

Revivals And Church History :: The 'Unnatural' Love ("The Betrayal of the Ages" Continued)

The 'Unnatural' Love ("The Betrayal of the Ages" Continued) - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/26 9:19

THE OUTPOURING OF GOD'S LOVE INTO THE HEARTS OF MEN (Part 1)

By Robert Wurtz II

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:1-5)

Our passage begins with our justification, a foundational truth that makes the rest of the passage possible. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where once we were lost and without hope and God in this world, doomed to everlasting destruction and perdition, now we have been justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a love that when perfected in us casts out all fear. Many people struggle with unnatural fears, but as we will learn God's unnatural love with cast our ALL fear. In times of trouble we need perspective. And that begins when we realize that no crisis can rival the condition we were in before we were saved. Nothing is remotely as fearful and troubling as to know that we were once without Christ and at enmity with God.

Paul, in dealing with several issues at once, is giving us a right perspective for our trials, temptations, and tribulations. He wants us to keep in mind the terrible condition God has brought us from. Not just that we were wrecking our lives, but that we were dead in trespasses and sins. He then points to the person and means by which we survive every trial. He writes, *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

The 'whom' is Jesus Christ and the 'what' is grace. We can define grace as God looking favorably towards us and helping us in a time of need (Hebrews 4:17). It is similar to the Hebrew term *Shalom*. We do not deserve God's favor; it is an expression of His nature without regard to our worth. We are 'standing' in that grace. The phrase 'this grace wherein we stand' is the means by which we have our patience (lit. perseverance).

We stand firmly and safely during trials and temptations because we are upheld by the power of God; as Ephesians 6 tells us 'having done all stand'. We stand as soldiers that keep their ground, not worn down by the power of the enemy. It is this recognition of God's keeping power during trials and temptations; abilities that we know we do not possess in ourselves, that ultimately leads to the 'hope' that does not disappoint (KJV 'maketh not ashamed'). God is working in us and we begin to 'see' it.

Re: The 'Unnatural' Love - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/26 10:53

In The World Ye shall Have Tribulations (Part 2)

In James 1:12 we read, *Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* Notice that a direct connection is made between enduring temptation and loving God. The passage indicates that temptations are ultimately a 'test' of our love for God.

This directly relates to our original passage in Romans 5. Paul writes, *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience (perseverance); And patience (perseverance), experience (character); and experience (character), hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Notice that the progression is tribulation, perseverance, character (proof), and then hope. This is a process similar to refining silver. Fire is applied and the silver is refined and if 'approved' (dokimos) is given the stamp of approval. Here our word for 'approval' has been translated as 'experience'; but it means the "state of mind that has passed the test."

What test? To pass the test is evidence that we truly love God. But is the love referred to here just 'any' type of love or is it a special kind of love? We will answer that question later. Notice again James 1:12, *for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* This seems to be the point that Paul is driving at in our text. The evidence that the 'love of God' has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost is that we can withstand the 'test' of our love for God when it comes.

Jesus told us, *In the world ye shall have tribulations.* Tests of your and my love for God are going to come and come often. Will you remain loyal? Often folk want to know if they are 'really' saved; and the answer to that is known to a great degree by whether or not you and I are passing the 'tests' of our love for God when they come. Are we remaining loyal to God? Are we 'enduring' (abiding or persevering) in His love?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/27 8:31

THE PROVING OF OUR LOVE (Part 3)

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God *proveth* you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut 13:1-4)

To summarize what we have learned so far; it is evident that various trials are going to come to prove or 'test' our love for God. Perhaps we can take this a step farther and say that temptations come and by their coming reveal to us whether the love of God has been *truly* shed abroad in our hearts or not.

Job is a prime example of a man who remained faithful to the Lord in spite of the fiery trial which was to try him. The great accusation against the Saints from our enemy towards God is the same as Job, "Doth Job serve God for nothing?" You must bear this in mind in any trial you go through. The enemy says that we only love God because He will do us good. We serve Him for what we can gain from the relationship. His argument is that if God were to withdraw the blessings- man will withdraw His love.

If you look closely at the Hebrew words for 'curse God' (as the enemy told God Job would curse Him to His face) there is an underlying meaning that Job would 'dismiss' God from His heart. Imagine the implications of such a statement, "Yea, skin for skin, touch his body and He will dismiss you from the throne of his affections." That, indeed, is a powerfully painful accusation. The enemy argued that there was a point in which Job would stop loving God with all his heart. He believed a scenario could be created that would cause Job's love for God to *collapse*. Yet, this writer believes that there was something more to this relationship with God that nor the enemy or even his wife understood. Job had tasted of the love of God and that love endures *all* things.

Since the 'love of God' (agapE) is not the same as we would generally understand love (phileo, stergos, eros) we will take a moment to define it. Vines Greek NT dictionary states that, "(agapE) Love or 'the love of God' can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son (I John 4:9,10). But obviously this is not the love of complacency (self-gratification), or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects (Romans 5:8). It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." (Vines)

This is God's love and it flows from His nature independent of any good thing in us. God loves because it is his *nature* to love. The old timers often use the term *benevolence* as a way of describing this love. I Corinthians 13 describes it in detail. It is the highest form of love. This agapE love is what is poured into our hearts when the Holy Spirit comes in. We as born again believers have a *nature* to love and keep on loving in spite of the many challenges to that love because the Holy Spirit resides in us.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/27 16:42

THE EXPRESSION OF AGAPE LOVE (Part 4)

AgapE love or 'Christian love' has *God* for its primary object. We express agapE love first of all by obedience to Christ's commandments (John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; I John 2:5; 5:3; II John 6).

A predominant attitude of 'self-will', that is, 'self-pleasing', is evidence that God's love (agapE) is not present. God's love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings (as would be phileo, eros). AgapE love does not always run with the natural inclinations and affections (stergos), nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom you may have a relationship.

AgapE love (God's love) seeks the welfare of all (Romans 15:2), and works no ill to anyone (I Corinthians 13:8,9,10). AgapE love seeks opportunity to do good to *all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith* (Galatians 6:10). This is a love expressed by God causing it to rain on the just and the unjust.

We get a picture of this love expressed in Matthew 5; *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 who is in heaven: for he so loveth them that hate him, that he sendeth forth his sun to shine on the just and the unjust.*

dren 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.

Notice what this passage says, *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.*

The word for 'perfect' here is Teleios. It carries the idea of *completeness*. Our love should be expressed even as God expresses it. This is the thing that distinguishes true Christians from non-Christians. The appropriation of benevolence by unbelievers is hit and miss and thoroughly 'incomplete' in its distribution. If we distribute benevolence like everyone else we are no different than them. However, with the love of God (AgapE) poured out in our hearts we are enabled to distribute good-will to all as if we were 'blindfolded' to our relationship to them; good, bad, or non-existent. God's Love desires the best for everyone and does not delight in the ills of others.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/28 8:15

THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD (Part 5)

In II Corinthians 3:5 we gain insight into the constraining influence of the love of God as it has been poured out in our hearts. Paul writes, *We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.* (NASU)

This is a powerful statement! The Greek word for 'control' gives us a picture like unto a narrow road walled in on both sides like a tunnel or a channel. The love of Christ would not allow Paul to turn to the right hand or the left. It was this love, poured out in His heart, that kept him 'on track' and doing what God wanted him to do.

Paul is also stating that what he does is not for 'appearance' but is done out of the love (agapE) that's in his heart. He did not do things to be seen. He did not do it for the praise of men. He did it because it was his new found born again nature to do it and he could not *help* but do it. The love of Christ was the inward motivating factor in his ministry. It was not something he had to 'force' any more than we would be motivated by love in the natural.

Moreover, there was an additional truth that kept Paul thankful, even cultivating the desire to be filled and filled, over and over with God's love through the Spirit. Paul had come to the sobering conclusion that if *one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all*. Now we are back to our survey of the wondrous cross. John said it similarly, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* (I John 4:11)

So what were these men saying? Men that had experienced the fullness of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts? They were looking through the eyes of love and were constrained to love, in spite of the circumstances. And in that fullness they were *fully equipped* to fulfill the two great commandments upon which hang all of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40).

Re:, on: 2006/4/28 8:24

From my favorite Psalm below that applies to these posts. God is GOOD and His mercies endureth forever and so does His Word.

"Psa 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

LORD Bless you Robert.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/4/28 8:42

AGAPE THE "UN-NATURAL" LOVE (Part 6)

You will recall that we stated in an earlier section that *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*; the end of that passage states, *therefore love is the fulfilling of the law* (Romans 13:10). The word *ill* in this passage is generally translated as *evil* and should be understood to mean the *outworking* of that selfish, murderous, destructive and hateful spirit of Satan himself. It is the opposite of agape love and flows from the Sinful nature.

Simply stated, *love works no injury to his neighbor*. This is the supreme summary of the Law of Moses. The Jews had eventually codified that law into 248 "Do's" and 365 "Don'ts" (one for each day of the year), a total of 613 Commandments. But the fact is, you cannot *legislate* Agape love. Reason being is that man must have the intent and spirit of the Law front and center as his objective in obeying it; and that objective is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. When that objective is lost a host of means can be employed to carve up the Law till it is of none effect. Simply put, the Law just as well as told the people you don't really love God or your neighbor in of yourselves. You have a nature of hate and are of your father the devil. This is the reality that makes John 3:3 make sense.

Agape love will put down the emotions and constrain a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Law could not do that in it was weak through the flesh. The nature of humanity is contrary to the spirit of the Law. And the Law does a wonderful job pointing that out. As we look into the perfect law of liberty, the Law that shows us a God of perfect love, who causes it to rain on the evil and the good, and we *see ourselves*, we see what manner of men and women we are. And apart from Christ; apart from the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we are destined to sin, because sin is cultivated in the absence of Agape love.

Before you were born again you would defend your family to the death for the same crimes you had put your enemies to death for; why? Because your love was not *perfect*. You would prefer your friends and make provisions for them regardless of whether they were right or wrong. Why? Because you *phileos* them. You would sacrifice and sacrifice for Sin and this world to the destruction of your own life and soul, but would not as much as walk across the street for free *salvation*. Why? Because you sacrifice for that which you love, and you loved Sin more than your own best interest.

But when you were born again you found a new love. This love was demonstrated by our Lord as He was being taken to the cross and crucified. Here we read, *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."* (NAS) I have chosen the NAS version because it accurately translates the Greek verb as *'was saying'*. This means that He not only said it once, but was *'saying'* it *over and over* again. Had man seen such a perfect expression of love? It is certain that this had *never once* happened before in the history of humanity. That a man wrongfully condemned would pray forgiveness for those who were putting Him to death and mocking Him? Not after there was time for the wounds to heal and after reflection and much thought and feelings of mercy may begin to flow. Oh No! The love of Christ was in the "while we were yet..." tense (if you will). This is completely UNNATURAL LOVE. It was an expression of God's love in the midst of tremendous trial and temptation. It was a demonstration of that same love which has been shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/1 8:44

THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND (Part 7)

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. (Romans 12:2)

In a previous study we looked at Romans 12:1 where Paul calls our attention to the previous 11 chapters with the term, *'therefore'*. Romans is the closest thing we have in the New Testament to a systematic theology on the subject of salvation from Sin and sins (R.B). In verse 1 of chapter 12 he draws attention to the great *'survey'* of the cross that he had afore explained to the readers. Paul expounded upon the length and width and breadth and height of God's plan of redemption and the tremendous sacrifice and love that God demonstrated to us while yet sinners.

With chapters 1-11 as his backdrop he opens chapter 12 verse 1 with *"I beseech you therefore brethren..."* He closes the verse by saying, that our presentation of our bodies is our 'reasonable' service. This word in the Greek is *logikos* and is where we get the English word *logic*. He was saying, essentially, that anything *'other'* than our full presentation

of ourselves to God, in light of all He has done for us, simply would not make sense; it would defy reason.

We then have the conjunction 'and' that couples the thoughts of verse 1 with 2. This means that the passage in verse 2 also is part of the 'therefore' of verse 1. He is beseeching us of two separate things that are coupled together. The one is dependant on the other. We are 'urged' to 'present our bodies' and we are 'urged' to renew our minds. If we understand this rightly it would be as if Paul *also* said, *"I beseech ye therefore brethren by the mercies of God... to be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."*

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/1 13:58

THIS WORLD: AT ENMITY WITH GOD (Part 8)

We must begin this section by affirming God's total enmity with this World. In I John 2:15-16 we read, *"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."*

There are only a relative 'handful' of occasions in which the word 'agape' is *not* used in relationship to Christian Love (the Love of God). Our passage is one of them. Its use in I John 2 is similar to other passages where we are told that things such as, *men agape (love) darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil* (John 3:19). We read in II Timothy 4:10, *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world....* other ways it is used include 'love' as in one that 'loved' the nation of Israel (Luke 7:5) and the Pharisees that 'loved' the chief seats (Luke 11:43). Even sinners are said to 'love' (agape) those who 'love' (agape) them (Luke 6:32).

In every case we have an incomplete 'version' of the perfect agape love of God as described in our previous study. In the aforementioned examples the word is used to denote a love willing to sacrifice. Truly the love of God also is one of sacrifice, but the difference is in the perfection of God's love. The agape of God is 'self-less', the agape expressed by the unsaved is 'selfish'.

We are told to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. Then we are faced with an 'if' leading into John's second thought... *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*. You cannot have the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5) and love the world at the same time. It is impossible. It is an axiom of this passage that if you love the world you do not have the love of the Father. This is a 'one or the other' question; it cannot have an answer of 'both'.

The 'World' is this temporal age headed by the spirit of disobedience- bent on selfish rebellion against God. It is the domain of Satan where the expression of his nature is increasing with each passing day. The 'things' that are in the world are, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the only three 'tools' in the devil's kit (Reidhead). With these three things he has damned the race of men. They answer to the Old Testament gods that Israel stumbled over when they came into the promised land of Baal, Astaroth, and Molech.

Baal represents the procurement of 'things'. Astaroth represents 'forbidden and illicit experience'. Molech 'ascendancy over one's fellows' (See Danger of third Generation Religion; P. Reidhead).

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/2 8:19

CONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD (Part 9)

'Be not conformed' is an interesting phrase. Paul is telling the people that there is a danger that after all God has done the effects of His work would be made void by neglecting this truth. What travesty! What an injustice? That God would take a sinner from a sinful world, forgive their sins, give him/her a new nature, pour His love in their hearts by His Spirit, put them back into the world for the purpose of their being a 'peculiar people' (in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation), and that person pattern their life after the world that God sent His Son to save them from.

A sober mind sees this as utter madness. *Be not conformed...*, that is, do not 'pattern yourself' after. The word 'conform' has the Greek root, *sun* (soon) and it means to 'walk together in union as companions.' James said it this way;

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.

Those members of the church that have befriended the world are figuratively regarded as unfaithful spouses to God. Why? Because their affections have turned away from Him and have turned to this World, His enemy. This is the pure definition of whoredoms; to take the love that belongs to the one and give it to another.

The enemy is always wanting to steal away our affection for God for himself. What's the solution? *But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Re: - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/5/12 19:49

bump

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/15 15:55

THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND (Part 10)

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (Ephesians 4:22, 23)

The first step in renewing the mind is to believe that your mind needs to be renewed in the first place. One must believe that the Christian life demands that the entire *bent* of one's mind be towards the will of God.

In a previous lesson we discussed how God had given man a new heart and a new spirit, but not a new 'mind'. God, through the finished work of the cross transforms the spirit of their mind, but does not delete the whole of the *memory* or instantly replace *wrong reasoning*. For those who have been born again, the 'spirit of the mind' is *bent* towards God's will, but even this 'bent' needs to be continually refreshed by the Lord.

This renewal goes hand in hand with the Word of God that has the *effect* of 'reprogramming' the beliefs, thinking and reasoning. Some may think that when we were born again the mind was renewed and that was *all* we needed. Truth is, the mind must be renewed perpetually in order to prevent our conformity to this world (Romans 12:2).

In a former study we also examined how God through the Apostle made his case for our *commitment* to renewing our minds. The key here is 'commitment'. Before one will be committed, they have to be 'convinced'. One has to be *completely convinced* that their mind must be constantly renewed.

The old adage comes to mind, "where there is a will- there is a way." Perhaps this is why Paul used such strong terms in Romans 12:1. The UBS Handbook states that, "There are a number of ways in which the phrase 'I beseech you' may be rendered; 'I strongly urge you,' or 'I beg of you earnestly.'" Once the people have a revelation of this they are more likely to take it seriously and act on it. Truly, it is life and death. Where there is a 'will' there is a 'way'.

Our shortage is not the means of renewing our mind, but our resolve to have it renewed. If the mind is not renewed, the heart is likely to turn aside after this world and conformity to it is inevitable. Conformity and friendship are not far apart.

People take on the traits of those they befriend. This is where the concept of an 'affected' personality comes from. People want approval from their friends and often resort to mimicking them. Friendship with the world is no different and is expressed in *conformity to it*. Can two walk together if they are not agreed?

Once the realization of the ramifications of befriending the world are realized and an express determination to prevent this is made, the renewal of the mind has already begun.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 7:25

THE OTHER 'BESEECH THEE' OF ROMANS 12:1 (Part 11)

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. (Romans 12:2)

In a previous study we looked at Romans 12:1 where Paul calls our attention to the previous 11 chapters with the term, 'therefore'. Romans is the closest thing we have in the New Testament to a systematic theology on the subject of salvation from Sin and sins (R.B., soteriology). In verse 1 of chapter 12 he draws attention to the great 'survey' of the crosses that he had afore explained to the readers. Paul expounded upon the length and width and breadth and height of God's plan of redemption and the tremendous sacrifice and love that God demonstrated to us while yet sinners.

With chapters 1-11 as his *backdrop* he opens chapter 12 verse 1 with "I beseech you therefore brethren..." He closes the verse by saying, that our presentation of our bodies is our 'reasonable' service. This word in the Greek is *logicos* and is where we get the English word logic. He was saying, essentially, that anything 'other' than our full presentation of ourselves to God, in light of all He has done for us, simply would not make sense; it would *defy reason*.

We then have the conjunction 'and' that couples the thoughts of verse 1 with 2. This means that the passage in verse 2 also is part of the 'therefore' of verse 1. If we understand this rightly it would be as if Paul said, "I beseech ye therefore brethren by the mercies of God... to be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." These are compelling words. These are words that draw our attention to what Christ has done and our right response to it.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 7:44

GOD'S GREAT ENEMY (PART 12)

We must begin this section by affirming God's total enmity with this World. In I John 2:15-16 we read;

"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."

There are only a handful of occasions in which the word 'agape' is *not* used in relationship to Christian Love (the Love of God). Our passage is one of them and it is similar to other passages where we are told that things such as; *men agree (love) darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil* (John 3:19). We read in II Timothy 4:10, *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*...

We have to make a distinction between agape in this sense and the love of God as described in our previous study. In the afore mentioned examples the word is used to denote a love willing to *sacrifice*. But that does not mean the sacrifice is necessarily unconditional. A few other examples using agape in a non-Christian love sense includes one that 'loved' the nation of Israel (Luke 7:5); the Pharisees that 'loved' the chief seats (Luke 11:43) and sinners that are said to 'love' (agape) those who 'love' (agape) them (Luke 6:32). In all of these cases there is a sacrifice and an exchange taking place.

It would seem appropriate to say, the agape of God is 'self-less', the agape expressed by the unsaved is 'selfish'. In either case, we are not to love the world whatsoever. We are not to befriend the world either. We are not just told to love not the world, but neither the things that are in the world. Then we are faced with an 'if' leading into John's second thought... *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

You cannot have the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5) and love the world at the same time. It is impossible. It is an axiom of this passage that if you love the world you do not have the love of the Father. This is a 'one or the other' question; it cannot have an answer of both.

The 'World' is this temporal age headed by the spirit of disobedience, bent on selfish rebellion against God. It is the domain of Satan where the expression of his nature is increasing with each passing day. The 'things' that are in the world

world are, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Paris Reidhead in his sermon "The Danger of Third Generation Religion" remarks that 'these' are the only three 'tools' in the devil's kit. With these three things he has damned the race of men. By way of illustration, they answer to the Old Testament gods of Baal, Ashteroth, and Molech. Baal represents the procurement of 'things', Ashteroth represents 'forbidden and illicit knowledge or experience', Molech 'ascendancy over one's fellows'. These are the three main characteristics of a secular world view. This is the nature of Satan manifest in society.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 7:56

CONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD (Part 13)

Returning to our passage in Romans 12:2, *be not 'conformed'* is an interesting phrase. Paul seems to be telling the people that there is a danger that after all God has done the effects of His work would be made void by neglecting this truth. What travesty! What an injustice? That God would take a sinner from a sinful world, forgive their sins, give him/her a new nature, pour His love in their hearts by His Spirit, put them back into the world for the purpose of their being a 'peculiar people' (in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation), and that person pattern their life after the world that God sent His Son to save them from.

A *sober* mind sees this as utter madness. Sin has a way of numbing the conscience to the reality and seriousness of their actions. *They are drunk but not with wine, they stagger but not with strong drink.* You don't have to be intoxicated with alcohol or mind altering drugs to be 'drunk' on sin. We read, *Be not conformed*; that is, do not pattern yourself after.

The word 'conformed' has the Greek root, *sun* (soon) and it means to walk together in union as companions. Can two walk together that are not agreed? James said it this way, *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.* Those members of the church that have befriended the world are figuratively regarded as unfaithful spouses to God. Why? Because their affections have turned away from Him and have turned to this World, His enemy. This is the pure definition of *whoredoms*; to take the love that belongs to the one and give it to another. What's the solution? *But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:05

ONE THING THOU LACKEST (Part 14)

When you were born again you became a new creature. This was a creative miracle on the part of God in which you died to the old man (by the cross) and were raised to life as the new man (in the power of the Holy Spirit). This was a miracle every much as real as our Lord calling Lazarus from the grave or healing a blinded eye. You were emancipated from Sin (Romans 6:18-22), freed from the Law (Romans 7:1-6) and were crucified to this world and the world to you (Galatians 6:14). Your flesh has been crucified also (Galatians 5:24).

Now, as the born again, you are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit if so be that the Holy Spirit dwells in you (Romans 8:3-9). You have received a new heart and Spirit in place of the old stony heart and the spirit of disobedience (Ezekiel 36:27, 28; Ephesians 2:2, etc.). The life that you now live is no longer you, but Christ that liveth in you (Galatians 2:20). But though you received a new heart and a new Spirit (the Holy Spirit), you did not receive a new brain. The spirit of your mind has changed, but there are many many beliefs and reasonings that God will need to 'renew' and change in order to change you into His image from Glory to Glory. People come to God with some strange and even outrageous beliefs. God takes us where we are and begins working on our minds.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:12

THE RENOVATION OF THE MIND (Part 15)

We must always bear in mind that though we received a new heart at salvation, we did not get a new memory. We have a new affection, but we also have a memory bank 'loaded' with trash (as it were) from the previous owner.

I recall once that I looked at a house for purchase that was two stories and huge on the inside. The seller was asking little for the house compared to what it looked to be worth from the exterior. When I went inside the home I had never been as overwhelmed with trash and junk in all my life. I didn't know that folk could survive under such conditions. The trash was to my knees and I was literally wading through it from room to room. The house was 'loaded' with the remnants of the life the former owner had lived. It seemed that when they unpackaged something, they left the packing where it fell. The smell was awful to put it mildly.

Though we have a new nature and are free from the flesh, Sin, and this world, we are loaded with memories of the past experiences we have lived out. Bad habits. Wrong reasonings. Life patterns. Memories that have an awesome and almost 'automatic' effect. Like dialing a phone by placing your hands over the numbers and not being able to recall it till your hand touched the pad- then the hand dialed it. Many such things.

Our mind is powerful. It can recall vivid color, majestic sound, distinctive scents, magnificent flavor, emotions distilled from a multitude of circumstances, and other unknown factors that we are not keen enough to realize. Many of these thoughts were the products of being drawn away by our lusts or godless emotions and were birthed with the hallmarks of our sinful condition. Put this all together and you have a 'mind's eye' that can *take you there*, either past or future. The past has a powerful effect on the present as it pertains to our minds. The vast warehouse of intricate memories both stores and manufactures new thoughts. With a wide arrangement of resources, the combinations and possibilities are almost endless. Can you see why the mind must be renewed?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:23

FALSE RENEWAL (Part 16)

In 1993 I had been born again about 2 years and desired greatly to please the Lord. I knew that my mind needed to be renewed daily. I recall hearing a TV minister state that he was going to start a series on "Renewing The Mind" and I looked forward each day to the coming start of that series. When it started a study guide (book) was offered, so I ordered it. When it arrived it was little more than a bizarre combination of *prosperity* proof text scriptures and positive thinking techniques. I was greatly disappointed to say the least.

I understood then that there was no abundance of believers that truly understood what it meant to 'renew their minds.' What disillusionment I felt when I had looked for a resource to assist me in renewing my mind to the image of Christ, and found the exact opposite in a book that would set my mind on the temporal things of this world. The book that promised to renew the mind- actually sought to conform it to this world.

In the 80's and 90's prosperity and positive thinking techniques gained a foothold in American Evangelicalism and laid the foundation for the apostasy and gross departure from scripture that those who think Biblically are vexed by today- from day to day. These were promoted by many televangelists that influenced local preaching.

As TV preaching has gone, so has gone much of the church. This is evidenced by a sharp turn away from the scriptures and towards *psychology* and *motivational* preaching. The whole emphasis of the Church as a whole has shifted. The emphasis has often been on being 'positive' and 'optimistic' in exchange for Truth and Faith. Tears in the altars have dried and a whole new form of Christianity has cropped up.

Fads have come and gone and each has left their own distinctive 'mark'. Many worldly concepts birthed in the minds of ungodly men fabricated ideas that would challenge the word of God, by using the word of God as its proof text. Ron Bailey tells of a pulpit he once saw that had a plate that none could see save the man preaching. The enscribed words were, "**We would see Jesus.**" Would to God that such a reminder would be attached to every pulpit in the world.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:31

RAT POISON IS 90% GOOD CORN (Part 17)

The devil loves to teach Christians his subtle ways. Paul writes in Colossians 2:8, *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*. Imagine buying a book on 'renewing your mind' for the purpose of being transformed to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, only to find a subtle work of noxious poison designed to corrupt your thinking process with worldly reasoning. As if we need to be taught the world's ways again or something? As if we need to set our new heart on the affections of the sinful? What it amounted to was corruption of a regenerated and renewed mind.

Though obviously well intended, it was flesh at best and demonic at worst. Popular Christian authors are increasingly promoting many of these types of teachings. "If it is bad it is bad, regardless of its origin. Christians should judge a book by its dedication to truth, not by the popularity of its author." (A.W. Tozer) God does not respect persons as men do (Galatians 2:6). It is a sin to do so (James 2:1). We must be good Bereans and test all things from the word (Acts 17).

'Positive thinking' as it is commonly known is one of these doctrines. Positive thinking is not the same thing as *faith*. It is an awful counterfeit. Carlton Pearson (before he fell into Universalism) commented that Rat Poison is 90% good corn; it's the 10% strict nine that makes it deadly. It had been good if he had heeded his own advice. It speaks of how men can quote truths for novelty sake and not realize what they are actually saying. The problem is, like mice, folk are more than willing to ignore the 10% as long as 90% is good. That seems reasonable doesn't it? If 9 out of 10 things said seem biblical, can we ignore the 10% rife heresy? It might seem OK today, but it would not in times where Christians were discerning and confrontational towards false teachers. We should speak the truth in love, but it is not love to drink down poison for fear of giving offense.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:39

CELEBRITY PREACHERS (Part 18)

Celebrities wield tremendous power over people. If a person has appeared on TV, they have an influence unlike anyone else. Folk reason that if they are on TV, and have a following in the thousands or millions then they must be doing something right? But is that necessarily so? No! That's the world's reasoning corrupting minds as further evidence of need for renewal. Christian's who have somehow become popular and are now essentially 'celebrities' have the same type of influence over people. The larger the ministry- the more their teachings are implemented.

The 'positive thinking' type doctrines equate discernment with being *critical* and *fault finding*. Anyone who questions their beliefs is causing discord or disunity. This has the effect of having a security guard that turns his head rather than blowing the whistle. This is one of the most effective discernment neutralizers ever devised. People ignore the warning signs for fear of being 'labeled' or 'fighting against God' and 'His Anointed'. The voice of *reason* is out and deception is in.

The NAS version of Colossians 2:8 translates a little differently; *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ*. No-one means no-one. This passage is a prophetic word to our times.

We cannot do God's work the world's way. We have to do God's work- God's way. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The Church in the 21st century has to reckon with one major question; either the word of God is *absolute* or *obsolete* (Ravenhill). Let God be true and every man a liar.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:49

WHAT THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND IS NOT (Part 19)

The Spirit of your mind is not a 'feeling'. It has nothing to do with feeling up or down, feeling good or bad, or feeling positive or negative. *Scientology* has corrupted people into believing if there is negative 'energy' in the body that this has to be eradicated. This is false. Should man feel 'positive' when they are in Sin? Should people feel 'good' when they leave a service unchanged? This is the heresy of our times. Keep the people feeling 'good' and 'positive' all the time. As opposed to what, "bad" and "negative" (I speak as a man). In an atmosphere such as this, can God even move among the people? Can a man laugh his way through the New Birth?

The 'spirit of our mind' has nothing to do with 'positive'- it has to do with *our response to God*. It has to do with the spiritual *disposition* of our minds. "The change is not in mind psychologically, either in its essence or in its operation; and neither is it in the mind as if it were a superficial change of opinion either on points of doctrine or practice: but it is in the spirit of the mind; in that which gives mind both its bent and its materials of thought. It is not simply in the spirit as if it lay there in dim and mystic quietude; but it is in the spirit of the mind; in the power which, when changed itself, radically alters the entire sphere and business of the inner mechanism." (Vincent)

Scripture teaches that the unbeliever has a mind that is hostile towards God, ignorant of Him, vain, unable to sense the pains of conscience, and without moral understanding. This is a 'carnal' mind and cannot be made subject to the Law of God. It follows after the world and its ways- hook, line, and sinker. The spirit of our mind is made after Christ, but the spirit of this world is antichrist (I John 4:3). You simply cannot mix them.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:52

WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST (Part 20)

Another key aspect of our renewed minds deals with our ability to understand and 'judge' spiritual things. We are able to separate from holy and profane, truth and lies, sin and righteousness. In I Corinthians 2:15, 16 Paul writes, *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ*. The spiritual man is qualified to sift, to examine, to decide rightly, upon all things because he has the eyes of his heart enlightened (Ephesians 1:18) and is no longer blinded by the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4).

There is a great lesson for Christians who know by personal experience the things of the Spirit of God. Men of intellectual gifts who are ignorant of the things of Christ talk learnedly and patronizingly about things of which they are grossly ignorant. The spiritual man is superior to all this false knowledge. (Robertson's) The spiritual do not drink down deception. They do not follow a multitude to do evil, they judge all things.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 8:56

THE 'SPIRIT' OF THE AGE (Part 21)

It is almost amazing the lengths to which the Spirit of Antichrist can work in evil seducers to deceive and be deceived (II Timothy 3:13). These people can stand a passage of scripture on its ear and make Christians like it and even 'amen' it. In I Timothy 6:5-8 we read, *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*.

Can you imagine whole ministries built on prosperity and others that have an undercurrent of that teaching? The word here for 'supposing' is the Greek *nomizo* (nom-id'-zo) and means to 'think'. What did they think? They 'thought' that 'gain' (lit. money-getting) is 'godly'. They believed that money-getting was a legitimate *expression* of godliness and a measure of their spirituality. If this is true we can deduce that their whole theology would be effected and they could preach or teach on prosperity and actually 'think' it was spiritual. Why?

They were men of *corrupt* (lit. thoroughly rotted) minds and literally 'defrauded' or 'bereft' of the truth. This means t

hat they once held the Truth and knew the truth, but have set it aside. What a devilish strategy! Feed the people truth until you gain a following and then set aside the truth and feed the people lies. The meaning could also be that the truth 'died' in their life. What happened? Obviously they did not renew the 'Spirit' of their minds and in time truth perished in their reasoning. The Devil got a foothold in their mind and now they are deceiving and being deceived.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 9:01

PAUL's ADMONISHION (Part 22)

How could a corrupt mind, bereft of truth, assist someone else in renewing their mind? Maybe a better question would be, why would they get an opportunity? Personally I have to look at the teachers themselves first because of the strong **warnings** in the New Testament about God judging teachers with a stricter sentence. We read in James 3:1; *Be not many (of you) teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.* (ASV) This is a solemn warning to teach the word of God to God's people and nothing else. Wherein would teachers presume to stray from the plain precepts of God's word and even 'add to', 'take away', or 'misinterpret' the scriptures?

But are they alone to blame? In no wise. Paul has already begged the people to renew *their own minds*. He warned them at Ephesus for three years with tears that 'wolves' were coming. Peter also warned them and by when we get to Jude 4 we read, *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 (license), and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* Now they were already in the camp and they were here to stay.

How do you protect yourself from ideas and thoughts that would injure (as it were) the spirit of your mind? Concepts and philosophies that could spoil you after the rudiments of this world? What are we to do when those who did teach truth have laid it aside and have suffered decay in their own minds? Paul gave a simple answer; *from such withdraw thyself.* Do not give them an opportunity to corrupt your thinking so that you lay aside truth also. To be certain Timothy understood he states in verse 11, *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 16:12

SECTION II

BRINGING MANY sons UNTO GLORY

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (II Corinthians 3:18)

The great objective of God in creating man was that He might bring many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10). He desired that man would be a living manifestation of the nature and character of God. This does not mean that man was created as Deity, but was created upright or righteous in harmony with the personality of God. When God created man from the dust of the earth, it is said that in His image and in His likeness created He him. God is a spirit without a definite shape, as we would know it.

God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Man was created as Spirit, Soul, and Body. Man was created 'upright' and in the image of God, but Sin has marred that image. Because Sin has entered (Romans 5:12), man has sought out many 'inventions' (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Sin came into man and ruled the heart of man in place of God (Romans 5:21). God formed man's physical parts in a moment of time, but desired a different process for shaping the inner man. God had given man a free will and any shaping of the inner man would require man's cooperation. God was the Potter and man was the clay.

Beginning with Adam God desired to bring many sons unto glory. Ron Bailey has rightly pointed out that God needed nothing before He created man, but He desired to bless a people with His glory and presence (John 17). Before we were born again we were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us and because of the blindness of our hearts (Ephesians 4:15-24). Simply put, we were not *compatible* with God. Our human spirit had been severed from the life of God and the spirit of disobedience ruled in the heart and mind. This is what it means to be dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2). Death is separation. As we have quoted before, *Christ did not simply come to make bad men good, He came to make dead men live* (Ravenhill). Man is born spiritually dead; that is, he/she is *dead* towards God.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/17 16:18

SPIRIT, SOUL, BODY (Man as a Tripartite Being)

The *spirit* of man is that which allows man to be God conscious. The *body* of man makes him physically conscious. The *soul* of man makes him self-conscious. The soul is said to be that true part of man that existed when man was spiritually dead and will exist when he/she is physically dead. This defines man as a tripartite being (I Thess. 5:23, Hebrews 4:12).

In this model the soul is the 'center' of the person where the mind, will, and emotions exist. At the center of the soul is the seat of the affections commonly called the *heart*. In fact, the whole workings of the soul, in the lower and sensual, as well as in the higher spheres, has its origin in the heart.

Proverbs 4:23 informs us that it is out of the heart that are 'the issues of life.' The word 'issues' is literally 'goings out'. Jesus took this up in Matthew 12:35; A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. There was only one good man and that was Jesus Christ. All others were evil men with evil hearts (Romans 3:12).

This is the condition of man unsaved. His body is cursed with the creation, filled with infirmity. The soul at its heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9) The human spirit is dead to the life of God (Ephesians 2:1). *Unregenerate* man is physically dying, spiritually dead and morally corrupt.

So why does Paul say in I Thess. 5:23, *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.* ? (NASU) How can man be entirely sanctified to God when they are fallen in Sin? God's answer is regeneration.

Man has to be regenerated or as we commonly say, *born again*. The word 'regeneration' is the Greek *palengesis*. It means in modern usage 'an exact representation of ancestral characteristics.' (R.B) What were the characteristics of Adam before the fall? More excellently, what are the characteristics of Christ? Adam before the fall was made 'upright' or 'right' in the eyes of God. Jesus Christ was all that and more- for if you had seen Him you had seen the Father (John 14:9).

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/18 7:46

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE

There is only one Father, one eternally uniquely Begotten Son, and one Holy Spirit. There is only and will ever only be one God. As God says in Isaiah 45:18, *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.* So what does Peter mean when he writes, "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." (II Peter 1:4)?

The object of all God's promises and dispensations was to bring fallen man back to the image of God, which he had lost. This, indeed, is the sum and substance of the religion of Christ. We have partaken of an earthly, sensual, and devilish nature; the design of God by Christ is to remove this, and to make us partakers of the Divine nature; and save us from all the corruption in principle and fact which is in the world; the source of which is lust. This is the Greek word *epithumia*, which in this context, means irregular, unreasonable, inordinate, and impure desire; desire to have, to do, and to be, what God has prohibited, and what would be ruinous and destructive to us were the desire to be granted. (Ed. Adam Clarke)

God so designed that man would not only be a demonstration of His personality and character in the earth, but a truly compatible being with which to have fellowship. Remember that our section is to the effect of bringing many sons unto glory. Though we stress this often, we must understand that when Sin entered the human race the image of God in man was marred and a total restoration to that image had to be accomplished before God could restore man to fellowship. Spiritual 'death' is man separated from the life of God. Man needed 'life', that is, eternal life. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* (John 17:3) If you recall the Garden of Eden in light of this passage, it is almost as if man had chosen the knowledge and experience of Sin over a knowledge and relationship with God.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/18 8:24

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM THE WILDERNESS TABERNACLE

We know that God desires to make man His tabernacle (dwelling place). This was the basic point of Steven's message. God desires to reside in man (John 14:17). For the unsaved, this is impossible without regeneration. To complicate matters further, unregenerate man has no real desire for God.

The Wilderness Tabernacle was basically tripartite, with the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. By way of analogy, the Outer Court is like unto the body, the Holy Place the soul, and the Holy of Holies our human spirit. As with the Tabernacle, so with us, the temple had to be cleansed with blood. In our case it was the Blood of Christ, as we had been defiled by Sin.

The next step is that Christ must restore His rightful place in our Holy of Holies (as it were). In the Wilderness Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant represented the very Throne of God with the Cherubim as we find in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. This Throne was shielded by a huge curtain 4 inches thick and woven of one seam. It was total darkness behind that veil. You had not been able to see your hand in front of your face. The Lord's glory was only there at special times. This is a picture of man utterly dead in trespasses and sins. This is man alienated from the life of God. This is *Ichabod* over the doorposts of man's human spirit.

With God gone man was left to himself and Sin to rule and reign. The body served as the only real expression of the life of the Soul; hence, man gave himself over to sensual and glandular experience. The mind was darkened and any real fulfillment in life came through the exercise of his glands. Solomon took this reality to a whole new level. And after giving himself to everything any unregenerate man or woman would ever dream to have and more; he found that none of those things could meet the need of a man. (Paris Reidhead) Man was simply incomplete with a dead human spirit, dead to God. The bodily satisfactions could not fulfill him.

Yet, tragically, the Vail remained. Hebrews makes interesting parallels also of the Tabernacle and the True Temple in Heaven. I find it wonderful and mysterious that God desired to both rule and reign in man and at the same time open the way for us to come boldly before the Throne of Grace. We read in Hebrews 10:20; ... *which way he did initiate for us -- new and living, through the veil, that is, his flesh.* (YLT) It was commonly believed that Sin was the great barrier between us and God and that 'Sin' was symbolized by the Vail.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (II Corinthians 5:21)

This is a wonderful truth that answers why we can be dead to Sin and alive unto God. Jesus said in Luke 12:50; *But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* We shall presume no farther than the revelation of scripture and simply say, that Christ was 'made' sin for us. When items were baptized in the New Testament era it was that of fabric being dipped into dye. The two became one. Christ took sin down into death on the Cross- wending the vail from top to bottom; that is the Sin that separated us from God. Christ's death on the Cross separates us *from the dominion of Sin*. Christ's death loosed Sin and death's hold upon all those who are in Him. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.* It is through Christ that we can now enter in to the Holiest and that the Holiest might enter into us. It is Christ who was made Sin for us that He might die to it for us that we would be free from its reign and rule.

Ron Bailey points out that there is a wonderful connection to all this that summarizes what our Lord means by 'regeneration'. We read in Matthew 19:28, *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Regeneration, simply put, is when Jesus Christ is sitting upon the Throne of your very life ruling through the Holy Spirit, in your quickened human spirit. This passage is indicative of the post-resurrection world, but the principal is the same no less. Christ restored to the Holy of Holies in me, sitting on the throne of His Glory- ruling and reigning in my life.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/18 14:15

THAT WE MIGHT COME 'UP' INTO GOD

We have a great picture of salvation from Sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil in God's great deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Hebrews 3). We were slaves to our cruel taskmaster Sin and the Devil, but God called us out, through the hand of Christ as He did with Moses that we may go and sacrifice to our God (Exodus 5:8, Romans 12:1-2).

What does this mean? Did God just desire to save us from Sin? Did Jesus die to save us from Hell? What does the scriptures say? *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* (John 17:3) The point of everything is that God would restore man to His Image that we might know Him.

And this is the difference between those who fell in the wilderness and those we will take the 'Promised Land'. When Israel was free from their taskmasters they were happy, for a while, until trials came for the word of the Lord's sake. Then, they murmured against God as would fair-weather believers, and their hearts turned back to Egypt.

God led them out by a mighty deliverance. He called out a people to sanctify totally to Himself. He wanted to fellowship with them and walk among them. But did they share the same feeling towards God or were they merely interested in being relieved of their sorrow and afflictions?

God sanctified a Mountain and forbid any from coming up to Him save those whom He would allow. What a picture! What a fearful sight. This is the place where God would test the hearts of the people. This was the Mount that was not to be touched. This was the Mount that burned with fire. It is here where Moses trembled and quaked. It is here we learn a tremendous lesson.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. (Psalm 24:3, 4)

God knew the rebellious hearts of the people (Jeremiah 17:10). He knew the thoughts and intents of their hearts (Hebrews 4:12). If they had presumed to come before God in that rebellion He had broken upon the people with tremendous judgment (Exodus 19:23). It is here on the mountain that we learn the terrible awesomeness of God's pure holiness. It is here that we are made to appreciate the privilege of ever coming back into the presence of God once we were sinners. It is here that we stand in awe and wonder at the marvel of a salvation that could reconcile a thrice holy God, with a thrice sinful sinner. Man, who was shot thoroughly through with Sin, was about to reckon with the reality of His maker.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/19 7:42

A READINESS TO OBEY

If there is a word that is completely out of vogue it is *obedience*. The word has even been deleted from marriage vows in many cases. The word implies a readiness to submit our will to another. Folk don't like to be told what to do or not to do. This attitude must be utterly forfeited when coming to Christ. Humility implies *subjection*. Not only towards God, but a prevailing attitude towards one another (Ephesians 5).

And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people.

This is a bad mixture, God who *demands* total obedience and a stiff-necked people? God wanted to bless Israel with His glory and presence, but they desired a life totally incompatible with God.

When we say 'glory' we are not referring to God's sovereignty, worship, and praise. We are not saying God was about ready to share His throne. God says in Isaiah 42:8 that He will not give His glory to another or His praise to graven images. God was saying that there is a glory due to Him, and to Him alone.

What we are referring to is what Jesus spoke of in his prayer to the Father in John 17:22-23;

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as

thou hast loved me.

This is the glory of God's person, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The prayer is for all those who should believe on Him through the Apostles word (John 17:20). As Christ, according to his human nature, is termed the Son of God, He may be understood as saying: "I have communicated to all those who believe, or shall believe in me, the glorious privilege of becoming sons of God; that, being all adopted children of the same Father, they may abide in peace, love, and unity." For this reason it is said in Hebrews 2:11, Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Clarke) Why? Because they have the nature and mind of Christ and are no longer incompatible with Him. This is not Deity, it is the fruit of the Spirit; the evidence that the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/19 7:53

THE MAKING OF MANY 'sons'

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. 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (I John 3:1-3).

We are the children of God by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. We have been born of God through an incorruptible seed, which is the word of God (I Peter 1:23). Our temples (body+soul+spirit) has been set in order and cleansed, endued with the living presence of God. Formerly our spirit was dead towards God, but now it has been quickened. The Holy Spirit is in contact with our spirit. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Ababa, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (Romans 8:15, 16). As the children of Israel followed the fire and cloud in the wilderness, so also;

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (8:14).

As our Lord had said, "My sheep hear my voice and another they will not follow." This implies *personal relationship*. Shepherds often give each of their sheep a name and call them by that name. This is more than knowing about God, it is knowing God in a personal way.

IN THE GARDEN

I come to the garden alone

While the dew is still on the roses

And the voice I hear, falling on my ear

The Son of God discloses

Chorus

And he walks with me

And he talks with me

And he tells me I am His own

And the joy we share as we tarry there

None other has ever known

He speaks and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing

chorus

And he walks with me
And he talks with me
And he tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

I'd stay in the garden with Him
'Tho the night around me be falling
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe
His voice to me is calling

chorus

And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/19 8:20

FROM GLORY UNTO GLORY

We have a wonderful picture of what it means to be changed into His image from glory to glory again with Moses in the wilderness. In Exodus 24:1-4 God called Moses up unto Himself to give to him a covenant that according to Paul in II Corinthians 3:13 had a *fading glory*. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy of the elders of Israel; were to come up with Moses, but were to worship 'afar off'.

Moses alone was allowed to come near. Why? We know later that Aaron would assist the people in the making of a gold en calf (Exodus 32) and Nadab and Abihu would offer strange fire to the Lord (Leviticus 10:1). Moses had long since forsaken the trappings of Egypt, but it still dwelled in the hearts of these other men. We know with certainty that none of that generation save Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land.

Moses came near to God in as much as his face began to shine with the glory of God. It was when Moses was near that God gave Moses the Law on the tables of stone. In this I see a picture of the hearts of the people; *hearts of stone*. This deals with the unwillingness of the people to 'hear'. We are given this WARNING in Hebrews:

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

If we read this passage in reverse we find that the deceitfulness of Sin was the 'means' by which the hearts of the people were hardened. It would appear that the deceitfulness of Sin had supplanted their faith in God and His Word. They listened to the enemies lies instead of listening to God. They would 'hear' the lies and 'harden' their hearts against God. What has happened when something hardens? The water has gone out. It has been 'quenched'.

I have used the illustration of what it means to 'quench' the Spirit by referring to the sound that a hot poker makes when it touches a wet cloth. SHHHHHHHH. And if I might make the connection, it is no different when man quenches the Spirit. They have essentially put their index finger to their lips and told Him, "SHHHHH, I don't want to hear what you have to say!, I'm asserting MY will, not YOURS!" This, I think, is how we sear our conscience and harden our hearts. We tell the Holy Spirit His orders are not welcome. Charles Finney writes;

What is it to harden the heart? It is to commit the will or mind against the claims of God and of humanity. To harden the heart is to commit the soul in a spirit of disobedience, and self-will, and stubbornness, against God and his government. It is always a voluntary act to harden the heart, and a voluntary state when the hardness of heart is continued.

The mind always assigns to itself some reason for taking this position of self-will, and for maintaining this position of stubbornness against God. It is a matter of consciousness that the will has indirectly a great control of the feelings. If the mind commits itself by an act of will to any position, the feelings are brought to adjust themselves to the will's position; not always directly and instantly, but the feelings will soon come to sympathize with the attitude taken by the will.

The reason is very obvious, the feelings are influenced by the thoughts, and the thoughts are directed by the will. When the will, then, is committed to a dishonest position, it will always use the intellect dishonestly; and by a dishonest use of the intellect will foster such thoughts as to prevent the feelings.

This is common experience, as every one knows who has paid any particular attention to his own state of mind. A voluntary stubbornness always locks up the sensibility, and closes it against that class of emotions that would naturally result from a different attitude of the will. If the mind takes a position against God, it will use the intellect to justify its position, or to excuse it; consequently it will indulge only in thoughts, and arguments, and reflections, that justify its position, and therefore that poison and pervert the feelings and bring them into sympathy with the will.

Men harden their hearts, then, by an uncandid and selfish use of the intellect, assigning to themselves such reasons for their conduct as to justify their taking this position. if you harden your heart and continue to do so, it will surely be fatal to you. There is no power in the universe that can save you, if you will persist in hardening your heart against God. (C.G. Finney HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART)

Can God write His laws into a heart that has made the Holy Spirit unwelcomed? Will man behave like Christ with his/her heart hardened as a stone? No. This is why man needed his stoney heart removed and a heart of flesh installed in its place. This is a heart with a readiness to 'hear', 'trust' and 'obey'. I love this connection in Paul's writings:

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart (II Corinthians 3:3).

Is Paul saying that because we are changed into His image from glory to glory that our faces will glow with a radiance? We are used to thinking of glory as a 'glowing' or 'light'.

What are we talking about? We are talking about real 'evidence'. Evidence that we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). W

When we keep our hearts tender and right towards God He can put His laws in them until they are woven into the very fabric of our personality. Our behavior will illuminate. Our actions will manifest the person of Christ. It is 'His image' that we are changed into from glory to glory.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 8:15

THE DIVIDING OF SOUL AND SPIRIT

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged 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 (Hebrews 4:12)

One of the first lessons we find in scripture is that of Cain and Abel. This lesson is among the first of many that comprise a body of revelation from God to man that we call the Scriptures (the Bible from *biblion* 'book'). The Bible is not intended to be a complete history of events, it is intended to convey specific truths about God and man. God carefully selected the stories and their characters for a *definite* purpose.

Consider that billions of people's stories could have been recorded over the course of human history in the pages of scripture; but God revealed these specific events and story lines of the people of God and specifically Israel for our instruction and learning (I Corinthians 10:11). The backdrop of the New Testament is the Old Testament. Therefore, there are NO insignificant details in God's word; not even the 'beginnings'. Every entry has a purpose or it would not be recorded. The Bible is not a history book in the sense that it exhaustively records the details of peoples and nations' existence; it is a specific selection of history meant to reveal God and His dealing with man. (R.B) This is the revelation that is sharper than any two edged sword.

In order to gain a right perspective of God's dealing with man we have to look at the dividing asunder of *soul* and *spirit*. The real life story of Cain and Abel is one of the first pictures we get of the *dividing asunder of soul and spirit*. Here were two brothers born first to the fallen race. At this juncture in history there is still 'some' dealings with God as both at some point brought to God an 'offering.' We are not told the details of why or how, but we are certain that they have been trained in the matter of offerings or they would not be bringing them. In either case, we understand that God accepted one offering and rejected the other. Cain is mentioned first that he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought a sacrifice to God according to God's design and specifications, that is, the firstlings of his flock with its fat portions.

We can make some safe assumptions here while first looking at why Cain should have known fruits and vegetables are not an acceptable offering to the Lord. First, may it be known, that God judges man based upon the light that he/she is given. If you know the right way or *should* have known the right way, there is no excuse (Romans 1). Adam and Eve did that which was right in their own eyes and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness. God took animal skins to cover them. There is a bit of a mystery here. Yet we know with certainty that God revealed 'leaves' or the 'fruit of the ground' as insufficient to cover man's sin.

So why would Cain want to kick against the pricks? He knew that God had given a right way to approach Him. He knew what that path was. God only expected Cain to walk in the revelation he had available. He did not ask him to be Melchizedek.

Cain rejected revelation. He rejected knowledge. We could read some things into this behavior, but suffice it to say that Cain was in rebellion. Cain devised his *own method* of coming to God as if God was supposed to accept any old offering from Cain. He had totally hardened himself to his own sinfulness and God's holiness.

Unregenerate man is in no position to offer God 'gifts' as he/she is eternally and immeasurably indebted to God in the first place. That would be like bringing a birthday gift to your banker while in default on a trillion dollar loan. There is only one posture to present yourself when in that condition and that is for total obedience and utter humility and denial of self. The right response? "Your wish is my command." But this was NOT Cain's attitude. He expected God to *accept* his silly offering as if he were doing God a service or something. But it was Cain's own mind and will that put together what was right in *Cain's* eyes. This is Cain's will and not God's. This is the essence of 'soulishness'.

What about Abel? He did that which was accepted. Why? Because he responded rightly to what God had revealed. What could be more simple than to say that genuine faith is simply responding rightly to God's will and way? It is NOT faith to try to come to God some other way. He gave the method and we follow it.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Hebrews 11)

This is the nature of the 'spiritual.' Cain brought to God what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6). This is the nature of man operating from the soul or 'soulishly'. Abel walking in the light that he was given. That is all God asks. We have to *believe* God. Not what's right in my own eyes. But God's prescribed means and methods *alone*. Nothing added and nothing taken away.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 8:27

SOUL AND SPIRIT

Our passage states that the word of God is able to distinguish between the *soul* and the *spirit*. This is a most interesting passage in that folk are not generally thinking in terms of spiritual and soulish. When we talk about the spirit of man we are talking about that faculty that allows him to be conscious of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is that which allows him to worship in spirit and in truth.

This human spirit is dead towards God in the unsaved and alive to God in the regenerate. The soul of man is that part that contains the mind, will, and emotions. At the center of the soul is the *heart*, which is the seat of the affections. Simply put, we find man's will being established within his/her soul, while man is made conscious of God's will by the Holy Spirit and through our human spirit.

Remember our text, *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit*. It takes the word of God to make the distinction because the issue is one of profound difficulty. Yet, the distinction must be made in order that we learn to walk in the Spirit and not according to our own will and imaginations.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 8:37

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

There is a great difference between 'figuring something out' with your own reasoning skills and *discerning* the mind of God through Divine revelation. The reasoning faculty of man is resident in the soul. When man operates on this 'level' he/she does things that 'make sense' to the natural man.

Man has a mind with the ability to take into account known facts and make judgments based upon the information available. This is man using his/her ability to decide apart from God. This is in complete contrast to the leading of the Spirit. Yet, many believers direct their lives based upon their own *understanding*. They say they are trusting in God, but their whole life is directed by their own natural logic of what seems best.

We have a early 'glimpse' of what it means to walk in the Spirit from Proverbs 3:5, 6;

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

The word 'lean' in Hebrew means to 'rest upon' or 'rely'. This passage is conveying a concept that is not the same as making decisions based upon what *looks* like the *sensible* thing to do. The world makes decisions like that and they are spiritually dead. This passage is about trusting God with all your heart, leaning NOT upon your own understanding, and in everything God is acknowledged. These are the three prerequisites for walking in the Spirit and making spiritual decisions. If we do that, we have done our part. Can you trust God to direct your paths or do you feel like you need to keep control? Are you making decisions based on your own "mind, will, and emotions?" What makes sense, what you want to do or some emotion ranging from anger and on and on? For those bent on God's leading, there is no need to micromanage God, he shall direct thy paths.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 9:06

THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO PRAY ABOUT

If God has already spoken on a topic and the answer is clear from the word of God, there is no further need to pray for a *different* answer. God will not lead a person contrary to His word. You can pray about stealing something all you want, and God will still call it theft. You can pray about adultery all you want, but God still calls it wickedness. You can pray about covetousness all you want, and when you get up it will still be idolatry.

Prayer does not change God's word. And this is the crux of our subject, where is the prayer originating from? In the soul or the spirit? Is it man's will or God's will? In genuine prayer the Holy Spirit is leading a person through their human spirit to pray the will of God be done (Luke 11:2). In a 'soulish' prayer there is a wish list that is unanointed, based upon the desires of the heart of the person *apart* from God. This is why we must pray until we 'touch God'. Tozer called it "praying until you PRAY."

If God puts the desire in your heart that is one thing, but when prayer and direction from God is sought in such a way as to bring man's will to pass, God is *not* glorified and most of the prayer is in vain. Why? Because you have not prayed until you can say, "THY will be done." C.S. Lewis is to have said once that prayer does not change God, prayer changes us. There is a lot of truth in that saying. Do you pray with the intent on changing God as if you have a better and most acceptable method or way than His? Would it not be wise to accept the will of an all knowing and loving God as being the best possible route we could possibly take?

What if God had FULL control of a person's life? What if they were utterly dead to their own will? What if God's will was done in our lives as it is done in Heaven?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 11:41

GAINING DIRECTION FROM GOD

Most bad decisions are made by Christians because they did not truly seek God's will in prayer. This is often rooted in an absence of a personal relationship with God. Not having a real 'revelation' of who God is, they want God to sign off on their plans, rather than their signing off on His.

A right understanding or apprehension of God will have a profound effect on our behavior. I often say that what we often need is a fresh revelation of God. God began revealing Himself to Israel through Moses as He desired to lead them from Egypt. They were given instructions on how to wait on the Lord (as it were) as they had not yet had a revelation of Him that would enable them to rightly relate to Him. This was about to change during the first Passover.

Our lifestyle should be such that we are 'standing' as Israel when they were consuming the Passover in Egypt. This was a taught behavior for them, but should be our very nature as the regenerate who have had a personal experience with God.

And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover (Exodus 12:11).

This is a people awaiting 'marching orders' from God. This should be the *posture* of our hearts. There should be a 'readiness' to do the will of God, not just because of what God has done for us, but because of who He is. It is 'logical' or 'reasonable' to present ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice; but more than that, because of the consciousness of God which we have, we should have a persistent attitude of reverential awe and submission to Him.

You will notice that they had "done all" and were standing (Ephesians 6). We need to have ourselves ready to abandon all and do God's will. No obstructions, weights or sins. No incumbrances, but an "instant in season and out of season readiness". This means a readiness to manifest the person of Jesus Christ in every situation. This is constant denial of 'self'.

When 'self' shows up in the situation SIN is lying at the door (Genesis 4:7). Satan, as we have mentioned in previous studies is always faithful to suggest that we 'pity' ourselves; but Jesus said we must utterly deny ourselves (Matthew 16). This is the same Greek word as used in Peter's denial. This is a picture of how we ought to deny ourselves.

How did Peter 'disown' the Lord? In so much that he went out and wept bitterly. He realized that he had denied the Lord in the way he was commanded the Lord to deny HIMSELF. What a picture! This is no mere coincidence. You will find that the only place that this specific Greek word is used is for denial of 'self' and Peter's denial of Christ. We are left to reckon with what it means to 'utterly' deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/22 11:59

PRESUMPTION OR GOD'S WILL?

We must make a distinction here and observe what soulishness really is. This is 'that' which originates in the soul of man, rather than the Heart of God. Ideas, plans, and schemes are often the result of man's strategies, rather than God direction. Anything we do for the Lord, must have the Lord as its source. It has to begin in the heart of God or we are no different than Cain.

This does NOT mean that we sit idle and wait for instructions; we already have 'marching orders'. As Ron Bailey has said, "God should never have to speak more than once. If He speaks the second time it is definitely grace that allowed it." We are taught in Proverbs the means of rearing a child properly. God is not like many parents who talk and talk and threaten and threaten their kids; God will use the rod of correction without hesitation if it is in order. Anything else would *spoil* His child. God cannot allow us to get into the habit of disobedience or even 'delayed' obedience. The will of God must needs be carried out in us as it is in Heaven. That is lightening fast obedience. This is not lingering and weighing the options.

So what are we to do? Are we not to wait for the 'call'? Every Christian is called; but few *Trust in the LORD with all their heart; and lean not unto their own understanding. In all their ways acknowledge him, and He directs their paths.* Many hide behind the whole 'call' thing. They say they have no 'burden' for ministry. As if they were waiting on God to call. The very same people will get up in the morning and brush their teeth and wash their face of their own volition with *no need* for permission from God. They only seek permission if it is God's work. Can we reasonably conduct ourselves like this and suspect it is being led of the Spirit?

Some of the most spiritual things you will ever do as a Christian is that which you were not specifically 'called' to do. (G.W. North). God needs a people with their loins girded, prayed up, packed up, willing and ready to step into the path He is directing them into. This is a conscious readiness to walk in the path God sets before them. The trouble people get into is that they have not trusted in the LORD with all their heart; and leaned not unto their own understanding. In all their ways acknowledged him, so that he SHALL or 'will' direct their paths. Souliness is refusal to do the afore mentioned three prerequisite things and then attempting to do *anything* for God. It is a most simple truth of scripture. Call it presumption or strange fire, but we must live by Proverbs 3: 5, 6 as an active posture of the heart or we will have one or the other.

We have to learn to follow Christ. We have to let Him lead, but this is more like 'merging' into the flow of God's will than looking for a 'green light'. As we are walking He directs our steps. It is more complicated than this, but it is not, really. This is the foundation of our walk with Him.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/23 14:33

EVERY THING TO GOD IN PRAYER

Can man alone build Christ's Church? What does the scripture say? *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18).

The gates of hell will not prevail against the Church that Christ builds, but surely it will prevail the 'church' man builds. Imagine going about to build a building without a *total disposition* to build according to the Owner's plans? Your work is your work. That which we do under *His direction* is His work. His materials, blueprints and staff.

Where does this process begin? Proverbs 3:5, 6;

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and

he shall direct thy paths.

This is not making decisions based upon what looks like the 'sensible' thing to do. This is trusting God with all your heart, leaning NOT upon your own understanding, and in everything God is acknowledged. Did God mean what He said or do we look for another method? He has said that if we do these three things He 'shall' direct thy paths.

This principal is as old as the Old Testament and is as timeless as any principal in scripture. This didn't go out of date with the New Covenant. When we sincerely trust God in faith that He is going to direct our path, we have to be ready to *disregard* our own understanding. We have to be ready to do things that seem like utter nonsense at times. Did it make sense to dip an infection ridden body into a river 7 times for healing? Did it make sense to pour water into water pots in hope of having wine? That none should glory in His presence, we are left to follow Christ in faith.

We have to be ready to follow the Lamb whosoever He goeth. We have to be ready to trust God with our whole lives. The Bible is loaded with such accounts of God leading people according to Proverb's 3:5, 6. It is when man began to look to their own sensibility that God's displeasure fell on the people. When David numbered Israel or the children of Israel looked on the outward appearance. We don't know the facts or even the multitude of variables involved. More than that, we don't know the will of God unless we seek His face and walk in the revelation He has given.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/24 8:22

WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE THE LORD

We walk by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. When God says we can, we can and we must. Here we read;

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:36, 37).

Literally the Greek states, no word from God is *void* of power. This is a powerful truth! When Jesus came walking on the water, all of Peter's sensibility told him to stay put in the boat. But, with one word from Jesus, "Come!" There was inherent in that word the power to carry out the task. No need to argue about whether one can or cannot obey the Lord; when God speaks we can perform what He asked (para R.B).

The question is, will we believe God or our lying eyes? Truth is not what is perceived by the natural senses- it is what God says. Peter did not lean upon his own understanding, he disregarded the 'logical' for the *revelation*. This can be dangerous also for folk. They are ready to step out when they have not really heard from God. Some may say, "Peter stepped out- so can I!" Often their plans are contrary to the word of God.

But there is something to be said to returning to a conscious dependency on God to provide for all our need. Many believers have so fortified themselves against any real need for faith in God that God has to orchestrate situations where they have to trust Him by faith. We have become so self-sufficient that we don't even need to pray before service or anything else for that matter. We have the talent and ability to pull it off- with or without direction from God. So we think.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/24 8:52

THE BABY IN THE BASKET

This particular entry finds me at an odd time in my life. A troubling time. It seems I have spent my entire youth raising my kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Yet those days are approaching that I must begin to loose them from my care. It is time to put up or shut up (as they say in our parts). It's time to either trust God or pack up and go home (wherever that would be).

It's easy to talk *faith* with barns of plenty and the family is doing well, sitting at your feet. What about when the storms of life have come and you wake up one day and it seems Hell itself has been unleashed into your life? What about times like Job, when folk are literally standing in line to bring you tragic news? What about then?

Whether you believe it or not there is an enemy that is out to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to destroy you, your friends, and your family. He is not joking and is not flip about it. He is DEAD serious, bent on wickedness hurt, pain, and destruction. He doesn't want to merely take their lives and life, he wants to lead them into the paths of eternal damnation. Like Pharaoh, he sees the people of God multiplying in the earth and puts a contract out on the little ones. Newborn babes in Christ and our little ones that are vulnerable. As parents and pastors we guard them like a Banglee. But there comes a point when we know the battle is bigger than we could ever be and we must step aside and trust in the Lord with all of our might, having forsaken all that our eyes and ears are saying.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. (Exodus 2)

Here is a mother who loved her child and did everything she could do in her own ability to preserve the life of this baby. She didn't want him to be lost. She loved him as a godly mother would. *And when she could not longer hide him...* I see here a picture of a parent coming to the realization that if the child is to live, God must be the Savior. Mom loved this baby, but she could not save him. She had hid him from the enemy. She had protected him from the thief that would come to steal, kill, and destroy. At the end of the day, when all her efforts were winding out and the enemy was closing in, she had to reach up for a hand that was bigger than hers.

Maybe she could hear the footsteps? Perhaps the enemy had taken to going from door to door after the children? Maybe she was shaken by the shouting and screaming of mothers who had their babies ripped from their arms?

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. (Hebrews 11:23)

There is a desperation that comes in the heart of a Saint in which faith will arise. Perhaps God quickened some revelation to her heart and in absolute confidence and faith she took hold of some necessary items and prepared an ark for the saving of her house. Moses great great great... grand father Noah did the same thing when He had heard from God as the enemy was closing in on his family.

Maybe you are reading this and you feel the enemy closing in on you to take your family with some 'thing' or weapon with which he would snatch them from your arms? Maybe you hear the footsteps and the screams of parents who have watched as their kids backslid into the clutches of a merciless devil. Maybe it is not so serious, maybe you are just riddled with uncertainty about your family, friends, or even your own life. *And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.* Sometimes, like Moses mother and the baby in the basket, we just have to launch them into the hands of God.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/25 13:56

NO WORD FROM GOD IS 'VOID' OF POWER

We walk by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. This is God revealing something about His person to us in such a way that we 'see' it. We 'see' something about Him that brings faith. Faith 'cometh' by hearing. Maybe it was reading the word or maybe it was listening to a sermon, but in some real way God has spoken to you and it is your responsibility to respond to that revelation. To do so is *faith*. This is not an intellectual exercise per se, it is the working of the Holy Spirit.

When God says we can, we can and we must. It is worth repeating. When God 'says'- we can do what He has 'said'. Here we read,

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, wh

o was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:36, 37).

I'm being redundant here, but literally the Greek states, *no word from God is without or 'void' power*. This is a powerful truth! When Jesus came walking on the water, all of Peter's sensibility told him to stay put in the boat. But, with one word from Jesus, "Come!" There was inherent in that word the power to carry out the task.

The question is, will we believe God or our lying eyes? Truth is not what is perceived it is what God says. Peter did not lean upon his own understanding, he disregarded the 'logical' for the revelation. He had placed his life into the hands of the Lord. He saw fit to step out of the situation he was in and into the arms of the Lord. This has an echo of the Leper in the Old Testament who reasoned, "Why should we just sit here and die?"

Yet, in the West, many believers have so fortified themselves against any real need for faith in God that God has to orchestrate situations where they have to trust Him by faith. We have become so self-sufficient that we don't even need to pray before ministering or anything else for that matter. We have the talent and ability to pull it off- with or without direction from God. So we think.

What do we have to give the people *from* God if we have not received from Him? We serve as a link between time and eternity. it is our privilege to hear from God and act in faith as a demonstration of the reality of God in the earth. But first, we have to 'hear'.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/26 7:46

'DIVIDING' THE WORSHIP

Worldly *ambition* and Divine *direction* are not the same thing. Christianity is not a multi-level business opportunity. As believers we should have one 'ambition' in life and one alone; to live our lives in perfect harmony with the Divine will of God. If we accomplish His will for our life we have done the most we can possibly do to glorify God. You simply *cannot improve* upon the perfect will of God (Rev. D.L. Burch).

We often think God needs our talents and abilities and the *opposite* is true. God has to strip us of our trusting in our own abilities before He can even use us. Imagine how absurd this sounds, Trust in thy 'God given talents' and abilities with all thine heart; and lean unto thine gifted understanding...

There are many talented people whose talents have been a snare unto them. The world is loaded with 'talented' people. Why have those talents been a snare? Because they use them for self-glorification. This happens in the Church also. Anything you do to be seen of men in a function dedicated to the Lord has divided the worship and usurped His glory. That is one of the most fearful thoughts we could possibly consider.

Ambition, the enemy of God's will. This is the message behind Ten Shekels and A Shirt (among other things). That God would be a means to some man's end? God anoint my talents that I may glorify Thee?! They are puffed up and exalt themselves as though talent somehow trumps unction or something. A cursory look at what is often termed as "Christian" music reveals this self-evident reality.

I was recently asked, "What IS ministry?" This can be answered in many ways. But I think we need to first establish this one foundational *truth*. As did Aaron's 'under priests' (as it were) we also must go into the throne room of grace that we might have something to give to the people from God. The priests had nothing of their own. They owned no property and were totally dependent upon God for everything.

Christ is the only source of spiritual food and we are the mediators of that 'nourishment'. We are to bring to the needy something we have received from God for their edification. If it does not originate in *eternity*- it cannot minister. True ministry flows from the heart of God and into our spirit. It flows from our spirit to our hearts in abundance- that we might be filled with the purpose of God, His words, His love, His compassion. We are living expressions of God in the earth. When a person encounters us they are touching eternity. When they hear from us- they should be hearing from eternity. That may sound far-out and outlandish, yet I will ask you, "What do we have to give that we have not received?" Freely we have received- freely give. We have to 'receive' before we can give. This is not our talents or natural giftings, it is manna from God.

Ministry is handing the people what God has handed us. We acquire ministry, not in talent or ability, but in our personal time with Him. Often our talents and abilities *get in God's way* because we use them to *concoct* something to feed the people rather than getting something 'fresh' from God.

Like the manna in the wilderness, we need a fresh word for those who will hear; but first for ourselves. If we have not been with Him we have nothing to give; no 'food' to feed a starving and malnourished people. We must have that radiance of His glory. We must have that costly fragrance of having been with Jesus. We must walk in the anointing that flows from His beard down upon us.

I'm getting long winded here, but Watchman Nee told of how there was a woman that seemed not to do much for the Lord and it seemed reasonable that she should be somewhere in a big city and a big church that could USE her. You need to be 'USED' of God he would say. But, in time, when he was older he realized that she was being used of God and did not need to be in a ministry per se, she was mentoring young men in her little town and showing them how to love the Lord and walk with Him.

Like the alabaster box, Judas (the world) and the Disciples (the Church) saw what the woman did as a WASTE. But there is no waste, when we wait upon Him. That is our FIRST job. We serve HIM first and from there we have somewhat to serve others with. This is not laziness, it is a conscious understanding that our first priority is not BUSY-NESS. Little is much when God is in it. God can do more with little when we spend time with Him than He could do with the whole of our lives- busy neglecting Him. It is NOT waste to pour our lives out upon Him. sure some would say it should have been given to the poor or something else; but they don't understand the POWER and value of coming from His presence with something of REAL substance. It is more than we could ever 'work' towards or busy ourselves to.

God wants vessels meet for the Master's use. This is a vessel empty of self and soulish ambition. This is a person whose whole desire is to please the Lord. And these are the only people qualified to be Christ's disciples; those willing to utterly deny themselves.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/7 7:58

UNWAVERING OBEDIENCE

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 3:3, 4)

Our text finds our Lord on a fast of some 40 days in the wilderness. You will recall from the Exodus that Israel had entered the desert hundreds of years before on a quest to become a Kingdom of Priests (Exodus 19). Some years before on the backside of the desert, Moses who had suffered 40 years in exile, met with a history altering encounter. When I reduce the solemn and awesome event to its simplest form, its almost as if the LORD appeared to Moses and said, "Let me introduce Myself, Moses, *turn NOT aside after me, and remove the shoes from thy feet.*" Unlike the gross gods of the Egyptians and the other nations; many of which were mere expressions of mans unbridled lust, the ONE GOD of the universe had broken the silence and we gain one more of a long series of revelations about the Terrible and Holy nature of God. This, I believe, is a foundational revelation of who God is. It is a 'beginning' revelation.

When I was a child my dad had a chair in the living room that was 'his' chair. No one was supposed to sit in 'Dad's chair'. That chair, in a matter of speaking, was *sanctified* unto my dad. If dad was late from work and mom cut a slice of meatloaf, placed it on a plate, covered it with foil, and placed it in the oven, that portion of dinner may be said to have been 'sanctified' unto my Dad. It was *set apart* for him alone. So also, God wanted a people that were set apart for His name. A people to be an expression of who He is in the earth. A people to 'interpret' God to a sinful world. A people to represent Him in the earth, so that if you had seen them you had seen the Father. He wanted a *Kingdom of Priests*. Here we read; *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: (Exodus 19:5)*

When it all boils down, the thing that separates a Christian from a pagan is that they obey God. I know the details have to be worked out and the process of repentance, justification, regeneration, adoption, glorification, etc.; but the bottom line is, God set apart a people that *if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure*

ure unto me above all people:. What makes us a 'peculiar people' and a 'holy nation' (I Peter 2:9)? It is that we 'obey His voice indeed'.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/7 8:19

EARLY LESSONS AND A SIMPLE DEFINITION OF SIN

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (James 4:17)

Sin is disobedience to the revealed will of God. Our text says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not." When one knows His Lords will and does not do it, it is *sin*. The question is one of 'knowing'.

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.(Luke 12:47)

I used to have a friend that had a habit of saying that "ignorance is bliss." A.W. Tozer once pointed out the folly of this saying by reminding us that if you were ill and did something that endangered your life unknowingly you could die because of your ignorance. Ignorance is not bliss, it is *dangerous*. Not only that, there are things that we are responsible to know if there is a means by which we could know them.

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: (II Peter 3:5)

Some translations say, 'willingly forget' or 'put out of their minds'. The proliferation of the printed word of God leaves everyone with access to the word of God with a far greater accountability before God than those who never had access to His will. In some industrial business' there is what is known as 'mandatory safety meetings' in which issues are discussed that the people are required to *know*. If a person chooses not to go to the meeting, they are still accountable for what was revealed in the meeting. If they get hurt as a result of not being in the meeting, there will be serious consequences for their *wilfull ignorance*. They 'should' have known the new safety policy or procedure, but they *chose* to ignore the information (revelation).

ISRAEL was put to the test a few times early on to see if they were willing to be God's peculiar people. God would give a general question or commandment and see if they responded rightly to it. One of those first 'tests' had to do with the daily collection of Manna for food. The people cried out to God and murmured for food. When God gave a commandment on how to handle the food, they transgressed. They knew their Lord's will and did it not and to them it was sin.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/7 8:27

I AM That I AM

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7).

The word for 'beginning' here in the Hebrew means 'the first'; in place, time, order or rank. It is the 'chief' of knowledge to fear the Lord. Not only is it the *starting point* for knowledge and wisdom, but it remains as the highest ranking and most precious knowledge one will ever know. The word is sometimes translated as 'firstfruits'.

Without this fear of the Lord perspective, one will never *rightly* understand anything about God or themselves. God is Love and God is holy. The emphasis in the 20th and 21st century has been upon God's love. Yet, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. This is God's testimony and it is an unchanging reality.

It is important to stop and state also that It is not 'one' or 'the other' (love or holiness), it is both. To present one without the other is to misrepresent God and make a god after your own imaginations. This is the basis of certain forms of idolatry. God told Moses to tell the people when they asked what His name is, that His name is I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14). "I will be what I will be." This is such a name as checks all bold and curious inquiries concerning God, and in effect says, Ask not after my name, seeing it is beyond your comprehension (see Judges 13:18; Proverbs 30:4).

It is sufficient for us to know that God is what He is. This name makes folly of any comparison between the God of the Israel and the gods of the Egyptians and other nations. It furnished Moses and his people with a foundational truth that God would build upon as He further reveals Himself in scripture. God cannot be cast into a mold based upon what we want Him to be or even our last revelation of what He once revealed to us. He is the 'living God' and living means 'river'. What is the shape of water? It is what it is and to try to form or mold it is impossible in its natural liquid form. So also, we cannot cast God into a mold of what we want Him to be or even bend Him a particular way for the sake of emphasizing a certain attribute of His. He IS what He IS.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/7 11:35

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Every intelligent creature owes his/her Creator due reverence. Lest we should somehow misunderstand how we ought to view God, Jesus gives a most solemn warning;

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 (Matthew 10:28).

The word 'fear' here is *phobeo*. It is strange that folk would have a phobia of heights and use the utmost caution when on a ladder, etc., but yet have no fear of the Lord when they consider Him. When John the Revelator came before our Lord in the Revelation *he fell at His feet as dead*.

When I was a child, like many people, I went to church on a church bus that picked my brother and I up for church and especially, Sunday School. My Sunday School teacher was old timey holiness. This woman single handedly convinced me of the meaning of the 'fear of the Lord'. She presented God as loving, but a God not to be trifled with either. I recall once in class making the mistake of using the slang term 'gosh' and it came off as I had near to take God's name in vain. With the snap of her head pointing her warning look with me in the crosshairs she stated, "WHAT did you say?" Um, uh, um, I said 'gosh', I replied. "That's DANGEROUS" she stated. And from that day to this I cannot recall ever once using God's name in vain 'cursingly' as it is so often used. That look and her solemn and hollow voice went clear to my bones and into my heart. Trifling with God was a "NO NO."

I don't believe that it can be overstated that this all too often missing element in modern Christian education has caused untold damage and deception. The love of God is presented without a healthy *balance* of the fear of the Lord and the people have no concept of unwavering obedience to God. They have some strange idea that obedience is optional, because after all, God loves me unconditionally.

Modern Sunday School philosophy is to FIRST teach children that God loves them. I look at the massive exodus of youth that backslide after they acquire a car, boyfriend/girlfriend, and a job and wonder if that philosophy is right. Where is the fear of the Lord in their life? What has caused them to think that turning away from God is even an option? something, no doubt, is missing from the foundation of their knowledge of God.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/8 8:28

THE VOICE OF WICKEDNESS

In this entry, I wish to glean some wisdom on the subject from the Psalmist. It is nothing new for those who seek the Lord to look around and try to *diagnose* why folk seem to live so slapdash, haphazard, and approximate in their obedience. (para. A. Katz) Even with death itself at the door, many seem to keep on in their *carelessness*.

The psalmist gives an inspired prognosis in Psalm 36:1;

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

From their contempt of God and their want of a due regard to Him: "The transgression of the wicked *speaks* within my heart

heart (makes me to conclude within myself) that there is *no fear of God before his eyes*; for, if there were, he would not talk and act as *restraintless* as he does; he would not, he would dare not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty or dread of his wrath." (para comp. M. Henry)

It used to be said (pre 20th century) when indictments by our law were brought against a criminal, that "such a person, *not having the fear of God before his eyes*, did so and so." The wicked do not always openly and verbally renounce the fear of God ("this day I renounce my fear of the Lord!"); but their transgression is *evidence*, that when observed, appears in the hearts of all those that know anything of the true nature of God Almighty.

It is an axiom of scripture that transgressors transgress because they do not fear the Lord. This missing element in a human being is evidence that they are unsaved and in need of the Born Again experience (Romans 3:18).

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/8 8:52

GOD'S BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Scripture tells us that Lot was *vexed from day to day* because of the unlawful actions of the people of Sodom. There are many 'Lot's' in our times as well. They look around at the condition of people and groan within themselves and grieve at the blatant wickedness. One of the Greek words for vexed means 'tormented.'

It happened also in Israel's time also. There is always a remnant who sigh and cry for the sins of the people. You will recall in Ezekiel the angel that came forth with the inkhorn and set a sign upon the forehead of all those who were weeping or groaning- vexed by the filthy behavior of the wicked. This 'torment' can be either a sense of *tremendous loss* or *tremendous jealousy*. I have to think in this case, it was both. When the destroyer went through the city with his battle axe- it was those who had been 'vexed' that were spared.

When we reach the book of Malachi we are watching God's dealings with Israel wind down. II Chronicles 38 tells us that God had sent prophet after prophet and the people despised them and their words, so God sent His wrath upon them until there was no remedy. The reader ought to tremble at those solemn words. If God hath afflicted, who can remedy? What could be a worse judgment than God simply pulling out and leaving the people to themselves? One could endure anything if God be with them; but who shall stand in the day of His departure?

Malachi is winding up the Old Testament revelation. As the hands on the clock near align themselves for the stroke of midnight. When I was a child I used to tremble around 2:00 AM, when having fallen asleep while watching some late night program, was awakened by the almost deafening tone of a station signed off, or the black and white 'snow' that revealed the total absence of any human being. I'll never forget how alone I felt at that moment. How worthless and even fearful was that wooden box when there was no signal.

Most bibles have a single white page that separates the Old and the New Testament. Did you know that that page represents 400 years of no prophetic voice in the land? No word from God worthy of being recorded in God's Holy Word. Just a chapter and a half before GOD 'signed off' He left the people and for our admonition (I Cor. 10) these words:

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not (Malachi 3:16-18).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the root of all religion; they revered God as "his Majesty" (King). They submitted to His authority. They had a dread of His wrath in all they thought and said. They humbly complied with God and never spoke any strong words against Him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant. (M.H) God remembered those who feared Him and He wrote down the conversations they had one to another as a memorial. Like the tears in the bottle we read of in the psalms, God kept a record. I sometimes wonder if my name is in that book? I sometimes wonder what, if anything, God may have written about me. Have I groaned for our times? Am I vexed from day to day? Am I jealous for His name?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/8 11:41

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!

A man was recently 3000 feet into the air flying his small plane when a 4 _ foot black snake peeked its head through the instrument panel. When asked what he did the 62 year old pilot referred back to something his instructor told him some 25 years before; "No matter what happens, FLY the plane!"

And such as it is in our lives. No matter what happens, "Fear the Lord!" Not as Israel who watched the Egyptian Army (their arch enemy) drowned in the Red Sea behind them and then murmured against God because they had no water and food (Exodus 16). They wandered 40 years on an 11 day journey.

Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and waiting on the Father. Not only did he not murmur, but He faced off with the Devil who was desperate to get our Lord's mind onto the same types of things he succeeded in getting Israel's on. It's that same old proposition, "PITY THYSELF."

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This is astonishing! It was as if our Lord told all of us, "Never mind that I have not eaten for 40 days, you worry about being totally and swiftly obedient to God!" As He told Peter in the closing hours of His sojourn on the earth, "If I would that he should tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." Our front and center concern, is obedience to the Lord. This obedience will not long be present in the absence of the fear of the Lord.

This is the lesson Israel did not learn in the wilderness. They were used to the ebb and flow of Egypt. They longed for the predictability they once knew. They were not quite willing to trust God at the level He was asking them. In Egypt they could use their skills to make buildings and earn a slave's wages; but in the desert it's just them and God.

When things don't go as planned what will we do? When God takes us a different route than we imagined, what then? What did Israel do? What... did Job do? And such as it is in our lives. No matter what happens, "Fear the Lord!" When a line forms a city block long with folk bearing bad news, "Fear the Lord!" When God asks of you much more than you first bargained for, "Fear the Lord." When you don't feel you can take another step, "Fear the Lord." No circumstance of life ever provides us with a just cause to murmur, complain, transgress or depart from the Living God.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28, 29)

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/9 8:26

THE SHEPHERD OF THE LAMBS

Sometimes it is good to 're-focus' our attention on the things that God has revealed as important to Him. Not that all things are not important, but sometimes some of the most precious things or 'people' are allowed to slip through the cracks for one reason or another. The enemy understands what these things are or in the case of this entry, *who* these people are.

James is an interesting epistle. So much does it deal with 'works' that Luther felt the book to be non-canonical. Perhaps he felt the book in opposition to *faith*. Yet, some scholars believe that James is one of the earliest epistles and written by the half brother of our Lord. This book is written from a unique perspective.

Before we look at our text in James, I want to point something out. Pharaoh, who is symbolic of Satan himself, ordered that male children, when born, were to be killed by the midwives. The closing verse of Exodus chapter 1 contains these words, *Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.* We know this process as *infanticide*. Why would the enemy of the Hebrews want the males killed, and why the children? It has lon

g been the strategy of the enemy that if he cannot KILL them he will CORRUPT them. Hence, abortion and the modern day secular education system.

What is it about children that Satan has devised so many means with which to destroy them? What has allowed God's people to not fully appreciate the little ones? You will recall that even in the time of Christ the disciples would 'shew away' the kids that tried to come to Jesus. What was our Lord's reaction?

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. (Luke 18)

This was the attitude of our Lord and it seems reasonable for James to write from a unique perspective of having lived with our Lord, perhaps, more than any of the others disciples, maybe even ALL of the others combined. And from that perspective he gives, what is to me, one of the most radical statements ever inspired by the Spirit to the heart of a ready writer:

Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

There is an echo from the Gospels, *I was a stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit me.* It is interesting that in the passage in James that the Greek word for 'religion' is *threskeia* and it means "religious discipline." This opens us up to some interesting considerations, because the root word is *threskos* which means the FEAR OF THE LORD.

What are the implications of this? If we draw a strait line through the facts we come up with a New Testament definition of the FEAR OF GOD and it is *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* Notice the order of things in this passage. How could that be possible? Is the order even significant? I believe it is. Why? Because Jesus also told us that offending one of the little ones that believe in Him would be worthy of a millstone being placed around the neck and thrust into the sea. But, does this jibe with the Old Testament?

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. (Exodus 22:22-24)

You may be wondering how this could be? "How is it possible that 'pure' fear of the Lord could be comprised of visiting the fatherless and widows?" I can understand how "keeping unspotted of the world" would fit. Why can't pure fear of the Lord be comprised of fasting and prayer? Maybe its because folk do as the Priest who passed by the battered and bruised robbery victim on the way to the Temple for what he believed was more important religious exercise? Maybe its because fasting and prayer are measures to build our relationship with God, that when that relationship begins to have its effect, and the heart of God and the heart of the seeker begin to beat in sync (as it were), the seeker will walk out of the prayer closet and into the FEAR OF THE LORD.

Where are they? Where are the fatherless and widows? How is the Church doing in terms of fearing the Lord? It is interesting to note the extreme number of children born out of wedlock, whose fathers have little or nothing to do with the children. The inner cities of America are literal Mission Fields of children who have never heard the name of Jesus. The voice of our Lord beacons, "Suffer them to come... suffer them to come unto me..." visit them... Visit them... VISIT them! The nursing homes and centers are filled with widows. Many of them are former Sunday School teachers, Pastor's wives, strong leaders, having served God for 50-70+years, and now...

Yet, there is almost a silent rebuke as folk often view kids as too much trouble. There are tremendous ministries to kids in cities. Sidewalk Sunday School, Church bus programs, etc. But who has not passed through a neighborhood and saw a little child playing in the yard on a Sunday. What about that Grandmother that is in a Nursing Home with one foot in the grave wondering if the Lord has forsaken her?

No, there's not a lot of glory in pure religion. Perhaps that's why its pure? Not many people write books about ministering on inner city streets to children. Not a lot of books on the subject of going into homes and getting little kids dressed for S

unday School while mom and dad are passed out in bed from a night of partying. But these folk don't need publicity, they are a SHEPHERD OF THE LAMBS.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/9 13:26

NONE OF SELF- ALL OF THEE

C.T. Studd, the African missionary, believed that Christians ought to live as such a threat to the Devil that in Hell he will throw a thanksgiving celebration for the Church having been called from the field of battle. What could the Devil fear more in the Church than believers so full of the Holy Ghost that they lived by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? No sooner the command reach our ears and we are swift and unhesitant in obeying Him.

Yes, C.T. Studd was a radical Christian. In many ways he gave a new meaning to the idea of desiring God's perfect will above all else. He is said to have "prayed in" everything he received and lived on while in ministry, without making his needs known to men. He totally relied on God to supply His need and God never failed him.

Ron B. in the devotional "Abraham My Friend" *The Making of a Praying man*, relayed the story of how one of C.T. Studd's young dentist comrades, agitated that Studd so relied on God stated, "It is ridiculous to be like this..." he said, "...living from hand to mouth, surely we've got to survive!" C.T. Studd replied, "Not necessarily."

This is the heart of a person willing to compromise what they want to do for God's perfect will that we must guard ourselves against. Those words, "surely we've got to survive" must have rang in his ears as the Devil telling the Lord, "If thou be the Son of God turn these stones into bread." What was being said? PITY THYSELF! Think about yourself Mr. Studd! Don't you at least deserve to live? Yet, C.T. Studd did not have a death wish, he utterly refused to veer off from God's perfect will.

For our Lord it was the temptation in the wilderness and later with Peter that gives us a pattern of the enemies strategy. Was it a sin to eat? No. But our Lord had witnessed Israel for 40 years wondering in the Wilderness unable to come to the understanding that, "Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The thief on the cross must have been Satan's last line of defense; his last 'Pity Thyself' messenger.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" (Luke 23)