



## Revivals And Church History :: The "Glory Departed" (The 'Betrayal of the Ages' III)

The "Glory Departed" (The 'Betrayal of the Ages' III) - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/15 8:58

ICHABOD

And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

There are times in reading the scriptures that the words take hold upon the heart in such a way that the immediate response is to weep *bitterly*. This passage is one of those. I should suppose to say that among all the pages of the sacred book, that this one is among the more tear stained.

Unlike the days of Lot who was worn down afflicted and tormented at the filthy conversation of the wicked, we have a heightened sense of alarm and terror, the likes of which should strike fear in every man.

When I was a young boy I had an uncle who was an alcoholic. He looked into my eyes and in a moment of sobriety, perhaps brought on by years of reflection, made a most disturbing statement. "Son", he said, "When you stop talking, its over." He repeated himself with even more certainty as if he had come to a revelation of when the relationship with his former wife had died; "When you stop TALKING, its OVER!" He stated again. For years I never knew what he meant, but I kept that saying in my heart.

There is nothing more devastating than for God to stop speaking to a people. As some have said and so it is, there is a little white page that separates the Old and New Testament in your bible, perhaps another page that ought to be tear stained. For in that page we might say is a 400 year memorial to God's silence in Israel. It is almost unimaginable.

For Eli and his sons, the time of their departure was at hand. They had finished their course. But unlike Paul the apostle they leave us with quite a different story.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

There comes a time when the worship has been divided for so long, that God makes His exit and leaves a people to themselves and their enemies. *And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered....* This should have been one of the happiest moments in this woman's life. I think of the many women of scripture that begged God for a man child. Just a few years before, Samuel's mother came before the Lord weeping to herself and to God that she had no man child. But the all too real terror of the news far outstripped any rejoicing and we read, *and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.*

Would to God that the fear of the Lord had come over His people in our times and they had learned from this passage. Here is a woman who falls over in labor in the throws of birth and death and yet the most troubling thing to her is not her own life, but that the Lord had departed Israel. The worst of nightmares that every strolled across the fevered mind cannot compare to the terror and emptiness of the departed Savior. I cannot think of anything more solemn than this, *And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.*

Re: The "Glory Departed" (The 'Betrayal of the Ages' III) - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/16 8:56

THE HOLY RELEGATED TO THE SUPERSTITIOUS

And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath Jehovah smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh; and they brought from thence the ark of the covenant of Jehovah of hosts, who sitteth above the cherubim: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. (I Samuel 4:3, 4)

We are working our way backwards in this story that we might come to the root of what happened in Israel at this juncture in thier history. I wish to point out how low the leaders had sunk in their attempt to twist God's arm into fighting for them, against their enemies, in the *midst* of their rebellion. It is important to realize that it is the presence of God that was gone. When the *glory* departs, the *voice* of God departs. When the voice of God departs man has little to stand on and act on but mere superstitions.

What is it when men try to act in faith when God has not spoken? It is *superstition*. What is it when God has not given direction and yet the wicked attempt to step out in faith? It is *superstition*. The sons of Eli called to remembrance the glory days of Israel when they had gone after God in the wilderness and He drove their enemies out before them. Some would call this faith, but this is *presumption*. This is logical deductions drawn from proof texts (Tozer). This is taking hold of a past move of God and trying to transport it to the present. Again, this is not faith. Why? Why is this not faith? Because God has not spoken. It is not the method or the measures, it is our response to God's instructions.

Let's take this a step farther and ask the question, who was hearing from God? You will recall that Samuel as a young boy was lying in bed and God called out to him three times. With Eli in the other room, God chose to speak to the child in the bed. *And the child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. (I Samuel 3 ASV)* The word of the LORD is always precious, but in this case it was rare; like a 'drought' or *famine* of hearing the words of the LORD, every word was precious. Why had it come to this?

Why? Perhaps it was because Eli was in the well established habit of not listening to God and responding *rightly* to what God had said. He had chosen his sons over the LORD. His sons were wicked beyond measure. *And the sin of the young men was very great before Jehovah; for the men despised the offering of Jehovah. (I Samuel 2:17 ASV)* On top of that, fornicating with the women that did service at the door of the tent of meeting. Eli heard of all these things. So God sent a word to Eli, one of those 'precious' words. The prophet reminds Eli of the priestly function of Israel and then states:

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

There is a word that you may want to have in your vocabulary if it is not already and it is the word, 'High-handedness'. Israel left Egypt and came out with a 'high-hand'. In modern terms it is like unto a man driving at a high rate of speed in a large 4X4 with an arm out the window with his fist in the air. Now turn that around for a moment and imagine that the sons of Eli were treating the things of God with high-handed *contempt*.

And Jehovah said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both *the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle*. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not. (I Samuel 3:11-13)

Before we leave this section I want to look at a curious statement made by Eli. It happens that Eli asked Samuel what God had said, *And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he (Eli) said, It is Jehovah: let him do what seemeth him good*. No call for mercy. No begging God for another chance. No turning away from the sin. No anything. No weeping. No shock and wonder..., *It is Jehovah: let him do what seemeth him good*. Perhaps he realized he deserved the sentence. But, all he had to do was earlier on repent of allowing such blatant wickedness to go on with his sons. All he had to do was *restrain them* in their folly.

Israel lost 4000 men in the battle that followed. *And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said,*

Wherefore hath Jehovah smitten us to-day before the Philistines? All Israel knew the sin that was in the camp. Notice that they DID NOT inquire of the LORD as to what to do before they acted. When Joshua lost a battle he set his face to seek the LORD as to what happened. What was it? SIN in the camp. Now consider the awesomeness of this; A man and his family died before the Lord by *burning* for taking a Babylonian garment and some other items. Yet THESE men had taken their sin and rebellion to a new level.

So without a word from God; without any direction from God, the very symbol of the authority of God (the Ark) was taken up by the people and thrust into the battle. This is an absolute contradiction. Why not seek the Lord? Why not inquire of Him? Why not respond to the prophets that had brought those 'precious' words in a time of no open vision? What says the scriptures?

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (Proverbs 1)

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/6/17 18:58

Quote:

-----What is it when men try to act in faith when God has not spoken? *It is superstition.*  
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There is some tremendous thought in here ...

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/19 15:44

ACTIVITY DISGUISED AS WORSHIP

Israel had to learn an important lesson. Throughout the Old Testament we have account after account of God demanding one simple thing, 'obedience'. We often get tangled up on concepts of whether man 'could' or man 'could not' have been righteous. This may be debatable, but God really only asked man to be *obedient*.

It is a strange thing that man will sometimes worship God under one condition; they can worship Him *their* way. This is the cry of a sinful heart, "If I must but worship thee, then at least leave the details up to me." Frank Sinatra recorded a song in the 60's that gives a *chilling* look into the mindset of selfishness; this is almost selfishness *personified*;

For what is a man, what has he got?

If not himself, then he has naught

To say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels

The record shows I took the blows and did it my way!

There is no new thing under the Sun. If one were to profane the worship of God they had not been the first. God gives His own commentary in Isaiah 58:1-12. Here we read:

"Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins! Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf. 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why! It's because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting. (NLT)

Do you recall how the sons of Eli had profaned the sacrifice and would actually take their meat hooks and take from the people the prime portions for themselves; things that actually belonged to the LORD? This is the danger of being around the holy things and it is that of familiarity and contempt. Could a person actually believe they were entitled to that which belonged to God alone? This is a most solemn warning.

Imagine a people who we cut-out to be servants of the Most High God and they are serving themselves *under the pretense* of serving God. This has a devastating effect on how God perceive God, because His representatives are doing what is right in their *own* eyes.

The Lord continues:

You keep right on oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD? "No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn. I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

A lot is said and written about why revival tarries. Likely these folk were trying to gain the 'ear' of God for some reason or another. They were praying for 'something' to happen? *You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?* Sometimes it is time to get about the Master's business and show a willingness to walk in the Revival God is wanting to send, before He actually sends it. Perhaps few consider that when Revival comes that the attention of the Church will be where God's heart is focused. To turn our heads away from that which God has revealed is His will and then ask for revival is to declare beforehand that we had not wanted revival if He sent it. They were 'simple' things that Isaiah mentions as mini-steps to God answering their prayer.

"If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the LORD will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. "Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day. The LORD will guide you continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Your children will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as the people who rebuild their walls and cities. (NLT)

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/20 8:02**

THE MASTERS' BUSINESS

There used to be a saying common in Pentecostal circles that went like this, *"God's presence withdrawn means judgment has been delayed."* The concept is built upon the fact that when God's presence is near, judgment is *swift*. Yet it is certain that when God withdraws His glory then His voice departs with it (Ravi Z.), and the departure of God's 'voice' is perhaps one of the greatest judgments of all. There is no point in talking when there is nobody listening so He just leaves.

Eli and his sons had done things that caused judgment upon their house in an almost unprecedented fashion. The striking thing about their behavior is that it reminds me of Luke chapter 12 when the Lord spoke of the servants who began to beat their fellow servants and be drunken *rather* than watching and *doing* their Lord's will. What is even more shocking is that they already had *pending* prophecy over the family, outlining tremendous judgments from God, when they set out with the Ark into battle.

Imagine the *parallel* of this to our times. So much of our days feels like the Book of Judges. Everyone doing what seems right in their own eyes. Disobedience, mixed worship, gross abominations, and radically inhumane behavior. *"God's presence withdrawn means judgment has been delayed."* Man is left to his own devices. Wickedness is unbridled when the voice of God is gone.

Do you recall Acts chapter 5 when Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and then *lied* to the Holy Spirit and fell

dead where they stood? Unlike the tower of Siloam or the time Herod mingled the blood of the people with their sacrifice; there was no doubt that this act was the *judgment of God*. Likewise, after Herod had killed James the brother of John and put Peter in prison, he set himself up to kick against God's work also:

Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They came with one accord to him, and, having made Blustus, the king's personal aide, their friend, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. On an appointed day, Herod dressed himself in royal clothing, sat on the throne, and gave a speech to them. The people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he didn't give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied.

When God's presence comes upon the Church as it was in the book of Acts, one will not lie to the Holy Ghost as did Ananias and Sapphira because they will carry their bones out and bury them as they did those people. One will not exalt themselves and divide the worship because the FEAR of God will rest upon the place and folk will once again take Him seriously and get about their Masters' Business.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/20 8:26

#### PATHOLOGICAL REBELLION

In the Mosaic Law there was a guideline for treating slaves that had worked through their obligation and were now at liberty from their master. If that person had a wife and children that belonged still to the master and he did not want to leave them behind, he could go to the master and give his *ear* unto him *forever*. There was a ceremony that took place in which an awl was driven through the ear as a symbol of this free man's commitment to that master forever. From that point on the slave master had this man's 'ear'. (R.Bailey)

We, as the regenerate, are slaves to God and He is our Master. Christ is supposed to have our 'ear'. This means we are to 'hearken' unto Him. It is the objective of a servant (slave) to learn and perform his/her Masters' will. *God's word is God's will*. No need to be confused as we have within the pages of the Bible the general and unchanging *will* of our Master. There are more things for us to work out in our Christian lives than could possibly be accomplished without 'adding' extra's of man's requirements. We could spend a lifetime seeking God prayerfully for direction on how we *individually* are to perform each task.

The general revelation of God's will is written down and in prayer God makes specific application for our lives. However, it is important also to point out, that the general knowledge of our Lord's will is a tremendous guide that the Holy spirit is weaving (as it were) into our personality. Putting it simply, some things don't require our seeking God to know whether or not we should do the thing. We should or should not do it because we have a *grasp* of God's will and we know what pleases Him. To do that will has become our very sustenance.

But, there is a strange setting aside of the BOOK and a whole new set of means with which folk have come to express their faith in Christ (their religion). 'Important' or as Jesus called them "weightier matters" are being avoided and other more *fringe* practices and programs are being implemented that are more in harmony with the desires of the practitioner. It is terrible to consider, but is not much religious expression today as was Cain who brought God vegetables when He knew *His will* was to bring a spotless Lamb? Many try to offer the Lord a host of things that He has not required at our hands in hopes that He will overlook their plain rejection of what they know to be His will.

God did not consume Cain's sacrifice because it was unacceptable. Cain was wroth at God! If Cain did well he would be accepted, but if not, SIN was crouching at the door. This is sinful human nature at work. Imagine a 7-year old boy being asked to go and clean his room, but instead goes out picks and then brings mom a flower. The boy, hoping to somehow please mom with a 'sacrifice' hopes that she will smile upon him and excuse him from cleaning the room. It is sinful human nature that causes a person to want to do almost anything except what they are supposed to do. This, is a most serious affront on God, and many do not realize it.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/20 8:46

#### TAKING THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS REVIVAL

In Luke 12 we have a most solemn account of our eventual accounting before God. The Lord gives great revelation for us to consider in our daily lives;

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. (36, 37)

I can see a very large house here with much work to be done. There are servants who tend upon this house and the many aspects of the household. Each has a job to do. Each has a general knowledge of his/her Lord's will. In the closet is a book that outlines each and every persons' personal responsibilities for the day. Each day that servant is to go to that closet at their appointed time and look on that date and find their name. Generally that book reads the same, but occasionally there is a small notation of some special task that is to be performed on that day. In anticipation of the following day's work these servants had gotten down the book together and had began to seek out their Lord's will together. Earnest and vigilant they were. These are servants who were 'watching' (praying and seeking the Lord) in anticipation of the Lord's return during the night. This lord had left the servants *plain instructions* on what to be doing while He was gone. The second and third watch of the night had come and they could not work, but they could watch.

What about those for whom He would return in the day?

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

The Lord is coming for each of us. Some have represented this passage only to mean those who are here for the 'Rapture' of the Church. But the truth is, it is appointed for man once to die and after that the judgment.

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. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

There are prophetic undertones in this passage that speak of a future event. Jesus was telling of a time that was to come. He was offering a picture of future events. I am being redundant here, but the truth is, this is a prophetic picture of a future reality and the details of how that prophecy is going to play out individually is based upon where we fit into the description. The question arises, why was the servant beaten?

You are doing 'something' and you say it is for God, but are you doing your Lord's will? Are you making up your own way to please God? This is a most important question as so much hangs upon the answer of it. Many have thought that their *ignorance* of divine things would be a sufficient excuse for their disregard of God's will; and thinking they might have but few stripes, they voluntarily continued in ignorance. But such persons should know that God will judge them for the knowledge they might have received, but refused to acquire because His will has been published throughout the land.

It will not avail a person, in a day of such light and information, to be ignorant, as he shall be judged for what he might have known; and, perhaps, will be even greater than that of the more enlightened; because his crimes are aggravated by this consideration, that he refused to have the light, that he might neither be obliged to walk in the light, nor account for the possession of it. So we find that the plea of ignorance is a mere refuge of lies, and none can plead it who has the book of God within his reach. (Para. A. Clarke)

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/21 7:38

#### THE WIDOWS SERVANT

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. (Acts 6:1)

We discussed in an earlier entry the topic of James 1 and the essence of 'pure religion'. We noted that the Greek word for 'religion' had a root that means 'fear'. We concluded that this was revelation into the New Testament meaning of the *the Fear of the Lord*. 'Pure' religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep themselves unspotted of the world. The Old Testament goes to great lengths to establish the fact that God defends the fatherless and widows and great judgments were leveled upon those who oppressed them.

Charles Finney in his revival lectures tells about various things that 'hinder' a revival and grieve the Holy Spirit away from the meetings. One of those 'things' is to neglect the basic operations of the church in ministry. I have observed that if folk are not careful they will get so 'spiritual' (as the term is often used) that they will neglect the simplest of commandments concerning God's will. Revival comes when folk have a readiness to give heed unto the word. This means they are ready to get about the Master's business. If revival tarried until the Second Coming, it would be no excuse whatsoever for those who have neglected the most fundamental aspects of the Christian life. You say you are waiting on God to move? Perhaps you may consider that He is waiting on you to get about the work and that He would come along side you.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

We cannot avoid the fact that our Lord has already said that the greatest among you shall be your servant (Matthew 23:11). *"For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:45) What was pure religion for James, the half brother of our Lord, is pure religion for every born again believer that is able to function in that role. This included James and it would also include the others. We are servants of the Most High God. It is hard for me to believe that the Apostles were suggesting that hiding away in prayer and the word to the *exclusion* of serving others was in order. This simply cannot be the meaning of the Apostles' comments. For 2+ chapters God is about to show us a pattern of ministry that all can follow.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

It is stunning that while Stephen was serving tables, God imparted to him such a Spirit of wisdom and revelation of the Scriptures that the people were not able to resist the wisdom with which he spoke. I know of no other account in scripture such as this. Here is a man who had stepped forward to take a job that others felt they had *better* things to do. This is the neglected aspect of this story. Stephen was a servant of widows. Before we talk about the greatness of him as a preacher or his valiant faith in dying for the cause of Christ, we must grasp that one truth, he exercised *pure religion*.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/21 8:09

#### THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

Stephen appears on the scene when a dispute concerning the tending to widows resulted in the appointment of several men to that job. The other apostles decided to give themselves to the 'word and to prayer' because it was not 'meet' for them to serve tables. I just cannot get away from this, because we are about to consider one of the most pivotal happenings in all the scriptures. God is carrying out a plan to set in motion the spread of the Gospel in an unparalleled fashion. He is bringing all the pieces of the puzzle together. All of the characters are staged and the curtain is about to open, and when it does we once again have to reckon with this widows servant.

When I read the account of this widows servant; *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people...* (Acts 6:8) I hear echoing in the back of my mind like a voice ringing down the deep channels of a cav

e, "It is not meet that we should serve tables." *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.* (v. 10) "It is not meet that we should serve tables." *And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* "It is not meet that we should serve tables..." *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.* (7:51) "It is not meet that we should serve tables..." *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* (7:54-56) "It is not meet that we should serve tables..." *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Perhaps you would think, the stories over? This widows servant, waiting tables for the Most High God, humbled in a calling that others felt they had 'better things' to do, has one more scene to appear in. Having exhibited a most awesome Spirit of Christ through love and humility; leaving for us an ensample of how we ought to minister grace and truth, he fell asleep. *They threw him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses placed their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.* But the words of that message, must surely have rang out in the mind of this young man named *Saul*, by which Stephen *obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

Some have said that it was D.L Moody who reached the end of his life and having been used much of God replied, "It has yet to be seen what God can do through a completely yielded vessel." Stephen was a chosen vessel. He was willing to serve tables when others were busy doing 'other' things that so often seem to be so much more important. Solomon said that to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under Heaven. What about our times? Are the widows being tended to? How about the fatherless of the streets of our major cities? Perhaps the reason why we have so few 'Stephen's' is because we have too few 'widows servants'. Perhaps there is a general feeling that it is not 'reason' that we should leave off from prayer and the word to 'serve tables.'

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/24 13:48**

SHOW ME THY FAITH

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Opportunity for faith comes once God has spoken. We exercise faith when we respond rightly to what God has revealed. This does not mean we need to constantly be told what to do in all things. There is an extent to which we know, as Christians, what our Lord's will is. I wish to address this fact in this entry.

In the administration world there are two frequent problems that have to be dealt with when trying to manage people. There is the problem of folk not doing what they already know they are supposed to be doing and then there are folk who presume to do things when they should have asked for permission first. In other words, folk tend to disregard their own responsibilities and usurp authority that does not belong to them or waste time doing things that they were not asked to do. Sometimes folk will do all of the above.

When it comes to knowing the Lord's will for our lives we have already established the fact that God's word is God's will. This means that the truths written in the scriptures apply to us and we are to live by them. Actually, when we walk in the Spirit the personality of Christ is expressed through us and we live in harmony with the word. I would liken this to a worker who worked in a factory. Every day the worker comes to work and knows what his/her responsibilities are because they have been trained and are expected to have basic *common sense*.

Some workers are very responsible and work well with very little supervision. They keep their area clean and do things according to procedure. It is rare to have to come and tell them to do something that is 'commonsensical'. They do their job and *do not try to bend the rules*. These are the types of employees who will pick up a piece of trash that is on the floor rather than stepping over it. They rarely call in sick unless they are really sick. Their managers can *safely* trust in them. They build a reputation for themselves of being upstanding and hardworking; *not with eyeservice as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart fearing God.*



This, I believe, is what James is saying. "Take a look at my record." Examine my 'work' history (as it were). Take a look at my life and see if my *words and my actions match*. You say you believe God, but where is the evidence that demonstrates such a belief? A man may say, "I believe", but do they *trust*? A man may say "I believe and trust", but do they *obey*? Do you believe and trust enough to obey?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/24 14:23

CAN FAITH BE 'FAITH' WITHOUT OBEDIENCE?

We hear a lot in reformed circles about 'works' and how we are not saved by 'works'. This is clearly true as we find in Ephesians 2:8.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;(Titus 3:5)

The Jews hold the tradition that God gave Noah 7 laws called the 'Noahchide laws' after the flood. Then on Sinai God gave to Moses the 10 Words or the Decalogue. We know them as the 10 Commandments. In time the whole Torah (Pentateuch) was codified into 613 Laws. There were 365 'dont's' (1 for each day of the week) and 248 'do's'. On top of this was added a 'fence' of Oral Traditions that eventually became the Talmud. The Jews also believe in what are known as acts of *zedikah* (righteous deeds). These were charitable deeds that had various levels of sincerity: therefore they were *meritorious*. Some are considered more meritorious than others. The Talmud describes several different levels of *zedakah* and they have been organized into a basic list. From the least meritorious to the most meritorious, the list is as follows:

1. Giving begrudgingly
2. Giving less than you should, but giving it cheerfully.
3. Giving after being asked
4. Giving before being asked
5. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity
6. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity
7. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity
8. Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant

Notice that these are said to be 'meritorious'. According to Jewish tradition, the spiritual benefit of giving charity is so great that the giver benefits even more than the recipient. By giving charity, Jews recognize the good that God has given to them. Some Jewish scholars see charitable donation as a replacement for animal sacrifice in Jewish life in that it is a way to show thanks to and ask forgiveness from God. Contributing toward the welfare of others is a central and fulfilling part of one's Jewish identity. (Lisa Katz, A Guide To Judaism).

It is easy to see how confusion has entered the Body of Christ on the matter of 'works'. The problem is, that folk have learned to take the book and discard God Himself. Religion has been defined as *worship in the absence of God*. When a person takes the book, extrapolates all the commands and tries to carry them out, it is *religion*. A person can do this and be in direct rebellion against God. 'Work's' are acts in the absence of the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. A person can actually be keeping the traditions and laws real good and yet still be *resisting the Holy Ghost*. This is what Stephen said and was stoned to death for. The people had shut God out and tried to keep the covenant. When the Temple was destroyed they started a process of improvising to compensate for God's destroying the means of facilitating their religion.

Getting back in a right standing with God is not accomplished by getting together a host of things that one may think God will 'accept' as substitute for their disobedience. This is Cain. This is Saul. This is rebellion.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/24 14:46

#### THE DANGER OF DISOBEDIENCE

And Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king."

Saul rejected what He knew were direct orders from God. The prophet had given him clear direction and Saul chose, rather, to resist God's command and rebel against God's authority. Notice three words in our passage:

stubbornness  
rebellion  
rejected

'Rejected' is what God said Saul had done to the 'word of the Lord.' It is interesting to note that there is an axiom here if we look closely: *God will receive us as we receive His word.* It seems evident that God will respond to us proportionally to how we respond to His known will. God is no respecter of persons and these things are written for our examples and for our admonition. They are warnings to us of how we ought to obey the Lord.

Matthew Henry comments here on Saul's judgment: "He reads his doom: in short, *"Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, hast despised it (so the Chaldee), hast made nothing of it (so the LXX.), hast cast off the government of it, therefore he has rejected thee, despised and made nothing of thee."*

God made Saul a King and he 'UN-made' Saul a King. This is a most fearful and solemn consideration. We are King's and Priests unto God. We are cut-out to be a Kingdom of Priests who demonstrate to the world the majesty of God. What signal hath the world from a disobedient and gainsaying people? Does it not say that the God of Glory is safe to trifle with?

And Samuel said unto Saul, "I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, who is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man, that He should repent."

It is a fearful thing that believers in our times mistake works for obedience. When we know our Lord's will and the Holy Spirit has confirmed it in our hearts it is not 'works' to be obedient, it is faith and that faith is not faith without *obedience*. Can faith be expressed in disobedience?

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/6/24 15:33

RobertW,

Absolutely not! Faith can not be expressed in disobedience, that's mere imagination.

Living in the days described here in:

2 Timothy 3:2

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

Works produced with these qualifications are nothing but evil works.

'Works' produced by the flesh (old-nature) tend only to gratify self-esteem in man. Francis Schaeffer was very clear when he said that doing the works of God in the flesh, those works are simply the works of the flesh no less.

A person walks into an average church these days is told to:

1. Believe (whatever they want them to believe)
2. Get water-baptized
3. Pick up some ministry

One is seldom reinforced with the importance of studying and learning Christ through the entire Bible. I mean, the ENTIRE Bible.

Reading your posts remind me of how important it is to study and re-study the Old Testament ( along with the New Testament ) on a life long basis. Because its often the Words in the OT that reveal to us what our GOD is like, what truly pleases HIM and what causes HIM anger etc... I mean the ability to know GOD's true attributes.

'Free' grace (in my mind, which is so costly to our Christ) and emotional love have been bombarded to the extent where holiness, obedience and diligence in studying the WORD in relating to faith have been mostly tossed out.

Christians must study the ENTIRE Bible, through and through, day by day, year after year, this, in itself, is serving GOD, along with prayers, these are essential works. A partial knowledge of the written WORD could only produce partial faith in the living WORD.

Thankyou RobertW,  
still needing to learn more,  
mamaluk

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/26 7:49**

Hi Mamaluk,

Amen. Makes me think of the hymn:

#### TRUST AND OBEY

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,  
But His smile quickly drives it away;  
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,  
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Refrain

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,  
But our toil He doth richly repay;  
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,  
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

Refrain

But we never can prove the delights of His love

Until all on the altar we lay:

For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,  
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Refrain

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.  
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.  
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Refrain

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/26 7:57**

I found this little history of "Trust and Obey" written by John Henry Sammis (1846-1919).

A business man and YMCA worker in Logans port, Indiana, Sammis attended McCormick and Lane Theological Semina-  
ries, was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1880. He served in Glidden, Iowa; Indianapolis, Indiana; Grand haven, Mic-  
higan, Red Wing, Minnesota; and Sullivan, Indiana. For the remainder of his career, he taught at the Bible Institute of Lo-  
s Angeles.

"Trust and Obey"

This song gives a simple, clear explanation of living the Christian life. The title expression was used in a testimony meeti-  
ng, following an evangelistic crusade in Brockton, Massachusetts, by Dwight L. Moody. A young man stood to speak, and  
it soon became clear he knew little Christian doctrine. But he finished by saying, "I'm not quite sure—but I'm goin-  
g to trust, and I'm going to obey." Daniel Towner, who was in the meeting, jotted down the words, and gave them to J-  
ohn Sammis, who developed the lyrics from them.

**Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/6/26 10:14**

Robert W,

Too weird, this song came to my mind when I was posting that !

How much have these verses been proving themselves, over and over again. GOD repeatedly told us in:

Proverbs 16:2

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes

Proverbs 21:2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes

How sad but true,even of myself.

I was a fool for the longest time, in my younger days as a churchian, having only zeal but no knowledge of HIS Word.No-  
r did I even care. Running around "churches", serving these "pastors" with the utmost enthusiasm and reverence. The m-  
ore I 'served", the less I could care reading the Bible. The more prideful I became! Understanding the Bible in bits and pi-  
eces, and even tried to correct others at times with them , picking and choosing my pet verses,just to gratify my desire, t-  
hinking to myself that the OT was completely irrelevant,except when I needed the Psalms to comfort me!! Wasn't I outr-  
ageously irreverent to God??

Unbelievable, from hindsight, I wonder if I was really a true "Christian" at all, but for HIS grace.

Praise our living WORD for every jot and tittle in the written WORD , Christ Jesus! Thank GOD so much for the shed Blo-  
od!

Thanks RobertW, I could definitely use more encouragement from OT expositions.

mamaluk

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/27 8:42**

#### THE DANGER OF SINNING PERSISTENTLY

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,(Jude 24)

Our text describes the power of God to keep the regenerate from falling with a simple word, 'able.' It is important to break through a barrier of mind that would cause one to think it necessary for them to have some 'sin' in their life at all times. Our Lord is 'able' to do exceeding and abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think according to the power that works in us. If we 'sin' it is not God's fault and it is not because He had no power to keep us from falling.

I first wish to examine what is likely one of the most strict teachers, Charles G. Finney's concept of persisting in sin by looking at what he says 'persisting in sin' is not.

*1. To persist in sin is, not to abandon it. If a person should only occasionally, under the force of temptation, fall into a sin, any form of sin, and should repent and abandon it for a time, and should only occasionally be overcome by a temptation to commit that form of sin, it would not be proper to say that he persisted in it. For, according to this supposition, he is not wilful, or obstinate (stubbornly refusing to change), or habitual in the commission of this sin; but it is rather accidental in the sense that the temptation sometimes overtakes and overcomes him notwithstanding his habitual (a consistent pattern) abandonment of it and resistance to it. But if the commission be habitual, a thing allowed, a thing indulged in habitually--such a sin is persisted in. (Oberlin Evangelist 9/11/1861)*

I wish next to give some synonyms for 'occasionally'.

Occasionally:

I have coffee with dinner 'sometimes', from time to time, (every) now and then, (every) now and again, at times, every so often, (every) once in a while, on occasion; periodically, at intervals; irregularly, sporadically, infrequently, intermittently, on and off, off and on.

Our passage states that God is 'able' to keep us from falling. This is perpetual power. Falling into some sin invariably comes as the result of refusing to remain submitted to God. *Submit yourselves therefore unto God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)* The sin itself is merely a symptom of the problem, and that problem is refusal to submit. This is a most critical truth for Christians to grasp as they must fully submit to the Lordship of Christ or they are especially vulnerable to the temptations of the enemy.

Do you recall our Lord when He was fasting for 40 days in the wilderness? The enemy came and tempted Him to make the stones into bread. What was His response? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This has a most simple meaning; eating is optional, submitting to God is *not*. This must reign supreme as the highest priority of life to which everything else must submit. Submission to God is the cornerstone of all of our decisions. Once that is established defeating the enemy is as simple as *resisting* him. The tempter flees when a believer is submitted to God and resists him. You can resist from now on and the temptor will continue his attack until you decide to submit to God. Without submission to God, there is nothing to brace yourself against except your own sheer will power. When we are submitted to God *fully* the finger of God is never far and the enemy flees when we resist.

If we sin persistently then we are succumbing to temptation persistently. If we are succumbing to temptation persistently we are not submitted to God on a persistent basis. As the devil told the 7 sons of Sceva; Paul I know and Jesus I know, but who are you? It is folly to expect the devil to submit to God in leaving off tempting us when we were not submitted to God ourselves. The enemy just says in effect, "Why should I have to submit to God, you're *not*." This is the lesson the sons of Sceva learned.

This is where the enemy wants us. He wants us to get a 'taste' of sin so that we enjoy what we 'tasted'. If he accomplish

es that then we sort of 'befriend' that thing. An affinity develops that has a devastating effect. First, because it is sin God will not tolerate it. Second, it is impossible to love God and some 'sin' at the same time. God referred to Israel's sin sometimes as a 'lover'. This is part of the cycle to the intent that you or I will cease from submitting to God. Once that beachhead is established then there is no basis upon which we can resist the devil and every time he comes around with his temptation, there is a fall. The sin becomes 'habitual.'

This is where repentance comes in. There has to be a re-establishment of our complete submission to God. It is then and only then that we can remain safe from the temptations of the enemy. Subtle feelings of rebellion and self-will emerge as we are allured away and enticed. Turn from those things before they capture just enough of your affections that you waver in your submission to God. That is what the enemy wants, that is how he makes you vulnerable. He is challenging your submission to God.

**Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/6/27 10:50**

"If we sin persistently then we are succumbing to temptation persistently. If we are succumbing to temptation persistently we are not submitted to God on a persistent basis."

Sounds like a growing cancer...

sigh..thanks

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/28 8:03**

THE BOOK OF JUDGMENT

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6, 21:25)

When I think of the book of Judges I think of judgment. I think of a people who were set-apart to be God's revelation of Himself in the earth, who are now mixing the things of God with the pagan idolatry of the former inhabitants of the land. Page after page, account after account of disaster and victory. *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* To read this passage one would almost get the idea that if there is no king then the people will do what *they* wish. God wanted to be their King, but there existed a people that needed constant micromanagement. This was not a new problem, it manifested when Moses went up on the mount and the people desired a Golden Calf. And this is a most vexing thing in our times, is there a people that will serve God if there is none to 'prod' them along?

It is a most juvenile character trait. It is evidence that one has yet to understand their need to act rightly *because it is the right thing to do.* The KJV uses a word "eye-service" to describe a people that have this character trait. In other words, "I will serve if the 'eye' is on me." When the 'eye' is not on them, they will do what is right in their 'own eyes.'

I recall a saying of Jonathan Edwards that was actually part of a prayer he prayed to God before he preached the message 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God', that said to the effect, "let eternity be in my eyes." This resonates back to a saying in the Old Testament "before the eyes." One of the indictments God has leveled upon man is that there is "no fear of God before their eyes." In other words they do not 'see' it or if we might say the fear of God is not factored in to their actions.

There is another word that fits in at this point and it is the word *conscientious*. Not in the sense that one just wants to do a good job, but one in which the conscience is allowed to speak into the person's life continually. A person living in 'eye-service' is not conscientious. There is a saying among those who scoff at the traffic laws in our area, "No Cop- no Stop." This is the feeling I get reading this passage... *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/6/29 12:04

Revelation 22:20

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come **quickly**. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

May God judge, even me!

In Christ, Praise thine cleansing Blood!

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/6/29 20:54

AS LONG AS HE SOUGHT THE LORD

And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. (II Chronicles 26:5)

Uzziah is one of many tragic figures in the word of God; all of which are written for our instruction and our learning. Uzziah was greatly blessed of God and did many exploits in Israel. But there is a tragic end to this otherwise glorious, God glorifying life.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. (26:16)

It is hard to understand how such a thing can happen. We can only speculate as to the finer details, but *...when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction...* What went wrong? I think we have a clue if we contrast the Uzziah that was lifted up- with the one who *sought the LORD*.

This is the very spirit of the devil himself if we look closely. Perhaps the favor of God had been misinterpreted and the power source was forgotten. It was like a line had blurred in Uzziah's heart between his own natural abilities, and the power of God that was manifest as he continued to seek the LORD. This is a deadly miscalculation.

Presumption is a most terrible sin, because it disregards God's authority and places 'ours' in His stead. Somehow one would think that they know God well enough to start making decisions and doing things without His direction. The faith movement, so it seems, has to a great extent manufactured presumption.

Imagine a people who decided to go through the scriptures and catalog a passage to fit every possible need they might ever have. They develop this catalog into a mental cross referencing guide that automatically pulls up a scripture verse to 'stand on' in the time of need. Sounds pious? Or does it?

Man is forever trying to devise ways to be religious in God's absence. They are forever trying to find a means with which to make all this Christian stuff work, without maintaining a daily personal relationship with God. No need to inquire of the LORD for my problem, I'll just look up my proof texts in my trusty cross reference guide and 'stand' on them.

Daily, when we go to God's word for answers or general direction for the day, we go prayerfully and with an open heart for God to speak to us from His word. Often times we are reading along and suddenly the Holy Spirit will direct us to a certain passage and it seems to just lift off the 2 dimensional page into a 3 dimensional reality. God has 'quicken' that passage to your heart; He has given you a revelation of His will. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will bring a passage to our remembrance, etc. The Lord will put His finger on a truth and it is then up to us to trust and obey. We never grow beyond this need to enquire of the Lord, no matter how long we serve God.

Pride took a person who was seeking the Lord for direction and turned him to do what was right in his own eyes. What a wonder, that a person would be lifted up until they say no need to enquire of God. This is the tragedy of our times. What can we learn from such a simple set of verses?

And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

**Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/6/30 23:18**

deleted

**Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/7/1 0:23**

Quote:  
-----A person can do this and be in direct rebellion against God. 'Work's' are acts in the absence of the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. A person can actually be keeping the traditions and laws real good and yet still be resisting the Holy Ghost.  
-----

Hi Robert, been meaning to follow up on this as well as catch up with the more recent postings. I don't know if there is much more important than realizing this and realizing it constantly.

Did snip that there in the middle maybe as seeing it beyond the matters you addressed;

Quote:  
-----It is easy to see how confusion has entered the Body of Christ on the matter of 'works'. The problem is, that folk have learned to take the book and discard God Himself. Religion has been defined as worship in the absence of God. When a person takes the book, extrapolates all the commands and tries to carry them out, it is religion.  
-----

Just occurred to me, to back track again;

*A person can actually be keeping the traditions and laws real good and yet still be resisting the Holy Ghost.*

Act 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/4 20:12**

Quote:  
-----Act 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.  
-----

Hi Mike,

This is an excellent example of a person resisting the Holy Ghost. It is quite a picture. For those who may not have heard this before the 'pricks' were actually *goads*. These are sharp wooden dowel pins that are used by the plowman to control the direction of the animal pulling the plow. A sharp pricking instrument on each side of the animal with a connecting I ever made for quite a steering wheel!



To 'kick' against the goads is to keep going the wrong direction in spite of the tremendous pain of conscience and Holy Ghost striving. Truly the way of a transgressor is hard.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/10 11:17**

OUR PERPETUAL NEED FOR A SAVIOR

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

Those who seek to walk upright before God almost invariably find themselves facing a great temptation. That temptation is the constant feeling of needing to 'appear' to have *reached* what we have taught and *preached*. This can have devastating effects on a persons' relationship with God.

When a person is in personal revival they are most conscious of their need for the Savior. They are swift to acknowledge their shortcomings and have no feeling of 'saving face' for the purpose of maintaining an 'image'. They speak the truth and let the chips fall where they may. They hold the same or higher standard of righteousness for themselves as others. They will repent no matter who likes it. They don't care how they 'look' or what people will think about it. In time this vulnerability and 'realness' fades and an image takes its place. That 'image' is the great enemy of ongoing personal revival. So long as we keep feeling we need to maintain an 'image' as if we have fully reached what we have preached, God is silenced as He speaks to our hearts about the things where we fall short. Whether in our own eyes or the eyes of others, our 'image' of ourselves has as much to do with whether we come into and stay in personal revival as anything else.

To this point in our devotions we have emphasized man's responsibility to respond rightly to God and to do what we believe to be God's perfect will. We have emphasized the necessity of obedience. This is man's responsibility, to respond rightly to what God has said. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This is a perpetual speaking forth and a perpetual requirement to obey. However, there are times when temptations come to compromise the will of God and sin lies at the door.

As believers in holiness and striving for being made perfect in love, there are times when genuine believers fail and fall into sin. This is not to say that it is 'necessary' for a Christian to sin because it is not. Yet John gives us insight into this in I John 1:8; *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* This is an important passage to consider. This is the great temptation many who seek Christian Perfection face, to say "we have no sin."

We see in the previous verse as we read, *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* (I John 1:7) The passage states that the blood cleanses us of all sin as we walk in the light. This indicates a need for cleansing in the midst of walking in the light. This is evidence of the need to have our conscience always clean before God.

In pursuit of perfection we sometimes ignore the so-called 'little things' as if we had no sin. This is self-deception. It is the little foxes that spoil the vines. This is compromising the truth for the sake of maintaining a feeling of *accomplishment*. It is a seeking to vindicate one's self, rather than God. Some had rather made God a liar to maintain their self-image of sinlessness than to be sensitive to the Spirit and allow Him to remind us and in turn cleanse us of ALL unrighteousness. Matthew Henry comments here, "And therefore, if we say either that we have not sinned or do not yet sin, the word of God is not in us, neither in our minds, as to the acquaintance we should have with it, nor in our hearts, as to the practical influence it should have upon us."

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/11 8:17**

THE DECEPTION OF MAINTAINING A SPIRITUAL 'IMAGE'

Christians that love the Lord fear to bring a reproach upon His name by some failure or anything that could misrepresent the LORD. They often feel they must walk the New Testament standard at all times and cannot appear to strive under temptation or be weak in any way. In society they would say, "never let them see you sweat."

The self-induced pressure to maintain this 'image' of being super victorious can lead a person to ignore any indicators that challenge that image. It can cause a person not to ask for prayer from friends or seek counsel from trusted friends in Christ in times of trial and temptation. If there is a strong sense of self-love then one may actually

quench the Holy Spirit (cease listening to the Holy Spirit when He is putting His finger on things) to keep themselves appearing righteous and sinless in their own eyes. One may begin to justify things in their life that does not please the LORD. Quenching the Holy Spirit is not a valid means of maintaining a pure conscience- it sears the conscience with a 'hot iron' (as it were).

There are times in gatherings when folk feel 'impressed' to go before the people for prayer, but they will not do it publicly for fear of losing face before the people. This is maintaining that 'image' before the people of having it 'all together'. Soon, when the Spirit tries to deal with the person in their personal devotions and quiet time they will 'shut Him down' for fear of losing their own personal spiritual *self-image*. This is not being spiritual, this is being a Pharisee. Notice the word 'image' that keeps coming up.

In layman's terms we could say that one never outgrows the need to respond to an altar call or prayer if God is calling you to respond. Moreover, no one is so spiritual that they do not need to respond to messages from the word at times. The Pharisees used to parade around acting like they needed no repentance. John Baptist called the people to repent and be baptized and the Pharisees, masters at maintaining their spiritual 'image' before the people would not respond to the call. They tried to come off as holy and righteous. This is why Christ could not save them. They refused to admit their need. They refused to call upon the name of the Lord.

There is an idiom here in Missouri that states, "What is good for the goose is good for the gander." I suppose we have made a Humpty Dumptyism out of it, as it means more that the equality of the sexes in our usage. I suppose I could say it like this, "What is good for the sinner is good for the repentance preacher." What I mean is, repentance preachers need to repent at times also and they ought to repent in the same measure as they expect from those they preach to. It is my personal opinion, that the spiritual self-image prevents this and in turn greatly reduces the effectiveness of the minister. When was the last time you saw a repentance preacher fall to their knees before the people and cry out for mercy?

How can the Lord save us from our sins if we will not admit we have any? What is more important, to allow the Lord to save us from sin or to look 'super spiritual' and in no real need? This is the enemy's deception and a powerful means of making us vulnerable and confident at the same time. The enemy lies to Christians by telling them that if they appear weak or need prayer then somehow it reflects negatively against the Lord or something. "I can't appear to need prayer, I preach repentance!" Well, if you are preaching in such a way that you can't appear to be vulnerable or in 'need' yourself, you are doing something seriously wrong and need to examine yourself. Why? Because what is good for the goose is always good for the gander.

Yet, nothing glorifies the Lord more than when we call upon His name and acknowledge our need of Him. You are not spiritual because you thank God that you are not like those 'wretched sinners'. You get God's attention when you beat up on your breast and cry out to God, unwilling to even lift your head, "God have MERCY on me a sinner!"

It is evidence that we are a Child of God that we will admit of our need. Reason being is that we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit and are quite self-conscious when it comes to sin. If we deceive ourselves into thinking we have no sin we will go to God in prayer and not even bother to examine ourselves truthfully. Why? We can become afraid that we are not what we believed ourselves to be. This leads to 'denial' of our sins. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* (1 John 1:8)

If you will walk in humility in the times of victory you will have victory. There is no other way. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If God were to withdraw His grace from us we had made the inhabitants of Sodom appear to be Saints. It is in grace that we stand. It is grace that we ask for in time of need. Not my own determination, but my willingness to humble myself before him in sincere heart felt reality, sober of mind and aware of my estate. We will call on the name of the LORD and see great exploits when we finally cast down the 'images' we try to project before our own eyes and the eyes of others. You are never stronger than when you realize your weakness.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/12 8:33

PERSONAL REVIVAL

As early as the Book of Genesis we gain insight into the relationship between God and man and how 'one-sided' that relationship can degenerate to. Adam and Eve having partaken of the Tree, their conscience affected, they were fleeing from the face of God. Adam did not come looking for God in this condition, it was the other way around.

Personal revival comes about when God in effect in our lives comes asking, "where are you?" Perhaps sin had affected the conscience and we had left off seeking the LORD. Maybe it could be a matter of a slow developing coldness. In any case, God comes searching for us (as it were).

This is the sovereignty of God at work. It's unfortunate that when the Holy Spirit begins to deal with us that somehow we could think it was 'us' that 'decided' to come into revival. This has an immediate effect because the perspective is wrong. Sometimes it can be a progressive misperception as one may start out knowing God was doing the work and in time begin to lose perspective of this being the Lord's working and see *themselves* as having 'done' the work. Soon the attitude becomes towards others, "You need to do what I did get revived and you will get my results." The attitude becomes one of condemning folk. This is most unfortunate.

God initiates contact. God initiates personal revival. If one becomes conscious of their need- God is back of it. If one develops an urgency for religion it was God who was drawing them to Himself. While it is said, TODAY if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

A few years ago I had gone through a dry time in my walk with the LORD in which I began to think the LORD had forsaken me. I had been struggling in some areas and in my mind, though I did not say it out loud to anyone, I said in my heart "The LORD hath forsaken me." Not that I had committed some terrible sin, but I knew there were areas of my life in which I was in disobedience. I don't want that to sound like a contradiction because sin is sin. Yet I think there is a distinction between that and 'falling'. I had not fallen, I was seriously discouraged.

I went to lunch one day alone with this on my mind. I went to a place and sat down with my food at a table. At once I looked up and two men who were preachers were talking together. A man overheard them sitting behind them and stood up with his wallet in hand and gave the preacher an 'offering' right there at the table. This may be the American Bible Belt, but things don't ever happen like that. I don't think the man was saved that gave it. I marveled at such a thing and went away thinking the Lord had directed my steps to see this happen.

A few weeks or so later my brother and I went to the same place together to eat. On the way I told him the story I just relayed. We went through the line to pay and were met by a woman who wanted to seat us. That was quite odd as we generally always had seated ourselves, but we accepted the offer. This was a huge place, so there were hundreds of seats perhaps. The lady led us to the very seat the preacher was setting in when the incident happened a few weeks before. At this point I was in great wonder as the odds of this happening were very low. I smiled at my brother and told him that this was the table that the preacher sat at. I was shaking my head as if to say, "LORD, you know where I am and you are STILL directing my steps." It may seem odd to some, but this carried serious weight in my heart. BUT, God was not done yet.

We finished our food and was ready to leave. My heart greatly encouraged. The gal who had served us had taken our receipt and written a note on it. I could read it from where I was sitting as I sat there and my brother never seen that she had written on it. I motioned with my eyes towards the receipt and said, "Read that." It was a simple note and read:

"God Bless you both Always, Thanks Janie."

To this day I carry that receipt, among other little keep sakes in my wallet as a testimony of one of a trillion ways in which God can 'break radio silence' when we feel we are down and almost out. You may say, "brother you are reading a little much into that I think." Well, you may think so, but I know different. I don't go around divining every thing that happens to me, but there are rare occasions when God will orchestrate events that you *know* beyond question that He had gotten your attention. He could not have gotten my attention any better had He spoken audibly.

This, for me, was the beginning of my own personal revival. I had a renewed sense that God cared and that He loved me and that He was still dealing with me... "Robert, where are you?" What a smile that brought to my face! Like a letter left

on the windshield of the car by the wife,... "Just wanted to tell you to have a great day at work today and I love you."

You see, it is the goodness of God that will stir up the fallow ground in our hearts as we break and weep when we see His loving hand in our lives. That broke me unlike a thousand hell-fire and brimstone messages. And I have heard more than most, perhaps. I have forgotten a lot of repentance messages, but I have never forgotten and will never forget what God did that day. He broke the silence and in so doing... broke me.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/13 8:54

#### PREACHING THAT PRODUCES RESULTS

It is common for preachers to employ 'methods' in their preaching to the intent of achieving desired results. This is true across the whole spectrum of most preaching and teaching including false teaching. If I wish for the hearer to do 'X' then I must do 'Y' and 'Z'. This is a suspect concept from the beginning because it ignores the individual need of individual persons at a given time. There is no 'one size fits all' method. This is where the infinite *wisdom* and *power* of God have to be front and center in ministry.

Repentance preachers in our times are in great danger in my opinion of moving into a 'one size fits all' mode that utilizes a certain 'method' of preaching to achieve the desired result of *repentance*. It is generally believed that preaching on righteousness and judgment to come will achieve the desired end. This is likely due to a misunderstanding of former repentance preachers who have preached on these topics and God moved. Many have forgotten that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance just as sure as righteousness and judgment preaching.

I wish to look at two ministers briefly; chiefly Jonathan Edwards and Charles G. Finney. If we extrapolate the most 'potent' messages of Edwards and Finney and launch into ministry with those highly caustic messages we run the risk of causing more harm than good in the long run. Reason being is that in an attempt to 'correct' the errors of easy-believism and false assurance we might well create **asymmetric converts**. We note from Edwards, *"Not that the symmetry of the virtues, and gracious affections of the saints, in this life is perfect: it oftentimes is in many things defective, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instructions, through errors in judgment, or some particular unhappiness of natural temper, or defects in education, and many other disadvantages that might be mentioned. But yet there is, in no wise, that monstrous disproportion in gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, that is very commonly to be observed, in the false religion, and counterfeit graces, of hypocrites."*

What Edwards is talking about is having a symmetric balance that is in accordance with the person of Jesus Christ. I am not called to be Elijah, I am to be conformed to the image of the Father's Dear Son. What profit is there in modeling my life after Ezekiel? These were certainly godly men, but I am not called to be conformed to Ezekiel or Isaiah or Moses or John the Baptist. We are called to continue until Christ be formed in us. This is a most important fact. Although it may seem advantageous to select sermons of Edwards and Finney that achieve great conviction of sin, a careful examination of their lives reveal more symmetry in ministry than they are often portrayed as having.

What do I mean? First of all if you are under the delusion that the content of their sermons was the secret of the great power towards God you are wrong. It was not the 'words' that Christ and Paul used to cast out devils that was at issue, it was their relationship to God and the power they had with Him. The sons of Sceva found out how just 'mouthing words' (even those of Paul and Jesus) has no real effect on folk in rebellion. You may be sowing 'seed' but that is not what I'm referring to. Sometimes all it does is incite anger and rage. The **POWER** was in the multiplied hours of prayer and seeking of the face of God. Finney preached with such an unction that he could not raise his voice at times or the whole place would have erupted into some sort of furor.

As a repentance preacher myself I can say that the tendency is often to want to challenge folk and hit at them. This is questionable at best. I have found that the most solemn messages I have ever preached or heard preached, the voices were not much above a whisper. Finney also talks about this happening in meeting houses. When the unction of God is present the power is not in voice inflection or harsh guttural words, but it is in the unction.

May we never present a Gospel that does not rightly lead folk into a personal relationship with God. May we never get the idea that it is our place to emulate the prophets. May we ever realize our need to have unction. God can do more with t

wo words with unction than a thousand spoken carefully and craftily or with a harsh tone. You cannot do with threatenings what God cannot do with unction. If folk don't respond to the message do not resort to rhetoric and criticism. Let God deal with them. Don't allow the rejection of the rightly presented message lead to your interjection of ill devised comments. Maintain your symmetry as a Christian. Rightly represent Jesus Christ and let the prophets be the prophets.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/14 9:01

THE GOODNESS OF GOD THAT LEADS TO REPENTANCE

*Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever you are who judge. For in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself. For you who judge practice the same things. We know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. Do you think this, O man who judges those who practice such things, and do the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and patience, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath, revelation, and of the righteous judgment of God; (Romans 2: 1-5 WEB)*

It is a hard heart that fabricates judgments against sinners when they themselves are doing the very same types of things. *You are without excuse, whosoever you are that judge...* sobering words to begin teaching the inner workings of the revelation of the Gospel. It is interesting to note how that Paul writing to the Philippians states, *Brethren, I could not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before,*(ASV). Yet, the judge says, "I have apprehended- I have reached 'the mark', why tarry ye and kick against the pricks, I have laid hold- do thou likewise."

Preaching and teaching against sin is not a free pass into Heaven. The **stronger** the preaching, the greater the condemnation in the end for those who have not fully obeyed themselves. *With what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again.*" Wherefore should our words always be with grace and seasoned with salt? Well, lest you be numbered among those who preach Christ *out of envy and strive, while the other of Love or lest we preach Christ from a contentious heart.* And even more fearful is that we had treasured up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and the righteous judgment of God.

*Do you think this, O man who judges those who practice such things, and do the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?* This is a sobering question. Obviously the person has to feel that preaching against certain sins pardons their own. This is serious error. *Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and patience, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?* Here we find the ROOT of the judges error. They interpreted God's goodness, forbearance, and patience as a stamp of approval for what they were doing. Those 'riches' of God's goodness were not extended to this judge that they might judge others from a higher pedestal, but that they themselves might see God's goodness and be led to the very repentance they had been preaching to others.

Preaching without grace is evidence that the preacher does not fully appreciate what God has done for them.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

This is the attitude of a person who cannot appreciate mercy; *have patience with me, and I will pay thee all....* And because the person does not fully appreciate the enormous and insurmountable debt they were forgiven, they take their neighbor 'by the throat' when they ought to have lived a life that exemplified grace. They received grace freely, they should have given it freely. There should be a tenderness to the offering of grace and mercy. There should be a welcoming and non-begrudged attitude that issues forth from a person who recognizes the debt they were freed from.

Even a dog will not come to his bowl to eat if you BARK at him to get him to come. GET OVER HERE AND EAT THIS YOU WRETCHED DOG YOU!! The dog may well have tasted and seen that the food was good, but the harsh attitude of t

he owner caused the dog to go into a nervousness that foiled his appetite, period. Imagine preaching the Gospel like that? You WRETCHES GET OVER HERE AND TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD!! Well, is it any wonder that folk dont respond?

Conviction of Sin will lead a person to the Cross and not DRIVE THEM from it. The Gospel is an invitation.