



2 Cor. 3:18

Open Face

One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness

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The Devil's Rabbits

David Clayton



Many years ago I read a discourse by HMS Richards in which he gave the following counsel: "Do not stop to stone the devil's rabbits." Basically what he was saying was, God has given us a job to do but Satan tries to turn us from it by creating distractions to draw us away. He provides meaningless side issues to divert our attention from what is really important. The devil is very good at this and most of the time we really just need to ignore his distractions and move on with our business. However, sometimes these rabbits of the devil become more than simply annoyances; they become real hindrances to the work which God is seeking to accomplish and when this becomes the case they must be dealt with.

DIVISIONS

I suppose that by now, most of us who are involved in the godhead movement, will have realized that some serious divisions have taken place in the movement. Of course, since it is a movement and not a denomination, it is inevitable that people with widely varying views on different religious issues

will find themselves a part of this movement. There has been a loose, somewhat uneasy alliance among all these different groups, linked together by their recognition that the true knowledge of God and His Son transcends all other issues.

Over the past five years, however, a fracturing has taken place which has intensified and caused a serious rift in the godhead movement. Unfortunately, this rift is not healing but rather is growing worse with each passing day. Some attempts have been made to keep the news of this disturbance quiet. People have talked about it, but generally have avoided coming out and openly discussing what has happened. A recent letter sent out from a group in Australia highlighted this situation and deplored the fact that people were unwilling to honestly examine evidence in an unbiased way. Since Restoration Ministries has been at the center of this disturbance, we are going to break the trend and open up the situation to all our readers so that all may know definitely what has happened and has been happening.

The first consequence of this disturbance was a break between Smyrna Gospel Ministries and Restoration Ministries. Most of us will know that for several years there was a very close tie between Smyrna, led by Allen Stump, and Restoration Ministries, led by David Clayton. This alliance no longer exists. Allen and I still communicate on rare occasions, but we do not work together anymore.

A more recent consequence of this is-

sue, has been the dismissal of Nader Mansour and Imad Awde from Restitution Ministries in Australia. Most of us will be familiar with Nader and Imad. In fact, for many people Nader would have been the face of Restitution Ministries since he was one of the main speakers linked with the ministry. Now he is no longer associated with the ministry, having been dismissed, along with Imad. The Pinto brothers, Bill and Tom, who have taken the other side of the issue, remain in charge of Restitution Ministries, along with those who support their position.

It should be said that there have been attempts to resolve these issues. I have spent many hours in discussion with Allen Stump and others on this issue and there are times when I thought we were close to a resolution, but this has not materialized. Now, basically, we have accepted the rift as a way of life. I understand that there were also discussions and unsuccessful attempts to resolve the issue in Australia.

THE ISSUE

What has been the reason for this terrible rift? What issue has so fractured the movement that former friends and associates can no longer work together and rarely speak to each other any-

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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more? It all has to do with the issue of Righteousness by Faith, with particular focus on the question of, "What is Sin?" This might seem to be a terribly small point but a little examination will reveal why it is such a critical issue.

All of God's work for the human race is centered on the issue of delivering mankind from sin. The great doctrine of "Righteousness by Faith," is so important because it professes to provide a genuine and final answer to the question, "how can we escape the power of sin? What has God done to deliver us from it?"

However, if we are to understand and apply the remedy which God has provided for sin, we must first be certain of what the problem is which needs to be addressed. What is the nature of the disease for which we need a remedy? This is why it becomes so vital that we understand what sin really is. If we misunderstand the nature of man's problem, then it is certain that we will take a wrong approach in dealing with the problem. All of us are fa-

miliar with stories of doctors misdiagnosing patients and consequently administering wrong medications which not only fail to correct the problem, but cause serious additional problems. The same exact situation prevails in the spiritual realm with respect to the issue of sin.

THE REAL PROBLEM

The Bible says without question that man's problem is SIN. We are told in Matthew 1:21 that Jesus came to "save His people from their sins."

People like the Pinto Brothers, Bill and Tom, as well as Allen Stump and others have insisted that the only definition of sin in the Bible is found in 1 John 3:4: "Sin is the transgression of the law." They have stuck with the idea that sin is what we do, sin is wrong actions, wrong behaviour and that this comprehensively defines sin. They are fond of saying that there is no other definition of sin in the Bible. It should be noted that these brethren can find several statements from the writings of Ellen White which seem to support their position: This, for them, has been the end of the story. Ellen White says so and that is the end of all controversy.

We here at Restoration Ministries have viewed things from another angle. We believe that the real question is, "what is mankind's real problem?" When we ask, "what is sin?" then we are likely to get responses which focus on semantics. However, we ask, "what is the real problem of mankind? In dealing with man, what is the real problem which exists which God has to solve?" When we have an answer to this question, then I believe we are better able to understand the issues.

We believe that man's true problem is not what he does, but what he is. Man did not suffer merely a change of behaviour when he sinned in the garden of Eden, but his very mind and nature were changed. The problem which faces God is not the issue of how man behaves, but the issue of what man is. Man's behaviour is only a manifestation of what he is. A person may see sores breaking out all over his body

and think that by covering the sores he has solved the problem. But the truth is that there is probably something wrong on the inside and that the sores are only an indication of a deeper problem. It is the same way with sin. Our behaviour is only an indication of what we really are on the inside. If the problem of sin in man is to be dealt with, God has to do more than deal with what we do, he has to get to the root of the problem and deal with what we are.

THE NEW BIRTH

This is why the Bible represents the solution to man's sin problem as being, the new birth. The solution is not a change of action, but a change of nature, a change of life.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

I like Ellen White's comment on this statement of Jesus:

*Jesus continued: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By nature the heart is evil, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Rom. 8:7; Matt. 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. **The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effec-***

tual working of the Holy Spirit.
{DA 172.1}

This is a wonderful passage and it comprehensively expresses the true problem of humanity and God's way of solving it. Let us examine the key points made:

1. By nature, the heart of man is evil. This means that man is inherently this way. It is not something which he develops, it is the way man is by birth. This is what is implied by the use of the word, "nature."
2. The fountain of the heart (the nature) must be purified before man can do what is right. The streams cannot be pure if the fountain is impure. The problem is not the streams, the problem is the fountain. The problem is the heart, not the behaviour.
3. The Christian's life is not a modification, an adjustment of the old life. There is an **ALTOGETHER** new life.
4. This change can **ONLY** be accomplished by the working of the holy spirit, the life of Christ in the soul.

So man's nature is naturally evil, he cannot do what is right unless this nature is changed, God's solution is to give a new life, not to modify the old, His way is to transform the nature through the work of the holy spirit. This process of change Jesus calls, "the new birth."

Those who say that sin is **ONLY** the transgression of the law must focus on their behaviour, on what they do, for this is what their definition and their understanding require. Their solution is focused on changing their actions. Naturally the focus has to be on their works. On the other hand, those of us who say that the problem is what we are, that the problem is that we are born with a carnal nature, recognize that the only solution is that we need a new, or a transformed nature. We need to be born again. We need a solution that takes care of the true problem, what we are, rather than simply what we do.

SELF-DEFENCE

This appears to be such a simple matter, so easy to understand, that the question must be asked, "how is it that a seemingly simple matter like this, seemingly so easy to understand should cause such a rupture?" Are there Christians among us who would really deny that man has a carnal nature at birth? Are there really those of us who don't believe that the solution to the sin problem is the new birth? This is difficult to accept.

Sadly, these disagreements often deteriorate into personality clashes where one side has to defend its position against all evidences to the contrary, where it is no longer simply a matter of what is true, but more a question of defending one's reputation and status. It is a terrible reality that in these situations men often bury their heads in the sand and having once taken a position defend it with all their might, closing their minds to everything except the position which they have taken. But this should never be. We are not playing children's games, we are contending for the salvation of men, the greatest issues on the planet are involved in these questions and surely, all that should matter to us is that we discern what God is saying, not that we should defend ourselves!

ORIGINAL SIN

The phrase "original sin" has become an irritating phrase because of the way it has been used. It has been used in a similar way to how Trinitarians have used the word, "Arian" to label those of us who deny the Trinity. We know it is a distortion of the truth and it misrepresents us, but Trinitarians delight to use it anyway because it makes us look bad and they know it disturbs our peace. The phrase, "original sin," has been used to label those of us who believe that humans are born with a corrupt nature. Is this a fair or an accurate label? By no means but it suits some to label us in this way.

In actual fact, the doctrine of original sin teaches that all men are born **GUILTY** because of the sin Adam

committed. This is the primary emphasis of the doctrine of original sin. It is either ignorance, or deceptiveness which would make any person accuse us of teaching original sin, for we have stated over and over again that we reject the idea that we are guilty of the sin of Adam. We do believe that we suffer from the **CONSEQUENCES** of Adam's sin, but not the guilt. Consequences are the result of nature taking its course. Guilt would mean that this is something which God arbitrarily places upon all men. This would bring a reproach upon God's justice if it were true, but it is not true and we do not believe or teach this.

All parties agree that we suffer the consequences of Adam's sin. The difference, however, is that those who disagree with our position, insist that the **only** consequences which came upon humanity were **physical** consequences. We disagree. We believe that man suffered both physical and spiritual consequences. Why is it compulsory that all who are saved **MUST** be born again of the spirit? Isn't it obvious that there is something missing when we are born? Isn't it obvious that we are not born of the spirit when we are born from our mother's wombs? Isn't it obvious that when we are born of the flesh we are not fit for heaven and that we must be born again? Are not the words of Jesus crystal clear on this point?

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6)

Does not the Bible teach this truth in the New Testament, over and over? Why is this so hard to grasp? Has prejudice so blinded the eyes of some of us that we cannot see something so plainly taught in the Scriptures?

Man suffered a spiritual consequence of Adam's fall. We are all born without the spiritual birth. We do not possess the indwelling spirit which Adam possessed, unless we are born again. This condition came upon humanity because of Adam's sin. Because we teach this, we are accused of teaching

the doctrine of original sin, but let each one decide for himself if this is the truth.

THE CARNAL MIND

What is truly appalling is the reality that there are some of us, prominent leaders of the people who, like Nicodemus, know nothing of the new birth, who believe that all man needs to do to be saved is to keep the law. Who deny or ignore the necessity of the new birth and who believe that all men are born fully capable of doing righteousness and that all that is necessary is that we choose to obey the law. This is a blatant denial of the word of God.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Rom 8:7-9)

The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God and it **cannot** be. Nobody who possesses a carnal mind can do the will of God. But what does it mean to have a carnal mind? The word carnal simply means, “fleshly.” Therefore Paul continues by saying, “so then, they that are in the flesh (carnal) cannot please God.” So how do we escape from that condition of being carnal, of being “in the flesh?” He makes it clear how this is achieved: “Ye are not in the flesh ... if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you.”

So, to state it simply, those who do not have the spirit of God are fleshly, they are carnal. They cannot please God and they cannot keep the law of God. They are not subject to it. But those who have the spirit of God are not carnal, they are subject to the law of God and they do keep it.

DO ALL POSSESS GOD'S SPIRIT?

Bill Pinto states that all humans are born with the spirit of God and he uses a statement made by Jesus to support his premise. The statement he uses is

John 1:9. Referring to Jesus, John says,

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:9)

The obvious meaning of this is that Jesus enlightens every person who comes into the world. This does not in any way suggest that men are born with the spirit of God. Surely all Christians should understand that possessing the holy spirit in us – dwelling within - is different from having the holy spirit work on us from the outside! Jesus made this plain enough when He said,

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)

Christ on the outside, shedding an influence on humanity is very different from Christ on the inside, dwelling within. The light of Christ is shed on all the world, but clearly, not all the world has received Christ, not all the world is born of the spirit, not all the world has Christ dwelling within, not all the world is saved. It is only those who are born again of the spirit who have salvation.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

This is an exclusive group of people. This certainly does not apply to everybody on the planet. It may seem strange that I should feel the need to emphasize such an obvious fact, but the misguided concept that some brethren have makes it necessary that this truth be emphasized.

THE STATE OF BABIES

Some of the ideas which have been thrown about are the consequence of wishful thinking, not of careful study of the word of God. For example, some of us look at the innocence of babies

and conclude that because of their inability to do anything wrong, then they must be in a saved condition at birth. I am fully persuaded that God has a plan in place to save babies who have never been able to make a choice of their own to serve Him. However, the Bible states plainly,

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:3-6)

Even babies need to be born again, because, in case we didn't get the point, the problem is not what they have done, or have not done, the problem is that when we are born the first time, we are simply born of the flesh, and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Nothing can qualify us for heaven and eternal life except **the new birth**. I am sure that God has a way to impart this new birth to babies if they happen to die without being able to make a choice to serve Him, but the fact is, nobody is born in a saved condition. The only reason why some come to this conclusion is because they take a legalistic approach where they view a person's eligibility for salvation on the basis of the law. On the basis of human works, on the basis of what we do, or don't do. They reason that because a baby has not done anything wrong, then he is fit to be saved. But since when were our works a qualification for salvation? It is not what we have done, or have not done, either at birth or otherwise, it is what Christ has done for us, and does for us in imparting His life to us which qualifies us for salvation.

LEGALISM VS RIGHTEOUSNESS

The approach of those who say, sin is exclusively what we do, is to attempt to address behaviour. They see the law as the answer to the sin problem. Of course this is how they must see it for they believe man is already born capable. They believe man is not born with any problem apart from being

physically degenerate. Therefore, man's problem must simply be that he needs to know the law and to make up his mind to obey it. This concept is the root reason for legalism and self-righteousness and lies at the foundation of all false religion, including pagan religions. False religion believes that God requires man to meet a certain standard of behaviour and then God will bless him if he does. Christians generally believe that standard is the Ten Commandments while non-Christian religions generally have some other standard which they regard as God's requirements. However, apart from this minor difference, the basic idea remains the same. "You are able to obey. You were born with this capacity to obey. God requires you to obey and if you do, He will reward you with His blessings now, and eventually, eternal life." That is the basic false concept underlying all false religion and when all the trappings and quotations and mis-quotations and speculations are all removed, this is exactly the basic foundational idea on which some of our brethren are building.

The Muslims come out and say it straight, "we don't believe man is born a sinner, we believe man is born, good, and capable of good." Therefore, in Islam, there is little mercy for the sinner. Instead there is condemnation and harsh punishment for those who dare to transgress, and self-righteous commendation for those who present an outward form of obedience to the rules,

for of course, this kind of religion teaches that since we all are able to do good, then the problem really is simply that some of us choose to do wrong. What we need is to exercise our will, to try harder, to be more properly educated in the requirements of the law, to be threatened with the consequences of disobedience and this will do the trick. This will produce people who are righteous, because really, the problem is our behaviour and this is what really needs to be fixed. May God preserve us from such a religion!

The religion of Jesus Christ is a miraculous thing. It is not something which depends on the abilities of humanity, but rather the abilities of Christ. Man's part is to lay hold on Christ by faith. Christ's part is to live out His life in man. The foundation of this religion of Christ is the new birth of the holy spirit.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor 5:17)

It is astonishing that professing Christians can read passages such as the above and still not see that the real

problem of humanity is the fact that we are born wrong when we are born the first time and that God's answer to man's problem is, the new birth. But you see, when we understand this, then man recognizes that his only hope is Christ. He realizes that he can do nothing, he must look to Christ and receive Christ and trust Christ to do for him what he cannot do. The glory of man is laid in the dust and Christ alone is exalted. Man must look outside of himself for the solution. He realizes that his problem is not merely what he does, but that the problem infects every fiber of his being and that he requires a remedy which only God can provide. This remedy he finds when he turns to Christ and is born again. The solution does not lie in focusing on the law, the solution lies in receiving Christ. Not in a legalistic approach, but in the spirit of God.

This understanding leaves no place for man to glory in himself, no place for him to exalt himself in his achievements, for he has none. This is very often the real reason for the violent objections to the true doctrine of righteousness by faith. It leaves no room for the victorious to feel that he is better than those who fail. There is no commendation, no glory, no praise for me when I do well, for really, I can do nothing. If I boast, I will boast of Christ who alone is capable and who I truly know, is my all in all.



Raising our Flag

Recently our meeting house received a new sign. This sign is a part of our revived focus to make our position more prominent. This is not an effort to create persecution (smile), but we realize that if people don't know what we believe, they won't be interested in hearing about it.

In addition to our sign, we have printed T shirts and bumper stickers which also carry striking messages identifying the Trinity falsehood. As a part of our renewed thrust there are plans for a revitalized literature distribution campaign with the aim being to reach all of Jamaica with the truth.

We appreciate your prayers for these endeavours.



What Profit?

David Clayton

Recently in reading from the book of Leviticus I came upon the passage where God gave Moses instructions relating to the disease of leprosy. There are detailed instructions as to how the priest was to identify leprosy and how he was to treat people who became infected with the disease. As I read, I was deeply stirred. Leprosy was a terrible disease and it could have devastating effects on a person's body.

But when raw flesh appeareth in him, he shall be unclean. (15) And the priest shall see the raw flesh, and pronounce him to be unclean: for the raw flesh is unclean: it is a leprosy. (Lev 13:14-15)

As I read I could picture the effect it would have on a person when he was diagnosed with this disease. He was doomed to watch the flesh rotting from his bones and feel the life and vigor draining from him day after day until he died. I remember hearing a song about Naaman the leper which graphically describes the horrors of leprosy. It tells of Naaman's experience as he dipped in the Jordan:

"Six times in the Jordan, six times sores drained, Six times he looked at himself, six times, no change."

"Sores drained!" What a horrifying picture! But this was the reality of leprosy. During Bible times it was one of the most feared diseases and was regarded as, "the curse of God." But what troubled me most of all as I read this passage was the statement which I found in verses 45, 46.

And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. (46) All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habita-

tion be. (Lev 13:45, 46)

Now I know that this sentence was necessary in order to safeguard the health of the camp. I understand that quarantining the person with the disease was necessary to prevent the spread of the plague to others. It was a way of ensuring that only one person suffered rather than many. But put yourself in the place of this leper for a moment: You are taken before the priest with your heart beating hard in trepidation. You are hoping against hope that what you have is not leprosy, but you are fearful because the signs are there. He examines you carefully and then you hear the dreadful sentence, it is leprosy!

From this moment, you cannot return to your home, you cannot visit your wife and children, you are cut off from your friends, you cannot return to where you are safe and comfortable. From this instant, you are an outcast, a feared and unwanted person, doomed to spend the rest of your life outside the camp, alone. Whenever you see other human beings you must cry from the distance, "unclean, unclean." From the point of view of the rest of the camp, this is good, this is something necessary, but what about from the point of view of this miserable leper? This is a human being, somebody with a heart, with feelings, desires. What must it be like for him to be doomed to spend his life in such abject, utter misery?

The thought which challenged me as I read this sentence was, where was God in all this? Was this the best He could do for His people? What is the point in having a God if this was the best He could do for a person in such a terrible situation?

WHY A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

This is an interesting question. Of course, in any relationship, the reason why both parties seek each other is a

sense of mutual need. Each party brings something to the relationship which the other party needs and so, the relationship is established and maintained because of this mutual dependence and the mutual satisfaction obtained. It seems strange to think that God could be benefited by a relationship with puny, inconsequential human beings, but apparently He is benefited in some way.

But what does man get from the relationship? I suppose everybody expects something different from God. Some come with the hope that some day they may have the privilege of living forever. Others have a fear of hellfire and hope to escape it by developing a relationship with God. Some seek God because they desire good luck, success in their endeavours, good crops etc. The reasons are many and varied, but the point is, men seek God, whatever they perceive Him to be, because they have needs that they believe that God will satisfy. When people come to the place where they believe that God has nothing to offer, no help to give, they become either agnostics or atheists.

ONLY A COMMANDER?

One thing which stands out as we read the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy is the vast number of commands which were given to the Israelites as to how they were to behave. In fact, it almost seems as though God's part of the relationship consisted mostly of telling them how to behave. There were instructions and commandments covering every minute detail of their lives. There was no question that they had a God, but sometimes it seemed that the relationship was very one-sided. God told them what to do and they obeyed. God's purpose was to command, and their part of the relationship was to obey. There really seemed to be very little real benefit for the people on a day to day basis. I realize that this was not how it was, but there is evidence that many of the Israelites did view the relationship in this way. They came to fear God and to think that perhaps it would have been better if they had not become involved with Him. They

came to believe that they did all the giving and God did all the taking.

FRUSTRATION AND HOPELESSNESS

Most of us will remember the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Because of the rebellion of these men against Moses and Aaron, the ground opened and swallowed them up with their families. Two hundred and fifty other men set out to prove that they were just as qualified as Aaron was and they took censers and offered up incense before God. There came out a fire from God and destroyed all of them. The next day, as the masses of the people murmured and complained, a plague broke out among them and killed fourteen thousand, seven hundred of them. In two days nearly fifteen thousand of them died, and it seemed like it was all because of their association with God! Listen to the words of the people and you will get an idea of how they felt about this relationship with God.

And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. (13) Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying? (Num 17:12-13)

These words are painful to read. These poor people were in abject fear of God. No doubt they wished themselves safe in Egypt, under their taskmasters where they were enslaved, but at least, they knew what to expect. With this God they were in real fear that by being close to Him they would be utterly destroyed. This attitude remained with them for much of their history and the Old Testament record is full of incidents which demonstrate that these people never came to trust this God and never ever developed a happy relationship with Him, as a people. Many hundreds of years later we find the descendants of these same people making a similar statement concerning their relationship with God;

Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so

much against thee? (14) Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? (15) And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. (Mal 3:13-15)

This was their understanding of God, they felt that serving Him was a one-sided affair where they did all the obeying and following of rules, but it was all in vain because there was no benefit for them. In fact, the proud and the wicked seemed to be enjoying just the same benefits and even better benefits than those who served God, so what was the good in serving God?

CHOSEN BY GOD

Let us remember that it was God who initiated the relationship with Israel. It was not they who asked God to enter into the relationship, it was God who chose them and established this covenant with them.

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. (9) Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. (10) Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isa 41:8-10)

This was God's stated claim as to how He intended to treat Israel, as to the benefit which they could expect from Him being their God. They had every right to expect that when they were in trouble and needed help that He would intervene and deliver them.

But what kind of help could they expect from God? Was it merely the same kind of help as they could obtain from their neighbours, from the Egyptians or the Syrians? What was the good of

having a God if all the help that He could offer was only what might be expected from humanity? What is the point of having a God, if supernatural help may not be expected?

THE LIVING GOD

One of the phrases which was used many times with reference to Jehovah, was, "the living God." This phrase is used thirty times in the Bible, referring to the true God. Notice how David used the term as he encountered the fear and cowardice of his fellow Israelites when they trembled at Goliath's challenge.

And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? (1 Sam 17:26)

What did David mean by this phrase, "the living God?" What meaning do the words convey to the mind? The living God implies a God who can act, a God who can intervene, a God who is more than just a figurehead, more than just an object to be revered and worshipped. It speaks of a Being who can and will and does intervene in the affairs of men when He is needed, one who can be depended on to help His people. Those who belong to the living God are not ordinary people and are not restricted to the devices which are available to ordinary men. The living God is ALIVE! Therefore, He is a reality who is always the factor which makes the difference when His people are in difficult situations.

These were some of the realities which passed through my mind as I considered the plight of those poor souls who were diagnosed with leprosy. Why did God decree that they should be treated like that? If they were children of God, children of the living God, was this the best God could do for them? To sentence them to banishment, to be despised and outcast for the rest of their lives? Where was their God, where was their "living God," in this moment

of their greatest need? What profit was there in serving God if when it came down to the crunch and a person desperately needed God, all that God could do for them was to decree that they should be banished from all human habitation?

IS GOD CONSISTENT?

One of the attributes of God is changelessness. He Himself has declared,

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Mal 3:6)

Can we believe this statement? What this suggests is that God can be depended on. His principles never change. In fact, it is wonderful to consider that if we perfectly understood God's nature, character and principles, then we could always predict with perfect accuracy what God would do in any given situation, for He never changes! It was a failure to understand God which led the Israelites to regard Him as being a moody, unpredictable Person. It was this which led many of them to live in abject fear of Him and to be afraid of coming too close to Him. It was this misunderstanding which made them believe that it was unprofitable to serve God and that they were better off before they formed this relationship with Him.

A CONDITION TO HIS BLESSINGS

Consider the words of God in the following passage:

And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. (Exo 15:26)

Notice what God says here: He promises that if the people would **diligently** obey His commandments, one of the guarantees is that none of the diseases which afflicted the Egyptians would come upon them. Were these promises true? Could God be trusted to be

absolutely faithful in keeping His word? This is a serious question and one which we should consider carefully. If God could not be trusted to keep His word, one hundred percent, then the Israelites would have been right in being afraid of Him and in wondering what He would do next, but God meant every word that He said and He keeps His promises perfectly.



Why then did "God's people" contract the terrible disease, leprosy, along with other illnesses in ancient Israel? The only possible answer is that those people who contracted these diseases must have been people who were not faithful in keeping God's commandments. There can be no other answer because it is certain that if they had done as God commanded, God would have faithfully kept His part of the bargain. I know that this sounds like a hard saying and it seems to support the idea which the Jews had that leprosy was a punishment inflicted by God upon a person because of his sins. However, if we think about this more carefully we will see that this does not follow.

NONE RIGHTEOUS

How many of those Israelites really diligently obeyed God's commandments? We have no realistic way of accurately answering that question. However, the record of Israel in the Bible gives us reason to believe that very few, if any of them did. Their history is one of almost constant rebellion and defiance of God. The truth is, if God had set out to afflict people with disease **because of disobe-**

dience, all of Israel would have been filled with leprosy with perhaps not one person escaping. In fact, if we are to believe God's assessment that "there is none righteous, no not one," then we would have to say that every single person in Israel deserved to be afflicted with leprosy. But this didn't happen. Some became sick, others did not, but in truth there was no guarantee for any of those people, for all had come short of God's required condition.

God's statement was really a guarantee of protection, not a promise of affliction. God was not saying, "if you don't obey, I will make you sick." His point really was, "if you put yourself in my hands, then I will put my protection over you, but if you don't, I can't take care of you." Disobedience to God really put the people in a place where He could not protect them. As a result of this, some of them contracted diseases such as leprosy while other calamities came upon others. These disasters were an indicator that God's protection was removed, they were not a signal that God was punishing them. All lepers had been disobedient, but in fact, so had everybody else been. They were no worse than the rest.

But back to the question: Why did God give these terrible instructions concerning lepers when these were His professing people? Why didn't He simply do what a "living God," can do, and intervene to help His people? Since He was their God, and they were His people, why didn't He perform the functions of a God and heal these lepers instead of sentencing them to such lives of hopeless despair?

One of the most well-known stories in the Bible is the story of Naaman the Syrian leper. The story is outstanding because it tells of a man who was not one of God's people, yet he was cured of his leprosy by God. Most of us remember the description of this heathen man dipping seven times in the "dirty" Jordan river and then, miraculously being cured of the dread disease on the seventh dip. However, it is probably also true that some of us miss the

fact that this man was healed while many in Israel were afflicted with the same problem. Why was this so? Why did God heal this foreigner while He left many of His own people in the same desperate straits? Let us ask the question again: Is God consistent? Can He be depended on to keep His word? What was the basis on which God healed Naaman's leprosy?

I have listened to comments on what happened to Naaman and to others who were healed in the Bible and many of those who examine these incidents put down these healings to God's discretion, God's compassion or unknown reasons. What I mean is, they see no consistency in the way God goes about healing sicknesses and disease and performing miracles. It almost seems like their concept of God is no different from that of the Israelites who believed that God was an unpredictable moody Being and that what you got from Him depended on what mood He was in on a particular day. This kind of darkness and uncertainty arises from a failure to believe what God says. If we accept His word then we have to believe that what God did for Naaman, He was willing to do for everyone who possessed the same faith as Naaman did. We have to believe this because God is not prejudiced, He is no respecter of persons and He does not change. Those who do not know this are the ones who end up being uncertain and afraid of God.

STRANGE ATTITUDES

In our last publication of "Open Face," I wrote that it is always God's desire and intention to heal our sicknesses and diseases if we can only believe. One prominent writer, declared that my statement was presumptuous. It is this kind of uncertainty and ignorance of God's ways which leads many to conclude that serving God is a kind of gamble. They believe that we are obligated to do as God demands, but that God has no obligation to keep His promises. These same people who declare that God is not always willing to heal are the kinds of people who will hand

their lives over to doctors and medical people. They will subject themselves to being dosed with all kinds of drugs, to being cut to pieces in their desperate attempts to obtain from men what they feel that God will not give! These people spend all their means on human physicians in an attempt to obtain physical healing, yet, tragically and painfully they come to the place where they watch their loved ones laid to rest after desperate attempts to overcome disease. In all of this, where was God!! The conclusion is, "it was not God's will to heal." If this is the truth, then why all the attempts to obtain healing from men! Why all the efforts to preserve life if it is "not God's will?" Would it not be consistent to accept "God's will" from the beginning and not resist God by all the desperate attempts to obtain healing from men, when it "isn't God's will?"

The truth is that for many of us, dealing with God is a lottery! We have no understanding of His will or His ways. We approach Him from a distance and our knowledge of Him is based more on hope than on what He has revealed. When it is not God's will to heal and we desperately try to overturn that will by turning to men for healing, then we either declare that we are in blatant rebellion against God, or we reveal that we really have no idea of what His will is. This is a tragedy. Those who claim to be "the people of God," who claim to serve "the living God," surely ought to be better acquainted with God than that. Surely we ought to be able to ask God what His will is, and be able to obtain an answer.

The Bible reveals that God will fulfill every one of His promises for those who will *believe*. For those who have true faith. This is God's single condition. It was the condition for Naaman's healing and it was the condition for all healing in the days of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus' words in this regard are amazing.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. (23) For verily I say unto you, That whoso-

ever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (Mark 11:22-23)

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (Mat 17:20)

Almost unbelievable, but these words need to be fully and wholeheartedly accepted because they are the words of one who cannot lie. To those who are skeptical I would ask the question: Why do you think Jesus spoke those words? What do you think His point was? Why would He say such a thing if He did not mean it? Can we trust all the promises of Christ, or only those which are possible through human effort? God help us if this is the state of our religion!

GOD'S SECONDARY PROVISIONS

So why did God command that lepers should be treated in such a terrible way? Why didn't He simply heal all those of His people who had leprosy and spare them all the heartache and hopelessness? When we put all the facts together, there is only one reasonable answer. It was because of a lack of faith among those who became sick! God would have done for every leper exactly what He did for Naaman if every leper had asked in faith! This has to be true because God is consistent! He is always the same and always responds the same if the conditions are the same. But lack of faith was the reason for this terrible sentence which had to be passed on lepers. Some time ago I heard a phrase which I believe aptly expresses the reason why God had to make this provision for those who contracted leprosy. It goes something like this: "**God's pathways are not designed for the faithless.**" This says it all.

God did not quarantine lepers because He was hard, or because He was incapable of helping them. He gave those commands because in love and mercy, He provided a way that was **second best** for those who had no faith!! This is the truth. What we find in those commands in Leviticus is not God's ideal. It is not what He wanted to do for those Israelites. They were His people, He was their God. He was willing to be for them, "the living God." Not just for them as a nation, but for each one of them individually, including the poor wretches who became infected with leprosy. But lack of faith restricts the work of God, in spite of His almighty power. This is why God made these provisions for lepers to be quarantined. It was terrible for these poor lepers, but in a faithless situation, it was the best He could do, because, something had to be done.

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

The exact same situation exists today. Some will insist that God does not plan to heal everybody who is ill, or at least they will say that God is not willing to do it Himself. Instead, His will is that we should spend our last cent on medical help, or on herbs and poultices which in some cases are almost as expensive as medical treatment. Everybody knows that such treatments are a gamble. The doctor says "you will live," but you die. He says, "you will die," but you live! Is this the best that God can do for His people? He who is the living God? No, no, no! A thousand times no! Again, this is simply God making allowance for lack of faith, for unbelief. God's first option was manifested when His Son was here. It was demonstrated during the time of the early church. We are told that there were entire villages where there was not a moan of sickness after Jesus had passed through. The glaring exception was Nazareth where Jesus was unable to do many mighty works because of their unbelief.

How is it that we are so blind? How is it that we deny the plainest facts of Scripture? Jesus over and over made it clear that it was His will and God's

will to heal ALL who came to Him for healing. Every one without exception! Is God consistent? Is it true that He never changes? Does He no longer feel for the sufferings of those who are sick? I have no objection to people using herbs or even medical avenues to treat sickness and disease, but let it be known that these are the **second best provisions** which are made for those who are unable to take hold of God's promises. This is not an attempt to condemn anybody, I myself find that my greatest need is to develop this invincible, unshakable faith. But the point is, knowing this, I know where to look, I recognize my need. Those who deny this truth that God wants to work for us in this mighty way, are satisfied with their poor second best scrambling around in the dark. They are content to live these lives of pitiful uncertainty where they watch their loved ones suffer and die as they desperately call on all the help that they can muster from men, while they ignore the living God, concluding that "it is not God's will to heal." How terrible!

NO CLAIMS TO PERFECTION

Since we here at Restoration Ministries became involved in the study of Righteousness by Faith, we have progressed from one truth to another. God had joined the links of the chain and shown us how this truth is tied to the truth of the godhead, the truth of the gospel of the kingdom and the truth of the baptism of the holy spirit. There is no question that we have made mistakes from time to time. God and heaven alone are infallible. But the truth is, nobody makes progress unless he is willing to go forward.

Recently I was reading an article and I came upon a startling, but interesting statistic. The article stated that world-class ice dancers fall over more often in practice than intermediate ice dancers. This sounds paradoxical. Why do the elite seem to make more mistakes, in practice, than do those on a lesser level? The reason is that the elite are always pushing themselves, they are attempting jumps that are at the outer limits of their capabilities. Those who

are intermediate or at a lower level are never pushing themselves, they are satisfied to remain where they are and thus cannot improve. They don't make as many mistakes, but they don't improve either. They are stuck in a rut and can go no further.

This principle is also true in the spiritual realm. As we reach out for a closer walk with God and a better understanding of His word, He Himself leads us forward. We step out into untravelled paths and sometimes we do stumble momentarily. Those who are satisfied to remain in one place are alarmed. They want everybody to remain in their mediocre state and are quick to condemn those who seek to progress. They magnify every imagined mistake and condemn every move which leaves them behind. This is the way it is, and this is the way it has always been. Those who have made real progress in the cause of God in all ages have been those who have been willing to listen to, and to follow Christ, and to follow Him alone, even if the path is at times lonesome and full of reproach from former friends and allies..



Campmeeting Notice

Each year the Jamaican Camp meeting has been held in March or April during the Easter holidays. However, this year we have shifted the date and instead will be having it October 12-15.

We have made this change for a couple of reasons. First, it is always difficult to find a campsite during the Easter week-end. The campsites are always heavily booked at that time. Secondly, many who attend from overseas indicate that fares are most expensive at Easter. Neither of these problems exist in October.

The new date will include a public holiday on the Monday.

Halitosis

Lenworth Frankson



Bad breath, also known as halitosis, is breath that has an unpleasant odor. I believe that it is fair to say that most people at some point have experienced bad breath. With others this is a persistent condition. For many people, the millions of bacteria that live in the mouth, particularly on the back of the tongue, are the primary cause of bad breath. The mouth's warm, moist condition makes an ideal environment for these bacteria to grow. Some types of bad breath, such as "morning mouth," are considered to be fairly normal, and they usually are not health concerns for some folks but it is my strong belief that this so called "normal condition" is in fact not normal.

The truth is that for most people, halitosis is preventable and curable. One reason why "morning mouth" type of bad breath occurs is because the saliva that regularly washes away decaying food and odors during the daytime diminishes at night while you sleep. Your mouth becomes dry, and dead cells adhere to your tongue and to the inside of your cheeks. Bacteria use these cells for food and expel compounds that have a foul odor. Another reason is that people eat late in the evenings or nights and go to bed before allowing their meal to be properly digested. Drinking beverages with meals before retiring also makes matters worse in that the sugar from the liquids creates fermentation in the stomach as you sleep. Skipping breakfast can give you bad breath. Eating breakfast gets the salivation going and takes care of the overnight dry mouth

phenomenon. So staying hydrated is crucial to good breath. Hydrating your body thoroughly throughout the day and eating a light easily digested supper four to five hours before bed time, without the added drinks, along with proper brushing of teeth, tongue and flossing most likely will change your "morning mouth" or "dragon's breath" to "baby's breath".

COMMON BAD BREATH CAUSES

If you suffer from chronic, severe bad breath, it's important to identify the cause so you can determine an effective treatment. Halitosis has many causes, including the following:

- **Tobacco use.** If you smoke, quit. Unfortunately there are some Christians who are still struggling with this destructive habit. Your bad breath may be due to other causes, too, but tobacco use is a guarantee for bad breath.
- **What you eat, or don't eat.** Certain foods, such as garlic and onions contribute to bad breath, but only temporarily. Once they are absorbed into the bloodstream, the smell is expelled through the breath, but the odors remain until the body processes the food, so there's no quick fix.
- **Dry mouth.** If your mouth is extremely dry, there is not enough saliva to wash away excess food particles and bacteria, which can cause an unpleasant smell if they build up on the teeth. **Dry mouth** can be caused also by salivary gland problems, medications or by "mouth breathing" and even poor hydration of your body throughout the day.
- **Infections.** Bad breath that seems to have no other cause may indicate an infection elsewhere in the body. If you have chronic bad breath and your dentist rules out any oral problems, see your doctor for

an evaluation. Bad breath can be a sign of a range of conditions including respiratory tract infections, chronic sinusitis or bronchitis, diabetes, or liver and kidney problems, so it's important not to ignore the problem.

- **Poor dental hygiene.** Infrequent or improper brushing and flossing can leave food particles to decay inside the mouth.
- Infections in the mouth. **Periodontal (gum) disease**
- Respiratory tract infections. **Throat infections, sinus infections, lung infections**
- Systemic illnesses. **Diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease, lung disease, sinus disease, reflux disease and others**
- Psychiatric illness. **Some people may perceive that they have bad breath, but it is not noticed by oral-health-care professionals or others. This is referred to as "pseudo halitosis."**

A person may not always know that he or she has bad breath. This is because odor-detecting cells in the nose eventually become accustomed to the constant flow of bad smells from the mouth. Others may notice and react by backing away, holding their breath, turning their heads to the side or even bending down to tie their shoe laces as you speak. This might be embarrassing for you but the good news is that there is a cure.

The best way to improve bad breath is to follow a thorough oral care routine including twice-daily tooth and tongue brushing and daily flossing to remove the food particles and bacteria that can cause bad breath. Mouthwashes only improve bad breath for the short term, and if you have a chronic problem, your dentist may suggest an antimicrobial rinse to help keep bacteria at bay.

6 FOODS THAT FIX BAD BREATH

Because brushing constantly is impossible, try using breath-busting foods with what's likely to be handiest.

- 1. Lemons.** Suck on a lemon wedge, or nibble on the rind. Eating an orange is another easy option if you are in a restaurant, where there's often a citrus garnish; if not, you can order sparkling water with lemon.
- 2. Parsley and other green garnishes.** When your favorite garlic laden dish or onion-topped entree arrives with a few sprigs of parsley on the side, consider it a hint, not just a colorful trim. Chewing on the sprigs releases parsley's pleasant, breath-freshening oils. Garnishes of fresh basil and rosemary will also work well.

- 3. Apples and other crisp, fresh foods.** They are high in fiber, and all that chewing increases saliva production. This combination acts like a scrubbing rinse for your mouth.

- 4. Crunchy spices.** For a more exotic solution, pick up some anise, cardamom, coriander, and fennel seeds, available in the spice aisle of most grocery stores. Mix equal parts in a small covered bowl, and keep it on the dining room table next to the salt and pepper. Chewing on a few seeds will release enough oil to sweeten after eating curry dinners. Your mouth will also taste amazing.

- 5. Mint sprigs or cinnamon sticks.** Either of these deliciously potent flavors will squelch the sulfurous scent

of onion and garlic. Plus, an essential oil in cinnamon kills a nasty type of oral bacteria, discouraging it from setting up house in your mouth.

- 6. Berries and yogurt.** If you can't get through most days without indulging in foods that are less than breath-friendly, eat for prevention, which is even better than a cure. Consuming half a cup of plain, sugar-free yogurt twice a day can lower mouth levels of hydrogen sulfide (that rotten egg smell). Berries (and melons, oranges, and other fruits high in vitamin C) also deter mouth bacteria. Start and end each day with fruits and you might never have to worry about bad breath again.



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