believing the promises and threatenings of God through His Word. Faith is not mere mental assent, but a willingness to do whatever God says. We can have confidence in the integrity of God and His power to do all He has both promised and threatened to do in reference to the destiny of man. As we mature and become the holy woman God desires, we will have wisdom, confidence, character and strength.

This Is Where Our Needs Are Met

Paul told Titus to "speak the things which become **sound doctrine!**" In Titus 1, Paul described the immoral

character of the Cretans, and now, in contrast with that, he urges Titus to impress upon the brethren the need to teach sound doctrine. If we become the holy woman God intends, we too, will teach sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is normal and healthy, firm, safe, stable, honorable, loyal teaching. This teaching will make men and women strong in the faith. We shall briefly discuss the 7 things that Titus was to teach the older women so that they could instruct the younger women:

1. Sober-minded. Have your desires and passions under control... to be serious about serious things. Sensible, grave, temperate are synonyms. Does this mean that we can't laugh, have fun and enjoy life? No! We are not to be sour-faced old women, crabby, who never see the fun in anything and who constantly go about with a frown on her face. There are too many passages that teach otherwise.

2. Love your husband. This word for "love" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is from the Greek word "*phileo*." *Phileo* is friendship love. Be your husband's best friend! How many marriages could have been saved if we older women had taught younger women to "love their husband!"

Divorce is so rampant today that "intact" marriages are in the minority. Remember that God hates "putting away" or divorce (Mal. 2:16). Read often, (Matt. 19:8-9). *Agape* love is found in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." The single most valuable thing you can do as parents other than to teach them the Truth is to have a good father and mother relationship.

3. Love your children. There would not be 4,000 innocent babies aborted every day if every mother loved her child. It is horrible to think that there have been 40 million babies killed since 1973 when the decision was to lift the ban on abortion by the Supreme Court. Love for your child is opposite from child-abuse. The Lord has given us the best way to rear our children to be happy Christian adults, and

to sacrifice a few short years to give our children the proper training. You only have them 18 or 20 years of your life.

4. Discreet/Chaste. Webster says the definition of Chaste is: “Not indulging in unlawful sexual activity virtuous; said especially of women. Not indecent; modest; restrained.” Paul encouraged Timothy, “Keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). Today’s charged sexual climate challenges parents to give proper direction to their children. Research indicates that 63% of college freshmen are sexually active. Remember that true love waits! Teach your girls not to flirt. Those “electric” conversations lead to intimacy. The intimacy of marriage is not all God wants. The husband is to be wife’s **exclusive** property. You and your body, are for your husband. Keep your marriage bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4). Study the word “undefiled” some time.

5. Keepers At Home. This does not mean that we can’t work outside the home, but it does mean that **home keeping** is our primary work. How do you working women do it? Unless it is absolutely necessary, I would advise that you do not work outside the home. When we care enough to do a good job as the chief executive of homemaking, our good husbands will look forward to coming home. His mind will not be clouded with worries over the way children are cared for throughout the day. If you properly use your time at home you can give your gift of time to prepare a Bible lesson, to spend quality time with the children and to take care of heavy chores. He will be thankful that the queen of his life happily treats him royally.

6. Good: In All Respects, And In All Relations. To a wife, a mother, a sister, there can be no higher characteristic ascribed, than to say that she is good. To be good is to be holy.

7. Obedient To Their Own Husband: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands ... (1 Pet. 3:1).” “Wives submit yourselves unto your own husband, as unto

the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church..." (Eph. 5:22-23). The Feminists of our day do not like this Scripture. They grumble, "Why did you write all of this, Paul?" They need to read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

8. That The Word Of God Be Not Blasphemed.

What a powerful ending! If you live contrary to these commands you will be blaspheming (speaking against God). If you live contrary to these commands you non-Christians will see you and speak against godliness.

Conclusion

Do you remember Deborah, the fourth of judge of Israel? She was a mother in Israel and one of the most courageous women of all time. When I study about her, it encourages me to be holy and devoted to God. Israel was suffering from spiritual decay and was crumbling before her very eyes. Are not many homes in America crumbling before our very eyes? Someone had to do something. The children of Israel cried unto the Lord for deliverance from the twenty years of oppression by the Canaanites. They had 900 chariots of iron.

Deborah summoned Barak to lead the army. He said he would not go unless she would go. Deborah made a statement that we certainly need to ask ourselves: "**Is not the Lord gone out before thee?**" They won the battle that day because of the courage and trust in the Lord of this one woman!

I challenge us today to have a "**Can-Do**" spirit and to know that by the help of the Lord, we will have the **Strength** to be the "**Woman of God!**" (Psm. 18:1-2). We can truly be God's holy woman.

CHAPTER 35

A Tale Of Two Women

(1 Tim. 5:9-15)

Geraldine Chaney

Introduction

I *HAVE TAUGHT MANY* women's classes but I have never spoken on a lectureship. I want to thank B. J. for having enough confidence in me that he asked me to be one of the speakers, and I appreciate so much our good elders that have enough confidence in B. J. that they trust his judgment. This is a humbling experience and preparing this lesson has been a wonderful experience.

1 Timothy 5:9-15 says:

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good works. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.

These passages depict two different kinds of widows. One is godly and the other is worldly. We have to decide which kind of widow we will be.

Marge Green, in her book, *Martha, Martha* said:

The role of widowhood is perhaps the most difficult that woman will have to accept. It carries with it the sad feeling of being separated from part of herself. When she was married, she became one flesh with her husband. When she becomes a widow, the source of love and understanding is severed and she stands alone in a world where she no longer is “first” in the heart of anyone. Certainly she is loved by her children and her friends, but these have their own lives. They will include her in their love, but she no longer occupies the chief seat in anyone’s life. While this feeling is desolate and painful, it will only prove fatal if fed by bitterness and self-pity. The death it produces does not affect the physical body, but the more vital spiritual life. To make this loneliness “work together for good” is the primary task of the widow after the initial shock of death has passed.¹

Older Women Teach The Younger Women

If we are fortunate enough to keep our mates until we grow old, we are very fortunate, because we are never really prepared, at any age, to be a widow. When we were young we never thought that we might become a widow (we usually think of a widow as being old), but it does happen to young women also. Some women are left with young children and she has to deal with the loss of her beloved husband and also be concerned with taking care of her children.

We may think that children would be a blessing, at this time of sorrow in our lives, because the children would take up so much of our time and it would help take our minds off our loneliness, but, if you are a young widow,

you not only grieve for yourself, but also for your children, because they will never get to know their earthly father. Young widows, please take the necessary time to grieve, but don't let someone else tell you how to grieve, and please remember that your children are grieving also. They will need you now more than ever. Now is the time to lean on God and to teach your children that God is there for you and them.

We, as older widows, need to remember that these young widows need us more than ever. It could be so easy to get discouraged and wonder where God is. Life has become much harder; they have lost their mate and it is up to them to provide material necessities as well as spiritual training for their children.

Then, there are the widows that have no children. They become lonely and may reach out for love in all the wrong places. When we read 1 Tim. 5:9-15, it is as if we were reading a letter from God written yesterday. God made us, and human nature never changes. In 1 Timothy 5:9-10, he tells which widows can be taken into the number to be taken care of, and he is very plain about what her age should be, and the kind of life that she has lived. In 1 Timothy 5:11-15 there is a warning concerning the younger widows:

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.

In the book *Martha, Martha*, Marge Green said:

Age only magnifies our qualities. I once heard a young woman express her thoughts in this way,

'I'll be so glad when I'm old, then it won't be so hard to be good and kind and sweet.' How mistaken she was! Age does not bring about a change of character; it only enhances and magnifies those qualities which we possess when we are younger - the clay of the youthful life hardening with the passage of time. The shape does not change; it is firmed into a solid form for the duration of its existence. If we are impatient, grouchy and harsh at thirty, then most likely we will be even more impatient, grouchy and harsh when we reach seventy. Just as age tends to harden the arteries of the body, it also tends to solidify the traits which will either make us a joy or a terror in our old age. When we see a beautiful older woman with her kind face and white hair, we can be assured that she built that image on qualities that were developed and improved while she was much younger. If we want to be a gentle, sweet old woman, than we had better start being a gentle sweet young woman.²

Some times widows tend to forget God. This may be because they were not living as close to God as they should have been before they became a widow. We need to remember that the life we live before we become a widow will pretty much determine the kind of widow we will be.

In Luke 2:36-38 we read:

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God [worshipping] with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Anna was a widow much longer than she was a wife and yet she continued to worship God all of her life.

Bible Widows

Some well known widows in the Bible would be Naomi, Ruth and Orpah. It was through the lineage of Ruth that Jesus was born. We can see the providence of God working through these women. Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, were driven from Canaan by famine. They settled in Moab.

While in Moab, Elimelech died and Naomi was left with two sons. The two sons married Moabite women. Chilion married Orpah, Mahlon married Ruth. They lived in Moab about ten years and Mahlon and Chilion died. Naomi, Orpah and Ruth were all widows now. Naomi heard there was food in Judah so she decided to go home. Orpah and Ruth started out with Naomi to go to Judah. Naomi tried to persuade the women to go back to their mother's house. Evidently, Naomi was loved very much by her daughters-in-law. They did not want to leave her. After many tears Orpah decided to go back to her family but Ruth would not leave Naomi. In Ruth 1:16-18; we read:

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth 1:22; 2:1-3 says:

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of harvest. And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and

his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Ruth went to work and worked hard for her mother-in-law. Boaz took notice of her and said unto his servant that was set over the reapers:

Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I Pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, and she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from thence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger. And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore (Ruth 2:5-11).

Ruth and Boaz eventually married and it was through this lineage that Christ was born. It all came about through the providence of God and a young widow who was willing to work.

At the church here at Southaven, we have about 42 widows. Many of these widows are like Ruth, in that, they are not afraid to work. Many of our widows are out visiting the sick, preparing food for the sick and those who have lost loved ones, taking widows (who are not able to drive themselves) to the doctor, sending cards, calling them, etc. We even have our own “Ruth”.

I want to tell you about our “Ruth.” When she was growing up she lived on a farm. She plowed ground with a mule, helped make sorghum molasses, sawed logs, etc. When she was 17 years of age she married Henry Hill. Henry was 24. Henry heard the gospel on the radio, read his Bible, and learned the truth. He asked Ruth if she would go with him to the church of Christ. She agreed to go with him and after a short while, they were both baptized.

Ruth’s husband passed away when he was 56 years of age. Ruth was a young widow at the age of 49 years. They raised two children, a son, Doyle, and a daughter, Mary Sue. After Henry died, Ruth got a job at a Vocational Rehabilitation Center, training the handicapped to sew. She was the supervisor and was well prepared for this job since she had made all of her and her children’s clothes. In 1981, at the age of 64, she became interested in making porcelain dolls. She learned the trade by reading books and going to seminars. After a few years, you could buy the dolls at the store cheaper than she could make them, so she went back to making ceramics. If you have been at Southaven very long you probably have one of her dolls, ceramic birds, or deer, in your home.

Ruth has been attending the Southaven church of Christ since 1983. She has been involved in the work of the Lord ever since she came here. She is 87 years of age and is at every service, if at all possible. She has been a widow 37 years. There are many more things I could say about Ruth, and our other widows here at Southaven, but time won’t permit.

Earthly Possessions

Death will come to all of us, and we don't know if we will be left or if we will be taken before our mate. Most of us really aren't ready to die because there are too many things on this earth that we love. First of all, we love our mates, our children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, etc. Then there are all of our earthly possessions. 1 John 2:15-17 says:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

One blessing of growing old may be that we put our trust in God more. Earthly possessions may not be as important to us as they were when we were young, especially if we suffer from a painful illness. We may have grown tired and want to go home to our Father. God did not intend that we should live forever. Those who have lost a loved one to serious illnesses know that death may be something that they pray for, and it may be that we are ready to give them up because their suffering is too painful for us. James 4:14 says: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." If we have lived to be sixty, seventy or older, we look back on our life and we know exactly what God is talking about.

Growing Older

God has never left us to wonder how we should behave at any stage of our lives. We don't hear many lessons on growing old because there aren't too many people who will admit being old. However, if we don't die

young we will be old some day. We need to prepare to grow old gracefully. Have you ever noticed old people who are happy, cheerful, and you just enjoy being around them? Then, there are older people that make life miserable for themselves and for others around them.

The difference is our attitude toward old age. Psalm 90:10 says: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Job 5:26 says: "Thou shalt come to they grave in full age like a shock of wheat in its season".

It is a beautiful thing to see someone who has lived a full life in the kingdom go to his grave at peace with God and his fellowman. The Bible is our guide and if we follow it we have nothing to fear. We may have learned this as we get older but this is something that a young person has to learn. Job 12:12 says "With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding." M. F. McKnight, in his book *Christian Homes Are The Vestibules of Heaven*, said:

With those who have reached a ripe old age there is wisdom and it can only be learned one way and that is through experience. Older people have had far more experiences than we who are younger. Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment. There are some lessons in life we just have to learn the hard way, it seems. Who is there among us who could say, 'I have never made a mistake, I have never exercised any bad judgment.'? But bad judgment brings experiences and good judgment comes from experience."³

Young people can learn a lot from the elderly if they will only take the time to listen. There was a time when families lived close to each other all of their lives. As the mother and father grew older, and were unable to work, they were taken in by their children and taken care of. If

they were God fearing people their parents were treated with respect and honor. Young people have a responsibility to their elders. 1 Timothy 5:8 says: "If any provide not for his own he hath denied the faith and he is worse than an infidel." 1 Timothy 5:3-7 says:

Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let the children first learn to show piety at home and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

Many times young people look upon the widow/widower in the home as a burden. If we treat our parents as if they are causing a hardship on the family then our children are going to feel this way also. The best way to teach our children to respect the aged is by our Godly example.

Conclusion

There is really no way that you can prepare to be a widow. I lost my husband about two a one half years ago and I was totally unprepared for what I was about to face. Even today when I leave the house to go somewhere, I feel that I am leaving something behind, and I am: I'm leaving something that had been a part of me for fifty five years, my husband. People have an expectation about how you are supposed to react, and how long it is supposed to take to get over grieving. My first reaction, when I lost my husband, was disbelief. After two and a half years I am doing much better, but I'm still (as they say) not over it.

I am so thankful to God that he gave me time to be the best wife that I could be. Herschel was sick for about

10 years and **really** sick for the last two or three years of his life. It is at such a time as this that little picky things are so unimportant. When I realized that “I could lose him at any time,” all I could think of was trying to make our time together as pleasant as I could. So, the only thing that you can do to prepare for being a widow/widower is be good to each other.

A friend of mine told someone “Be careful what you say to each other.” You never know when words will come back to haunt you. If your mate dies and you are left with hurtful words, this will be the hardest thing with which to deal. Take advantage of the time that you have together.

I love a segment that is shown on TV. It shows an elderly man and wife, and a young man and wife. They are sitting in a restaurant. The older couple are not talking, they are just reading the paper and drinking their coffee. The younger couple are talking and laughing. The young woman says something to the effect that she doesn’t want their marriage to end up like them (speaking of the older couple) with nothing to say to each other.

As both couples get up and leave the restaurant the younger woman looks back and notices that the elderly couple are holding hands. I think at that moment she realized—they still love each other. She looks at her husband and quietly reaches over and takes his hand. There is nothing more beautiful than an older married couple who still love each other. You know each other so well. You don’t have to talk. A touch can mean more than words. This is the best preparation that you can make to prepare for the possibility of being a widow.

Endnotes

1 Marge Green, **Martha, Martha!**, (Abilene, TX: Quality Printing Company, Inc., 1964) p.93.

2 Ibid, p. 98.

3 M. F. McKnight, **Christian Homes Are The Vestibules Of Heaven**, (Abilene, TX: M.F. McKnight, 1966) p. 143.

CHAPTER 36

A Woman Of Inner Beauty

(1 Pet. 3:1-6)

Dorothy Mosher

I FOUND OUT WHAT IT takes to be a beautiful woman. The secret is that unless your beauty is on the inside you will never be beautiful on the outside.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain (1 Cor. 15:10).

Some day all earthly accomplishments will fade into nothingness; all material wealth will lose its value; physical bodies whether beautiful or otherwise will decay, but there is a part of us which will never die. Life's most urgent task is to keep the inner being well groomed, free from the stains of sin, ready to appear before the Great Judge of the only beauty contest that really counts.

I want to say how much I appreciate brother Clarke and the elders for their confidence in me. I consider it a privilege to be with you today. I hope our study will be profitable. Our lesson is titled "The Inner Beauty of a Woman." What makes a person beautiful? Have you ever disagreed with the decision of the judges in the Miss

America contest? Many of us do not even watch it anymore because we know it's not really about beauty. Who gave these few judges the authority to say who is more beautiful?

The old saying is still true "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Or as my mother often told me "Beauty is as beauty does." How do we know who is beautiful? We know what we think is beautiful or handsome. When we are young we look for someone who is handsome who will walk us down the aisle. What we think of ourselves has a great bearing on who we think is handsome. If I have low self esteem I will not expect much in a man. Young girls have the idea that they are not pretty enough to get a really handsome guy so they'll just settle for cute, or settle for whoever wants them. These girls who think they are not pretty often try some other means to win a handsome guy and it almost always ends in disaster.

The trouble is ladies, most women do not find out what beauty is until most of their life is over, and we look at old movie stars who we thought were so beautiful. Their beauty has faded, replaced by wrinkles, stooped shoulders, baldness, etc. I knew a woman, a sister in Christ, who knew what beauty was. She and her husband were in their 80's. She was a little petite woman. He was short, a little pudgy, age spots on his face, wore glasses, moved slow. She looked at him and then at us as we visited in their home and said "Isn't he handsome?" I thought that was precious.

What do we really know about beauty? If we haven't seen it from God's perspective we don't know what beauty is. I know most of you here today. I know of your faith in God; I know of your loyalty and work for the Lord's church; I know some of the trials and heartaches you've been through, some of the pain that life has given you, and I don't believe that you realize how beautiful you are.

When I was a girl there was a song that said, "If you want to be happy for the rest of your life never make a

pretty woman your wife.” What is that song implying about women who think they are beautiful? It implies “I’m one of the beautiful ones so I get what I want; you are to serve me.” A homely wife would say I am very lucky to have you and I will spend my life serving you. He may date the beautiful girl, but which one do you think the guy wants to marry?

What is beauty? God tells us in several ways in His Word, but how many women in the world read the Bible to find out how to be beautiful? Probably 99% don’t read the Bible for any reason, much less to find out how to be beautiful. The writer of Proverbs said “Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, the woman who fears the Lord she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30). We are told that Sarah, Rachel, Esther and others were beautiful in appearance. We are also told these women were our examples of true beauty. (1 Pet. 3:5). Why speak of beauty if beauty is in vain? Outer beauty is even condemned to a degree in 1 Peter 3:3: “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel.”

Why bring it to our attention? Are we to abhor beauty? There are different types of physical beauty. There is physical beauty that is only “skin deep”—only physical with no spirituality. There also exists physical beauty, which is at its base spiritual. It is an outward appearance of an inner beauty, causing those who see it to remark, “What a perfect creation, beautiful inside and out.” It is a beauty that comes from within.

Our western civilization today is consumed with beauty. We have beauty pageants from the tiny baby to Miss America, Miss Universe, Miss World etc. Women today refuse to trust in God to make them beautiful. They think they know all the answers. We have been taught by the world that outward beauty is what makes one

attractive. Thinking like the world can become a big hurt, as you get older. Outward beauty fades quickly but inner beauty lasts a life time. “Though our outward man perish our inner man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Sarah is an example of beauty. She was so beautiful that at the age of 65, Pharaoh thought that he had to have her for his harem. 65 years old! God brings this beautiful woman into our mind and says “You know what really makes Sarah beautiful? 1 Peter 3:5. She trusted in the Lord and she is honored in Hebrews 11.” What’s on the inside? What matters is how she treats her husband. Ladies, if you are not treating your husbands in a beautiful manner, an honoring way, you may not be beautiful to God.

He tells us even our prayers can be hindered. Do you want God to hear your prayers? For years we have grown up with the idea somehow that if we wear the expensive clothes, have expensive jewelry, have the right hairdo, have the perfect shape, spend a lot of money on exercise equipment and spas, we will be beautiful. The world has sold us a bill of goods that just isn’t so. It is not your expensive clothes that make you beautiful. It is the “Sarah Look” (1 Pet. 3:4). The meek and quiet spirit loves God and loves her husband.

Can you look in the mirror and say I am a beautiful woman? Most of us wouldn’t dare. We would see a lot of things that need changing. But if you are a Christian, if you are a woman of God you can say, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psm. 139:14). “Thank you Lord.” Many are too concerned about the outward beauty; the braid of the hair, the costly jewels, the expensive clothes (1 Pet. 3:3). This is not what makes you beautiful. TV and magazines have done a good job of brainwashing women. What a tragedy when you see a woman with outward beauty who has never learned what it is to be beautiful inside.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with

shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

In 1 Tim. 2:9, it says to wear modest apparel. We think of the word “modest” as the opposite of sexy or shameful. Actually this word in the Greek means the arrangement of things. We get our word cosmetics from this word, the arrangement on the face. We look at the world, the Cosmos, the arrangement of the planets. It means that whatever we wear it should be clean and neatly arranged. God does not want us to be sloppy. If you have only one garment make sure it is clean and neat and well arranged.

Somehow people think this isn't important. The sloppier the better. Our young people think it is attractive to be sloppy, to wear baggy jeans with the crotch down to their knees and the waistline down over the hips. They think it is attractive to have all parts of the body pierced and jewels hanging from their nose, their eyes, their lips, etc. God doesn't care about the price we pay for clothes, or how many clothes we have, but He does want our clothes to be modest and well arranged.

The second thing in this passage is a message about sensuality. The KJV reads “shamefacedness and sobriety.” The NKJV renders it “propriety and moderation.” These are two words which are similar, but with a subtle difference. Shamefacedness is dealing with a sense of shame and is talking about what reaction you produce in another man. To put it plainly, do not seduce men by what you wear. The second word, sobriety, is what you feel in yourself, not what you cause in someone else. Don't satisfy your own lusts by what you wear. Wearing something to make you feel sexy is appropriate only for your husband and not to be worn outside the home where you may

produce sensuality in another man. It is not so much braided hair that is condemned as it is the motive of drawing attention to yourself. The Romans had elaborate hairdos and they would decorate the hair with jewels so that everyone noticed them when they came into the room. In Isaiah 3:18, God is speaking of women who want to be noticed and God condemns such an attitude.

In that day, the Lord will take away the beauty of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, their anklets, and their cauls Lace, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, veils, the bonnets and the ornaments of the legs and the headbands and the tablets, perfume boxes and the earrings, the rings and nose jewels...and it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink, and instead of well set hair baldness...(Isa. 3:18-24).

They thought they were beautiful but God smelled their stench. God is not against you looking great; He is against extravagance. He is against you thinking that somehow the key to your beauty is clothes, jewelry, and cosmetics. None of these things are wrong in and of themselves but how we use them makes the difference.

Always distinguish between femininity and masculinity. We are told this in Deuteronomy 22:5: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God."

Always distinguish between attractiveness and seduction. Always distinguish between your husband and other men. When you dress for other men you have a problem. Let's go back to 1 Peter 3:4:

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Peter speaks of emotional calm, the hidden, gentle and quiet spirit. This emotional calmness originates inside your heart. There are two characteristics of this calm: (1) gentleness or meekness, (the opposite of revenge); (2) Being a forgiving person. In all your dealings with your husband and children are you forgiving or are you revengeful? That which makes a woman extremely beautiful is to have the quality of Jesus when He says, “I am meek and lowly in heart; learn from me and you shall have rest to your souls” (Matt. 11:28).

When Peter speaks of a quiet spirit, an equivalent word in the English for this is “tranquility”; it’s talking about an attitude. There are two different kinds of tranquility: tranquility from without, when people are reacting to you in a peaceful manner. It’s easy to be tranquil when others are, but the second type of tranquility is when you are tranquil in heart, even when it is stormy out. The second one here is not domineering, aggressive, or revengeful, but denotes a calm rest in the Lord. Having this attitude makes you beautiful. The cost mentioned in 1 Peter 3:4 is very precious, great—it’s cost is based on God’s values, not man’s. We ought always to emphasize the inner spirit rather than outward appearance.

Are you ready to go to the beauty parlor right now? In fact, I think we shall go to two beauty shops to make ourselves beautiful on the inside and on the outside. We have all been to a beauty shop.

We will go to the world’s beauty shop first and tell them we want the works. The beautician will probably start with the eyes. To make our eyes beautiful she will put eye cream on our eyes and then some eyeliner, some eye shadow and mascara. Now let God make your eyes beautiful on the inside:

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest,
and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give
thee light (Eph. 4:14).

And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed (Rom. 13:11).

Wake up. There is nothing pretty about a drowsy Christian. Isaiah 60:1 declares, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” We have the light. Christ is the light. Use your eyes to see the lost, the sick and those who are sorrowing. Look with compassion toward others. Your eyes will be beautiful.

Next the world’s beauty shop will make our mouth beautiful by using a lip liner, some lipstick and lip gloss to make them shine. God will make our mouth beautiful on the inside. Matthew 10:32 reads, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Go about telling others how much they are loved by Jesus and how they can become part of God’s family.

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” Speak kindness, teach the lost, give wise counsel (Jas. 3:2).

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:32).

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20).

Now your mouth is beautiful on the inside. We will go back to the beauty parlor to beautify our hands. The beautician will give us a manicure by filing our nails and

putting polish on them. We'll also have our wedding rings on our fingers. God wants to make our hands beautiful too.

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psm. 24:4-5).

Do good to others, reach out, keep busy doing good, preparing food for those in need. Proverbs 31:20 describes the worthy woman: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

We are almost finished at the beauty shop. If you've been there you know it takes most of the day to get beautiful. The beautician is down to our feet, which will feel very good after she gives us a pedicure and puts polish on our toenails, maybe even a toe ring. Then we will wear sandals to show off our feet. But God will make our feet even more beautiful:

As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15).

Who taught you the Gospel? Be grateful that their feet brought them to you. Take those feet of yours to someone who needs the Gospel. Someone is looking for the truth, and you need to find them.

All we need now is a garment. Choose an outfit that is becoming, attractive, modest, well arranged and neat. If it shows off too much body, put it back on the rack. God will be dressing you on the inside:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. And your feet shod with

the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6: 13-17).

Now you are beautiful inside and outside. Beauty has always been of universal interest to women and men alike. It is possible to develop beauty that is captivating, a calm loveliness of soul that is both sacred and compelling. God tells us how. The Bible is our mirror; it enables us to see our imperfections and needs and has given all the beauty ingredients and instructions for application. Think about grooming the inner you as much as you do the outer you. You clean your face and body every day. Don't let a day go by that you do not clean your inner you. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you. After all, we are preparing our inner selves to meet our bridegroom. How beautiful do you want to look on the wedding day? We have plenty of time on earth to get our inner self well groomed but no guaranteed time. One day our bridegroom will come. How will we look to Him? We can be beautiful but the Lord warns of the consequences of showing up at the wedding feast having neglected the inner soul:

And when the king come in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants. Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22: 11-13).

Endnotes

1 King James Bible.

2 Lottie Beth Hobbs, **You Can be Beautiful**, (Harvest Publications; Fort Worth, Bible Hour, Dr. David Hocking, Lamaroda, California).

3 Elizabeth George, **Becoming a Woman of Beauty**, (Harvest House Publications; Eugene, Oregon).

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