

A man with short dark hair and a slight smile is looking down at an open book he is holding with both hands. He is wearing a dark red, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a dimly lit room with a bookshelf filled with books. The lighting is focused on the man and his book, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

The
Good News
is *Better*
than you think

David Clayton

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Is Better
than you think

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NOT FOR SALE

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Understanding Sin and Righteousness

Introduction

As we look at mankind we see much that is distorted and wrong. Violence, abuse, selfishness, perversion of what is good and dozens of other evils are evident when we examine humanity. It is clear that there is a disease which infects the entire human race and that there is need of a cure that really works. We rightfully label this disease as "sin," and recognize the need to deal with it, but the question is, is there really a cure for this sickness?

The fact that there are so many thousands of different religions testify to the fact that man has always recognized his need to be free from sin and has sought for this freedom in a relationship with God. Yet, the testimony of most religious people is that sin is still very much a dominant force in their lives and that all their religious exercises have not really set them free from sin's power.

Sin is a problem because it creates so much sickness, suffering unkindness and death. But there is a still greater problem caused by sin. Sin alienates us from God putting us in the place where we have no hope for tomorrow. God promises eternal life, but only to those who are free from sin and this is the greatest reason why it is so vital that we escape from it altogether. In the book of Hebrews, Paul says in chapter 12 verse 14,

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: (Heb 12:14)

All Christendom knows that God is righteous, He is holy and His nature is opposed to sin. Even if we have never read what the Bible says about it, we know instinctively that in order to see God we have to be righteous, and from the beginning of time the search of humanity has been to find this righteousness which qualifies man for eternal life in fellowship with God.

The first pitiful effort to find it was made by Adam and Eve. When they discovered that sin had made them unfit to appear in God's presence, the Bible says they sewed fig leaves together. By putting on garments made of leaves they tried to make themselves fit for companionship with God. Of course as soon as God appeared they knew it was not enough

and they ran to hide from His presence.

Strange ways of seeking

Since then, people have tried in many ways to escape the stain of sin and to obtain righteousness. Back during the middle ages, there was a Catholic monk by the name of Simeon. In seeking righteousness, Simeon climbed up on a pole, and stayed there for thirty-seven years. At first his pole was three meters high, then he moved to one six meters tall, then eleven meters and finally twenty meters high as he tried to get away from the crowds which came to see him. He remained there through the sun the rain and the snow. Food would be passed up to him in a bucket. Here is what history records of this man:

“Simeon the Stylite spent thirty-seven years of his life standing on a pillar. He ate as little as possible, and did his utmost never to sit or lie down: he would tie himself to a pole fixed to the top of his pillar so as to sleep upright, or, on laxer occasions, he would sleep leaning on the balustrade that also prevented him from blowing off his perch during storms. He had no roof, and no walls apart from the open balustrade; a leather garment, long hair, and a beard were all he had for protection against the elements ...”

“He prayed all night, bowing frequently and low (this being his only exercise): one witness stopped counting after his 1,244th bow.”
(<http://gvannv.com/compass/arch/v1402/saint.html>)

This man believed that the greater his self-abuse, the greater would be his degree of righteousness and his approval in God's sight.

“So tightly was this rope bound about his body that it was imbedded in the flesh which rotted around it. Worms found their way into ulcers on his legs. For a year during which he stood on one foot, he replaced the maggots that fell from his sores and said, ‘Eat what God has given you.’” (The Other Side of Rome - by John B. Wilder, p.60)

This strange and misguided person was given the label of “saint” and is today known as “St. Simeon the Stylite.” What was this man seeking as he abused himself in this terrible way? He was looking for a way to escape sin, for purification of soul, for righteousness and for a way to please God.

What did he gain from it? Nothing. It never made him one degree more righteous.

In every religion on this planet, people are looking for a way to find righteousness, a way to obtain God's favor and eternal life. In some religions we see men lying on beds of nails, abusing their bodies to purify their souls and we wonder how people could be so misguided. But is this any different from the approach of many who call themselves Christian? For many of us, even the things which we eat become a part of the search for righteousness. We dress right, we eat right, and we carefully obey the rules of the church so that we may become righteous; that God may be pleased with us and so bestow his blessings.

It is possible that there may be some benefit in doing some of these things, but is this the way to escape from sin? The problem of sin can never be dealt with effectively unless we first of all understand what sin really is. One wise person once stated,

“There are thousands hacking at the branches of the tree of sin, but very few who are attacking the root.”

This is a true statement. The great majority of the religious world approach sin in the wrong way because they misunderstand what sin really is. The first essential need is to understand the nature of sin. When we understand sin it helps us to see what we are really dealing with, and better understand what is needed for the solution to the problem. In the next chapter we will examine this primary question, “what is sin?” When we understand this foundational truth we will be prepared to appreciate and take hold of the wonderful answer to the sin problem presented in scripture.

Chapter 1

The Nature of Sin

What is sin? Ask this question and many Christians will take you immediately to 1 John 3:4.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4)

Here it says clearly that sin is the transgression of the law. According to this definition, in order for a person to commit sin he has to actually break the law. Of course, there is no denying that this verse gives us a true description of sin. Accepting 1 John 3:4 enables us to have an understanding of the kind of behavior which is unacceptable to God. However, let us also realize that this is not all that the Bible says concerning sin. This is not the only understanding of sin which we find in the word of God. If we were to accept this verse as being a comprehensive definition of sin we would have to conclude right away that the existence of sin depends only upon our actions. We would then have to believe that sin is limited to our behavior, but there are many places in the Bible teaching us that there is more to it.

More than wrong actions

Sin goes much deeper than simply the things which we do. There are some Christians who insist that a person does not sin until he breaks the law; therefore a person cannot be a sinner unless he is a law-breaker. These people seem to believe that in order to solve the problem of sin, a person simply needs to start keeping the law. But anyone who is honest knows that this way does not work!

In Mark 7:18-23 Jesus made an interesting statement:

And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; (19) Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? (20) And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. (21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts,

adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: (23) All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:18-23)

Verses 21 to 22 are especially interesting. Here Jesus tells us that sinful actions start from somewhere within us. Before we can perform an action we first have to think about it. (Of course we have what are called “reflex actions,” which we don’t consciously think about, but these commands still come from the brain and are based on the kinds of habits or instincts which exist in our bodies.) The question then is, if we actually find our hand committing sin will it help if we cut off our hand? Of course not! We will still have the sinful thought in our mind. So now we see that our actions are not the problem; the problem is the thoughts that produce the actions. Now another question arises: What is it that produces the sin laden thoughts?

The real problem

If I could train myself by disciplining my thoughts through yoga, meditation, martial arts, etc., would I then be enabled to overcome sin? Look at what Jesus said in verse 21, “*Out of the HEARTS of men proceed evil thoughts.*” It is true that the actions come from the thoughts, but the thoughts themselves come from somewhere, they proceed from the heart.

The heart refers to the mind, not the conscious mind, but the subconscious mind which we sometimes refer to as “nature.” When we consider this it becomes clear that the root of sin is not what we do, or what we think. The problem is the kind of heart or nature that we have. This is the basis of our real sin problem.

Both Jesus and Paul tried to make us understand that our problem goes deep into our nature. The emphasis is unmistakable. In John 8:31-34, we read:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (33) They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? (34) Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John 8:31-34)

A slave master

Jesus said that if you commit sin you are the servant of sin. If this is so, then who is your master? Jesus said that SIN is your master. You are the servant of sin. The Jews of course, thought He was talking about physical bondage. They said, "We are Abraham's children and we were never slaves to anybody." But Jesus said that if you commit sin, somebody is your master and He referred to that master as, "sin." Here we see that in this passage, the word "sin" is not referring to transgression of the law. Jesus describes sin as a king, a ruling master who demands obedience. The word "servant" actually comes from the Greek word "*doulos*" which literally means "slave." Jesus says the one who commits sin is a slave of sin and a slave has no choice about what he does. Somebody else dictates how he is to behave and in this case, Jesus says that the master's name is "sin."

When we go to Romans chapter 7 we find that Paul is in full agreement with Jesus. In verses 14-17 we read:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (16) If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. (17) Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (Rom 7:14-17)

We all know what the life of a slave is like. In the mornings when he awakens somebody tells him what kind of clothes to wear, what kind of food to eat, where he is to work that day, and how long he will work. Somebody else even decides whom he will marry and where he will live. He has no choice about what he will do. Somebody else makes those decisions. This is how it is in the life of a slave. A slave has no power to choose for himself.

Paul says, "I am sold under sin." What kind of person is sold? A slave of course! Paul is speaking about the person without Christ. If such a person is a slave does he have a choice about what he will do? No! Paul says such a person is a slave to sin. His masters' name is "sin." Every day he gets up his master says, "you must work for me today. You must steal, lie, rape, kill," or maybe if you are a more respectable kind of slave - maybe a church member - he says, "be angry with your wife, shout at your children, and harbor malice in your heart." Maybe the sin master gives us the more re-

spectable sins to perform. They do not seem as bad as the actions of some other people, but the truth is, the root is the same. We are all still slaves of sin, obeying the same master.

In verse 16 Paul said, "I agree that the law is good," but in verse 17 he speaks of his enslavement and says, "now it is no more I who am doing it, but sin that is living in me!" Did Paul want to do what was right? Of course he did! Was he trying? Of course he was! With all his might he tried.

Paul was in character a stronger man than most Christians. Paul was a fighter who struggled and fought, but still he said, "I could not!" This weakness is not only true of Paul, but it is also true of every man and woman upon this planet. Those who are more educated and who live in the upper classes of society may put on fine clothes and better conceal open sin, but while they outwardly resist these sins and self-righteously condemn the murderers, the prostitutes and the thieves, they still harbor sin. They feel good that they are not sinners like other people, but which is really a greater sin; is it murder or hypocrisy? The fact is the root is the same; the cause of both kinds of sin is the same. It is fact: our nature is a slave to sin!

Nature must change

So, now we have a much fuller understanding of sin. Sin is not primarily our actions, and it is not even our thoughts. Sin is essentially the very nature we are each born with. Changing our actions and thoughts cannot change our nature. Our nature must change. And while it is difficult to change the habits of our thoughts and actions, it is impossible for us to change our own nature. We need someone who can actually change our nature. This is our only hope.

We have testimony from Jesus and Paul that man's problem is deeper than mere actions. These both make us understand that what we need is a change of nature. Jesus says something very interesting in John 3:6:

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

What does that mean? It seems so obvious, flesh is flesh. Why bother to say it? Jesus is saying, "if you are flesh then there is only one way in which you can behave and that is

like flesh! Flesh cannot behave like spirit, and when he says, "flesh," He does not mean our physical flesh and blood bodies. He means our carnal sinful natures, or our naturally depraved minds. Flesh is naturally carnal, the Spirit is naturally righteous.

Not from the outside

The English preacher Charles Spurgeon gave an illustration which expresses the problem well. "Pigs by nature, love to roll in the mud, I think every pig loves to do this. Even though some pigs are kept locked up from the moment they are born and are kept that way all their lives, if one of them was to be set free and encountered a puddle of mud it is more than likely that he would have a good roll in it."

Let us say someone decides that he wants a pig for a pet, but this pig has too many dirty habits so this person decides to send him to school where he will get five year's education. Every day in school the pig learns, "You shall not roll in the mud."

Five years of education finally is over and this graduated pig is going down the road. He has his certificate in his hand, he is wearing his jacket and his tie, when he comes to a pool of mud. What does he do? He throws away his certificate, he throws off his jacket and tie and he jumps in the mud and he rolls. Why does he do it? He does it because it is his nature! He was born a pig! From the moment he was born something in his pig heart was saying, "mud is the best thing in the world," and education will not take that out of a pig!

All men are born with a sinful nature and no matter how we educate ourselves, the root remains. "*That which is flesh is flesh.*" We might train a man not to steal, not to lose his temper, not to drink alcohol, but such teaching is contrary to his nature. When nobody is looking the man will take a drink, he will lose his temper, he will steal and he will indulge his nature because a person's nature is not changed by education. If there is to be any real change we have to go deeper.

Let us again consider the educated pig. Education did not help him, but maybe by some miracle of modern science somebody discovers how to do a brain transplant. So they take the brain of a cat and they put it in the head of this pig.

How does a cat relate to mud? Have you ever seen one rolling in mud? Only if it was dead! You have to kill a cat before you will get it to roll in mud. So here is this pig with the cat's brain and again he is walking down the road. He looks like a pig and he walks like a pig, but now he comes to the mud and what does he do? He walks as far from it as he can get. Why does he do this? It is because he has a new mind; a new nature. Nobody has to tell the pig, "thou shall not." He has not been educated, but he has a new mind. In one moment everything is accomplished that five years of education could not accomplish. This illustration helps us to understand what our problem is and how we need to approach it.

Light and darkness

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

Here, and in several other places in the New Testament, God is compared to light. There is a lesson to be learned from this. It is interesting that in order to define the word, "darkness," we need to use the word "light." Why do we need the word "light" to explain darkness? Do we need the word darkness to explain light? No! The reason for this is that light is something real, it is made up of pulses of energy. Scientists don't understand exactly what it is but they know it is something real.

But what is darkness? Darkness is the absence of something; it is not something in itself. Darkness is a condition where light is missing and can only be explained in terms of the light which is missing. We can only understand darkness by relating it to light. When we understand this truth we have a good foundation for understanding the true nature of sin.

The Bible tells us that God alone is good (Matt. 19:17). This means that there is no place where true goodness can be found unless God is there. But suppose there is no goodness present, what is it that remains? Evil remains! Where goodness exists evil cannot exist, but as soon as good is gone, immediately all that is present is evil. So we can understand why God is referred to as "light." When God's spirit is present and God is in control, sin cannot remain. It is only

when God's spirit is withdrawn, when God is not in control, that sin can appear. Sin is in essence simply the condition which arises with the absence of God. It is that other side which manifests itself whenever the presence of God is withdrawn.

This is why men are evil by nature; we are born without the spirit of God! When we understand this we can see our real question is not how to get rid of evil, but how to obtain righteousness. We cannot get rid of sin or darkness by attacking it. It has no reality in itself. We cannot get hold of it to remove it. No, what we must do is allow God to turn on the light - we must obtain His righteousness. When we have obtained righteousness, sin will naturally disappear.

Sin's origin

In Ezekiel 28 we find a description of how sin first entered the universe. Here we see a description of Satan represented as the king of Tyrus:

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. (13) Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. (Ezek 28:12-13)

Lucifer was the sum, the totality, the perfection of beauty and of great wisdom. He was created and instilled with more knowledge than any other creature, and he had no imperfections of the flesh. The record says that he was covered with precious stones. He was the most perfect being that God had ever created. He had great wisdom, great knowledge, great understanding and a perfect beauty. He lived in a sinless environment - he did not come from deprived circumstances. Every advantage which could have been provided was his. Verse 15 says that he was perfect in all his ways.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. (Ezek 28:15)

Everything which he did was always perfect. But there

came a day came when iniquity was found in him. His ways did not change until iniquity arose first in him. In him was where all trouble first started. It did not start with bad actions, it started first on the inside, in his heart.

Lucifer was created perfect. It is not easy to understand how sin happened to arise in him and it is certain that there can be no excuse for sin, but what we do know is that in this perfect being who had every advantage, who understood every doctrine, and who understood the ways of God, something began to change. Whatever happened had its way, first of all in the heart of Lucifer, and when that evil seed developed and became mature, it brought Lucifer to the place where he concluded that he could live independently of God. Isaiah 14:12-14 says,

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (13) For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isa 14:12-14)

The problem - independence of God

Here we see that Lucifer concluded that he was good enough to do, and to be, and to live, apart from God. He was one of those beings who felt that he was good in himself! He had lived, up to this time, totally dependent upon God without recognizing what was the true source of his life and his goodness. He did not recognize all the goodness which was in him, all the benefits which he enjoyed day by day, as being the gifts provided by the hand of God. He became wrapped up in himself and in his own abilities. He came to the conclusion that he could manage by himself, without God.

It is probable that Lucifer had no idea of the true working and ways of sin. He lived in a world where there was only light so what could he know of darkness? How could he know or even conceive of a concept called darkness? When Lucifer first started conceiving evil in his heart he did not plan to murder and to destroy and to deceive! All he thought was, "I am a good, intelligent being and I have the ability to think and make decisions for myself." I don't need to be

always doing everything the way God wants it done.” He just decided that he wanted independence from God because he was an intelligent being who was capable of directing his own life.

But God does not remain in the heart where He is not welcome.

We can see then that as soon as Lucifer decided to be his own boss, his own ruler, his state changed. He who had always been so good, so full of goodness, became totally evil. Not partially evil, but immediately, totally evil, the moment God departed from him. He may have continued to behave piously outwardly, but in his heart a change had taken place. A seed had been planted and in that seed was the root of everything which he is today. All the evil which has since then been manifested in the universe was in the heart of Lucifer the moment he separated himself from God. Apart from God there is no good. There is nothing that remains in the heart except darkness when we are separated from the light of God.

Sin’s door

Now let us consider something which will help us to understand this even better. When God created the universe He had the option to create robots everywhere. By this I mean that He could have created creatures who had no choice, creatures who could only do what He wanted and who could never think of doing otherwise. He could create robots, or He could have created beings who were capable of free choice and free thought. As we know, God chose to create beings who were free.

It is interesting to consider that this freedom of choice is something which will never be taken away. Free choice will always exist, and yet it is the thing which caused sin to be introduced into the universe. When God created free will He took a great risk. God took the risk that somebody might one day choose to exercise that free will in a way that was contrary to, or independent of God’s will. But it was God’s desire that this free will which He had given to His creatures should be yielded back to God Himself, in voluntary and willing submission. In creatures that choose to love God, He would be able to work to do His will and His good pleasure. And so it was for hundreds, or thousands or maybe

even millions of years. We don't know how long it was until finally one being chose to use that free will in a way that was independent of God's will. That one contrary choice was where sin began.

As we consider this a question arises in our minds. Can sin itself ever be destroyed? Can we destroy that which has no existence in itself? If sin had some substance, if it were made of something tangible then it could be rooted out and destroyed. But since sin is not something in itself and is not something tangible, then it cannot itself be destroyed. The death of sin is not like burning down a wasp's nest; it is not like cutting a cancer from your body. Sin is not something you can take and strangle the life out of. It has no existence in itself.

Can the universe ever come to the place where sin will no longer appear? The answer of course is yes. The universe will one day come to the place where, by the freewill of every being in the universe, sin will never appear again. This will be by the free-will choice of all who live in the universe. Although there will always still be the freedom to choose another way, no one will ever use that way again. Nevertheless, the opening will always be there, for free-will will always exist. But as the Bible suggests in Nahum 1:9, no creature will ever be so stupid as to re-introduce sin into the universe.

What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. (Nah 1:9)

Not sin, but rather, sin's cause

In approaching the problem of sin and looking for a solution we are not to look at sin as an entity in itself, but we are to look at what causes it. We have to see that the problem is not getting rid of our sin, the problem is in how to obtain righteousness. We can't get rid of something which has no substantive reality. We can't deal with sin itself, because it is not the true problem. The problem is the absence of light, the absence of righteousness, that is the problem and that is the only problem. Where goodness exists, evil cannot show its face.

God's authority rejected

As we look at the story of Adam and see what happened to him when he sinned it is evident that the problem began in his mind. We often say that when Adam and Eve sinned, they obeyed Satan. But let us look at the scenario a little more closely. God said, "don't eat the fruit." Satan said, "eat the fruit." But who made the decision? It was Eve who made the first decision. Before she made that decision she weighed God's words and she weighed the words of Satan and she came to her own conclusion. Ultimately, it was her wisdom that she trusted. For the first time God was no longer the authority in her life. Instead, Eve became her own authority when she choose to follow her own wisdom rather than trust God.

This was the moment when it happened. When these two people, Adam and Eve, decided that they were going to act independently of God they were immediately separated from God and became spiritually dead. At that moment, all they were capable of was only evil. Signs of the change in them began to appear right away. They became afraid of God and became conscious of being naked. As soon as God appeared, Adam, who had loved Eve, and lived only to make her happy, started to accuse her. He who had never had any thought towards her but good, suddenly was so scared that all he could think of was himself. He didn't even know if she was going to die because of her guilt, but still, he was ready to blame her! This came upon him immediately!

We never are good in ourselves. We do not learn to be good, we are not trained to be good, we do not evolve into good beings. Goodness is the gift of God and if we do not receive it in Him, we will never have it at all. It is only the presence of God that makes us good. If we could learn to be good, then we could learn to be God! But since God alone is good, how can we learn to be good?

The world of self

When Adam chose to take of the fruit he immediately became self-centered. Self-centeredness is the essence of the sin-life. This is the essence of the world of sin and sinners. Self becomes the world in which we revolve. In this kind of self-filled life all we can do is sin. In a selfish life all that is done is always contrary to God's way. The only life available

to Adam and Eve after they turned away from God is the life which every person in this world lives until he enters into a relationship with God.

So as we examine the sin problem and look beneath the surface, we see that there are four steps in the process of sin. Sin follows this sequence and any one of these four steps may be referred to as "sin."

1. First there is doubt or unbelief of God.
2. This leads to a broken relationship with God.
3. This results in a selfish, carnal nature.
4. This always results in lawless behavior.

When people refer to "sin," most of the time they are looking at the fourth stage which is, lawless behavior. This is what is most commonly recognized as sin. However, we can see that the problem of sin begins long before we see lawless behavior. It begins with doubting God. The result is separation from God and a broken relationship resulting in evil deeds. So if sin is ever to be dealt with, we have to focus on the root, the beginning, where it starts. To begin with behavior is foolish and we can see that such an approach cannot solve the problem.

Actions or nature?

There are many people who think of a righteous life only in terms of the Ten Commandments. A man becomes a Christian and thinks, "now that I am a Christian I must start attending Church. I must stop smoking, stop drinking, stop telling lies, and stop committing adultery or fornication as his case may be." But in everything else in his life - in terms of how he spends his money, he remains the number one decision maker. "It's my money, my car, my house, these things are mine. I am keeping the commandments, God is getting His part." This is how a righteousness life is seen to many people, but this is a wrong concept.

Righteousness cannot be limited to the performance of good deeds. In the righteous life, it is not only the actions which are significant, but rather, it is the entire change that embraces the entire life of the entire being. It is not just with respect to how we understand the law, but with respect to everything which is involved in our lives. We choose to become fully the property of God.

When we are truly righteous, we live entirely unto God. As it says of Christ in Romans 6:10:

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

The life we are to live is the resurrected life of Christ and that life embraces far more than commandment-keeping as it is commonly understood. It takes in everything, the food I eat, the hairstyle I wear, the way I treat my friends, the discussions I have behind closed doors - it takes in everything, because my life is to be the life of Christ.

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
(3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
(4) When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Col 3:2-4)*

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:11)

It is life that we have been given. Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. He did not just bring change with respect to some aspects of our lives, but change in the whole circumference of our being.

*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)*

That is what it means to have the righteousness of Christ. And this is what God wants to give us.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Righteousness

Some of the hardest statements in the Bible were made by Jesus, and in Matthew chapter 5 we find a few of them. Matthew 5:20 says,

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Mat 5:20)

Not good enough

Let us remember the kind of life that the Pharisees lived. They paid tithe on mint and anise and cumin, they fasted twice per week, they were always praying, always giving something to the poor. If you wanted to find people whose lives were outwardly righteous, then you had to look for the Pharisees. Now Jesus comes and He says, “this is not good enough, if you don’t have a greater righteousness, it is impossible to enter the kingdom.” Many of those people were probably thinking, “this is a hard saying, but what shall we do? We just have to try harder!”

Jesus went on to say that the one who was a murderer was not just the person who took somebody’s life, but was even the man who was angry with his brother without a cause who was guilty of murder. A man doesn’t become an adulterer only by going to bed with somebody else’s wife, but also by just having the desire or intention in his mind. In many churches there are men who think about this and recognize that they are not fit for heaven, but they keep hoping that someday, by hard work and careful discipline, and by re-educating their minds they may be able to bring their very thoughts under discipline and so be qualified for heaven.

But look at what Jesus said at the end of that chapter; He went on to make things even more difficult. In verse 48 He says,

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Mat 5:48)

What do you do when you read a statement like this? Some people throw up their hands and give up. But the average Christian says, "I must try harder. Even to be as perfect as God is, I must TRY harder."

The truth is that many of these people who make these desperate efforts at self-discipline, in the effort to please God, are totally sincere. They truly are doing what they think God requires. It is not always the case that they delight in self-discipline, but rather, that they are genuinely ignorant of the nature of true Righteousness and how to obtain it. It is critical that we understand this for if we do not get this right we may put in the most strenuous efforts and find at the end that it was all in vain.

In order to come to grips with this issue, let us consider the question, "what is righteousness?" How shall we define it? One of the more popular definitions says that, "righteousness is right doing." Many Christians have felt that this definition is a very good description of righteousness because of course in 1 John 3:4 the Bible says,

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4)

So it seems a matter of simple reasoning. We conclude that if sin is the transgression of the law, then obviously righteousness is the opposite of sin and therefore must be simply, obedience to the law. So, we conclude that in order to avoid sin we simply stop disobeying the law, and in order to obtain righteousness we simply obey the law.

On the surface this seems a reasonable conclusion and in fact, with some slight variations, this is the basic foundation principle on which every non-Christian religion is based (though in most cases the laws to be obeyed are different). The sad fact is that Christians have become so misguided, so unfamiliar with the principles of the gospel that they have embraced the same basic philosophy as the heathen in seeking salvation. The basic idea behind this philosophy is that being saved or being lost is something we earn by what we do; by how well we obey.

Righteousness in the law

Of course when we define sin and righteousness in terms of what we do then our reference point must be the law for the law is God's standard by which He makes us know what

is right and what is wrong. But let us look at what the Bible says in Galatians. 3:11,12:

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. (Gal 3:11-12)

How do the just live? It says the just live by *faith*, but the *law* is not of faith. So obviously the just cannot live by the law. In seeking righteousness we will not find it if we seek it on the basis of obedience to the law. Verse 21 says,

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (Gal 3:21)

What these verses tell us is that God might have made righteousness available through the law if it was possible. But such a thing is impossible and therefore in seeking righteousness we cannot relate to the law. Many Christians see their religious experience in light of the law, and their relationship with God in light of the law. If they have managed to be reasonably obedient to the requirements of the law, they feel that they are in God's favor, but if they have been disobedient, they feel that they are alienated from God and need to start obeying before God can accept them. In building on this foundation they are building on something which cannot work, for by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified. Righteousness cannot be produced by our obedience to the law.

Without the law

This point is further emphasized in Romans 3:21:

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. (Rom 3: 21)

Notice what this verse says. It speaks about God's righteousness, and it says this is *without the law*. This is a strange phrase. What does the apostle Paul mean when he says, "without the law?" What he is saying is that there is righteousness that exists, but obtaining it has nothing to do with the law. How is that possible? This righteousness is declared to be the righteousness of God. Now if it is "without the law," obtaining it cannot be on the basis of observance

of the law, or relationship to the law. It cannot depend on our right-doing or our wrong-doing. The thought is continued in verse 22.

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (Rom 3:22)

Two Kinds of Righteousness

Here we see the Bible comparing two types of righteousness. There is the righteousness of the law, and there is the righteousness of God which is without the law. It is important for us to recognize that there is a righteousness that does not have anything to do with obedience to the law. This righteousness is said to be **God's righteousness**. Now the righteousness of the law says, "the man who does these things shall live in them (Gal. 3:12)." But what does the righteousness of God say? Verse 22 says it is "unto all and upon all who simply **believe!**" Notice, one requires **doing**. That is the law. The other requires **believing**. That is God.

This truth was clearly brought out in the experience of Abraham. We read in Romans 4:3,

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Rom 4:3)

Amazing! Like everybody else Abraham wanted righteousness. The Bible says he believed God. What did he do? Something happened in his mind, in His attitude towards God and when it happened, immediately God counted him as righteous. Immediately he obtained what people have been seeking so hard for, and he obtained it simply by believing God.

The apostle Paul understood the way of righteousness thoroughly and gave his testimony in Philippians 3:6-9. He says,

Concerning zeal, (I was) persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of

God by faith: (Phil 3:6-9)

Here he mentioned all his own works, his carefulness in obedience to the law and the lineage which would have made him one of the most outstanding followers of the law in Israel. His countrymen would have considered him one of the holiest men among the Jews. He referred to these achievements as the “righteousness which is in the law.” But then he said that he counted all this as nothing but filth so that he might be able to obtain the “righteousness which is of God,” and he finished by showing how it is obtained, “by faith.” The point is, there is a righteousness which does not depend on the observance of the law, and this is the only righteousness which is worth having.

Let us consider that since God is perfect, absolutely righteous. The only kind of righteousness which He can accept is perfect righteousness. For Him to accept anything less, would mean that He had compromised and since He is perfect it cannot be possible for Him to compromise. The only righteousness He can accept, is absolute righteousness.

Since He requires perfect righteousness, then it is clear that only God Himself can produce this righteousness. In actual fact, all who are seeking to become righteous by what they do, are really trying by their efforts to become like God! This kind of attitude can be only described as “crazy.” It is crazy for a poor corrupt sinner to try to produce the life of the almighty God, by his own efforts. But this is how confused many of us have become.

Danger in the wrong way

Anyone who is seeking righteousness must go to God to get it. The only way we can obtain it is as a gift from God. The one who seeks it in any other way will wear himself out and achieve nothing. This is what the Jews, as a nation did. Romans 9:30-32 says,

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; (Rom 9:30-32)

Who could have tried harder than Israel? The Bible says they “followed after righteousness.” It is what they were seeking night and day, yet they never obtained it.

But here are the Gentiles. Are they seeking righteousness? Not at all, but they hear the gospel and what do they do? They believe it, and immediately they have found what the Jews, in working so hard did not find. It was faith and faith alone which obtained the blessing of righteousness. We must learn that all our good intentions will not help us in the search for righteousness if we seek it in the wrong way, and that is what this experience of the Jews teaches us.

What are we saying then? Is the law contrary to the righteousness of God? Is God’s righteousness against the law? How can the law be important if it cannot make me righteous? How can it be necessary if I do not need it in order to be righteous?

God’s Character expressed

The Ten commandments have been described as a *transcript* of God’s character. Maybe it would be more correct to say that they are an *expression* of God’s character. In other words, the Ten Commandments tell us what God is like and they are an expression of God’s will for men. But obviously, if this is what God wants for us, then it must be an expression of what is in His heart. A person of integrity will only make laws which he considers to be just and good. It is evident then that the law can never be contrary to God’s righteousness because if it truly is a description of God, an expression of His character, then it is indeed an expression, or a description of true righteousness. Therefore Paul tells us in Romans 7:12,

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (Rom 7:12)

But the commandments are not righteousness *in themselves*. They do not bring or produce righteousness, they only *describe* righteousness. When God came down on mount Sinai and gave the ten commandments to Moses, righteousness did not suddenly come into existence, it was only an expression of something which had always been there. God only described His character and put it into words in the Ten Commandments.

If we can understand this, then we will be able to understand what the law is. We will understand that the Ten Commandments are a description of righteousness. Can we find righteousness in the description? No! If we want righteousness, we must go beyond the description.

Many Christians are confused on this point. They go to the law, which is only a description of righteousness and seek to find righteousness in the law. But if we want righteousness, we must go to the source of righteousness, and there is only one such place in the entire universe.

Let us consider an illustration. I have a photograph of my wife. If you look at this photo, you can see what kind of hair she has, you can tell something about the way she smiles, you can see the color of her skin and you may obtain a lot of information about her just by looking at this picture. You could perhaps pick her out in a crowd just by the fact that you have looked at this photograph. Suppose I take this photograph with me everywhere I go and I am always kissing it, and hugging it. Suppose I take it to bed with me at night, will that satisfy me? Of course not! Not unless I am crazy! This picture is only a description and it serves as a reminder. But it cannot satisfy. To obtain satisfaction, I must find the real thing.

So in the same way, if you are looking for righteousness, you must go beyond the description found in the law, or else, all you will do is frustrate yourself.

God alone is Righteous

Matt 19: 16-17 brings out this truth very clearly. It says,

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mat 19:16-17)

Verse 17 says that *only God is good*. This is an absolute truth. It is very important that we believe it. Jesus Himself said it. Since this is so, what are some of the truths which follow from this fact? Well for one thing, it means that anywhere in this universe that we find somebody who is good, we can know that God is living in that person. Wherever we find anybody good we have found where God's life is. When

we understand this, then right away we know that in our search for righteousness, our focus has to change. The challenge for me is not that I should produce righteousness, for how can I produce the life of God? The challenge is for me to receive the life of God, for God alone is good. So we see that righteousness is a *Person*, and that person is God. But of course righteousness is also “right doing,” because God always does what is right. But are WE going to produce the character of God by what we do? Are we going to produce a righteousness equal to God’s by our efforts? This is impossible. Only God can be God! Praise His name.

The question is, why does God do what is good? Why is He always engaged only in doing what is best for the creatures in His universe? Is it because He is obedient to a rule? Is it because He is commanded to behave in this way? It is a bit silly to think that God does not steal because His law says, “thou shalt not steal.” The fact is, God does not need law to do what is right. He does good because His *nature* is good. It is the way He is and because He is good, He cannot do what is wrong. The thought of wrong-doing is totally contrary to His nature. So if God is good, and God is living inside of us, what will be the consequence? We also will behave in a way that is good and we will do it because God is living His good life in us.

Is this idea a practical one? Is it possible for somebody to live in me in such a way that his very nature is manifested in my behavior? Is it possible for Him to live in such a complete way that I don’t even need rules to make me do what is right? This is what the Bible means when it says that we may have God’s righteousness which is without the law. We may be made righteous by receiving God’s nature, a righteousness which is based upon receiving life itself, rather than the righteousness which comes by what we do in observing the rules and regulations laid down by law.

Not Imitation, Substitution

Chapter 3

The Two Adams

The apostle Paul often uses a phrase, which we sometimes bypass as insignificant, or have difficulty in understanding. It is the phrase, “**in Christ.**” This phrase appears several times in the writings of Paul and it is full of deep significance. It is most often found in the books of Ephesians and Colossians. What does this phrase mean and how important is it that we should understand it? Ephesians 1:3 says,

(Eph 1:3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

God has already blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings, but there is a qualification. Where are these blessings? They are in Christ. There is only one way to obtain these blessings, we have to be where they are. Eph. 2:6 says,

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph 2:6)

Notice how strong Paul’s statement is. He says we are actually sitting in heavenly places. We look at ourselves and say “it is not true, I’m sitting here on earth reading this book.” So what does Paul mean? He is emphasizing the fact that the Christian’s life is united with the life of Christ. The same life which is in my toes is also in my finger so wherever my toes go, the life in my fingers also goes there. That is what Paul is trying to say. He is saying, “if Christ is your life, wherever Christ is that is where you are.” In 1 Corinthians 15:45 we have an interesting statement:

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. (1 Cor 15:45)

In order to correctly understand what it means to be “in Christ,” we first need to understand what it means to be in Adam. Notice, the verse speaks of two Adams, there is a first Adam and there is a last Adam. The last Adam of course, refers to Jesus Christ, but the question is, why is Jesus called the last Adam? Now we know Adam was the first man, he was placed in a garden and he was given a beautiful

wife. None of these things applied to Jesus, yet he is called “the last Adam.” God is trying to say something to us. When we look at Adam we can learn something about him that helps us to understand something about Christ. In Romans 5:14, Paul says:

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Rom 5:14)

Here it says Adam was a, “figure of Christ,” There is some way in which Adam and Christ are similar. Romans 5:19 gives us the key to understanding why Jesus is referred to as the last Adam. It says,

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Rom 5:19)

Look at the verse again, it says, “By one man’s disobedience *many* were made sinners, but a little word was left out when the translators of the KJV translated this verse. In actual fact, the verse should read, “By one man’s disobedience *the many* were made sinners.” This is the way it is translated in several versions of the Bible. The verse is not just saying that *some* became sinners, it is comparing two sets of people On one side there is *the one*, and on the other side there are, *the many*. Who is “*the one*?” The one is, Adam! And who are “*the many*?” The many are all the rest of humanity.

When one man disobeyed, what happened to the many? They became *sinners*. It was not their own actions or behavior which made them become sinners. No! It was one man’s disobedience that caused the many to become sinners. Of course that doesn’t seem to be fair or just, but it is not an issue of justice, this is the way the law of consequence works in the universe. One man’s choice affected all his descendants. All were born into Adam’s sin.

When you and I were born it was not our fault that we were sinners, but the problem of sin has been passed on to us and we have to deal with it. If a child is born with AIDS it cannot be his fault. It has to be his parents’ fault. It is not a question of who is to blame but it is still the reality which that child has to live with.

God created one man and when he created this one man all human life was in that person. God did not create every person individually, instead He created one human life and the life of all humans was created in that one life. It is that same life which has been multiplied and passed on over the centuries. We are all partakers of Adam's life, and in this sense we are all in Adam. In other words, since we are all partakers of that life, then we are all a part of Adam's existence.

But if we are all a part of Adam's life what kind of life do we expect to have? If something is born from a goat would we expect it to be a cat? Adam could only beget in his own image. Although he was originally made in the image of God, he perverted that image and this perverted image is the only thing he could pass on to his children.

Because of Adam's sin we are now the lawful prey of Satan. We have no right to be born with the life of God anymore, so we are all born without God's spirit. This is the heritage that we have received from Adam and it is important for us to understand this. The reason why humanity in its natural state does evil, is not because men don't try to do good. It is just simply that men are living the reality of Adam's life. The life in us is a corrupted life and it is not possible for us to live any other life than the one which we have. It is in this sense that, as the Bible says, we are made sinners by what Adam did. It does not mean that we are made *guilty* by another man's sins. What it means is that we are born sinful and helpless, unable to do anything good. We were born a kind of being, "sinner."

Many years ago I attended a graduation service. The speaker kept saying, "you are becoming what you are." As I listened, I thought, "what is this guy talking about? How can you become what you already are?" At the time, it did not make sense to me, but now as I have come to understand the truth of the two Adam's, I realize that there is truth in what this speaker was saying. If we all inherited Adam's corrupt, incapable life, then the fact becomes inescapable: As long as all we have is the life of Adam, as long as we are "*in Adam*," then the longer we live, the more effort we make, all we can do is manifest more fully the life which we already possess. We can only become what we already are. Nothing man can do, or has ever done, has ever been

able to change human nature. Man's efforts have never produced new life. Acts 17:26 says,

And (God) hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (Acts 17:26)

We can see how perfectly true it is. It is not only spiritually, but also physically that we are brothers and sisters. If we could go back far enough in time we would find that all of us have the same grandparents, but in spite of this family kinship we often fight against each other because that is the nature of Adam's life. There is no peace in that life, no harmony. Like a cancer in the body, Adam's life fights against itself.

I once saw a video of a dog chewing a bone whose behavior seemed to be crazy. As this dog was eating the bone, his hind leg started to move towards his mouth as though it had a mind of its own. The dog began to growl at his own foot, but as the foot moved closer to the bone he turned around and started to bite his own foot. It happened over and over. I looked at this dog and I thought, "that is just like the behavior of the human race." The thing is, we can tell that the behavior of this dog is crazy, but often, mankind does not realize that this is exactly how those who possess the life of Adam, behave, fighting against their own life. This is the natural behavior of the fallen life of Adam.

The main point is this: Why are we the way we are? Is it because we try to be this way? The answer is, no! It is not because of our efforts, or even because of our choice. It is because we were born this way! One man did it to all of us!" We are condemned to commit sin because we are the descendants of Adam and this condemnation rests upon the entire human race because of one man. What do we have to do to be condemned? We only have to be born!

When I say "condemnation," I don't mean that God condemns us, I don't mean that we are guilty of what Adam did. In order for a person to be guilty he has to make a choice to break a known law. God does not condemn us for what somebody else did, but our condition condemns us. The child born with AIDS is condemned to die. The disease in the child condemns the child. In the same way our condition con-

demns us. This is what the Bible means when it says,

“...by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation ...” (Rom. 5:18).

In this state, it is impossible for us to live a righteous life, and sooner or later, unless something happens to give us a new life, we will die in this lost condition. It is the life which we possess which condemns us.

If God’s grace, in Christ, had not intervened the very moment that Adam chose to eat the fruit, he would have dropped dead. When the life of God was removed spiritually, physical life would have ended immediately and the entire human race would have died in Adam. But Jesus stepped in between mankind and eternal death, He took the curse upon Himself and he obtained a period of probation for all of us. By His sacrifice, He said, “though they are spiritually dead, preserve their physical life for a time and give them a chance to find their way back to spiritual life.” This is why God has given us time, seventy or eighty years usually, to live. Our days on earth are a chance to find our way back to life, through Christ, because we were all born dead.

It is interesting to notice that God never promised to repair Adam’s life. The Christian life is not a remodeled life. The Bible makes it plain that the life of Adam has to die.

*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)*

Having been born in Adam, our greatest need is to have a new life! The old one is condemned and cannot be repaired. It has to die! But where are we to get this new life? In order for life to be passed on there has to be an original source of life. Adam was the source from which all human life was passed on but his life became corrupted unto death. Now that we need a new life, what does God give us? He gives us a second Adam! He gives us somebody else who is the source of a new life. If we can understand this we can know why Jesus is called the last Adam. Not because he was put in a garden with a beautiful woman but because He is the source of a new life, He is the Father of a new race of people.

Only by birth

Now as we consider what it means to be in Christ there is

another principle that we need to understand: Life is passed on from one person to the other by birth and only by birth. The only person who has ever been an exception to this rule is Eve, because she was not born. She received her life through Adam's rib.

In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is called, "the Everlasting Father".

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isa 9:6)

Jesus is not the Father in the godhead, He is the Son of the Father. But this concept of the two Adams makes it clear what the true meaning of this verse is. Jesus is the Everlasting Father, but of whom? He is the Father of all who make up the new creation, the new human race! Jesus is the second Adam and from Him there comes a new race of people who have been born into His life. In this sense He is their Father, the last Adam.

Let us consider what this means. There is a parallel between both Adams. One brought us into sin - one brings us into righteousness. When Adam took the forbidden fruit, none of us was yet born, so we had no consciousness, but our *life* was there and when thousands of years later we were born, naturally we began to live the fallen life of Adam. Did we have any choice? No, we simply obeyed what our natures demanded that we should do.

Now consider the second Adam: does His life work in the same way? If you are born into the second Adam, what is it that now determines how you live? It is His life! It is not your effort! Your effort was not what determined how you lived when you were in the first Adam. It was nature working its course which made you what you were. Likewise when we are a part of the second Adam our effort does not produce the life we live, our behavior is the natural result of our new reborn nature taking its course.

The life in Christ

All the qualities that Jesus possesses are a part of His life. There is no sin and there is no condemnation in Him. This life is in Christ, on the right hand of God, the place of infinite power and privilege, far above all principalities and

powers. These are the qualities which are an intrinsic part of this life of Christ. We don't need to struggle to obtain these wonderful things, they are already ours, present in Christ. The one question is, whose life do we have? That is the only question. Our deliverance and victory does not depend on what we have done, but on whose life we have inherited.

Notice that what Adam did was done before anybody was born. Likewise, what Christ did was done before we were born. But when we were born into Adam, the behavior which appeared in our lives was simply a manifestation of the nature that Adam had received from his transgression thousands of years ago. In the same way, when we are born into Christ what appears in our lives is simply a manifestation of what Christ already did two thousand years ago. So Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ," and every Christian can say the same thing. If you ask me, "when were you crucified, when did your old life of Adam die?" I will say, "two thousand years ago," for the life that I possess, was crucified two thousand years ago. If you ask me, "what is your relationship to God?" I will say, "we are one." The life I possess is one with God's life, for the life which I possess is the life of Christ himself.

When I came to God, recognizing myself as a son of Adam, my question was, "who am I to approach God?" No matter how I tried, it was hard to believe that I was heard, because I was so unworthy I could hardly ever believe that I could get an answer. But when Jesus prays, His prayer is perfectly acceptable. There is no obstacle standing in the way of God's answering His prayers. There is great power in prayer when we pray in Christ. There is no difference in how God deals with us and how he deals with Christ because we share the same life. We are truly one. It is something wonderful to think about; it is even more wonderful to believe.

So in these two Adams the lives we live were already determined, even before we were born. This is why the Bible tells us that one man made us all sinners (Rom. 5:19). As soon as we were born we began to live like sinners, because this is what we already were. We could not help ourselves.

Now on the other side in order to experience the life of Christ, we have to be born again. How do we become born again? On the side of the first Adam our life is passed on by

means of a sexual relationship. But how is life passed on, from the second Adam? It is by faith. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ's life is passed on. Our involvement is that we believe God. So even though Christ has done all of this, if we are to experience it we do need to be born again, and faith takes us into that experience.

Adam accomplished condemnation for all men. He did it for us all, but nobody will experience it unless he is born. In the same way, although Jesus accomplished deliverance for us all no one will experience it unless he is born again into Christ. So Jesus said,

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:17-18)

What do we have to do to be condemned? Nothing! We just have to remain the way we are. We are born in unbelief, all we have to do is just continue to not believe and we will continue in that condemnation where Adam had already put all mankind.

We are not standing here in the world in a **neutral** position, free to choose between two sides. Some have the idea that we are in a kind of in-between ground, and that we can freely choose one side or the other. This idea is a false one. This may have been true of Adam, but we are not standing in his place. We are born, and live our lives, already on Satan's side. Our only choice is to escape from that side, and the only way to escape is to receive the life of Christ. If we don't believe, we remain in our condemnation, but if we believe, our faith takes hold of the life of Christ and we escape the condemned life. The gospel is really very simple. In essence it is this:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (Gal 3:8)

The gospel was preached to Abraham, and what was this gospel? Look at what it says, *In one man all the world is blessed.* That is the gospel. Our lives, our blessing, everything, is in one person! - in Christ!

When I read the Bible I realize that in a sense, God is only going to save one man. All of us will partake of that salvation, but God's plan was to save us all as a part of one person. There is one righteous man, one who deserves God's favor, one who conquered sin. Our only hope is to join up to that life.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:11)

The Reality,
Christ's life in us

Chapter 4

Human Spirit

One of the questions which has fascinated man for as long as he has existed, is the question, “what is man?” What is his true nature? Of course, it is evident that man is far superior to the other animals. He is capable of thought and reason, of feelings and emotions which set him at a level infinitely higher than any other creature on planet earth.

Man has been able to examine his body and has discovered that in his physical makeup he is not very different from other living things. In fact, some of the more highly developed animals are very similar to man. However, it is in the area of his mind that the great difference appears. Man possesses a quality, a capacity, which he knows very little about and which he has difficulty in defining, but which makes him much more than simply another animal.

We all know that we have a mind, and that we are capable of functions which cannot be explained simply in a biological way. It is this quality of mind which has puzzled man, but at the same time has given him the capacity to control the planet on which he lives.

What is this quality which we call mind, and where does it come from?

As far as I am able to remember, I grew up with the belief that man is made up of two components, the dust of the earth and the breath of life. I was pointed to Genesis 2:7 as the foundation on which this belief could be established.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Gen 2:7)

This idea seemed to make sense. It was easy to picture what had happened when man was created: First of all there was the lifeless body lying there, formed from the dust. Then God started the process of breathing, and when man started to breathe, he became a living soul. So I was made to understand that man is simply a piece of dirt that is breathing.

Perhaps not everybody else was educated in this way, but in the religious situation in which I was brought up, this is the way it was taught. We always thought it was important that people should understand this.

When I was converted at age 22, a question came to my mind that I could not find an answer for. The question was this: If I should die, would it be me personally who came back in the resurrection? If I should die, it was evident that my body would go back to the dirt, it would go back to the very molecules from which it came. So if all I was, was a breathing piece of dirt, how would God bring back the same person in the resurrection? Would He reassemble the very same molecules and atoms which previously made up my body in order to bring me back to life?

I realized that the answer had to be, no. The very cells which make up our bodies are changed every year. The body which I have now is not made up of the same atomic particles that it was composed of ten years ago. In actual fact, during a person's lifetime, most of the material which actually makes up his body is changed several times over. It is even possible that what makes up one person today in terms of the actual molecules and atoms, may have been a part of somebody else's body at some time in the past.

So the question which became fixed in my mind and which kept nagging me was, what makes me, me?

I asked questions of those whom I thought should know, but I was told, "God is able to bring back somebody exactly like you." Of course, when I heard this, then I became really worried because it sounded like it would be my twin brother coming back in the resurrection instead of me, personally. Others told me, "it is not necessary for you to know how it happens. God is able to do it and that is all you need to concern yourself about." This answer also did not satisfy me. I did not believe it was wrong to seek for understanding.

So, of course, I began to study carefully, and to my relief, I found out that the Bible had a clear answer to my question. It clearly teaches that man is more than just a body that breathes. I discovered that there is also a part in man called the spirit, and that this part is the critical part of man. When the Bible says that God breathed into man the breath of life it is not just talking about wind or air. We are not just a

piece of dirt that is breathing; there is more to us than that.

The word translated “breath” in Genesis 2:7, is the Hebrew word, *neshamah*, and it can be translated in several different ways. The same word has several different meanings. According to Strong’s Hebrew dictionary some of the meanings are, *Wind, breath, spirit, soul*. So, the word may also be translated as “spirit.” It would be correct to read the verse like this, “God breathed into his nostrils the **spirit** of life.” I believe that this, is the true meaning of the verse. God was not telling us simply that man, as a piece of dirt, started to breathe. No. He was also telling us that He had placed a mind, or a spirit in man; an inward part of His being which was a vital part of his makeup.

Again in the New Testament we find the same truth. Let us examine a few other verses which very plainly reinforce this teaching. James 2:26 says,

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:26)

There it says that the body without the spirit is dead. The Greek word *pneuma*, which is translated as “spirit,” may also be translated as both “breath” and “spirit.” A minister once told me, “there is no place in the Bible which says that man is made up of two parts. Where the Bible speaks of man’s spirit it only means breath.” Clearly this minister was not familiar with the following verses. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says,

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Eccl 12:7)

This verse is discussing what happens when an individual dies and it mentions two aspects of the person. There is the dust and there is the spirit. The dust goes back to the earth, but what happens to the spirit? It goes back to God. Is this just speaking about the air we breathe? Is this saying that when a person dies the air he was breathing goes up to God? That is what some people believe but there is a lot of evidence in the Bible which says otherwise. 1 Corinthians Chapter 5 says, in verses 3-5:

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor 5:3-5)

In the church at Corinth there was a man who had taken his father's wife and Paul was very upset about it. Here he was advising the church as to what they should do about it and this is what he says. Three times he speaks about the spirit and none of those times can he be talking about simply the air that comes from the nostrils. First of all he says, "I am absent in my body but I am present in spirit." Then he says, "When you are gathered together my spirit will be there with you." He is not talking about breath. Finally he says, "Deliver this person to Satan that his body might be destroyed so that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord."

There is something called the spirit, and maybe we cannot explain what it is, but the Bible says that it exists, it is a part of the make-up of each human being. Paul says that even though the body might be destroyed it is still possible that the spirit might be saved. Notice the last words of Jesus as He was dying on the cross:

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)

He was not concerned about his body but about His spirit, whatever it was. Likewise when Stephen was dying his last words were, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59). He was not saying, "take the air that I am breathing." There was some other part that was his true self and he was asking Christ to preserve it.

When each of us is born we have a body, but we also have a faculty which enables us to think and learn. We are born with a mind and as we grow we begin to develop a character. Does this have to do only with the bodies that we have or is it something more? When each child is born he starts to behave in a certain way and it does not have to do only with the kinds of bodies we have. Even identical twins develop different personalities. There is something more than just the body. Sometimes we call it "mind," sometimes we call it "spirit" but we all know that these bodies are not our true

identity. They are not the critical component which makes us who we are. There is something more.

A useful illustration

Many years ago I read an illustration that gave a fair idea of the relationship between the spirit and the body.

We all know what a tape recorder is. It requires two components in order for it to work. One of them is the recorder itself, and the other is a cassette. At the beginning of a presentation we may place a blank cassette inside a tape recorder and press the “record” button. It will then begin to record any sound that is made. At the end of the program we could remove the cassette and we could take the tape recorder and bury it six feet in the ground. But as long as we have that cassette, every sound made during the presentation is preserved and one day if we take that same cassette and put it into a different recorder, the same exact thing will play again.

This illustrates the relationship between the human body and the spirit. The spirit may be compared to the cassette, while the body may be compared to the recording machine. Can the cassette work without the recorder? Without the recorder it cannot function, but when you put it into a tape recorder again, immediately what has been recorded comes to life. If you separate them, again, both of them are “dead.” One cannot function without the other.

So, during our lifetimes, our whole personality and character is “recorded” on our spirits. Everything which makes a person a unique individual is imprinted on his spirit. When he dies, the body returns to the earth from which it came, but the spirit, the really essential part of the person, is preserved in an unconscious state. God preserves this spirit until the time of the resurrection when God will restore this spirit to a new body. The person then comes back to life with the same exact personality, character, memories etc. even though his body will be different.

I have never seen a spirit. I don’t know what my spirit is but the Bible says that it exists and my understanding tells me that it makes sense. Of course, when a person is dead, his spirit cannot walk around or fly around and frighten people as some believe. It needs a body in order to function. But one day God will put it in a new body. For the righteous,

it will be a much better body but it is the same personality that will re-appear. It will be the same person coming back and not just somebody exactly like him!

Now this is the makeup of man, simply explained, and when we have an understanding of this, we can begin to appreciate what our problems really are and may begin to understand how they must be dealt with. We begin to understand that our real difficulty is not the state of our bodies but the state of our spirits or our minds. The spirit is what controls the body and reveals itself through the body. If the problem of sin is to be dealt with, it has to be dealt with on the level of the spirit.

We might change the appearance of our bodies, we may change our hairstyles, or decorate our faces. We may put on some muscle by lifting weights. We can adjust ourselves physically, but the truth is, we can do very little to change the kind of spirits with which we are born. If we understand this at the very beginning, then we will recognize that any real change in our spirits has to be a work of God, and is not something which can be accomplished by man.

Understanding this truth is very important. Not only does it give us a foundation from which we can begin to understand the nature of God more perfectly, but it helps us to understand what our problem really is.

Chapter 5

The Spirit of God

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen 1:26-27)

Here we see that man was made in the image of God. We know that God has a visible form and we know that this form is similar to the form of a man. There are several places in the Bible where people have had visions of God and in all cases He appeared with the basic form of a man. One of these places is Daniel 7:9 where it says,

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. (Dan 7:9)

Here God is represented as having white hair. In Revelation 5:1 it says that He has hands. So we see that He has a form like ours, or perhaps it is better to say, we have a form like His. But is it only physically that we were made in the image of God? As we read the Bible we see that we are like Him in several other ways. We have feelings, God has feelings; we love, God loves; we can be grieved, God can be grieved. He has emotions like we have, but also, the Bible teaches that, spiritually, God is similar to us. When I say similar, I am not suggesting that we are in any way equal. Of course we are far inferior, infinitely inferior, but the pattern is there, we were shaped like somebody physically, mentally and spiritually. We were designed after the pattern of our Creator.

The logical conclusion follows that we can learn some lessons about what God is like simply by studying what man is like. One important thing which we have already learned is that man is made up of a body and a spirit, and that the two parts make up one person, not two different people. Let's read one more verse which emphasizes this point:

And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. (Dan 2:1)

Here it says that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which caused his spirit to be troubled. What does it mean when it says that “his spirit was troubled?” Was it his breath that was troubled? Of course not! Did it mean that his knees were knocking together? Not necessarily! Was he perspiring hard? Not necessarily! What is it that was troubled? It was his mind that was troubled! Inwardly he was troubled. There we see how the Bible uses the word **spirit** as it relates to people. It refers to the inward part of a person, to his mind. Nobody would believe in reading this verse that it means that Nebuchadnezzar’s friend, or brother was troubled. We would understand that it was Nebuchadnezzar himself that was disturbed, but on an inward level. Understanding this helps us greatly as we try to obtain some kind of understanding of the nature of our Creator. Let us now go to 1 Cor. 2:11. It says,

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Cor 2:11)

Nobody knows what is in a man except his spirit. Does anyone really know what another person is like? What kind of person am I really on the inside? Am I really a Christian? What am I in those moments when nobody is looking? Apart from God the only person who really knows what I am, is me. But is it my physical body which knows my inward self? No! In my mind, my spirit, I know what I am. Nobody knows the things of a man except his own spirit.

Now the verse says, “Even so (that is in the same way) nobody knows the things of God except the spirit of God.” This verse is very clearly comparing two things. It is comparing how man’s spirit is related to man, with how God’s spirit is related to God, and it is one of the clearest verses in the Bible which helps us to understand what the spirit of God is. If a man’s spirit is not a separate person from the man himself, then God’s spirit is not a separate person from God Himself, otherwise the verse makes no sense. Paul is saying, “man’s spirit is related to man in the same relationship as God’s spirit is related to God.” Man’s spirit is not a separate person from himself, and God’s spirit is not a

separate person from Himself. So God has a spirit and man has a spirit. God's spirit is God himself but not his body. Man's spirit is man himself but not his body. Now when we understand this truth, we have put our finger on one of the great keys which open up an understanding of the subject of righteousness by faith.

Let us look at a few more facts which help to further establish what this spirit of God is. In 1 Kings chapter 8, we have a description of the occasion when Solomon was dedicating the temple. In verse 27 Solomon spoke about God's omnipresence, his ability to be everywhere at the same time. He said,

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1 Ki 8:27)

Solomon knew that God sits on a throne in heaven, but still He said, "Heaven cannot encompass you, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain you." What he meant to say is, "this form that is sitting on the throne is not all there is of God. There is more that cannot be seen, there is a faculty by which God goes beyond His body and reaches to every part of the universe."

Once I was speaking to a brother and he said, "God is present everywhere but not personally. It is by his angels that He is present in all places. There are angels everywhere and they are seeing everything and then they go back and they report to God." When he said this, I realized that his concept of God was very limited. But the truth is, many other Christians hold to a similar belief. While they believe that God is present by means of the Holy Spirit, they think that the Holy Spirit is a different person from the Father! So the Father Himself is not actually present everywhere, it is only the Holy Spirit, a separate person from the Father. So in their thinking the Father is limited in power and is present only on His throne in heaven. Jeremiah says the same thing as Solomon.

Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? (24) Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. (Jer 23:23-24)

Now notice, God does not say that He lives within heaven

and earth, but that He *fills* heaven and earth, and that He is in every corner of the universe. What kind of person is this Being? When we consider this question, we see how small we really are and how great God really is. God has reinforced this truth in several places. In Matthew 10:29-30. It says,

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Mat 10:29-30)

I don't know how many birds die every day. When I was a thoughtless boy I killed many of them with a slingshot. God knew every one that I killed. Even as we walk along every day I guess that we kill many insects just by stepping on them. God knows every single one that dies. Even more amazing, is the thought that God numbers the very hairs on our heads.

How many hairs are on my head? What about all the hairs upon all the heads upon the entire planet? Does God really know how many hairs are on every single person's head? Such knowledge is too marvelous. How can we understand it?

But the question is, how does God know? How does He keep track? It is because He Himself is in intimate and personal contact with every single part of His vast creation. It is because He is omnipresent! Through His spirit He is everywhere! This is wonderful to think about. The very thought makes a person able to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil!

But let us consider this fact: If the Holy Spirit were a separate person from God the Father, then what it would mean is that God the Father is not actually present with us. It would mean that it is a *third person* who is here rather than God the Father and this would mean that the Father Himself is not truly omnipresent. The member of the Godhead who would be really powerful would be the Holy Spirit. We can see how this takes away from the glory of the Father, but more than that, in a very practical way, it takes away our relationship to God the Father.

Many years ago I thought about these things and since I believed that the Holy Spirit was an individual person, I reasoned, "if I pray to the Father and I pray to the Son why

shouldn't I pray to the Holy Spirit?" So I decided to pray to the Holy Spirit. When I started doing this, I found my religious experience beginning to deteriorate. I could not feel the presence of God during my prayer times as I normally did and as I was wondering why this was so, I became aware of something:

I know the Father; the Bible tells me what He is like. I have a picture in my mind of who the Father is. I know the Son too, I also find a picture of what He is like in the Bible, but I do not know the Holy Spirit. What does the Bible tell me about the Holy Spirit? It represents the Holy Spirit by water, by fire, by oil, by a dove, by the wind. None of those are things that I can know. I was trying to pray to something that I could not know. No wonder I could not break through!

When I understood this, it helped me to understand something else. In many churches today where worship is focused on the Holy Spirit there is often a great deal of disorder and strange behavior. People jump over benches, roll on the floor make loud noises, and generally behave in a very disorderly way. Why?

Did Jesus ever jump over benches or roll on the floor while worshipping? Demon possessed people behaved like that but not Christ. And what about the Father? All we know about Him speaks of decency and order and intelligence. But when Christians try to deal with somebody that they cannot know, problems are bound to occur. What do they know about the so-called, "third person," the Holy Spirit? They know that "he" possesses power! That is all they know about him. They see power without character and power without personality! So their real interest in relating to him, is in receiving power, rather than character. This is the logical consequence of worshipping a God who cannot be known.

But when we understand that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the Father, the means by which He Himself is personally present, then we are never disorderly because we know whose presence we are in.

As human beings we can visit any place in the world in our imaginations. By closing our eyes we can see, and in a sense experience places which are on the other side of the world, but we all know it is not a real experience. The pic-

tures we see, the experiences we indulge in, exist only in our minds. But what we can only imagine, God is able to do, because while we are like God in the basic pattern, He is much greater! What we can only imagine is His normal lifestyle. So He sits in one place but His life force, His energy, His personality, flows to every part of the universe! This omnipresent aspect of God, is what the Bible refers to as the Holy Spirit.

Let us mention just one more passage. Psalm 139:7 says,

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (Psa 139:7)

Here David explains that the Spirit of God is the same as the presence of God. David understood that God is omnipresent; that there was never any place that he could go that God was not there. It is important to understand this. In understanding it, our relationship with God will change and our worship will change. We will have a foundation from which we can truly understand the truth of righteousness in Christ.

One verse ties it all together. In 1 Cor. 6:17. It says,

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (1 Cor 6:17)

Let us consider carefully what this verse is saying. How do we join two pieces of iron together? It is by welding. How do we join two plants together? It is by engrafting. But how can two spirits be joined together? Only God knows! But God says that this is what happens. We can see two pieces of iron fused together, and we can see two plants becoming one, but we cannot see when two spirits are joined together. Nevertheless, God says that it happens. This part of God comes and unites with this part of man. It is one of the most wonderful truths in the Bible. By this means man becomes a partaker of the very life of God.

Chapter 6

Life in Christ

What is Life? There is no human being who can give a perfect answer to this question. If mankind could answer this question, then we probably would have already created life. But the best that we can do is describe the characteristics of life and show how it manifests itself.

Yet this is an important question because over and over in the Bible man's problem is said to be the absence of life. He is described as being dead and in need of life. We are told that this life is what we have been given in Christ Jesus. The question is, have we truly, literally, in actuality been given something, or is this just a figurative way in which the Bible speaks?

When a person receives life, what does he receive? For example, let us consider Lazarus when he was dead. What was there missing from him? What made him senseless? What shut down all his mind and body functions so that he was no better than a piece of dirt? What was missing? Was it a spark of electricity, was it a puff of air absent from his lungs? We know better than that! All the electricity and all the air in the universe will not bring a dead person back to life. Life is an element that ONLY GOD possesses and which only He is able to impart. We may not know what it is, but we know that it exists and that it is something very, very real.

As soon as an entity is born, we know whether or not it is alive because there are certain indicators we look for. In the case of animals we look for independent movement, response to stimulus – something to indicate that this individual has the ability to perform certain functions. If these functions are manifested, then we say the thing is alive. If these functions are not present then we say it is dead.

Different Kinds of Life

Whatever life is, plants, humans, animals, insects, birds, fishes, microbes all share it alike. Maybe when we come down to the basic fundamental definition of it, all life is the

same. It is the same spark of energy existing in the ant which also imparts life to the human. One thing is certain, however, and it is that life manifests itself differently in different organisms and in this sense we can say that there are different kinds of life.

From the moment of birth, a bird will behave like a bird, a fish like a fish, a dog like a dog and a human like a human. There are certain kinds of behavior which do not need to be learned as they are inherent in the life, and they are an integral part of the organism which receives such life. In other words, life is not something which is learned or developed. Life is something which is inherited, which is present at birth and which has in it, the characteristics which will determine how the organism will behave and what kind of creature it will be. No matter how it tries and how it learns, a dog will never be a cat. At best, educating a dog in cat behavior will only result in a very confused and poorly adjusted dog!

Spiritual and Physical Life

Spiritual life may be understood in more than one way so let us define what we mean when we speak of spiritual life. It may refer to the state of existence of spirit beings – the kind and the quality of life in which they exist. By this definition, all spirits possess spiritual life including God, the angels and even demons. It is a kind of existence which is non-physical. However, this is not the kind of spiritual life which I want to discuss here.

It is possible for human beings, in our physical state, here and now, to receive a certain kind of life that we refer to as spiritual life and this is what we are looking at now. How do we define this spiritual life? In this context what we are speaking about is a certain kind of life which God imparts to those who yield to Christ. This life affects us on the spiritual level, that is, it affects our minds rather than our bodies. This is why we refer to it as spiritual life. This life is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, and can be obtained in no other way.

One of the most important things which we need to understand is the nature of this life and how very real it is. It is also important to understand how this life may be obtained and received.

Are Spirit and Life the Same?

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26)

What is it that makes a person dead? The Bible says it is the absence of the spirit. This agrees with what we are told in Genesis 2:7 concerning how man first received life. It says that God breathed into man’s nostrils the “breath”, or the “spirit” of life and this is what made man become a living soul. The Bible consistently represents the spirit as being this key ingredient which makes a person alive. The following verses illustrate this very clearly.

“And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.” (Luke 8:55)

“and having said thus he gave up the ghost (spirit) (Luke 23:46)

“Saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit (Acts 7:59)

In these and in many other verses we see the clear teaching that the spirit (whatever it is) is the vital ingredient which makes a person alive. When the spirit is gone the person is dead, and when the spirit returns, the person comes back to life.

Of course there are many Christians who believe that the spirit is an actual individual entity which may continue to exist on a conscious level after an individual is dead. They believe that even though the body ceases to function, the spirit continues to live and function in a non-physical realm. This is a false idea which is not supported by the Bible and it lays the foundation for many false beliefs such as the teaching that at death man goes immediately to his reward in heaven or to an eternally burning hell. It also leads us to believe that it is possible to communicate with dead people, or, the equally dangerous idea that God’s spirit is an individual person, independent of God and Jesus.

In an attempt to counter these false beliefs, some have gone to an extreme in the other direction. They limit the spirit to simply thoughts and ideas, and deny that the spirit is an actual component made up of some kind of energy; a literal element which we cannot define. Both extremes are false and deny what the Bible says. Embracing one or the other will lead us onto a path which will eventually force us

to take a direction which will diverge further and further from the way of truth.

So, although we cannot define life, we know that we do possess it. Life is a very real and literal thing and our life is referred to as our spirit. This is also true of God. God's life is also referred to as the spirit of God.

The Nature of man

One of the main reasons why there is misunderstanding and disagreement on the subject of righteousness by faith is that there is confusion concerning the nature of man and therefore, confusion also concerning man's real problem. Some believe that man's problem is really a physical one and consequently, they also believe that the solution is a physical one. They believe that the real reason why man commits sin is because he has a weak, fallen, sinful body which he inherited from Adam. They believe that if, with Christ's help, we are able to bring these bodies under discipline then we will be able to stop committing sin.

But the truth is, there are two sides to man's nature. There is the physical and the spiritual. Man possesses spirit as well as flesh; a mind as well as a body. What is man's real problem? What is it that really makes him a slave of sin and an enemy of God? Is it his flesh or is it his spirit? Is it his body or is it his mind? Notice what God tells us in His word:

“For the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom. 8:7)

This is very plain. Man's problem is that he has a carnal mind, he has a corrupt spirit which is incapable of good. The very thoughts of sinful man are evil and therefore it is impossible for him to do good. The problem is not his body, but his mind. Man's problem is not a physical one, but a spiritual one and it must be solved on the spiritual level, not the physical.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (Mark 7:21)

Now it is true that the Bible often speaks of the “flesh,” or the body, as being the problem. For example in Romans 8:8 it says that those in the “flesh” cannot please God. However the very next verse, Romans 8:9 shows us that it is not

speaking of the literal flesh and blood, but rather the fleshly mind or the carnal spirit for we are told,

“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 8:9)

Likewise, Romans 6:6 tells us that the “body of sin” has been destroyed by our union with Christ. But it is obvious that we still have our flesh and blood bodies and they are still weak and suffering the effects of sin even after we become Christians. So it is evident that the Bible is not speaking of our literal bodies when it speaks of our “body of sin,” but again it is speaking of the carnal mind, the spiritual part of us which is our real problem.

The nature of man’s life

What is the nature of man’s life, or man’s spirit? By nature man has a life which is weak, carnal and inherently corrupt, and there is nothing which man can do about this of himself. The weak, carnal nature is something which he inherited; it is the life which was passed on to him, transferred from generation to generation across six thousand years. The lives we live reflect our nature. When we receive life at conception, we also receive our natures. Because of this, a creature born a dog behaves like a dog, and a pig behaves like a pig because of the life which each inherited. In the same way, a man will always behave like a human, but more importantly, he will behave as a sinner, with a tendency to always do wrong, because this is the nature he received at birth. His nature has to do with the life, or the spirit, which he inherited.

Now we can understand that we have inherited a sinful nature, or a sinful spirit, and that this nature is the essence of what we are, on both the physical and spiritual levels. Physically we are born with the same genetic weaknesses as is true of all mankind. Spiritually we are also born with the same fallen, corrupt spirits. As long as men are men they will have the fallen carnal spirit, or nature, and will be incapable of truly resisting sin. It is impossible for any creature in the universe to behave contrary to his nature. Man is born carnal, and will live a carnal life.

False religion

One of the characteristics of all false religions is that they cause us to focus on the physical level of our natures, or upon our outward actions.

Through affliction of the body, strict discipline, rites and ceremonies and outward observances, man tries to solve the problem of his depraved carnal nature. But this concept is very, very wrong. This is the foundation of legalism; a religion based on rules. These concepts lead to the idea that all man needs to do in order to overcome sin is to bring his body and mind into obedience to a set of prescribed laws.

It needs to be said again and again: man's problem is not on the outside. It is not his flesh which needs to change, but his spirit or his mind. He needs a new spirit; he needs the mind of Christ. So can we see? If what we need is a new spirit, where shall we obtain it? Shall we create it? Shall we develop it? Shall we produce it by a lifetime of effort? Can we of ourselves, and through our own efforts become as Christ? No, no, no! The Bible says that we can receive it ONLY as a gift from God. This is a *supernatural* work, it is something totally outside of man's ability to attain. If we desire to obtain this new mind, we must receive it as a gift from Christ purely by faith! There is absolutely no other way. No effort of man can make a sinner into a saint. No amount of discipline can change a carnal mind into a spiritual mind. A new nature, or a new kind of creature, must be the exclusive work of God in Christ.

"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3-5)

This is the answer to man's sin problem. It is the only answer. Every man who hopes to have eternal life must be born again because it is the only way that sin can be overcome. He must be born again of the spirit. What does this mean? Remember that the spirit is life. Jesus said "*Man's spirit is man's life and God's spirit is God's life.*" What Jesus was saying was that the only way man can escape the power of sin and be qualified for God's kingdom is to receive God's own life or God's own spirit. He must receive a nature which is completely different from his own corrupt one.

There are many people who stumble at this wonderful truth.

Some resist the idea that man may literally partake of the very life of God. To them, it seems a blasphemous idea to suggest that man and God may actually share the very same life. They fear that it may lead men to self-exaltation or that it may cause us to drift towards the teaching of pantheism. But when the word of God teaches something very clearly we need not be afraid of it. Rather we should be afraid of rejecting it. It is our misconceptions which must be cast aside rather than the words of God.

“... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

“... your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor 6:19)

“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Cor 6:17)

“In them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:23)

There are dozens of these verses in the Bible which all teach the same great truth. The Christian becomes an actual child of God, literally, because he literally receives the very life of God. Isn't this what happens when we parents have children? They become our sons and daughters because they receive our very life and this is the reason why they behave like us in so many ways? So the word of God tells us that this is the way we can behave like God; to be a new kind of creature. It is because we have this life in us, and this is a life that does not commit sin.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1 John 3:9)

This is the truth. Men do not overcome sin because they try hard to do what is right. They do not gain the victory by striving and struggling against temptation.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” (Rom 7:18)

Such methods are vain and frustrating. They can never lead to victory, because we cannot resist our natures. The

only hope is that we may receive a new nature or a new life and this is what God gives us when He gives us His Holy Spirit. It is His own nature, His own perfect life which cannot be touched by sin.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom 8:2)

The Word or the Spirit?

There is one other important question which needs to be answered. What is it which changes a sinner into a saint: is it the word of God or is it the spirit of God? Or is it that the word of God is the same as the spirit of God?

Jesus said, *“the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”* (John 6:63) This may lead to the belief that Christ does not literally live in His people and that it is not actually God’s life which literally is united to the life of the Christian. Some Christians believe that this means that by reading the words of the Bible that we are changed. We receive the thoughts from the Bible and they change our thoughts so that our thoughts become LIKE the thoughts of God and this is what it means to say that we have the life of Christ; or that we think in the same way that he thinks. In John 5:39 Jesus said,

Search the scriptures for (because) in them ye think ye have eternal life...” (John 5:39)

The meaning of this statement is better understood when we read it in a version other than the King James. We see that what Jesus was really saying was, *“you search the Scriptures ...”* He was not commanding them to study the Scriptures, but rather, He was commenting on their habit of searching the Scriptures believing that this practice guaranteed them eternal life.

The Jews loved to read the scriptures, but what was their purpose in doing this? They thought that eternal life was in the scriptures. They thought that by feeding on the words they would obtain the blessing of God. But Jesus went on to show the true purpose of the scripture,

“...and they are they which testify of me...” (John 5:39)

This is the purpose of the scriptures; to testify of Christ. The Jews read the scriptures thinking that in reading and

memorizing the words they would obtain life. However, words can never give us life. The purpose of the words is to direct us to Christ, the one who is the true life, and the only one who can give us everlasting life. As Paul says in Gal. 3:24, “*the law was our school master to bring us unto Christ.*” So Jesus continued by saying,

“ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” (John 5:40)

“I am the way, the truth and the life (John” 14:6).

What a tragic picture! The Jews searched and studied the scriptures, they could explain every doctrine and they made sure to memorize passages of the word, even writing out sections and sewing them into the very garments they wore, or posting them to the walls of their homes. But they missed the whole point of what they were reading! All this body of knowledge had only one point, one purpose, and it was to lead them to Christ. Yet while they embraced the words which spoke of Christ, they rejected Christ Himself, the living reality to which those words were directing them. Paul tell us,

“...if there had been a law given which could have give life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. 3:21)

But this was not possible. Words cannot give us life. No matter how we memorize them, no matter how we think about them, no matter how beautifully they express the truth, words cannot give us life. It is only Christ Himself, the living word of God who can Himself give us life; not by counseling us or educating us or stirring up our thoughts, but by implanting in us the seed of His very own life, His own life-force, the holy spirit, thereby making us a partaker of the very life of God, or the divine nature. Therefore, again Paul tell us, “*the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” (2 Cor. 3:6) and, “*the Lord (Jesus) is that spirit*” (2 Cor. 3:17)

The word is very important to us and our lives. We must study the Word, and we must understand it, but only because this enables us to find and to hold on to Christ. It is He and He alone who can give us life.

The Revelation of God

Chapter 7

With Open Face

One of the most terrible consequences of sin is that it has distorted our concept of God. This is the tragedy of the ages! The greatest goal of the plan of restoration is the renewal of a true concept of God. The evidence of the terrible distortion is illustrated in the behavior of our first parents after they disobeyed God:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (8) And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. (Gen 3:7-8)

Adam and Eve devised a plan of concealment before God should again come to visit. Their plan involved sewing fig leaves together to cover their nakedness with the hope that this provision would be adequate to enable them to appear before God. But when God appeared, they discovered that their own provision was never good enough to qualify them to stand before God. When they heard His voice it instantly became clear to them that there was nothing they could do to make up for their wretched condition and they fled to hide from the face of God.

Let us take note of the fact that it was not God who chased them away, neither was it God who hid from them. God came *looking* for them. God was not ignorant of what had happened; He knew exactly what they had done, but still, He came looking for them. Had God's attitude towards them changed one iota because they had taken the forbidden fruit? Absolutely not!! True love does not change. A father loves His children when they are good and when they are bad. Whether they fail or whether they succeed, a good father loves just the same. So God says, "*I am God and I change not ...*" (Mal. 3:6). Therefore, God went looking for Adam and Eve as His custom was, even when they had rebelled against Him. God's attitude towards them hadn't changed.

The Hiding of God's Face

But something had changed, and there was no question about that. The thing that changed was the greatest and most tragic consequence of sin. Man ran to hide from God, His Father and best Friend. The reality of this change in man's attitude towards God is illustrated in other instances in the Bible. Consider Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai:

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: (23) And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen. (Exo 33:22-23)

In this encounter with Moses God's action was illustrative. God could have shown Moses some kind of face while veiling His glory if He had chosen to do it. When Jesus appeared to Abraham with the two angels, Abraham did see his face and speak with Him in open, face to face communication. So when God told Moses, "you cannot see my glory and live," God was trying to teach a lesson which has deeper, spiritual implications.

And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. (Exo 33:20)

This was in response to Moses' request, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." This is interesting when we compare it with something the apostle John says in John 1:14. He says,

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

John says, "we beheld his glory," but God told Moses, "no man shall see my glory ... no man shall see my face and live." So God hid His face and showed Moses His back parts.

There are spiritual implications here which we need to consider. What does God's glory represent? It is God's character which is represented as His glory. In this experience with Moses, God was teaching the lesson that it was not possible for a human being to behold the full reality of what His character is like. Such knowledge would be overwhelming to the point of being destructive to fallen man. So what did God do? He showed Moses His back parts. How do we apply this in a spiritual sense?

Man's sinfulness not only makes him afraid of God, but it also distorts the image of God in his mind. When Adam and Eve ran to hide from God He had done nothing to cause them to be afraid of Him. His attitude towards them had not changed, but tragically, their understanding of God had changed and because of their distorted view of God, it was not possible for them to face Him.

Veiled in Darkness

God never changes. Every problem which arises from this sinful situation, every fear which we have of God, every reservation which we have concerning God is based on our misunderstanding of God, and it is not based on the reality of who God is or of God's true attitude towards us. God does not impose conditions on us before He will accept us. For example, He does not say, "*if you are not good enough you cannot come close to me.*" When we have this kind of concept of God it is because we are still looking at His back parts, we have not seen His face. In 1 Kings 8:12 we read:

Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. (1 Ki 8:12)

Now this is a strange verse, because in other places we are given the understanding that God dwells in brilliant light. In every picture presented of Him, we find that He is hidden by blinding light, but here, Solomon declares that God has chosen to dwell in "thick darkness." How are we to understand this? Well, obviously, God is speaking of the way He relates to mankind. In relating to humanity, God has to hide Himself in the darkness of human ignorance because man is incapable of beholding the full glory of God. So God hides Himself in darkness, not for God's sake, but because of the limitations of humanity, and the misunderstandings which men have of God.

The reality is that these misconceptions have become so deeply rooted in human thinking that even today, among the best of us Christians, these misconceptions still persist and affect our relationship to God at every level. This misunderstanding of God is the factor which has the greatest impact upon our faith and most severely limits our ability to receive the blessings of God.

Yet, God had to dwell in thick darkness in relating to man because of man's incapacity to receive the truth of what

God really is like. That darkness still envelops the mind of many people, even today. That is our real problem. But there is a wonderful thought found in 2 Cor. 4:3-6:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:3-6)

When Moses asked, “show me your glory,” God answered, “you cannot see my face and live,” so God showed him His back parts. Now, here in the New Testament we are given the spiritual application of this. Here we are told that now it is possible to see the glory of God and to still live, because God has revealed that glory in the face of Jesus Christ! So it is possible today to look upon the face of God and live! But of course, looking at the face of Jesus, what we see is not a physical display of light. When the Bible says we see God’s glory in the face of Jesus it is referring to God’s character or God’s nature. God’s attitude to humanity may be seen in full display revealed in the “face” or in the life of Jesus Christ. This is the point, and in our studies of God, we have to view Him from the light which shines in the face of Jesus, otherwise our concepts will be wrong.

Transferred glory

In the story of Moses’ visit with God on Mount Sinai, we are told of a very interesting phenomenon which took place. It seems that by close association with God, some of that glory of God rubbed off on Moses.

And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. (Exo. 34:29-30)

Many times in the Bible we see this reality demonstrated. Truths relating to God’s character are presented with a cov-

ering veil because people are not capable of understanding. Until we see Jesus as He is, the gospel will always be, to us, something covered with a veil, poorly and improperly understood. But God tells us that in Jesus Christ He has removed the veil so that all who will can look and see the full glory of God in all its splendor.

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. (17) Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (18) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:14-18)

As we behold the face of Jesus without this veil, we are transformed into the same image by the spirit of God. This is what God is doing for us; step by step He is showing us the face of Jesus, that the veil might be removed that we might see and understand Him as He really is.

Christ's Nature

Chapter 8

Why did Jesus Never sin?

Why did Jesus never sin when all other men have sinned? Was it just chance or coincidence that only one man of all the billions who ever lived never actually performed a sinful action, even as a baby?

We have seen babies get into a temper and we have seen selfish behavior in babies even before they could reason or understand. Did Jesus ever display such behavior?

If He had displayed sinful behavior even as a baby, (such as selfish behavior, temper tantrums, anger etc.) He would have demonstrated that He had a corrupt spiritual nature and was in need of a new mind. He would have needed to be born again. It is true that a baby cannot commit a conscious act of sin and therefore cannot be guilty of sin. But a baby can, and does display sinful behavior revealing that from the moment of birth he has inborn tendencies to do wrong, and that he has a corrupt nature.

Since Jesus never sinned, then it is obvious that He must have had something which no other person had. But what was this element which made Christ different from every other human being, even as a baby?

Physical and spiritual nature

Let us first of all make note of a fundamental truth: Every person in the universe possesses a physical or a material nature which depends on genetics or physical attributes. However, each one also possesses another nature, a spiritual nature which depends on the state of his spirit.

Man's body has a carnal or fallen nature. It has weaknesses and tendencies which are genetically passed on.

Man also has a carnal spiritual nature. He has a mind or spirit which is totally selfish and which will naturally lead him to do what is self-centered. Sin is not a matter of genetics. Sin originates in the mind. It is a matter of the state of the mind.

The source of selfishness

The only person in the universe who is naturally unselfish by nature is God. When God brought forth a Son, this selfless nature was passed on to His Son who inherited the very life and nature of His Father.

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) (1 John 1:2)

Therefore there are only two Beings in the universe who are naturally selfless and they are God and His Son. All other beings are only selfless if they are united to God through His spirit. Without this union they are naturally selfish and self-seeking.

But selfishness is not a thing of the flesh. Selfishness is not a thing which depends on behavior or how a person responds to the law. Selfishness is a quality which comes from within, from the mind of man and is the natural attitude of all men who are separated from the spirit of God. Even if a person learns to obey the law, it will not make him an unselfish person.

Education cannot make a person unselfish. Studying the Bible, relating to the law cannot make him unselfish. The only thing which can make a person unselfish is union with God. Therefore, no amount of education in itself could have made Jesus behave properly if His nature was not a good nature.

Here, some say that He was good, only because He was filled with His Father's spirit, but that He Himself, by nature, was just as selfish and corrupt as all men are. This is a totally false idea. If this was so, where did this selfishness and corruption come from? He inherited Adam's flesh, but not Adam's mind.

The Divinity of Christ

When He came to this earth, Jesus emptied Himself of his divine power and divine glory. What else was left of the Son of God? What made Him still the son of God?

There are some who go so far as to say, His power was gone, His glory was gone, His mind was gone, His nature was gone, His character was gone – so what was it that came

from heaven? What remained of the Son of God? According to their theory, He was all gone! All that remained was a name and it had to be a false name, because NOTHING of the original remained.

Well, if this were true, then the only conclusion we could come to is that Jesus was not the Son of God, and God could just as easily have taken any other human baby and done the same with him as He did with Christ.

Those who believe this have effectively destroyed the truth that Jesus was the Son of God. Let us remember the truth that divinity is not just *power*, but it also includes *nature*.

Divine *power* has to do with the almighty ability of God to do anything, to work miracles, to create worlds, and to repel every device of Satan. Jesus left every such ability behind when he became a man. (Phil. 2:5-8).

Divine *nature* is that quality of being which God and His son alone possess as a natural attribute, but which can be imparted to those who receive the life of Christ. This quality is an aspect of God's nature which makes His attitude totally different from all created things. When Jesus came to this earth He did not leave this divine nature behind.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

God is good. He is wholly good. This means that He never has and never had a single impulse which was not wholly based on love and selflessness. We all know this to be true. This quality is not based on God's power, nor is it based on God's knowledge. It is the very essence of God's nature. As the Bible tells us, "God is love." It is what He is. It is the essential quality of His being and in truth, it is the great quality which separates divinity from all created beings.

Contrary to what some believe, *power* is not the main attribute of divinity. If this were so, then Satan would be closer to being divine than men because he has far greater power. The main attribute of divinity is that God is perfectly good. He is pure love.

Jesus, as the Son of God possessed this (spiritual) nature of divinity, fully combined with the fallen (physical) nature of Adam. It was His by right. It was His by birth, by nature,

because He was divine. He was the Son of God. So all His impulses were to do good, to do what is loving, to do what is righteous, and it was so by nature.

However, it is evident that the *power* of God was available to him and that without this power, He would not have been able to carry out many of the good things which His mind made him want to do. Though He was good in himself, yet he did need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and he did need the power of His Father to carry out the desires of his heart.

In one sense, Christ had to come down to our level. He took our physical nature with all its liabilities, weakened by 4000 years of degeneracy. Here he came down fully to our level. But now that He was here, how could he help us if he was in exactly the same position spiritually? Can a man pull another from quicksand if he is also standing in the quicksand? No, that is an impossibility. Jesus needed to stand on vantage ground even as He came down to our level. He had to have some means of uplifting humanity and this means could not be found in humanity, for there is nothing good in humanity. He had to bring divinity into humanity and He could only do this if He himself was divine. In Himself He united divinity with humanity and in this way He elevated humanity to the place where man became the son of God.

Jesus did not take humanity and then teach man how to receive the holy spirit. Any other man could have done this, but only the Son of God could have be one man who was both divine and human, for He was both. This is what humanity needed to save it.

Can divinity be tempted?

A mind with divine powers cannot be tempted because such a mind knows the end from the beginning. But a divine mind without its powers which cannot see the future and which cannot know all things can be tempted. It can be tempted to choose the way of self rather than the way of surrender.

It is true that the very essence of evil is selfishness and divinity is entirely loving and selfless. Jesus by nature was selfless from the moment of birth. But what Satan tried to do all his life was to get him to do something which was not outwardly selfish, but which was based on self-government.

This was another way of getting Him to submit to the principle of self, which is the foundation of Satan's government.

His three temptations in the wilderness were illustrative of how Satan tried to get Christ to sin.

He first tempted him to turn stones to bread. This was something which did not seem to be selfish, but it would have meant that Jesus acted on his own initiative without the Father's direction. In actual fact, Satan was tempting Jesus to become His own God. Jesus told Satan that man must live by the word of God. God must direct every aspect of life and man must make no decisions of his own.

Jesus was next tempted to jump from the pinnacle of the temple and prove that he was God's Son. This was an invitation to prove that He was God's Son by performing a miracle. This would have been His decision rather than God's. Again, He was tempted to act without God's direction.

Thirdly, he offered to give Jesus control of the world without any need to struggle or die, if he would just worship him. It was an offer for Jesus to gain control of the world by a means other than the one which God had ordained. Jesus immediately repelled the suggestion.

The only time the Bible reveals Jesus struggling with self-will is in Gethsemane and on Calvary. At no other time in his life did He ever struggle with the Father's will. But even then, what did Jesus say? *"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."* Did He seek a selfish way? No. He said, "if there is some other way that they may be saved without me having to be separated from you, then please let it be done in that way." There was no selfishness in this. If there was an easier way, then there was no need for him to take the difficult way. But now, we see that He was being tempted to choose His way, rather than the Father's way. Not a selfish way, but a self-determined way.

This was the very root of Lucifer's rebellion. Selfishness means to be thinking of self instead of others. Self-determination, self-government means to be choosing my own way rather than God's, even in doing good. It has to do with faith or the lack of it and means trusting my wisdom above God's. Even if I do good for others and it is self-determined it is sin.

But did Jesus have to struggle and fight against the temptation to commit fornication? Did His body pull him towards sex with such force that He had to take cold showers to cool off? Did He have to struggle to avoid saying suggestive words to Mary and Martha and resist the urge to touch them in inappropriate places? Absolutely not! But there are some who believe that Jesus was tempted with the same temptations, with the same degree of intensity with which these temptations appeal to us. But the Bible says that sin was a thing which Jesus *hated*. It was not something which He was drawn towards.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Heb 1:9)

Of course the Bible says that He was tempted in all points like as we are. However, when we consider a few things carefully it becomes plain that though He was tempted like us in principle, He did not undergo our temptations in every detail.

First of all, two persons can face the same exact temptation and while one finds it impossible to resist, the other has no such problem. The fact that Jesus had to face the same temptations as we do and was tempted as we are, does not mean that He had to struggle just as we struggle with those temptations.

When does temptation become really strong? Is it when it momentarily comes to our minds, or is it when we begin to think about the possibilities?

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

When a man looks at a beautiful woman, when is he really strongly tempted to go to bed with her? Is it when he first looks at her, or is it when he begins to cherish the thought of what might happen between them? Every honest person knows the answer. Temptations are only strong when we cherish the thought of what it would be like to give in. When a person's mind is decisively made up that he will not carry out a certain action, then effectively, that action loses all power to tempt him.

We can consider Joseph's response to Potiphar's wife and compare it to David's sin with Bathsheba. Temptation gained a foothold in David's mind as he lingered on the roof, feasted his eyes on the beautiful body of his neighbor's wife and considered the possibilities. Not so with Joseph who never for a moment contemplated the thought of what it would be like to be in bed with his master's wife.

Now, did Jesus ever play with the thought of sin? Did He ever make room for the possibility of wrong doing? Absolutely not!! He hated sin. Therefore it is clear that in terms of the temptations which frequently beset us, Jesus never underwent the struggles to overcome which we often have to go through.

It is true that Jesus had to obtain victory over sin. This is what He has to give us. But this does not mean that He had to struggle with sin in the same way as I struggle. Why not? Because He did not come to give me a struggle with sin, He came to give me a victory over sin. What He needed was to be victorious over sin. This is all He needed to do. Having obtained that victory he now gives that life to me which is already victorious over sin.

Chapter 9

Fully Human, Fully Divine

Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this earth and became a man. He was one hundred percent human, but at the same time He was fully divine. This is a truth which has been proclaimed by Christians for ages and most still hold it as unshakeable truth today.

At first glance, such a concept appears to be contradictory and impossible to harmonize. Most Christians explain it by saying it is a mystery and something to be accepted by faith without trying to understand it. However, the full divinity of Jesus combined with the fact that He was completely human, is the key to the plan of salvation and unless we understand how Jesus could have been completely human and yet fully divine, the plan of salvation will always be an incomprehensible mystery to us.

Mankind fell in Adam

When Adam turned away from God he took the entire human race with him. It was humanity which rejected God because all humanity was encapsulated in the one man. Adam, at that moment, was the entire human race. Adam's life is the life which has been passed on to all of us, and the decision he made impacted all who would later come from his life. Adam adopted Satan's principle of life (independence from God) and brought the human race onto Satan's ground. From that point on, every person who was born of Adam's race belonged on Satan's side of the controversy. This is where Adam put us.

In order for us to understand what Jesus did to save us and what qualifications He needed to accomplish our salvation, we must remove Jesus from the picture for a moment and look at the condition of mankind where Adam put us.

When Adam took humanity onto Satan's ground, all that was necessary to reverse the situation was that Adam should have made the choice to return to God. It seems very simple, but let us consider something: It is not possible for any being in the universe to turn to God unless the spirit of God is

acting upon that person. According to Jesus, God alone is good (Matt. 19:17), and without the spirit of God, no creature can be good, or can desire good. Without the influence of God we are naturally afraid of God, having no desire for union with Him. When Adam chose the principle of independence from God, this was the condition he chose for all of humanity. Mankind's legitimate position was the same as Satan's position; mankind was separated from God, without the influence of God's spirit and unable to choose otherwise.

"the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can it be." Rom. 8:7

Humanity's only hope

There was only one possible hope for humanity and it was this: If there could be found a human being, born of Adam's race, placed in the exact situation where Adam had placed humanity (separated from God), who could voluntarily make the choice to return to God, then such a human being would be able, in himself, to reunite humanity with God. But such a person needed to be able to do this, not only for Himself, but needed also to be able to pass His life, reunited to God, on to all other men. This particular point needs to be expanded into a complete book. This is the critical issue in the plan of salvation and it is very little understood. The whole plan of salvation was about God's way of reuniting Himself to the human race. He could not do it without man's consent. It was man who had chosen to be independent of God and since God has established His government upon the principle of freedom, free-will and free-choice, God could not interfere with man after man made his decision. If God were ever to reunite Himself to man, it had to be by man's voluntary choice, and man, without God, was incapable of making such a choice.

Only God is good

Jesus tells us that there is only one who is good, and this is God. When we think about this we realize that it is an absolute truth. There is no creature in the universe who can be good unless he is united to God. If God's method was to impart goodness to His creatures independent of His own life, then the statement of Jesus in Matthew 19:17 would not be true:

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mat 19:17)

He did not say that there is only one source of goodness (meaning that God is able to give people goodness from Himself.) No. He said, there is nobody who is good ... except God! The angels around the throne in Revelation 15:4 repeat the same truth in slightly different words.

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Rev 15:4)

God alone is good, God alone is holy and every place where genuine goodness is found, we can be sure that we have found the presence of God. The Bible has sometimes described men as being “good,” but this was only because the presence of God through the holy spirit of God, was working in such men.

Is Jesus good?

But when the Bible states that God alone is good, does this exclude the only-begotten Son of God? The Bible tells us that Jesus is “the express image of His person.” (Heb. 1:3). He is exactly like His Father and this was true even while He was here in the flesh. This is the truth expressed in John 14:9.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? (John 14:9)

Jesus was begotten of God - the only being in the universe who originated in this way. He obtained His nature by inheritance and therefore must have the same inherent qualities of goodness and love as His Father. This is why Jesus was fully able to represent God while He was here on earth, because indeed, He was God by nature and in Him all the qualities of God’s nature and character were displayed.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

That glory seen in Jesus was the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. In other words, there is nowhere else

that such a glory could have been seen. This glory was to be found ONLY in the only begotten Son of God.

So when Jesus told the rich young man, *“there is none good but one, that is God.”* He was not suggesting that He, Jesus, was not good. It was His way of forcing the man to think about who He really was. If true goodness was seen in Jesus, then it must mean that true divinity was in Him. He was truly God by nature. This is what He wanted the man to realize.

Divine nature - the key

This is why Jesus was able to be placed in mankind’s position of total separation from God, and yet, be able to make the choice to be loyal to God, in spite of being in such a place. It was because He was good in Himself! The goodness in Jesus was not dependent on the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. No, we creatures cannot be good unless the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us. But Jesus is the Son of God; His source of goodness is Himself! Even when the spirit of God was taken from Him, He was still good, because as God’s Son He is inherently good. True divinity is always good under all circumstances, but it is the only good in all the universe and that is why it took a divine being to accomplish man’s salvation. Nobody else could have done it, not even the holiest angel, for any angel, separated from God would have instantly become evil. This is what we learn from the experience of Lucifer.

No Grace for Christ

Jesus, on the cross, took the place of humanity. He did not take the place of humanity as it exists under the influence of grace. Grace comes to us through Jesus Christ, and the grace of Jesus comes to us because of what Jesus accomplished at the cross. When Jesus went to the cross that position of grace did not belong to Jesus. He did not take our place as we are now, benefited by grace. No, He had to take our place as we deserved to be then, where we belonged when Adam made his choice. He had to take that place totally separated from God and without the help of the Holy Spirit. This was the meaning of that awful cry on the cross, *“my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

Yet, though He was totally forsaken of God, Jesus was still

able to make a choice to remain faithful to God. How was He able to do this? He was able to do it because He was good by nature; because He was fully divine by nature. The taking away of God's spirit and presence did not make Jesus turn to the way of self-preservation. This would have been the case if He was a creature who depended on second-hand goodness by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But He was God's Son, inherently good, and so, He was able to remain good even though He had become a man and suffered the withdrawal of His Father's Spirit. So, by gaining this victory through His divine nature, in fallen human flesh, He was able to restore humanity to its place with God.

Of course, the benefits of this victory of Christ on the cross were being felt by humanity from the moment that Adam first sinned. Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The instant man sinned, that same instant the sacrifice of Christ began to benefit the world, even thousands of years before Christ actually died. However, this did not diminish the reality that Christ did indeed have to die; that He did indeed have to go to the very place where man belonged. This is what God pledged from the beginning and Jesus had to fulfill that pledge in every detail, fully taking man's place.

Fully Human

It is evident that Jesus had to be a human being in the fullest sense, or else He could not have taken man's place and brought humanity back to God. It was a man who chose to separate us from God and only a man could reverse that decision. But Jesus had to do more than simply become a man. He had to make the decision as a human being, as a descendant of Adam, under the exact conditions which Adam had brought upon the race; He had to possess the same limitations and disadvantages of fallen, degenerate humanity for this is where Adam had put us, and most importantly, He had to be, at the critical moment of the test, totally separated from the sustaining spirit of God. This is where sin put humanity and this is where Jesus had to go in order to deliver humanity.

Fully Divine

However, we see also that Jesus had to be fully divine in the sense that He possessed in His spiritual nature, the

very nature of God. This was absolutely necessary in order for Him to be separated from God, yet be able to choose good and to trust in God while separated. His divine nature was essential for our salvation. Without this He could not have accomplished our redemption. So He had to be fully human as well as fully divine.

Let us consider another point: When we say that Jesus was fully divine, does this mean that He possessed in Himself all the powers of divinity? We have already seen that He did possess, and had to possess God's nature of infinite goodness. This in no way detracted from the fact that He was fully a man. It simply meant that He was a good man. In every sense He was limited to the abilities and powers of humanity, but He was good by nature; this was the critical difference. But did He possess the abilities of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and all the other abilities of God? If He had, then how could He have been said to be fully human? Humanity necessitates certain limitations. Furthermore, if Jesus had been almighty and in possession of all knowledge, then in what sense could He have been forsaken by God at the cross?

Divine Power laid aside

The truth is, Jesus laid aside His divine power, the glory of His divine glory. He came to earth as a man, limited as we are, made of a woman (Gal. 4:4). He was born in a body which suffered all the genetic defects and limitations brought upon humanity by Adam's fall, multiplied by four thousand years of deterioration. He was truly one of us as far as His physical, genetic inheritance was concerned. He did indeed come from the race of Adam.

The plan of salvation needed to be carried out according to certain definite limitations, within certain clearly defined boundaries. Why was this so? Because God had to do things in such a way that the universe would be satisfied that God had acted fairly and justly - even in dealing with Lucifer. There could be no room for the suspicion of deception or trickery on the part of God. Satan has accused God of being a liar and of being untrustworthy. The only way that God could defeat such an accusation was by being totally transparent and open in all His dealings.

If Jesus on earth had possessed in Himself, all the powers of the almighty God, then all the sufferings of Jesus would

have demonstrated nothing. It could all have been a pretense, a sham, and nothing but role-playing. Satan could have made this accusation and how could God have proven that it was not? How could we be certain that it was not? If God sets out to play a role, what creature could ever discover that it was not reality? Nobody is smarter than God and nothing can compare to His power. If Jesus had possessed the power of almighty God in Himself, even as a man, then it is certain that Satan would have claimed that Jesus was never fully a man and did not overcome merely within his human abilities and that He was not qualified to represent mankind, since He did not overcome as a man, but only as God, dressed up in the body of a man. How could God convince us that it was otherwise?

Someone may answer, "Well, we need to trust God." Yes, this is true. However, we trust God because we have proven that God is trustworthy. We have proven that Satan is a liar. But where did we prove these things? Where did God demonstrate them? He proved them at Calvary; they were demonstrated in the great sacrifice made by God and His Son when Jesus died for us. If, in that sacrificial event there is room for the accusation that it was all a sham, a divine role-playing act, then the very event which was designed to establish trust in God is made null and void.

Satan has used many methods to convince the world that Jesus never really died and that the whole crucifixion story was a fable. What God accomplished in the passion, death, resurrection and heavenly ministry of His Son is the only hope for humanity. In Jesus, God did not give us merely a moral teacher, He did not give us merely a good example. In Jesus He gave us a Savior, just what we needed as sinners and the only thing which could save humanity. This is the truth which sets true Christianity above all other religions.

Thank God for Jesus.

Understanding The Plan

Why the Sinner Has to Die

As we consider the title of this chapter, our response may be to think, “Well, the sinner has to die because *the law* proves him guilty and requires his death.” We see his death as completely dependent upon his relationship to the law. This concept is rooted deeply into the thinking of Christians, and while in a way it is correct, this common understanding does not fully explain the truth. Let us consider for a moment what a law really is. A law is basically a principle or a rule which governs behavior. A law dictates the way we operate.

But when we speak of law, there are two kinds of law which we need to consider. There is natural law and there is judicial law. Understanding the difference between the two kinds of laws is critical to a proper appreciation of the reason why the sinner has to die.

Natural Laws

In the case of natural laws all men recognize the importance of always working in harmony with them. The rules are built into nature and we cannot change them or adjust them. These laws simply describe the way nature works and they are called laws because nature compels all things to behave in conformity to those particular principles. We are required to work in harmony with them. One such law is the law of gravity. This law compels us to behave in a certain way with the sure knowledge that if we change our behavior, then drastic consequences will surely follow. For example, I may not agree with the law of gravity and so may step off from the roof of a 10 story building. I will speedily find out that by not acting in harmony with the law of gravity I have suffered severe consequences. I may not like natural laws, but if I disregard them, unhappy consequences are sure to follow. This is true of all natural laws.

Judicial Laws

Judicial laws on the other hand, are laws which are laid down by a governing authority. They are laws which are

considered good or necessary for the harmonious existence of individuals within a particular society and these laws are not necessarily the same in every society. The nature of these laws often depends on the nature of the society and those who govern and make the laws. With these laws, disobedience does not always bring a consequence. In many cases these laws are broken and the offender seems to get away scot-free. The enforcement of these laws is not built into nature as in the case of natural law. With judicial law, the governing authority has to do two things. First they have to make the laws and secondly, they have to enforce these laws. They do this by imposing penalties for transgressing the laws which they themselves must enforce.

Many of the judicial laws established by various governments are faulty and even unjust. But God is the author of all natural law. Natural law is always good. He designed the universe in a perfect way with these natural laws built in to ensure that life would exist and continue in a pattern of balance and harmony.

The nature of moral law

The moral law has been described as a “transcript” of God’s character. As this moral law is outlined in the Ten Commandments it is stated in a somewhat limited way and does not express the fullness of God’s character and may better be described as an “expression” of God’s character, rather than an exact transcript. However, when the moral law is properly understood in all its deeper implications, it certainly expresses what God is like in His moral nature and may be appropriately described as a transcript of His character. This means that: *The moral law is what God is*. God did not make the moral law, all He did was put into words what He was and gave it to us as the way of life.

To live in harmony with this law is to be in harmony with God. Since God is life, then harmony with Him means to be in harmony with life. However, when a person steps out of harmony with the moral law, then he is out of harmony with God and out of harmony with life. Death as a consequence is the sure result! God does not have to sentence or kill such a person. The person automatically brings death upon himself by choosing to separate from God who is the source of all life.

So we see clearly that the moral law is a natural law. It is a law of nature. To walk in harmony with it is to have life. To step aside from it is to embrace death. No one has to sentence you, and no one has to kill you. Sin itself will do the job as a natural consequence of the way the law operates.

How Death Came

In the garden of Eden God said to Adam, “... *in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Gen. 2:17). Most people have understood this to mean that God was threatening Adam; that He was saying, “if you eat of this fruit, I will be forced to kill you.” Was this how it really was? Was God threatening Adam or was He giving a prophecy? Was He stating what He would do, or was He simply making Adam aware of the natural sequence of events which would follow if he stepped out of harmony with God? The apostle Paul says,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Rom 5:12)

Notice, one man brought sin into the world. When sin came in, death came with it. It was not God who brought death or imposed it upon man, it was sin which brought death. When sin came in, death came riding on its back! In 1 Cor. 15:56 Paul says that, “*the sting of death is sin.*” When something stings you, a poison begins to work in your body and eventually brings about an end result. Somebody who gets stung by a deadly, such as a scorpion, has in himself the seed of death. The poison works in him and eventually brings the end result of death. So Paul says, “the sting of death is sin.” When sin stings you it injects you with a poison which begins a deadly work, killing you by degrees until inevitably, inescapably, your life departs from you.

Paul says Adam brought sin, which brought death. This death came upon all men, *because* all sinned. All men die *only because* all men have the disease of sin in them (Rom. 5:12). Let us see how Paul proves this: He says,

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (Rom 5:13)

What time period is he referring to when he says, “until

the law.” He is speaking of the period before the law was given on Mount Sinai, from the time of the creation of the world until the time of the giving of the law to Moses. Of course, the law has always existed as a natural rule of life because the law is an expression of God’s nature and God was always there, but it was not understood by the people of the world in general before it was given on Mount Sinai. Paul goes on to say, “But sin is not imputed when there is no law.” What is the point which he is making? His point is, sin was here. Men were sinners, but God did not impute sin to them, that is, God could not charge them with guilt. Why couldn’t he? Because the law was not yet given. Without the law men did not have a clear idea of what was right and what was wrong and therefore, there was no clear way of charging men with wrong doing.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Rom 5:14)

In spite of the fact that the law was not generally known to men before God proclaimed it on Mount Sinai (that is from the time of Adam to the time of Moses), yet death reigned over men. All men suffered death. Since sin was not imputed (charged) to them, then it could not have been God who was judging them and killing them because they were guilty. They had not sinned as Adam had sinned, in deliberate disobedience of a specific command. Without the law, there was no way of charging them with guilt, yet they were dying. What was killing them? It was sin which was killing them. Even though they did not have a clear definition of right and wrong, yet they were in a state of sin, passed on from Adam to all men and it produced death in all. (Rom. 5:21; 7:24; James 1:15). This is the point Paul is making.

Why Judicial Law Entered

Yet there is no denying the fact that the Bible teaches that men will be judged on the basis of the law and those found guilty will be sentenced to die.

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Eccl 12:14)

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the

law of liberty. (James 2:12)

These, as well as many other verses make it clear that our individual actions are significant, and that God will consider every deed in the judgment. How can this be explained? If sin kills those who embrace it and death is the inescapable consequence of sin, why did God need to impose a penalty upon those who commit sin? Why was there the need of a judgment to rehearse and examine the deeds which men have done that each might be rewarded “according to his works?” Why did God not just leave the sinner alone in his dying state, knowing that sin would eventually kill him? Why did God place the issues in a judicial framework, and why did He establish judicial law with penalties, instead of simply leaving it where nature had put it, leaving sin itself to eventually destroy those who embraced it? In Romans 5:20 we are told,

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Rom 5:20)

The law entered for the purpose of making the offence increase; that it might multiply. That is, that men could become aware of just how great was the power of the sin which existed in them.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Rom 7:13)

In other words, when Adam sinned, sin came upon all men. As a result all men became involved in vile and evil deeds and all men eventually died as a result of sin. But for the most part men had no true concept of how sinful they really were. Men came to regard death as the normal way of life, they made no link between the kind of life which they possessed and lived and the death which came upon them all. God, in love, had to find a way to make men appreciate what really existed in their natures and to make them see that there was a connection between that nature and death – that sin was the cause of death, so that they might learn to fear and hate sin. He had to set a system in place “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” He expressed the law in a judicial formula so that man could

understand the true nature of sin.

The “Discovery” of the Law

Isaac Newton was sitting under an apple tree one day when an apple fell on his head. To the inquiring mind of this scientific genius, this simple event became the catalyst of an amazing “discovery.” “Why,” he wondered, “did the apple fall on my head? Why did the apple fall down instead of up.” In considering this he became aware of the fact that this was the way things always behaved, every time, in every circumstance. This led him to formulate what is called the law of gravity and so he is credited with discovering this law.

Of course this law was in existence long before Isaac Newton arrived on the scene, but when he discovered it, for him and for the world, it seemed an amazing thing. For him it came as a complete surprise. Isaac Newton expressed this law in words and referred to it as the law of gravity. But although he expressed it in words, this was only a way of describing what was always there long before he or anybody else recognized it. When he expressed this law in words, it did not create or establish the law, it only made it known and understandable to some degree.

In the same way, the moral law of God always existed. All the angels obeyed it naturally with never a second thought.

Lucifer was the first one who discovered and pointed out to the angels that their behavior was always in one direction; always in keeping with what God wanted. This thought that there was a law by which they were governed came as a strange idea to the angels because their service had always been one of natural, joyful obedience. As it were, Lucifer “discovered” the moral law and determined that he was not going to submit to it.

For God to enable man to understand the way the moral law works so that man might be able to discover the power of sin and to see the connection between it and death, God had to formulate this law, or in other words to express it in a formula which man could understand. This is what He did at Mount Sinai.

Let us look at an illustration which may help us to understand this matter better:

An Illustration

Let us suppose that there are a group of people marooned on the top of a mountain. All around there are precipices with no way off the mountain. On looking down into these precipices, all one can see is darkness because the bottom is too far away to be seen. In actual fact, at the bottom there are jagged rocks waiting to pulverize anyone who falls or is foolish enough to jump from this mountain.

One day, a strange man appears out of nowhere and begins to persuade the people that down below, beyond the darkness there is a land of infinite beauty and plenty – a veritable paradise. He explains that there is a system in place by which those who jump from above suddenly slow down as soon as they pass through the darkness and eventually land as gently as a feather in this paradise. This strange person even takes a leap or two from the top of this mountain and returns with his arms laden with exotic fruit. Gradually the people are persuaded. One after another people start jumping.

However, there is one man who knows exactly what is waiting below. Frantically he pleads with the people not to jump and warns them of the horrible fate awaiting them, but all in vain. The people continue to jump. Finally this man, who is aware of the danger, pulls a gun and stands off to one side. He says, “I am going to shoot anyone who jumps.” A couple of people decide to take the risk and jump. To all intents and purposes, these people are already dead, but regardless of this, this man immediately shoots them dead.

Now the scenario changes. At first it was the fall that was killing the people when they jumped, but now it is this man who is killing them. Instead of the law of action and consequence working - instead of the law of gravity killing the people, now it is this man. He has established a system where they must conform to the rule or face a penalty and this new system has taken the place of the law of action and consequence. Now it is a judicial law (“You shall not jump or I will shoot you”) instead of a natural law (if you jump, gravity will kill you). The law of nature is a higher law and it always exists, but because of peoples’ ignorance and their actions of self-destructiveness, this man who understands, has set up this judicial system within the natural system in order to save those whom he can. In actual fact

he is only killing those who are already certain to die and in shooting them, rather than waiting for them to be crushed on the rocks he is actually acting in mercy because now, he will achieve several positive things.

1. He will make those who remain afraid of jumping. By this means he will give the people an opportunity of living a little longer with the hope that they will discover for themselves the true nature of what lies below and the character of the being who deceived them.
2. He will prevent the suffering of those who are smashed on the rocks but who do not die immediately.

Of course, all the people will become scared of the man with the gun. They may call him a tyrant and seek for a chance to jump when he is not looking. They will resent his presence and blame him for depriving them of happiness although in reality he is only working for their good.

Can you see the parallel? This is why God has put the issues in the framework of judicial law, along with the necessary penalties. In giving the law God was saying, "If you jump, I will shoot you." Although sin was always killing men they did not recognize it and did not fear it. They accepted their corrupt lifestyle and their subsequent death as just the way life was and saw no reason to be afraid of sin or to change their ways. This is why God established a judicial system. He set up a framework in which if you transgressed the stated laws He would require your death. Now men feared sin because they associated it with death, and in trying to put it away from them they came to recognize how totally it was integrated into their nature. They discovered that they needed supernatural help if they were ever to be rid of it and thus, the law became their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. (Gal. 3:24).

Unfortunately, with many people, God came to be regarded as the real problem since He had given these rules and required that they be obeyed on pain of death. Men would have preferred to be rid of God rather than to be rid of their sins and they chafed under His rules and blamed Him for the fact that those who disobeyed had to die. The fact is that whether or not God had sentenced the transgressor to death it would not have mattered. Sin would inevitably have killed

him anyway.

Consider the case of the antediluvians or the Sodomites. God sent a flood in one case, and fire in the other, to wipe out their civilizations. If God had not done this, what would have happened to these people? Well, in a few more years that generation would all have been dead anyway! Sin, working in them would have killed them as it does all men! And they would have been just as dead as the flood or the fire made them! So why did God kill them a few years early? What difference did it make? It was because God wanted to make a statement so that others would learn to be afraid of sin, and also so that there would be a check put on the depths to which sin had degraded mankind.

Three Levels

In our attitude and relationship to God, men are at basically three levels.

1. At the first, and lowest level, men believe, “if I disobey God, He will kill me.” So they are afraid of God and seek to please Him from fear of punishment. This is the basis of the pagan religions, but many times the Israelites also worshipped from this warped motivation, and sadly many “Christians” today are still at this primitive level of understanding. These people see God as the problem.
2. At the second level, people believe it is not God who is the problem, but that it is their sinful actions. God does not want to kill them, but He will have to if they don’t change their actions. Justice will require that He destroy them. These have a better concept of God but they still have not come to grips with the real problem and they see death as God’s necessary action because He is controlled by justice. They regard the real problem as the deeds which they do. The effort must be to change their *works* so that they can meet the requirements of the *law*. On this level, the sinner sees the issue as a question of satisfying justice.
3. But at the third level we finally understand! There is one problem and one problem only. It is that separation from God has resulted in a disease in me called sin and it is eating out my life, it is producing evil deeds in me and is killing me. This is the true de-

stroyer and it is not a judicial law that demands the sinner's death; it is a law of nature – a law of consequence. Now we recognize that the real problem is sin in me and that what I need is not to change my actions merely, but to change my nature. I must seek life in the only One who is able to accomplish this for me. On this level, the believer finally operates on the basis of righteousness by faith.

We need to understand this because when our understanding reaches only to the secondary level, then our relationship to sin and to God is always viewed and experienced from a legal framework. Sin is related to the details of the law, and salvation is related only to obedience to the rules. God's favor, and life itself, are all related to how we respond to the rules. In actual fact, this is the foundation of legalism.

Not my works, my nature

When we come to the third level, then we are ready to be no longer children or servants, but sons (Gal. 4:3,7), and we understand. The problem is not what I do. It is not a problem of my works, it is a problem of what I am. It is a problem of my nature. I realize that God's effort is not focused on changing my works, but that His effort is focused on giving me a new heart; a new nature by means of which my works will change. Now I am not afraid of God, and I am not even afraid of my actions. Now I am afraid of myself! Now I no longer struggle to change my works, but I seek with all my heart to find and to submit to Christ who alone is capable of changing my nature! It is not God, or even justice which requires my death. It is my sin cursed nature which is working death in me, and while the law of God has brought me to that realization, it is powerless to solve the problem. I must come to Christ (not the written law but the living law) that I may have life (Gal. 3:24); that I may have a new nature.

God set the controversy in a judicial framework. He established laws and penalties, but this is not the whole picture. This is only the picture within the picture; the secondary level. The true issues exist on a higher level and not on the judicial level; they exist on the level of natural law where we are involved with the principles which are built into the very existence of the universe.

Why Jesus Had To Die

I once heard the host of a popular talk-show in Jamaica describe God as a “blood-thirsty” being. His reason for coming to this conclusion was that he could not understand why God should demand death for the smallest act of transgression, and why He should be so inflexible in His demand that the only way He will forgive us is if His own Son should die instead. The way he explained it, it was God’s demand for retribution which made it necessary for the sinner to die and if this was to be avoided, then the only thing which God would accept was that His own Son should be sacrificed instead.

This man clearly was in great darkness, yet he highlighted an issue which had been a nagging one with me for many years and for which I had heard many explanations, but none which really satisfied the concept of a God of infinite mercy.

I have heard it said that the law demanded the death of the sinner; that justice required that if man was to be spared, then one had to die in man’s place, and not just anyone, but one who was a divine Being – one who was equal to the law – the lawgiver himself.

But my question was, what law, what judicial system will accept that one person shall be punished for the sins of another? Who does this satisfy?

Let me explain what I mean by using an illustration. If I instruct my son not to pick any of my mangos and he disobeys, then in order to make my instructions meaningful, I need to impose a penalty. This is for two reasons: first that my authority may be maintained and secondly that he may learn, for his own good that obeying me is important. Disobedience could get him into serious trouble some time. But in punishing my son these are the issues I consider. It is never an issue of vengeance, and it is not to satisfy some desire in me for retribution. It is not to make him suffer for daring to go against my will. Furthermore, I would never say to my son, “If you pick the mangos I will kill you!!” Pun-

ishing him must be for the purpose of making him a better person, of saving his life... not destroying it! Furthermore, if my son is truly sorry for what he did and demonstrates that he deeply regrets his actions, would it still be necessary to punish him? Why would I need to say, "Well Son, I see that you are sorry and I want to forgive you, but I cannot do that unless somebody is punished. You disobeyed my instructions and before I can forgive, somebody has to be punished. I see that you are sorry so I will not punish you, I will punish your brother instead." Does this make sense?

This is an area of the plan of redemption which admittedly has been a gray area for me and for many others. I accepted the fact that there was a good reason why Christ had to die, and I accepted that it could not have been God who demanded His blood, but I could not understand or explain the reasons why it all was necessary. Thankfully, in studying righteousness by faith I have finally seen the reason why it was essential, and I have come to appreciate what a wonderful plan it really was!!

Legal Fiction?

Not too long ago I came upon a question in browsing the internet which intrigued me. The question was, "is the gospel legal fiction?" The basis of the question is this: When men believe in Christ (accepting Him as Savior,) then they are justified. That is, they are declared just. God forgives all their sins and regards them as being as righteous as Christ Himself. However, popular Christianity teaches that such a person is not actually in himself, in his nature and actions as righteous as Christ. Thus the gospel is open to the charge of being, "legal fiction." It is seen as a legal transaction by which God "legally" accepts what is not true. He accepts us as righteous when in actual fact we are not. The theoretical issues and the legal arguments become the focus; they become the important things rather than the reality of what our condition actually is!

I have to be honest and say that such a concept presents a picture of God which is not becoming of the righteous king of the universe. It pictures Him as one of the glib, fast-talking lawyers who use legal loopholes to free the vilest criminals, setting them loose on society only to repeat their crimes again and again. Is this to be accepted as the best "plan of salvation," that God could offer? Is the gospel about legal

arguments, or is it about the real problem of freeing man from actual sin?

In the previous chapter we established the fact that it is sin which kills men. The converse is true: righteousness gives life. When we understand this, the death of Christ takes on a completely different complexion.

How Life is Transmitted

First, we must make note of an important fundamental principle which is critical to our understanding of this issue. It is this: Once God has created life, it is passed on to others and propagated by birth. Every creature receives his fundamental nature when he is born and it determines what he is, whether dog, cat, lion, wolf, human etc. Within the framework of that nature each develops a character, but the nature is what determines the kind of creature it is.

As we learned previously, we are all born with a spiritual, as well as a physical nature. All who come of Adam's race, are born with a sin-weakened, feeble, degenerate, dying body (sinful flesh) and a carnal, sin-enslaved, unrighteous spirit (a carnal mind). This is what we receive at birth, and none of the devices of men – medical science, psychology, education, re-socialization, religion etc., can change this nature, physically or spiritually, although man may subdue or disguise some of its manifestations. Nature is only transmitted by birth!! Man is born with a nature which, spiritually is dead. The Bible describes him as, “*dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1,5).*” He is born with a body which is dying. If he is ever to escape the power of this double death (physical and spiritual) which is at work in him, then man must be born again! Because nature is only transmitted by birth! (It cannot be obtained by trying to behave like somebody else).

A New Source of Life

But let us remember that when birth takes place there is always an original source of life. There is always a parent, one who passes life on to the other. If there was ever to be a new birth for man, if he was to receive a new life and a new nature, then there had to be an original source; there had to be a parent in whom this new life existed. Furthermore, all the vital attributes, the characteristic qualities of this new life, and new nature, had to be a part of the original

life. They had to be first a part of the life of the parent before they could be passed on to the offspring.

What was it that God wanted to do for man? He wanted to give him a life in which sin had been defeated and destroyed; a life in which the nature turned to God and His righteousness as naturally as the flower turns towards the sun. Only by receiving such a life could man be redeemed from the awful destiny imposed upon him by the life passed on from Adam.

This is what God proposed to do in Christ. Jesus was to be the second Adam, the second prototype of humanity, “the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6),” of a new humanity who could pass on a life in which sin had been conquered and destroyed and righteousness was a natural reality. But in order to have such a life to pass on, what qualifications did Jesus need to have?

- a. He needed to have taken sin upon Himself, experienced its power and to have defeated and destroyed it without succumbing to it. Only in this way could He have a victorious life to pass on to His offspring.
- b. He needed to be a divine being; one who was, in His very nature, equal to the law; one who was the very reality of the living law. An angel could have given instructions as to how to obey the law, and he could even have given us an example, but only the Lawgiver Himself, the living law, could pass on a nature in which the deep principles of that law were built in.

This is exactly the kind of Savior that Jesus is and these are His qualifications. Jesus had to be human, completely human, or else He could not have taken our sin upon Himself. He could not have taken our disease so that He could destroy it. Yet at the same time, salvation could not come from one who was only a son of Adam. By the law of heredity all that Adam could transmit to his offspring was sin and death. If Jesus were only a son of Adam that is all He could pass on. In order to give life, He had to be from out of this world. He had to be of another race so that He could be able to bring a new element into humanity. More than this, Jesus had to be fully divine!! Only by being a divine Being, one equal with God, could He impart a life of perfect righteousness; one which did not only conform to rules, but which was in itself, by nature, pure, righteous and holy.

Made to be sin

So the word of God tells us:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)

Notice what the word of God says; this is much stronger than saying that Jesus died for our sins. It says, He was “MADE” to be sin. How was this possible for a Being who was sinless? How was He made sin? How could it be that as Peter says,

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree . . . (1 Pet 2:24) ?

Because we have not properly understood the true nature of sin we have always misunderstood this. Some have believed that He bore our sins and was made sin, simply by the fact that He came with a degenerate human body and had the weaknesses of the flesh common to all men. Others, because they limit sin to acts of transgression, have supposed that He bore our sins in that every single wrong act ever committed in the history of mankind was in some mysterious way gathered together and piled up upon Christ. However, when we have a proper understanding of what sin really is, suddenly we understand what happened when Jesus became sin for us. Suddenly it makes crystal clear sense. We see the wonderful truth which is at the same time, awful, and yet, awesome.

The root of all sin is unbelief, resulting in separation from God. In every being who has ever experienced this separation, whether it be Lucifer and the fallen angels or Adam, Eve and their offspring, this separation has, in every case immediately resulted in the *manifestation* of sin, that is, in the performance of sinful deeds. It is important that we understand the steps in this downward process of sin so that we may fully grasp what happened when Jesus bore our sins.

1. First there is unbelief – an unwillingness to trust God.
2. This results in separation from God.
3. The immediate consequence is a totally selfish nature.

4. The natural and unavoidable result is the committing of sinful actions.

Each of these stages has been referred to as sin because they are all related, with each one being either the cause or the result of the other.

The generally held belief is that Jesus only took the last one of these stages of sin, (the sinful actions) when He bore our sins. But since He Himself never committed a single act of sin, then it must have been simply the *penalty* of those sins which He bore. Thus our idea is that when Jesus bore our sins, God took every single wrong act which has ever been committed in the history of the world and laid the penalty of those wrong actions upon Him. This again has made us view salvation as a legal issue, something which relates to paper-work and the balancing of the books. We see Jesus bearing the penalty so that in letting us off, God may legally balance the books. We do not see the sins which Christ bore as an actual reality which dynamically affects the very lives in which we exist in a real and practical way.

But it was our sin which God laid upon Christ. Not sin in its end-result of sinful actions, not sin in its third stage of selfish nature, but sin in its very origins, in its basic principle, where it begins. Of course, Jesus did not lose faith in God. He never chose his own way (the first step) so He did not separate Himself from God (the second step). But God laid our sin upon Him (Isa. 53:6). God imposed the second step, (separation from Himself), upon Christ. He had to do this in order that Christ could destroy the sin principle!

Sin Condemned

As God withdrew Himself from His Son, Jesus suffered the full *consequences* of sin. The agony of that separation was more than Christ could endure and it broke His heart. But let us consider what Christ did. In every other being who had ever been separated from God the immediate result had been selfishness. The third step in sin had followed immediately. The desire for self-preservation had immediately become the predominant principle of the heart. Even Adam, who found his whole joy in Eve, found himself immediately accusing her in order to save his own skin after he sinned and became separated from God!

Now God left Jesus alone and immediately a horror of great

darkness came upon Him. Without the comforting assurance of God's spirit everything looked uncertain and foreboding. Even the prophecies which related to His resurrection looked vague and intangible. The thought pressed upon His darkened and confused mind that if He died, it would be forever. Let us remember that Jesus was not in the comfort of His bedroom studying His Bible with the Holy Spirit illuminating His mind. He was a tortured human being, suffering greatly, deprived of sleep for probably more than twenty-four hours, suffering from loss of blood, bordering on hallucination and now, worst of all, *abandoned by the spirit of God!* There was no ray of light to shine into His mind, and no comforter to bring the prophecies back to His thoughts with fresh power. In addition Satan assaulted Him with wave upon wave of doubt.

The logical, the natural, seemingly, the inevitable result, was that Jesus would take the next step in the path of sin and turn to selfishness - that He would seek to preserve His own life. Any other being in the universe would have done this. The holiest angel in the same situation would have done this. But Jesus was fully divine. He was God's begotten Son, and of the same pure, holy, selfless nature of God. When His powers were taken away, when the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, and all hope was taken away, He could not stop being Himself. He could not become selfish for He was God by nature, and God is wholly good! Hallelujah!

Instead of turning to self and taking the next step in sin, instead of bowing to Satan's principle, Jesus died to sin. He resisted sin in Himself and resisted it unto death, thus destroying sin forever in human flesh.

.... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

It was in His flesh, in His human flesh that Jesus condemned sin. He took it on Himself and condemned it. Now there is a humanity in which sin has been destroyed. Now there is a humanity in which the enmity between man and God has been removed. There is a human life over which sin has no more dominion, a life in which sin took its best shot, but was defeated and destroyed. Where is this life? Where is this humanity? It is in the second Adam, the new creation; it is in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11)!

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:1)

Sin in us condemned us and produced death in us. Separation from God produced selfish natures and selfish actions. But Jesus took this condemnation upon Himself, He bore the curse in His own body (Gal. 3:13) and there, destroyed this condemnation. This is the life which Jesus now imparts to all who will believe. A life in which separation from God, selfishness, selfish deeds, have all been abolished. *And This Is Why Jesus Had to Die*

In all human beings there is a natural law at work, implanted and inherited from Adam. This dreadful law is called "the law of sin and death," and the apostle Paul describes the way it works in Romans 7:14-24. No man can, by any human device or effort overcome the effects of this law. It is a principle built into the lives of all who come of Adam's race. It is a natural law; a law of nature. Rules and regulations cannot cancel or override natural law, so the Ten Commandments, God's law expressed in judicial form, is helpless to solve the problem. Judicial law is never the real answer. Because law (judicial law) is weak, through the flesh (Rom. 8:2). A greater law than judicial law is at work in the flesh and judicial law cannot overcome that. It would be like me commanding a man, "When you leap into the air you shall not fall again to the earth." All my commands would be useless. They could not overthrow the natural law of gravity, no matter how much I pleaded or threatened, or how hard this man tried. If natural law is to be overcome, a higher natural law must be introduced to counteract the previous law.

Gravity is a natural law which demands that all things remain bound to the earth. However, the effects of the law of gravity may be overcome by the law of aerodynamics. This is another law which, when applied may enable a person to rise above the law of gravity. This is demonstrated every day when we fly in airplanes. We overcome gravity by applying a higher law. Though this man would find my command impossible to obey in himself, yet if he were to apply the law of aerodynamics he would be able to obey my command.

The Law of the Spirit

So the word of God says,

“the law of the spiri of life (natural law - the law of Christ’s righteous nature) in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (natural law - the law of my sinful nature).” (Rom 8:2)

... what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

The law of sin and death ruled in my being and I was helpless to resist it. The Ten Commandments could not produce the strength necessary to overcome it. But there is another law, the law of the spirit of life and where does this law exist? It is in Christ Jesus!! It may be found and experienced in Christ. What God did was to introduce another natural law to cancel the effects of the first law. Those who experience this natural law fulfill the righteousness of the law, they mind the things of the spirit, they have life and peace , their bodies are dead to sin and alive to righteousness, and they are truly the sons of God (Rom. 8:4-14).

The Broken Curse

What is a Curse?

The cross plays a central part in the salvation of humanity. A person cannot read through the New Testament without recognizing this fact. The crucifixion of Jesus was a pre-determined aspect of the plan of salvation, something designed by God and His Son before the ages. The apostles understood the significance of the cross and it was always at the center of their teaching. Paul wrote,

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (1 Cor 1:23)

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2)

Paul preached Christ, but notice his emphasis. It was not just Christ who was at the center of his message, but Christ at a certain point in His experience – *Christ crucified*.

Why is Calvary so significant? What really happened there on the cross? This is a question which will require all the years of eternity for us to fully answer it, but in spite of this, even today there is much which we can glean by studying this subject carefully.

Redeemed from the Curse

Let us begin by considering Galatians 3:13:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: (Gal 3:13)

The apostle Paul says that Christ redeemed us from a certain curse, and that this curse was, “the curse of the law.” Christ bought us back from this curse. But how did he do it? He did it by himself becoming a curse. By taking this curse upon Himself. In proving the point, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 21:23 which states that everyone who hangs on a tree is accursed of God. Christ was hanged on a tree, therefore he was cursed, and in this way he bore the curse and that is the way he delivered us from the curse.

There are a few questions which we must ask ourselves if we are to understand this issue properly. What is a curse? What does it mean that we were under the curse of the law? And how did Christ take this curse thereby delivering us from it?

What Is A Curse?

A curse is a sentence of disaster. This concept exists even outside of the Bible. Most of us probably know a story about somebody who was cursed and consequently was plagued by all kinds of bad luck. This is a popular theme in storybooks. This idea has some truth to it.

In the book of Numbers in chapter 22, we read that Balak, king of Moab, sent for Balaam to curse Israel. Israel was invading Palestine and defeating every nation that stood in their way and Moab was next in line. Balak was aware that everything that Israel did succeeded and he recognized that he could never defeat these people without special help, so he sent for Balaam, because Balaam had a reputation. He was a prophet of God and whoever he blessed was blessed and whoever he cursed, was cursed.

But when Balaam arrived, every time he opened his mouth to curse Israel, he found himself pronouncing blessings, not curses, and this tells us something else. It tells us that a curse is not something that one person can put upon another. A person can *express* a curse, he may speak the words of a curse, but one person does not have the ability to bring bad luck upon another. This idea is common in human thinking, but it is not the biblical idea of a curse at all.

As an example of what I mean let us look at Matthew 23. In this passage it is Christ who is speaking to the Jews.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (34) Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: (35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (36) Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (Mat 23:33-36)

Never was there a more solemn, a more terrible curse pronounced upon a people! This sentence was fulfilled when the Romans besieged Jerusalem. The conditions which came upon the Jews were so terrible that starving women began to eat their own children! When the Roman armies finally broke into the city, Jewish blood ran in the streets of Jerusalem like water.

Curses Are Self-Imposed

This was a curse, but who was it that cursed Israel? Jesus spoke the words but who was it that cursed them? The fact is, Israel cursed themselves! Was it Christ who brought these disasters upon them? No, it was their own actions that cursed them! All Christ did was tell them the truth before it happened. He only prophesied of what would happen. It was they who turned away from God and rejected Him entirely, insomuch that He was no longer able to protect them. The result was that Satan was able to work his way with them, resulting finally in the destruction of the nation. As Proverbs 26:2 tells us, “the curse causeless shall not come.”

This same truth is illustrated in Genesis chapter 9. Here we read that after the flood Noah became drunk and lay in his tent naked. We are told that his youngest son Ham went in and saw his father’s nakedness. The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly what he did, but the suggestion is that he mocked his father. Some say he did more than that and that he actually sodomized his father, but the Bible does not specify. In Genesis 9:24,25 we read:

“And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said unto him, “Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” (Genesis 9:24,25)

So Noah awoke and said, “Cursed be Canaan.” Who was it that came and looked at him? It was Ham, but strangely, it was not Ham, but Canaan who was cursed! Who was Canaan? He was the son of Ham. Ham did something and Noah pronounced a curse upon the son of Ham. If Noah had been the person who brought the curse upon Canaan, this would have been a grave injustice on the part of Noah. But it was not Noah who brought this curse upon Canaan! He did not have that power.

So why did Noah, under the inspiration of God’s spirit pronounce a curse upon Ham’s son. What principle are we to

learn from these verses?

There is a rule of life which is inescapable and it is called the law of consequence. God may pardon the penalty of a person's sin, but consequences remain. In other words, what we do affects our children! A person who picks up a disease as a result of sinful behavior may infect his or her children with that very disease. Later, the person may ask God to forgive the sin and of course God will forgive, but the children will not be miraculously healed of the disease just because the person is forgiven. Consequences remain.

Noah's son, Ham, had something in his character which would be passed on to his son, Canaan. Somewhere in the future these attitudes embedded in the character of Ham's descendants would result in them becoming servants of his brother's descendants. So the curse fell upon Canaan not because God arbitrarily decided to punish Canaan but because Ham transmitted his own habits and attitudes to his son, who, in turn, transmitted it to the next generation. In fact God says it goes on to the third and fourth generation and it really continues for as long as the evil traits remain in the family.

These examples bring out a principle which we need to understand thoroughly. In Exodus 20:5, God says,

... I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (Exo 20:5)

How can we explain this? Is it God who arbitrarily decides that when a person does wrong He, God, will punish that person's son and his descendants, generation after generation? Is that the way God is? Absolutely not!

One group of people which has suffered a lot is the black race. While it is true that some of the "great" civilizations of the past have been African, yet it is also true that one of the darkest chapters of human history has involved the enslavement and brutal treatment of Africans, in some cases by their own people, though more often by other races. All throughout the history of humanity man has enslaved his fellow man, but it seems that this evil has been most fully demonstrated in the enslavement of black people. But where did it start? Generally speaking, Africans are descended from the line of Ham.

Ham took a course contrary to God, and led his children into that same course. One of the first great rebels against God was Nimrod who was a descendant of Ham. Nimrod established a kingdom that was in direct rebellion against God (Gen. 10:8-10). The curse (the evil characteristics) passed from father to child, as Ham's descendants drifted further and further away from the true knowledge of God. As they became more confused, they became more degraded until they eventually began to worship stones and pieces of wood and to engage in some of the most degrading acts.

Where does the downward spiral stop when a person is born in a land where people eat people as a natural way of life, where the only gods known are made of wood and stone, and where the most degrading aspects of human nature are common place and are considered the normal way of life? What hope does a person have of ever breaking the cycle? It only gets worse!

So the curse is really the outworking of natural consequences, and that is one thing we need to understand. Normally God does not interfere with consequence. He may forgive penalty but consequences continue. This is the way it is.

How Can A Curse Be Broken?

Let us take note of the fact that God says He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, *“Unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”* Can we see an element of hope in that statement?

In Genesis 27 Jacob came to his father and, by deception and trickery, obtained something that belonged to his brother. He stole his brother's blessing. When Esau came in afterwards to receive his blessings, he found that they were all gone and although he pled with his father to give them to him, his father could not bring them back. Isaac could not change his mind because the blessing, like the curse, was simply a prophecy of the way things would be and under inspiration of the spirit, Isaac could not say what was not true. But in verse 40, he said to Esau,

“and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shalt come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.” (Gen. 27:40)

How is a curse broken? God told Esau through Isaac that he would serve his brother, but when the day came that he was able to break Jacob's dominion from his neck then he would be free from this curse. In order to break a curse a person has to first come under its power, and then from that position, defeat that power. That is the only way to break a curse.

Suppose there had been one man worshipping stone and wood, half naked out there in the most primitive part of Africa a thousand years ago. If this man could have come to the knowledge of the true God, what would have happened to his children? The curse would have been broken in his family! There would have arisen in the midst of Africa, a tribe of people surrounded by all this darkness, who were totally different from those around them. In them there would have been manifested the purity and the righteousness of true Christianity despite the surrounding ignorance. But it needed one person to break this curse.

But how could somebody growing up and living all his life in those circumstances break free from that cycle? Somebody grown and bred in that situation could never break out of it under normal circumstances. The only way was if some new element was introduced into his experience.

This is why even though slavery is such an abhorrent thing, I am thankful that God overruled in this terrible evil to bring about some good. Some of my ancestors came to the Caribbean under these terrible conditions but it gave an opportunity for many people of African descent to be exposed to the gospel and because of this, today I am where I am: a child of God and happy with my lot in life. So the later circumstances brought a change, and a new element came into the depraved life of Ham so that curse was not passed on to me. That curse on Ham has been broken because some new element came into the experience of my ancestors.

The Curse of the Law

In Galatians 3:13 we read that in order to redeem us Jesus took the “curse of the law.” What is this curse of the law? In Proverbs 28:9 it says,

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. (Prov 28:9)

What does this mean? What is an abomination? An abomination is something which is highly distasteful; something which one finds intolerable. The Webster’s New World Dictionary defines an abomination as “*anything hateful and disgusting.*” The man who closes his ears to the claims of God’s law has brought a great barrier between himself and God. Even his prayer is an abomination. If his prayer is an abomination, what about the person himself?? This gives us a clue which helps us to understand what the curse of the law is. The curse of the law comes upon a person when he breaks it. Galatians 3:10 says,

.... Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Gal 3:10)

It is those who do not do ALL that the law says who are cursed. To avoid the curse of the law a person must do absolutely everything the law says, but as James tells us, if he offends in one point, he is guilty of ALL. No human (except Christ) has ever kept the law perfectly. None of us has ever continued in “all things” which are commanded in the law, therefore the curse of the law was upon all humanity. The curse which we incurred by disobeying and by turning away from the law.

Adam is the person who introduced this curse to humanity and placed the entire race under it. In Genesis 2:17, God gave Adam and Eve a warning. He told them very clearly what the result would be if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen 2:17)

The popular opinion is that when God told Adam and Eve

that they would die if they ate of the fruit, He was placing a curse upon them. But let us remember the principle we already established: God does not curse anybody. What we regard as a curse on the part of God is really His prediction of what will happen as a consequence of a person's choices and behavior.

When God said, "If you eat, you shall surely die," He was not saying, "If you eat, I will kill you!" Absolutely not! He was saying that if you take the fruit, you are going to bring something into your experience that is going to kill you. He warned them in love. But they said, "We don't think you are telling the truth. This snake seems to have a good understanding of what is really going on here." In this they rejected God's counsel and took the fruit.

But God does not remain where He is not wanted. The moment that Adam deliberately, knowingly, consciously chose that he did not want God, God had to turn away from Adam. God had to allow Adam to be free and He had to respect his choice. Adam chose separation from God. In this condition, there is nothing but death, physical and spiritual death. *This is the curse of the law; the curse which comes from rejecting God, manifested by disobedience to His law.*

It is true that Adam did not die that day, but this was only because the moment he sinned Christ took his sentence and pledged to die in his place. He immediately began to benefit from Christ's sacrifice, even though Christ had not actually died yet. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev. 13:8).

Because grace immediately intervened it is difficult for many of us to really understand what man brought upon himself that day. But if we take a step a few years down into the future and consider the condition which will prevail when probation closes and the spirit of God is withdrawn from the earth we will get a better picture of where man really deserved to be. The Bible says of men at that time,

(They) blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Rev 16:11)

Why won't they repent? It is because the spirit of God will have departed from the earth. Without God they cannot repent. They have no desire to turn to God, their probation is closed, they have no benefit, no grace, no light from God,

and they cannot turn to God. The people who go through the last seven plaques will experience what it means to be fully under the curse. They will seek for death and not be able to die because Christ will no longer stand between man and the full effects of the curse.

This is where Adam and Eve should have been that day! This is what they chose! But God continued to bring blessings to the human race because Christ intervened that day.

God Alone is Good

In Matthew 19:17 we find what I consider to be the first great fundamental of the Christian faith. This is what Jesus tells us:

... there is none good but one, that is, God (Mat 19:17)

This truth is repeated in Revelation 15:4 where it says of God,

... thou only art holy (Rev 15:4)

The word, “*Only*” signifies that there is no other. There is none good, no, not one, except God. God alone is good. Another truth arises automatically from this great fundamental truth. It is this: Any place in the universe where good is found, we can be sure that the presence of God is there. When a person finds what is truly good, he has truly found the presence of God! If one were able to find goodness outside of God, then it would mean that there is more than one God because God alone is good. This is a fundamental principle and if we don’t understand this, nothing that we believe concerning righteousness is going to be correct. This is one of the foundation stones: We can’t find goodness anywhere except in God.

So in the beginning God made the universe and it was good. He created a world and it was all very good! What conclusion may we come to then? We may conclude that this entire universe, was filled with the presence of the good God. It is clear that God designed this world to be an expression of Himself. He designed it to be a place through which His life would flow and be manifested in every tree, every leaf, every bud, and every flower. In addition to this, the living, intelligent beings were to be dwelling places for the living God. Their bodies were to be temples in which He would live and express himself.

That is the plan which God had in mind when He designed this world and created it. In this condition everything was good.

But Lucifer introduced something into the universe which had not been included in the original plan. For the first time Lucifer divided the universe into two. It was not a physical division, it was an ideological division. Lucifer introduced the idea that it was possible to live better without God.

As we read in Genesis, Satan said to the woman (paraphrasing), "God is not telling the truth! God knows that if you eat of the tree in that day you shall become like God!" The essential element which God brought into their lives was that they were good. But in essence, Satan was telling them, "You don't need God to be good. All you need is to know right and wrong. If you have a knowledge of good and evil this will make you like God!" In essence he was suggesting that God's main purpose is to give an understanding of morality and that if a person understands good and evil, then God becomes irrelevant.

This erroneous teaching lies at the root of all false religion on this planet. Every false religion teaches that what a person really needs is moral education and he is able to do the rest. It is not the truth. Every false religion builds on the principle that if you have the right moral education, you already have the equipment to be good. But God alone is good! And without God we, "can do nothing." In order to do good a person's life must be united with God's life.

So the person who begins to seek for righteousness must begin to seek for God, and it is folly to seek this within himself. The person who seeks to do right of himself will find a lie, something that may have an appearance of righteousness but is really a satanic counterfeit.

The Curse Enters

The universe was changed after Satan introduced his new principles. Satan introduced something called, "evil", which divided the universe into two. Now there were two alternatives to life in the universe: On the one side was a life filled with God's presence in which everything was good. On the other side was a life separated from God in which nothing was good and all was evil.

Let us remember that when we speak of this division, it was not a physical division. The main element which divided one side from the other was the element of the life of God. Anywhere good existed, there was the life of God! But on the other side there was no life of God. Those who are there are already dead in trespasses and sins. They are carnal, and the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God and it cannot be.

We can understand then that a person who is *fully* separated from God is not partially evil: He is totally evil, for there is no good apart from God. By the same token, a person who is totally united to God will be a totally good person (as Adam was at the beginning) for there is no evil in God.

At first man was over on one side with God, where all was good, while Lucifer and his angels were on the other side, where all was evil and there was no good. But when Adam made the choice to reject God, he transferred himself over to where Satan was to the side without God. Thus Adam brought humanity under the curse; the curse of separation from God.

A Ray of Hope

Let us look at humanity for a moment as it would have been had Christ not intervened. We must do this if we are really going to understand what Christ did.

When a person moves from the good side over to the evil side the natural result will be that all of his children will be born on that evil side, separated from God and void of His spirit. The consequences of his actions will affect his descendants. They will be born under the curse.

How can that curse be broken? Well, it is simple. Somebody has to go back to the other side. Somebody has to make a decision to return to the side where God is. But is it possible for anybody to move from the right side, the evil side, to the good side?

The answer is, no. Why not? Because everyone there is without God and there is no pleading influence of God's spirit, and nobody, without God, can choose God, or God's way! So humanity was in a dilemma and Satan felt sure that there was no way out for us. He felt sure that once we accepted his principle, the principle of independence of God, we would

be His forever! But right at the beginning, there in the garden, God said something that filled him with a strange fear. God said:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Gen 3:15)

God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Satan's head represents his principles, his philosophies, and the foundation on which his government is built, the principle of independence of God, and separation from God. God said the Seed would crush his head and Satan felt a fear in his heart because although he had his world, and he had established his government, God's words meant that something was planned that was going to bring disaster upon him. What God was saying was that somebody was going to come who would break this curse!

Christ Made a Curse

In the beginning, God created man good. Man was not given the choice to determine whether he should be created good and in union with God, or evil and separated from God. It was God who chose for him. But there were already, at that time, two options in the universe, good and evil; life with God, and life without God.

Why didn't He give man the option to choose, since God believes in freedom and believes in being fair? This was Satan's argument. If God was fair and there were two opposing philosophies present in the universe, why didn't God allow man to decide which way he wanted? Why didn't God present man with an option so he could make up his own mind?

Free Choice

This is why God had to put the tree in the Garden. It was God's way of giving them the option to make a choice. It was allowing them the freedom to choose to be separated from God if this was what they wanted. God had created them already good. Now He had to give them the option to choose evil if this was what they preferred.

As we consider this we realize that the whole controversy is based on the principle of free choice, because God is a God who will not rule in a place where He is not wanted. This is why God gave man free choice. Unfortunately man used this freedom to put himself on Satan's side. Now if man was to come back to God's again, it had to be on the basis of free choice!

God could not interfere when man stepped over onto the evil side. It was man who had freely made his choice to be there and God had to respect that choice! God wanted to save man but He could not interfere with man over on that side without violating man's freedom of choice. Yet now, man was in a terrible predicament for in this position he could not choose to return to God. Having stepped over to the evil side, it was impossible for man to step back. Why is

this so? Because when man chose to separate from God, God no longer had the right to influence man through His holy spirit. He did not have the right to plead with man and to lead him to repentance for it was by man's own choice that he was separated from God. Yet, without the influence of God's spirit, no sinner can come to God. The carnal mind is enmity against God, it has no desire for God. Men were enemies of God, and had no desire to escape from that position. Free-will had set man free from God's control, but now free-will kept him in a place where he was a slave and God could not interfere.

God had to reintroduce His life into the human life-stream - by man's choice - *without overriding man's free will!* But fallen man cannot choose God. Therefore, the only way God could do this, was by sending His Son to become man, and making the choice on behalf of mankind.

Please remember that we are looking at it from the perspective of mankind's true dilemma, as mankind would have been, without Christ's intervention. This is the reality; this was what happened to humanity. We chose to put ourselves in a hole not knowing what we were doing and when we got there we could not get out! Man freely chose sin and now man had to come back of his own free will, but it was impossible.

One on behalf of all

Perhaps someone may say, "It is not fair that Adam should make a decision and I suffer for it." But is it a question of fairness or justice? If I do something and the judge sentences my son, that is injustice, but if I do something and the consequences pass on to my son that is not injustice, that is the reality of how life is. It is not somebody's fault, it's the way nature works. Consequences pass on, naturally affecting even those who are not guilty. It is the way the universe works, God does not step in and interfere with consequence, even though He does forgive.

So Adam brought these consequences upon all humanity. When he brought them upon humanity there was no way Adam could reverse them because now this man was on the evil side, and he had no ability to come back to the good side. So every life that was born from the life of Adam on this evil side was doomed to eternal death, separated from

God. That was the reality.

What did God have to do? If God could find one single human being who could make the choice to come back to the good side, God could find a way to save one man. If one man could be found who did love God, then human life could be brought back to the place of union with God. In that one life, the curse would be broken. Of course it wouldn't solve the problem fully because if one man came back, that one man could only bring himself back. But let us begin with first things first.

Qualifications of the Deliverer

Let us ask, was it possible for the curse to be broken? Could God devise a means by which the curse could be broken for one person? What would this person have to do or have to be in order to break the curse?

Firstly, he would have to be intrinsically good. He would have to be a person who was good in himself, by nature, and not simply by association with God. Why is this so? Because the condition of the curse is separation from God, and the consequence of this is that those under it are completely evil, incapable of choosing good, or of choosing God. So if anybody under the curse was able to still choose God, it could only be if that person could remain a good person, while still separated from God.

But who can be separated from God and remain good?

There is only one person in the universe who qualified. This person is somebody who is just like God. This person of course, is the Son of God. Jesus could be separated from God and yet still remain good, because He is the only begotten Son of God, of the same nature as God! Jesus, being divine, is good of Himself. Though human nature failed in Eden, human nature combined with divine nature could succeed, even when the spirit of God was withdrawn.

What other qualifications did Jesus need to have in order to bring humanity back? Well, He also needed to be human! What kind of human did he have to be? He had to be a human of the fallen kind, suffering all the effects which came upon man when he chose to be independent of God.

But more than this, He had to be man under the curse, and in this fallen condition, when separated from God, he had to succeed at returning to God. No one else in the uni-

verse could do this; neither man nor angel.

The only reason why Jesus could succeed at returning to God when fully separated from Him was because Jesus had in him the one element of life which could enable him to break the curse! This new element, never before inherent in humanity, was the element of divinity.

Thank God for Jesus! God Himself couldn't do it, for He could not be separated from Himself. He could not take the curse. Nobody else could do it. That proves to me again that Jesus is the true Son of God. The truth that Jesus had to be a man, under the effects of the fall, is absolute truth, but let us not deny the other truth that He was also absolutely divine. Both things have to be true!

Christ's Qualifications:

Let us look at all of this from what the Bible tells us:

- a. Christ was a divine being (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1,2)
- b. Therefore, He was intrinsically good. (Luke 1:35)
- c. He took fallen human nature. (Gal.4:4; Heb. 2:16; Rom. 8:3)
- d. He bore our sins ... on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24)
- e. He was made to be sin on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21)
- f. He was made a curse on the tree. (Gal. 3:13)
- g. He was accursed of God on the cross. (Deut. 21:23)
- h. He was separated from God on the cross (Matt. 27:46)
- i. He condemned sin in fallen flesh. (Rom. 8:3)

Christ Made a Curse

Jesus came to this earth and the Bible says that he became a curse for us, but where did he become a curse? It was "on the tree!" "*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*" (Gal. 3:13). Some have the belief that Jesus took the curse from the moment that He was born and that this curse consisted of the fallen flesh which He took, but this is not what the Bible says. In 1 Peter 2:24, we are told that He bore our sins in His own body *on the tree!* It was on the tree that he was made a curse. Remember what we discovered earlier, that the curse is the consequence and in this case, the consequence was the fact of being fully separated from God.

When Paul said, "*cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree*",

he was quoting from Deuteronomy 21:32 which says,

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. (Deu 21:23)

Is it really, literally true that every person who was ever hanged on a tree was cursed by God? Of course not. There are many people who have been wrongly hanged who were not guilty of the crime they were charged with. So what does the verse mean? The fact is that this verse has specific reference to Christ; a prophecy of what would happen to him.

Notice what the verse says: *“He that is hanged is accursed of God.”* Every person in the universe who is separated from God is there because of either his own willful separation, or as in the case of humanity, the willful separation of Adam. God does not choose to separate from any being, it is we who choose to leave Him. It is always God’s desire to remain with us, no matter what the circumstances. This is the way of love. However, in the case of Christ, let us note that it was God who laid this curse upon His Son. For the first time in the history of the universe, God cursed someone. He chose to leave someone who desired to remain in union with Him. This was the way it had to be, this was what our salvation cost both Him and His Son!

This agrees with Isaiah 53 which tells us that, *“we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,” “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,” “it pleased the Lord to bruise him.* (Isa. 53:4,6,10). God brought all this upon his son; He turned his back upon Him. His Son, who had never broken any part of the law suffered as *God put the curse of the law upon him*, and turned His back upon him and left him all alone in the universe.

God permitted His Son to be in a place of terrible jeopardy when He removed His presence from him at the cross. On the cross God turned his back upon His son and Jesus was left alone to endure being under the power and attacks of Satan, while also being under the full weight and power of mankind’s curse. When the separation from his Father was complete Jesus was confused and bewildered. He, who had enjoyed the greatest companionship with His Father of

any being in the universe, was now totally bereft of that companionship and he felt it more deeply than we can ever understand. It was in this bewildered state that he cried out in painful agony, "*My God, My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matt. 27:46).

Satan must have thought, "This is it! I have won at last! Nobody separated from God is able to remain loyal to God! Even though He is the Son of God He is still limited by degenerate human weakness and it is not possible for Him to choose God's way!"

But at that moment Satan's kingdom was destroyed. At that moment his head was crushed. Jesus defied the curse! The curse of separation had compelled all who came under it to choose self and not God, but Jesus defied it. As a human being under the power of the curse, He said, I choose God!; "Into thy hands I commend my spirit".

Two Trees

There were two trees at which mankind's fate was decided. The first was a living tree, and there Adam chose death. The second one was a dead tree and there Christ chose life. The cross was really the second "tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

When Adam came to the tree where mankind was sold to sin's dominion, the place was a paradise and all the conditions were perfect. Adam and his surroundings were the epitome of life and beauty. Adam had every inducement to serve and obey God forever. But when Jesus came to the tree on the hill, where mankind's destiny was rewritten, it was a fearful place encircled by the signs of death and decay. The very name of the place was suggestive: Golgotha, "the place of a skull." A symbol of the, lifeless, hopeless humanity that Christ represented.

At the tree in the garden Satan said, "If you disobey God you will live forever." At the tree on the hill he said to Jesus, "If you obey God you will die forever." Adam listened to the lie, but Christ rejected it.

So now, on the tree there is a human life in which the curse has been broken. Thank God! There is a human life in which Satan's power does not reign! One man is free, but what does it have to do with the rest of us?

A Life-Giving Spirit

In the same way that Adam passed on his defeated, corrupted life to his children, this one man had to find a way to take his victorious life and pass it on to others. Upon the same principle by which all humanity became corrupted, this man had to restore humanity. This is why He is called the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). Once Christ had defeated the curse upon the tree and made the way for man to have a restored fellowship with God, God needed to find a way to infuse this redeemed life into others and make them into new creatures.

This is why it was necessary that Jesus had to go back to heaven and be glorified. As long as Jesus remained merely a flesh and blood being he could never give life to anyone except Himself. He had to receive the ability to pass on His life to others. The Scriptures tell us;

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. (1 Cor 15:45)

Jesus was made a “quickenning spirit,” or, a “life-giving spirit.” This is one vital aspect of the life of Christ which many do not understand. One of the reasons why this truth is veiled in obscurity is the fact that few people understand that the Holy Spirit is the very life of Jesus Christ; that in receiving the Holy Spirit men are receiving the very life of Jesus. The life of Jesus was victorious over the curse, and it is the life which is united to the life of God. In Ephesians 4:10, the apostle Paul says:

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (Eph 4:10)

Why did Jesus go back to heaven? So that He might fill all things. When he was on earth Jesus could fill one man and that was Himself! It was impossible for him, while living in his body on earth, to fill anyone else with Himself. He had to go back and be glorified with the Father so that He could be able to take His victorious life and pass it on to every one of us. Now all who will believe in God and in the gift He has given us in His Son, will receive that life. All such will indeed be born again! Praise God for the plan!

Believe

And so as by one man death came upon all the human race, even so, by one man life came upon all the human race to be experienced by all who will believe it. That is where we are today. When we understand this, we can see what a tragedy it is that people try to base the plan of salvation upon the foundation of human works. It is a tragic idea and an impossible goal. Before a person can do right he must first receive life, and when he receives life he will do right.

May God help us to understand the beauty and completeness of what He has done for us through the life and death of Christ.

Type and Antitype

The Christian and the law

Is it necessary for Christians to observe the works of the law? The apostle Paul gives us a clear answer in his letter to the Galatians:

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. (Gal 5:6)

In other words, there is no benefit in being circumcised and there is no benefit in not being circumcised; the issue is of no consequence. Neither condition has anything to do with salvation. What matters is *faith* which *works* by *love*. This is Christianity, this and nothing else. The circumcised person has nothing over the uncircumcised and the uncircumcised has nothing over the circumcised as far as Christ is concerned. Let us bear this principle in mind as we consider that circumcision is one of the works required by the law.

But then, if this is true, what is the meaning of Paul's statement in the following passage?

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (Gal 5:2-4)

Here Paul says that there definitely is something wrong with circumcision, while in the previous verse he said that it didn't really matter. Is he confused? Notice what the issue is: it is Christ versus the law. When a Christian chose to be circumcised, it was an indication that he was seeking to be accepted by God on the basis of obedience to the law. Since he was expecting to be accepted because of keeping the law, then logically, such a person was under obligation to observe, or to do, the entire law- all of it. He was obligated to observe all 613 commandments specified in the law.

But let us not miss the point: When a person comes to the conclusion that he is required to do any part of the law then

Christ profits him NOTHING! Why is this so? It is so because this person has not accepted that Christ is enough. He has not accepted the fact that God has provided all he needs already in Christ. The very fact that a person feels that something is required in addition to Christ is an indication that such a person has not accepted Christ as being sufficient for all his needs. Since this person believes that his relationship with God depends on law-keeping, then this person is obligated to obey ALL of the law, every single command, because this is what the law demands of us. Perfect obedience to all of the law is the only way that we can obtain favor through the law. This is what the apostle teaches

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. Gal. 3:10-12)

But Paul's statement here seems to be a contradiction of the statement which we read before. First Paul says it doesn't matter whether or not one is circumcised, and here now, he says if a person is circumcised Christ will profit him nothing! How can this seeming contradiction be explained?

Let us ask ourselves this question, 'what are the reasons which would cause a person to be circumcised?' Well, if a person were a Jew, he would have been circumcised on the 8th day after he was born. This was a part of the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai and it was a rigidly fixed part of the Jewish religion. But it was more than simply a part of their religion. Over the centuries this had also become an integral part of their lifestyle and culture.

Paul's letter was written to the non-Jewish, Gentile brethren at Galatia. These were Christian believers who had never been Jews. There was no cultural reason for them to be involved with circumcision as it was not a part of their traditional lifestyle; however, it was possible for the Christian Jewish people to continue to practice circumcision due to cultural and national traditions rather than because they thought it was still required by God. But for the Gentile believers the only reason for them to desire circumcision was if they believed it was required in order that they should be saved.

Notice this important issue. Circumcision in itself is nothing. Jewish Christians did it and it was no big thing. Why would it be an issue if Gentile Christians did it? Was there a difference between Jewish brethren and Gentile brethren? Not at all, but here is the critical point. It is not what we do which is so important, it is what we *believe* which is important. At one point Paul himself took Timothy and circumcised him (Acts 16:1-3)! But why did he do it? Did he believe it was necessary for salvation? Absolutely not. The Scripture says that Paul circumcised Timothy to remove prejudice from the minds of the Jews because he was taking Timothy to work with Jews. Timothy was a half-Jew and this would allow him to be more effective in the ministry to the Jews. He was not circumcised because Paul believed that it was necessary, or a requirement for salvation.

Our faith is the important element. We are saved through faith alone, so if our faith is wrong, then we are lost! *This is the issue.* If my faith tells me that Christ is not enough to save me, and that I need to add my keeping of the works of the law, then I am lost! This is the point Paul is making. If I am adding any other requirements it is evident my faith has not taken hold of the salvation which is in Christ, and this is why I am still seeking to add to what Christ did. This attempt to add the works of the law is the proof that I have not accepted what is in Christ, and therefore I am lost.

The works of the law are nothing in themselves. They are just acts of human behavior. But when a person *believes* that he must do them as a part of the process of salvation, then such actions become an issue. They are then destructive to faith and therefore destructive to salvation.

Now, after receiving the news of Christ's righteousness these Gentile Christians were wanting to be circumcised; what was their reason for this? The reason was that there was a group of Jewish believers who were convinced that faith in Christ was not enough for salvation. These people were persuaded that anybody who became a Christian also needed to practice the works of the law in order to be saved. They went to some of the places where Paul had preached the gospel and tried to persuade those who were converted that they needed to keep the law in addition to believing in Christ. One of the places where these Jews ended up was Galatia. We don't need to speculate about this, the Bible

makes it very clear. This issue became so disturbing that on one occasion there had to be a special conference called in Jerusalem to discuss the matter.

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (2) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (Acts 15:1-2)

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, 'that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses. (Acts 15:5)

The apostles and elders came together and there was a long discussion about the issue. Finally, the council came to the following decision:

Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: (25) It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, (26) Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. (28) For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; (29) That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Acts 15:24-29)

As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. (Acts 21:25)

Here we see the issue clearly and unmistakably laid out. These Jewish believers (who incidentally were mostly Pharisees), demanded that the Gentile believers should keep the law including circumcision. These misguided brethren did not understand Christianity. As far as they were concerned, Christianity was an addition to their reli-

gion, it was something to be added to the Torah (the law). Therefore they felt that anybody who became a Christian must also accept Judaism as well and be joined to their system. But this was not the truth. Christianity was not an addition to the law. It was not an addition to the religion of the Jews. While the entire system of the law pointed to the coming of Christ and represented Christ, Christ was the end, or the goal of the law (Rom. 10:4). When Jesus died and was resurrected, the law (the entire Torah) had fulfilled its purpose and was no longer necessary in God's plan. Now, it was not something to be added to this new religion called Christianity, it was to be *replaced* by Christianity.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (Gal 3:19)

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Gal 3:24-25)

The system of the law was to last only until the Seed (Christ) should come. It was a schoolmaster, a teacher to guide and instruct God's people until Christ arrived. After He arrived and their faith became a reality, the law was no longer necessary. God's people were no longer governed by the schoolmaster, but by Christ Himself through His spirit.

Christians no longer should be observing or keeping the works of the law. The system of the law has been abolished by Christ and in observing the works of the law, Christians demonstrate that they do not truly have faith in Christ's salvation.

Of course, the immediate question which comes to mind is, "what about the Ten Commandments?" Were they not a part of the law as well? Are we saying that they also have been abolished? This question is addressed later on in this book in the chapter entitled, "The Law of the Spirit."

Chapter 16

The Two Covenants

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (2 Cor 3:6)

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:13)

New Covenant Ministers

God has made us ministers of the New Testament, or of the new covenant. If God has made us ministers of the *new* covenant, then obviously we cannot be at the same time, ministers of the *old* covenant. This is what Paul is saying, and in the verses which follow he makes this very clear. He also explains the critical differences between both covenants.

Notice, he says that the letter kills but the spirit gives life. What does he mean when he refers to “the letter?” What is this thing, associated with the Old Covenant which “kills?” Paul explains what he is referring to in the verse which follows:

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: (8) How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (2 Cor 3:7-8)

It seems difficult to misunderstand what Paul is speaking of here. He refers to something which was “written and engraven in stones.” When it was instituted Moses’ face shone with a glory which made it difficult for the people to look at his face. In Exodus 34:28-30 we find the passage to which Paul is referring. It says,

And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. (29) And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount

Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. (30) And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. (Exo 34:28-30)

Here we are told very plainly that what was written on the tables of stone were the “words of the covenant, the ten commandments.” Which covenant was this? Of course it was the *Old Covenant*.

Let us look at a couple of other passages which make it plain that the center of the old covenant was the Ten Commandments.

And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. (13) And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. (Deu 4:12-13)

Deuteronomy 5:1-22 also make it clear that the old covenant was based on the ten commandments.

The Difference Between Covenants

How can we understand what Paul was saying? Was he teaching that the ten commandments have been abolished? Was he saying that God's law has been done away with because of the new covenant? No, this is not what he is saying! As we look back at 2 Cor. 3:6 we notice that Paul identifies the critical difference between both covenants. He says, “*not of the letter but of the spirit.*” This phrase holds the key to understanding the difference between both covenants.

The term, “the letter,” has reference to what was written (in this case written on stone). Under the old covenant as well as under the new covenant, the great need of the people remained the same. *The goal was to obtain righteousness*, to find a way to escape from sin and the death which came with it. Under the old covenant the people sought to find righteousness by obeying the words (the letter) of the ten commandments. Through strict obedience they hoped to obtain God's favor, and to reach a place of holiness where God would be able to bless them and fulfill all His promises

to them. It never happened. That system of seeking righteousness could never work. All it did was bring the people into condemnation. Paul refers to it as the “*ministration of condemnation.*” (2 Cor. 3:9)

Let us notice that the commandments themselves were faultless. Paul states that they are “*holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12).*” But as the means of making men righteous, or as a way of producing godly behavior they were hopeless. Paul says,

. . . . if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (Gal 3:21)

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (Rom 7:10)

Man needed righteousness. The commandments described and required righteousness. So what was the problem? Why did God have to abolish the old covenant, based on the law written on stone?

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (Rom 7:14)

The old covenant could never produce righteousness in man. There was a fundamental conflict between two of the parties involved which made it impossible for the goal of righteousness to be attained. The law did its duty faithfully. From the two tables of stone it proclaimed righteousness and demanded obedience. But the words were only words carved into stone, only the lifeless letter and they fell upon the depraved hearts of carnal men with their demand for righteousness. Man wanted righteousness. He tried and tried to obey that holy law, that perfect law, but he was only carnal. In such a condition there was not even the slightest hope that he would ever obtain righteousness by obedience to the law. No matter how hard he tried, he always failed. So the old covenant, based on the written law (the letter) could never meet the great need of humanity for righteousness, and therefore, the system had to change.

In Hebrews chapter 8:7, we are told that there was a fault with the first (the old) covenant and because of this, God had to introduce the second.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no

place have been sought for the second. (Heb 8:7)

Let us note that this covenant which is called the “new covenant” or the second covenant is actually the everlasting covenant. It is the covenant by which men are saved in all ages and Paul emphasizes this in Galatians 3:16,17. However in God’s dealings with Israel as a nation, the covenant which was made with them at Sinai constituted the first covenant in terms of their experience as a people. Paul says that there was a fault with the covenant and that this is why it had to be changed. In Heb. 8:8,9 he tells us plainly what this fault was:

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: (9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. (Heb 8:8-9)

The fault was with the people. The old covenant contained a law that had no fault, one which was “holy, just and good.” But the people of whom it demanded righteousness were “carnal, sold under sin.” The system could not work because the law and the people were totally opposed to each other. Obedience was impossible under these conditions and so, God intended that this covenant should last only for a limited time.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (Heb 8:10)

What was the difference between this new covenant and the old covenant? Well, in the old covenant God’s requirements were written on stone. In the new, they were written on the heart. In the old, there was only the letter of the law (the written words,) but in the new there was the spirit of the law (the living reality of those words). In the old, righteousness was only described and demanded, but in the new, righteousness was imparted by the spirit of God entering the heart of the believer.

As you can see, the ten commandments describe righteousness. They proclaim God’s will for humanity in un-

mistakable words. But they cannot of themselves produce righteousness. *Righteousness is not obtained by practice or by the forming of habits.* It is a quality of nature, an aspect of life and can only be received by birth. Therefore the commandments do not offer a solution to man's problem. As far as the sinner is concerned, being carnal and "sold under sin," the only purpose the law can serve is to make him know how utterly wretched and hopeless is his condition and to make him see how incapable he is of changing and improving that condition. All it can do is condemn him for his sin, but it cannot deliver him from his sin.

The True Source

If we are to have true righteousness, then we must find the source of righteousness. We must find the place where righteousness is produced. The law can only describe righteousness, but what I need is to find the place where righteousness itself exists as a reality.

When Isaac Newton discovered gravity he wrote down his findings, and his words described the way gravity works. Even in schools today, students study those words and they refer to what Newton wrote as "Newton's Law of Gravity." Yet no one is foolish enough to believe that gravity itself exists in Newton's words. They know that Newton's words are only the "letter" and that if they want to find gravity itself they have to look somewhere else apart from those words. The words can help a person to understand gravity, but not to experience it. This is the exact relationship which the ten commandments have to righteousness. The commandments can describe righteousness but they can never produce it.

And so, the apostle Paul says,

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (Rom 3:21)

So we see that there is a righteousness which exists "without the law," that is, without the letter of the law. It is not contrary to the law, but it is independent of the law because the law cannot produce it. A person cannot obtain this righteousness by relating to the law because the law does not have it to give. There is a place where righteousness exists as a living reality. It is not dependent on the observance of

the law. This place is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Now a person may come to Christ who is the source of all righteousness, who is Himself the living law, the living reality of all that the law describes, and there in Christ he may find as a free gift the perfect righteousness for which he has been searching.

Natural Righteousness

Consider this question: was the law made for God? Was it something put in place to keep God from doing wrong? Why does God do only good? Is it because the commandments restrain Him from doing evil? What a ridiculous idea! God does not need the law to ensure that He does good. He is goodness itself; He is the living law. The commandments are only an expression of what He is like.

When a person has received Christ by faith, it is this very life of God which becomes his, through the Holy Spirit. The person has become a partaker of the divine nature – that is, God's nature has become his nature. Do you see why he no longer needs a relationship with the letter of the law? He now has the mind of Christ, and the nature of God. Now the person does what is right, not because the law demands it, but because Christ is living in him and the only life Christ can live is a holy life – one which is in perfect harmony with the law.

Suppose a man finds a photograph of a beautiful woman. He falls in love with what he sees and so every day he takes this picture wherever he goes. He talks to it, kisses it, embraces it and takes it to bed with him at night. How much satisfaction will he get? Not much, unless he is a madman. All he will do is only frustrate himself, because the picture is only a description. It is not the reality. To find true satisfaction he must find the real thing. The photograph has many limitations. It is a likeness of the reality but it is lacking many, many of the qualities of the original. Of course, the photograph may be helpful, it may assist the man in finding the person whom it portrays, but that is the only good it can do. And so the Bible says of the law,

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Gal 3:24)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Rom 10:4)

Why Then Did He Give the Law?

A question which arises as we consider all these things is this: why then did God institute the system of law? Why did He ordain a ministration which could not produce righteousness? The Bible shows us that there were several reasons why God gave the law:

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Rom 5:20)

First of all, we are told that the law was given so that the “offence might abound.” Man’s condition was hopeless. He was depraved and lost, but how could he know it? How could he be led to see himself as he really was so that he could seek a remedy? This was one purpose of the law. The law entered “*that the offence might abound*” – that “sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful (Romans 7:10).” As Paul says, “I had not known sin but by the law (Rom. 7:7).” The law was given so that man could try to keep it and in trying to keep it, he would recognize that there was something in him that he could not overcome. He would recognize that he needed help from outside of himself and this would lead him to turn to Christ.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (Gal 3:19)

But the law also served another purpose. It was “added because of transgressions.” As sin abounded and the innate wickedness of men’s hearts produced all kinds of atrocities, there was the need for man to be placed under some kind of discipline and restraint. Even among those who were called God’s people there was the need of a system which would restrain the natural tendencies of the carnal heart. This is why God placed Israel “under the law.” God put them under a system of government where the law ruled. This was not God’s final plan, it was only a stop-gap. Such a plan could never produce true righteousness, but there was need to put a restraint on man’s naturally wicked behavior and so, the law was “added because of transgressions till the seed should come” (Gal. 3:19). Notice, this system was only to last “*till the seed should come.*” *After that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Gal. 3:25).*”

If the kitchen's water pipe gets broken off, someone might take a piece of wood and push into the line until he can repair it properly. The piece of wood might stop the leaking partially, but it is not satisfactory to leave it like that. What he has done is a temporary measure until he can do something more perfect.

Now that's exactly what the Bible says God was doing with the law, He brought in a system which demanded that men should work and behave in a certain way, to be under a certain discipline. He knew that the system could never save men. He knew they would not keep that law perfectly so it was not a system that was intended to last forever. But until Christ came, there were certain purposes it had to serve.

Of course, the moral law is good and perfect and remains as a standard of right and wrong forever. But the entire system of government where we are controlled by law is not satisfactory, because the law can only tell us how to behave, but it cannot enable us to behave in the way that it commands.

A Way to Govern Children

At the age of 10 a child still needs to be governed by her parents' rules. When she is 19, they will have far fewer rules for her. What about when she is 30? She will then be free from their rules. However, this does not mean that her life will be disorderly. If the rules did their job when she was a child she will have a good understanding of good and bad when she is grown and she will walk more perfectly in harmony with those rules than when they governed her life, even though she is now free from those rules.

This illustrates why God gave the Jews the law. They were His spiritual children, but they could not understand God's principles. For four hundred years they had been slaves, and all they knew were the rod and the curse. They could not think for themselves, so God put them under law to keep them disciplined until they could come to the place where they could understand the gospel.

Now of course there were individual people who understood the gospel in Israel. All who will ever be saved must have had a basic understanding of the gospel because nobody was ever saved by the law; it was always by the gospel.

But the fact is that most of the Israelites never found the gospel and God was trying to bring them to that place where they all would understand and live by the gospel.

When Christ came the time had come that the law had fulfilled its purpose as a system. God's children had come to the time of adulthood where they should have graduated to the realities which had been illustrated by the law of their childhood.

So now we understand what it means to be under law. It means to be governed by rules. To be free from the law, means that it is no longer rules that govern me. The reason for my behavior is a changed nature – not because rules keep me under discipline.

So Galatians 3:24,25 tells us,

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Gal 3:24,25)

Ministers of Christ

So what we have seen very clearly is that we are not ministers of the old covenant. The commandments as they were written on stone (the letter) cannot be the focus of the Christian's work. We are made "able ministers of the new covenant," not of the letter but the spirit.

"Now the Lord is that spirit ... (2 Cor. 3:17)." Christ Himself is the reality of the new covenant. He Himself is the living reality of the law. All that the commandments described, He is the reality of. Now we are ministers not of dead words, written on lifeless stone, but of the living reality to which those words only pointed. Christ is to be the center, and the focus of our ministry. Christ is to be all, and in all (Col. 3:11).

The Law Established

What then is the relevance of the ten commandments? Now that they have led us to Christ are they abolished? We know that the "ministration," or the system of government based on the ten commandments has been abolished (2 Cor. 3:11,13), but does this mean that the ten commandments themselves have been abolished? Absolutely not!

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Rom 3:31)

When God gave the commandments to Israel He had two purposes in mind. Firstly, He wanted to make them aware of their true condition, to make them see how deeply integrated sin was into their nature (Rom. 7:10; 5:20) so that they would seek a remedy (Gal. 3:24). Secondly He wanted to put some restraint upon their naturally sinful behavior to prevent them from becoming totally depraved in their way of life (Gal. 3:19). Did God give them an artificial, or a false standard of righteousness to convince them of sin and to show them how He desired that they should live? Did God say, "this is the way of righteousness," although what He gave them was not a true description of righteousness? Of course not! The ten commandments as they were written on stone did not express all the deeper meanings of God's law. Jesus showed us that they go much deeper than the words actually say (Matt. 5:20-28). The ten commandments may have been limited in their expression of the truth, but they told the truth nevertheless. Note the words of Paul:

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, (10) For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; (1 Tim 1:9-10)

Paul does not teach that the law is abolished. There is a class of people who still very much need the law. They are the lawless, the disobedient, etc. They still need the rule of law to prevent the open manifestation of gross sin and to make them aware of their true condition. They have not yet come to Christ so they still need the schoolmaster.

But the law is not made for a "righteous man." Why not? Because having received Christ's righteousness, the righteous man is by nature in harmony with the law. He has obtained the righteousness which is the goal of the law and he obtained it without the law (Rom. 3:21.) The law did its work when it led him to Christ, but now his relationship is no longer with the law, but with Christ. Nevertheless, everything which the law demanded is present in Christ, because He is the living law, and the man who truly has ob-

tained the righteousness of Christ, will walk in perfect harmony with the law (Rom. 8:4; Rom. 3:31; 1 John 2:6).

This is not difficult to see. God did not say to the sinner, “here are the ten commandments. They show you how you must behave.” But then, after the sinner has found Christ He tells him, “now you no longer are required to behave in the same way.” This would mean that when a man is a sinner, God holds up a certain standard of behavior before him and tells him that if he does not obey it, he is guilty, but then as soon as the person becomes a Christian, then what was wrong for the sinner is no longer wrong for the Christian. But this is foolishness. If God said something was wrong when I was a sinner, then it is still wrong when I am a saint. The difference is, I was, as a sinner, trying to obey the rules but my nature was opposed to the work. Now I am in Christ, His nature is my nature. My whole life is an expression of Christ. I don’t need the rules to demand that I live righteously. In Him, it is my normal way of life.

Why The Old Covenant?

The popular definition of a covenant is that it involves two parties, each of whom agrees to do certain things, provided the other party fulfills his part of the bargain. But in the Bible this is not always what a covenant implies.

One example of what I mean is the covenant which God made with the world after the flood of Noah's days. After the flood God said:

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. (Gen 9:13-15)

Notice that although there were two parties involved in this covenant, God, and every living thing on earth, the *terms* of the covenant involved only one party. It was a promise of what God would do and those who were to benefit from this covenant had absolutely nothing to do. It was theirs regardless of what they did. So this was an agreement that God made with Himself in a sense. It was a promise really, but the Bible refers to it as a covenant. It is important that we understand this, for if we don't understand this concept of a covenant our concept of the New Covenant will most likely be a wrong one.

What is the New Covenant?

In Ezekiel 36: 25-27 and Hebrews 8:10-11, God explains the terms of the New Covenant. He says,

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezek 36:25-27)

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (11) And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (Heb 8:10-11)

Men have never received salvation by any means but by the new birth (John 3:3), and by receiving a new life through the imparting of the spirit of Christ. Because of this Jesus is said to be, “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” (Rev. 13:8). What we call the New Covenant really has to do with a new nature. God made a promise that he would impart a new nature or a new life to His people and that is the basis of the New Covenant. Nobody has ever been saved without that experience! So even though the New Covenant was not ratified and implemented until Jesus came, the promise of the New Covenant was there from the beginning when man first fell, and it was by faith in this promise that men entered into a saving relationship with God.

The Everlasting Covenant

So instead of saying, “the New Covenant,” it may be more correct to refer to God’s way of saving men as “the Everlasting Covenant.” The New Covenant is really the establishing of the Everlasting Covenant.

The everlasting covenant is the means by which God saves men and there has never been any other means of salvation. In this covenant God says, “I will put my life within you, I will put my spirit and my laws within you, and I will cause you to walk in my ways, and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.” That’s the New Covenant. In this New Covenant it is God who does what needs to be done. Man’s only part is to believe that God has done it and to accept that it is the truth. The only condition on man’s experiencing this New Covenant is that he must believe God’s promise.

As we read through the Bible it is clear that many of the faithful men and women of ancient times had a more limited concept of God’s nature, God’s character and God’s ways than we do. But that is why we are saved only by faith. If salvation depended on understanding the law, or upon hav-

ing an accurate knowledge of doctrine then many of these people could not have been saved. But the New Covenant is based entirely on faith in God's promise. There are no other conditions. Rahab the harlot ignorantly told a lie to demonstrate her faith. The action was faulty, but the motive was right. It was directed by a sincere faith which led her to commit herself to the God of Israel, even though she lied on behalf of the God who never lies. But she is saved because salvation is not based on knowledge of the law. She did not understand the law properly but her faith was in God, and through God, in Christ. On the basis of her faith she became a partaker of that Everlasting Covenant.

This Everlasting Covenant is the only way that God can justifiably and equitably save people in all cultures, and in all ages, because it is not based upon how much a person knows. If a person lived a thousand years ago his knowledge of God's ways was likely to be very different from ours and especially if he never had the Bible. But everybody can have some kind of experience where they can find faith in God and that is the only thing required under the Everlasting Covenant. So we can understand then why God has made it possible for salvation to be received on the basis of faith and not works or knowledge.

The Basis of the Old Covenant

Now then, we come to the question: what is the Old Covenant? The Old Covenant is referred to in several ways in the Bible, but it is important that we recognize that one of the terms which refers to this Old Covenant is, "the law," or "the law and the prophets." Generally speaking, the entire system of worship and government which existed from the time of Moses until the time of Christ was called "the Old Covenant," or "the law." (Gal. 4:24-25; Jer. 31:32). When we see the word "law," here, we are to understand that Paul is speaking of the Old Covenant, that entire system with its rules, its worship, its illustrations, its teachings, its lifestyle and its people.

In Exodus 19 we find the beginning of the Old Covenant and here we get an understanding of the principles on which this covenant was based. God introduced this covenant to Moses with the following words:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above

all people: for all the earth is mine: (6) And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exo 19:5-6)

And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. (Exo 19:8)

This covenant was not like the covenant which God made with the earth in Noah's day, and it was not like the Everlasting Covenant which was strictly based on God's promise, with no requirement of the people except to believe. The old covenant required the people to do something before they received any benefit.

In this Old Covenant, God made a promise that Israel would become a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people, and that they would become a kingdom of priests; but there were conditions. They had to obey His voice and keep his covenant and on that condition He would make them a peculiar treasure unto himself above all other people.

This covenant included the entire system of worship and lifestyle which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. This entire system of the Old Covenant was represented by the Ten Commandments as the following verse clearly shows:

And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. (Exo 34: 28)

The ark of the covenant was to contain these written commandments. God wanted Israel to keep his covenant and to uplift his Law. When God told them to keep His covenant, it is clear that He was referring to the obedience of all the law, including the Ten Commandments. Under this Old Covenant, this was to be the condition upon which He would bless them and accept them as His people.

The question is: did God expect them to first obey the covenant by keeping His commandments before He blessed them? Does man have to be obedient before God will bless him? The answer has to be no. Man cannot do good in order to be accepted of God. It is an impossibility. It can work the other way around, man can first be accepted of God in order

that he may do good, but he cannot do good first in order that he may be accepted. If that was what God truly required of men in order that He might save them, then no person could ever be saved. Yet, these are the terms of the Old Covenant.

The very first mention of this covenant is found in Exodus 19:6-8, and the terms are very clear. Right from the very beginning God asks for obedience and makes a condition. He says, "if you will do ... then this will be your reward." It was a covenant which began with a requirement for the people to do something. They had to obey; they had to keep the law. It seems very clear that it was God who instituted this covenant, and of course, the question immediately arises, "Why did He do this? If the Everlasting Covenant already existed and is the only way of salvation, why then did God institute something which could not save and which clearly could not be fulfilled by those who promised to fulfill it? Why didn't He simply emphasize the Everlasting Covenant and lead the people in that way?" The Bible gives us several reasons for this.

Reasons for the Old Covenant

The purpose of the law was:

- a. To reveal evil, to make men know right from wrong. (Rom. 7:7,13)
- b. To make man know his incapability (Rom. 7:21-23)
- c. To make man know his need. (Rom. 7:18, 24)
- d. To make man know that he is a sinner. (Rom. 5:20)
- e. To promote physical and temporal benefits (Lev. 26:3-12)
- f. To restrain the spread of iniquity (Gal. 3:19)
- g. To illustrate heavenly realities. (Hebrews 9:23)
- h. To illustrate future events. (Colossians 2: 16, 17)
- i. To bring men to Christ (to the new covenant) (Gal. 3:24)

The final text listed above tells us that the law was intended to be our schoolmaster, and this perhaps sums up all the other points. The purpose of the law or the Old Covenant, was to lead men to Christ. In God's plans, everything has its proper place, and everything works step by step in the accomplishing of God's ultimate purposes. God wants men to come to Christ, but in order for them to come to Christ they have to first of all recognize their need. So what

does God in his wisdom do? He sets up a system that is bound to let them recognize their need because this is an absolute necessity before they can come to the next stage.

Made for the unrighteous

Now, as we have seen, the New Covenant was always the basis of true salvation. But let us consider an important question: Who are the only people who can experience the New Covenant? Of course, the answer is only God's true people! They are the only ones who have the spirit of God in them, enabling them to walk in the ways of God.

On the other hand, who is it that the law leads to Christ? And of course, the answer is, those who are not God's people. So if we follow this reasoning we can clearly see that the Old Covenant is *not* for God's true people. The Old Covenant is for those who are not God's people. (1 Tim. 1:9)

When we understand that the everlasting covenant or the New Covenant has always existed then something else begins to come into our minds. If the Old Covenant is God's appointed way to lead people to Christ then it stands to reason that the Old Covenant must always have existed along with the New Covenant. If there was always the New Covenant from the beginning, then there must have also been a way that men could have been led to Christ from the beginning, as well. So in a sense, both covenants are not limited to just certain periods of time, but are also related to two different experiences. One of them is the experience where a person is outside of Christ, while the other has to do with the experience of being in Christ. It is clear that both these experiences have always been present throughout the ages.

So the question then is: Why did God take a group of people (the Israelites) and as a people group set them under the Old Covenant system, which in actual fact, signifies the experience outside of Christ? The very fact that they, as a group, were under the Old Covenant means that they, as a group, were outside of Christ.

Not for God's people?

When a person becomes a child of God it means that such a person has partaken of the spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Was Israel, as a nation, God's children? Were they, as a nation,

'born again' in reality? The fact is, they never were God's people in the true sense! So whatever God gave to Israel as a nation, whatever covenant God made with Israel as a nation, it was not on the basis of them being truly His people. God's people have eternal life. Did the Israelites as a nation have eternal life? No! And God never promised them eternal life. If we examine the Old Testament we will see that God never promised them eternal life. He never promised them eternal life because the Old Covenant does not deal with eternal things. The Old Covenant only deals with benefits in this temporal world.

When Paul says, "*we were under the elements of this world (Gal. 4:3)*," he was quite right because that is all the Old Covenant could deal with: this world and the benefits of this world. If the people carried out a certain kind of behavior then God would give them certain benefits, but only temporal benefits. The New Covenant brings eternal benefits. So when God set up that covenant with the nation of Israel it was not on the basis that they would receive eternal life. You will never find eternal life promised to the Israelites anywhere in the covenant God made with them because what God set up was not salvation. The old covenant could not bring salvation, but was only a symbol of salvation.

Was it possible for any of those Israelites to obtain true salvation? Of course it was possible! Anybody in that nation could have taken hold of the true salvation which was to come in Jesus Christ. They could have taken hold of the promise through faith, but this had nothing to do with the system that was set up, because as a system, as a people, God placed them under the principle of, "obey and live." His promises were, "*Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord giveth thee; I'll take you to a land flowing with milk and honey.*" That was what they were promised! They were never promised everlasting life on the basis of obedience. God promised them temporal benefits *only*, because the only condition on which you receive everlasting life and eternal benefits is faith and that is not the basis of the Old Covenant. As Paul tells us, the law is not of faith, it is about "doing." (Gal. 3:12)

Are we saved in groups?

It is a popular perspective to think of God's people, as "a group." We think of the Israelites as a nation belonging to

God and we tend to think in those same terms when we think of God's people today. But when we say, "as a nation," we put our finger on a critical point that confuses and deludes many Christians. Nobody is saved "as a people." God does not save people corporately. God only saves people as individuals so there is no way that God could have established the everlasting covenant with people, as a group or a nation. This was impossible! God only establishes the everlasting covenant with individuals because faith must be exercised individually. It cannot be done "as a people," on a corporate basis. That is why no church group can be truly said to be "God's people," as a church. Churches may be instruments in God's hand, used by Him to accomplish a certain purpose, but they are not His people in the sense of having a saving relationship with Him. This can only be experienced on an individual basis.

Under the Old Covenant God definitely established, and used, the Hebrew nation to be a teaching tool for the world. From the moment that Old Covenant was established those who understood its purpose were able to benefit from it, and even today, every individual in the world who sees that system and studies it carefully is able to see Christ through it. In their carnal self-centeredness, the Hebrews thought the system was established only for their benefit, believing they were better than other nations. But God's real purpose was to use them to bless the world in helping the world to find the Messiah. The whole system was just an illustration to demonstrate the realities which are in Christ.

The Israelites became thoroughly confused, and many Christians today have joined them in that confusion thinking that in that system itself there was salvation, and that God had a greater desire to save the Jews than any other people. But God was trying to bless the world by putting, somewhere on this planet, a school where people could look and see the way to Christ and see why we needed Him.

Using Our Misconceptions

God has always been working to save men, by any means possible, sometimes even in the most unexpected ways. From the very beginning God has used man's misconceptions as a means of bringing him to Christ. There has always been a concept among people that if they could only obey and do what was good then God would be pleased. Those

who were honest and sincere soon recognized that all their efforts were getting them nowhere and that they needed help. God used this as a means of bringing them to the place where they could recognize their need of Christ and, through faith in Him, could receive His life and be born again.

Even today the law serves that purpose. It certainly has done that in my life many times. Many times I tried to be good with all my might. Why was I trying so hard? Because I was trying to live up to God's standard and having failed I ended up talking to God and saying, "Oh help me! I can't do it!" The law still serves as a schoolmaster. The false idea that we need to obey it in order to obtain God's favor is deeply rooted in man's psyche and God still uses this false idea, many times, to drive us to the end of our rope so we will turn to Christ.

So in a sense, both the old and the new (everlasting) covenants co-exist right from the beginning all the way down to the end of time. The new covenant was not actually established until Christ died, but men were still saved if they had faith in this benefit which was to come in the future. However, at a certain point in the world's history, God established a system as a teaching tool, where one age and one entire nation was established upon this Old Covenant idea of living by obedience. When Christ came the world stepped into another age where the full light of faith, and what it means to believe and live, became evident.

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: (2 Tim 1:9-10)

So we divide time into two ages, the age of the Old Covenant and the age of the New Covenant, but in actual fact it does not mean that there are two ways that people could be saved. This is how some people interpret it. They say that because there was an Old Covenant and now there's a New Covenant, God has two different ways of saving people. First he saved them by the Old Covenant, and now He saves by the new, but that is not true! This is a false idea which must be guarded against. Man was ever only saved by the

New Covenant, whether in this age, or in any age since the beginning of time.

Only of This World

So this brings us to certain conclusions which we need to keep in mind. Nobody could receive everlasting life through the old covenant. It never happened, and it never will. God never intended that it to be that way. God's blessings under the Old Covenant were only temporal blessings, and they had to do with this world, so the commandments associated with this covenant were referred to as "carnal." (Heb. 7:16). Paul referred to them as, "*the elements of the world,*" (Gal 4:3) "*the rudiments of the world.*" (Col 2:20).

Paul says that under the Old Covenant, we "*were in bondage under the elements of the world*" (Gal 4:3), referring to the many laws and rules which were given to the Israelites. Many Christians say this could never be referring to the laws given by God. They say that God could never set something in place which could be referred to as being carnal, as being of this world, or as of being elements of the world. But the fact is this is all that the Old Covenant was, because the only benefit to be gained from that covenant had to do with this life, with physical things. There was nothing eternal in the Old Covenant, so it is perfectly right to refer to it as "carnal," and "temporal" and as being "of the elements of this world." It did not deal with eternal realities in spite of the fact that it was a necessary teaching tool to lead men to those eternal realities.

The Jews felt that salvation was present in the observance of these things so then they had to bring God down to their level. If you believe that God is going to give you eternal life because you kill some sheep, and because you fix copies of the law onto your forehead, and you observe the ten commandments, what kind of God are you making Him out to be? Your concept of God is bound to be warped.

It is only when you can see that in these things salvation was only illustrated but not received in reality, that you can look beyond the sheep, you can look beyond the observances of the feast days, the rituals, the letter of the commandments, and you can look at the greater reality and say, "God is a God who deals with realities, and not with form." But if you think that form and ceremony is what satisfies God,

then you bring God down to the baby level, and make Him out to be somebody who does not have much more sense than a human being.

Limited Penalties and Rewards

Now here is a final point for us to consider: Since the Old Covenant pertained to this world and the elements of this world, then the penalties and the promises associated with that covenant were also only temporal. We recognize that the promises were only to do with this life, but perhaps we have difficulty in recognizing that it was the same with the penalties. The penalties associated with the system of the law were not eternal, they had to be temporal also!

So if a man was stoned to death because he was picking up sticks on the Sabbath day does it necessarily mean that he has lost his eternal life? Not necessarily! Of course if a man was so much out of touch with God that he would deliberately go and pick up sticks on the Sabbath day this very definitely demonstrates that such a man did not have much of a relationship with God. But suppose that man's wife was at home sick and he went and picked up sticks on the Sabbath day to light a fire in order to make a warm brew, and they caught him, what would they do? They would stone him! Under the Old Covenant this man would die as a sinner! But what about under the everlasting covenant? If this man's faith was right this man would have eternal life, even though he might have been stoned to death under the Old Covenant as a transgressor. This is what nearly happened to the woman taken in adultery. This is what happened to the thief on the cross. So we are not to look at the killings that took place under the Old Testament and the benefits that people got under the old testament and think that these are necessarily an indicator of the final destinies of people. Much of it was only illustration and type.

When we look at the question of people's eternal destiny we have to go beyond what we see based on the Old Testament. That's why Paul could say, "Rahab is saved," even though she was somebody most people wouldn't expect to see in heaven. When you look at the behavior of some of these people it makes you want to ask, "what kind of people were these?" But God sees on a different level and we also have to learn to see on that level if we're going to understand God's purposes.

People who remain under the Old Covenant never experience any real internal change. It is only the outward behavior which changes. Under the old covenant they always remain bound to this earth and its ways, and under the control of the carnal nature. It is only when they have experienced Christ in the New Covenant that real change takes place and they truly become inheritors of eternal things.

The Law of the Spirit

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2)

This verse contains the key to understanding the true nature of righteousness and how it works in the believer. In order to understand what it means, we first of all have to understand that Paul speaks about three different laws in the book of Romans.

1. First of all, there is the *law* of the Ten Commandments.
2. Secondly there is the *law* of sin and death.
3. Thirdly, there is the *law* of the spirit of life.

Paul speaks of the law of the Ten Commandments in the following verses:

What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (Rom 7:7)

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (Rom 7:12)

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (Rom 7:14)

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (Rom 7:22)

These verses are all speaking of the Ten Commandments and they show us several things.

1. That the Ten Commandments are holy, just and good,
2. That the Ten Commandments reveal that we are sinners,
3. The Ten Commandment law is spiritual, but we are naturally carnal and slaves to sin.
4. Paul was in a state where he delighted in the Ten Commandments.

All of this shows that the commandments are very good, but the following verse reveals that there is a problem:

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:21-23)

Paul now speaks of another law. This law is not a legal law, it is not a law written out in words or demanded by some governing authority. How does this law work? It works like this: When Paul wants to do good he is compelled to do wrong. This law is stronger than the desire to obey God's commandments and it makes him a slave to sin. He refers to this law as, "the law of sin which is in my members (my body)."

We can recognize that these are two different kinds of law. One is a *judicial* law and the other is a law of *nature*. A judicial, or a legal law, is a rule, or a set of rules which are made by a governing authority. The Ten Commandments are legal laws. They instruct people to do something and then the person who hears must respond. He must decide either to obey or to disobey. It is up to the individual to decide whether or not he will obey. Whenever we deal with a legal law there are always penalties. If a person obey, he is rewarded; if he disobeys, there are penalties. It is the ruling authority who decides on the penalties and rewards.

A natural law, on the other hand, is something built into nature. When we think of natural laws we think of laws such as the law of gravity, the laws of motion, and the law of consequence. This is not the same kind of law as a legal law and it does not operate in the same way. In a natural law there are not stated commands saying, "Thou shalt do this, or that," laid down by a governing authority, and neither are there rewards and penalties. A natural law is a principle built in naturally which always produces the same result; this is why it is called a law. If we think of the law of gravity for example, it is called a law, because every time something is thrown into the air, it always comes back down. This happens every time without fail. So it is referred to as a law.

When Paul says, "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me," he is referring to a natural law. He is not saying that somebody gave him a rule that he must always do evil. He is saying that there was a principle

built into his being which worked like this: Whenever he wanted to do good, it made him do evil, and whenever he tried to avoid evil, he found himself doing it. This principle could not be resisted and so Paul referred to it as a law: Something that always worked the same way, all the time.

So the first law spoken of, the Ten Commandments, are *legal laws*. The second law referred to, is the law of sin, and it is a *natural law*.

Which of these two is the stronger law? Here is what Paul says:

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

Paul says that the law (the Commandments) was *WEAK* because of the flesh. In what way was the law “weak?” It was weak in that it could not produce righteousness. It could not defeat sin, and the reason was because it was dealing with sinful flesh (the carnal mind). There is a law in the carnal mind (sinful flesh), called “the law of sin,” and when it comes to dealing with sinful flesh, this law of sin is stronger than the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments demand good behavior, but the law of sin compels the individual to do evil. He cannot resist this law and he is a slave to this master called “sin.” Therefore, the Ten Commandments cannot solve the problem of sin. The natural law is *ALWAYS* stronger than legal law. Legal law may demand and threaten, but natural law comes from the inside and it fulfills its requirements naturally. It is in harmony with the instincts and the way of nature, so it is *automatically* fulfilled. It is always obeyed.

So there must be something more than legal law if the problem of sin is to be solved. Thank God, He has provided such a solution. The apostle explains the law which God uses to solve the problem. He says:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2)

This is the wonderful truth of the gospel. God, in Christ Jesus, has given us another *natural law* to cancel the power of the first natural law of sin. This third law is called “the law of the spirit of life.” What kind of law is this? Is it legal

law, or is it natural law? We saw already that legal law cannot defeat natural law, so the commandments could not defeat this law of sin. Therefore if God is to establish another law to defeat the natural law of sin, then He has to use another natural law. The legal law failed, it could not do what it demanded because the flesh canceled its authority. It was “weak through the flesh.”

But God sent His Son into sinful flesh and defeated the law of sin in flesh. How did He do this? He did it by introducing another law into that same flesh. This law was “the law of the spirit of life.” Through the spirit God implanted another principle in sinful human flesh which naturally loves to do good. A principle which delights to do God’s will.

The law of sin worked in this way: My carnal nature loved evil so when I wanted to do good, I always did evil.

The law of the spirit works in this way: My new nature loves good, so when evil presents itself, I always do what is good.

Let us notice that this third law, “the law of the spirit of life” is a natural law, just like the law of sin. There is no natural law in existence which *depends on instructions* in order for it to work. Natural laws have a built in power and all the instructions in the universe cannot overthrow natural laws. For example, the greatest authority in the world can stand on the shores of the sea and command the waves to stop rolling, but they will simply ignore him and continue to do what is ordained by nature. We may think, well, it is too difficult a task to command the waves to stop, so let the same authority throw a feather up into the air and command it not to fall to the ground and see if he is more successful. We can see it is not possible to overthrow natural law by using legal law. This is why all the rules in the world cannot stop sinners from committing sin, because the law of sin is a natural law in the sinner and he needs something more than legal law to overcome it.

The spirit of life does not depend on legal law or written rules to perform its work of righteousness. The law of the spirit of life works by producing true righteousness because Jesus implants the very mind of God, the very righteousness of God, into the nature of the believing Christian. He does this by giving His own spirit, His own life, and His own divine nature with its tendencies to always do what is good. This

implanted life produces the fruits of God's own life, not because of legal law, but because this is the *instinctive* behavior which is naturally a part of the nature of Christ.

This is the key point of the great truth of Christ our Righteousness. Those who are law-oriented say, "We cannot be righteous unless we observe the law." They accept that we need Christ to be righteous, they even say we need Christ's strength, but they cannot leave out the legal law. They say, we must relate to the law to know right and wrong and then we must respond to the law and seek Christ's help in keeping it.

But the truth is this: God has given us the very life of His Son!! Oh glory be to God for such a salvation! He has made us a part of Himself and in this way, by the power of His spirit He has implanted His very own nature into us. So we are righteous *without the law* (Rom. 3:21)...that is without the legal law, or the Ten Commandments.

The law of the spirit of life, the natural law of righteousness fills our lives with good works and with the love and selflessness of Christ *without the legal law*. This is a righteousness which is not AGAINST the legal law of the Ten Commandments because the commandments are good. But it does not depend on the Commandments to be fulfilled or to be defined. The Ten Commandments still serve as a measurement as to whether or not a person has the spirit of God in him. It also still serves as a schoolmaster to bring sinners to Christ, but it is not necessary as a governor in the life of the Christian. Christians are governed by a law which is far more effective than ten rules, a law which is far superior to anything which could ever be written on stone; they are governed by the living spirit of God Himself. This is the truth expressed in the following verses:

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isa 30:21)

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:15-16)

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the

same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (1 John 2:27)

These are amazing verses. Too amazing for most to believe. Read them carefully and consider what they are saying. The Christian has the privilege of personal, intimate guidance by Christ Himself. He not only has the very mind of Christ, but He is guided by His spirit. This is a far more effective way of producing righteousness than the way of the commandments, where a person had to respond to instructions from the outside. In this system of Christ, a man does what is right from his own desire, from the inside, from his own new nature (Christ living within).

This is the true message of Righteousness by Faith. It recognizes that the righteous life is wholly a gift of God. It is given to those who will believe in Jesus Christ and yield themselves totally to Him.

Those who are law oriented cannot accept that righteousness can be given so completely and effectively purely as a gift. They feel that we have a part to play in that we must address the law and respond to it in order to be righteous. This is why they insist that we must be governed by the law. But salvation is the FREE GIFT of God in Christ. It is God's gift, one hundred percent. All we can do is believe, or trust in Christ. All the rest is a gift. If this were not so then man would have something to contribute and it would not be wholly the work of Christ, and it would not be all of grace.

May our Father in heaven help us to understand.

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

It is a universally accepted fact that knowledge is good. Most of us would conclude that knowledge is good because it enables us to respond to our environment in an appropriate way. It enables us to deal with the circumstances that arise in life. As children we went to school to learn, and the whole purpose of this was to gain knowledge so that when we became adults and went out to face life we were able to relate to our circumstances in an appropriate way.

Critical Knowledge

One of the most necessary kinds of knowledge is a knowledge of our enemy, and this is especially true in times of war. It is interesting that of all enemies the one who is most hated is a spy! An enemy soldier who is captured is usually locked up, but often when a spy is found he is executed. A spy is hated and despised because he has more power to do harm than an open enemy. The worst kind of enemy is the enemy who is in our midst and is unknown! That is the very enemy that we need to know. Ignorance of this kind of enemy can be very dangerous.

Many of us have probably heard of a bird called the cuckoo. The cuckoo is a very strange bird as it never builds a nest of its own. During the mating season, when it's ready to lay an egg, the cuckoo goes and deposits its egg in the nest of another bird and then leaves it, and goes about its business! It finds a nest with maybe two eggs and it puts its egg right in with the others. The owner of the nest comes back home and finds three eggs, but of course, birds can't count. Mama bird knows she left eggs in the nest, and she comes back and finds eggs in the nest so she thinks everything is alright. She sits on these eggs with this strange bird growing under her. Finally all the eggs hatch and the cuckoo chick is bigger than the others so when the parent birds start feeding the chicks he pushes his head above the others and he gets most of the food. Soon the other chicks begin to starve. As soon as he grows a little bigger the cuckoo chick kicks out the other baby birds and finally he is left

alone in the nest. The parent birds continue to feed this cuckoo chick until it grows big enough to fly away, and later, to find another cuckoo bird and to carry on the cycle of deception and destruction.

Now this baby bird that they feed and nurture and care for destroys their own children. It is an enemy sitting in the nest but they feed and nurture it because they're totally ignorant of the truth. This illustrates the point that it is important to know who the enemy really is.

Perhaps some of us might have heard of Ignaz Semmelweis. He was a Hungarian doctor who was born in 1818. During that era approximately 10 percent of all the women who gave birth in a hospital died of later complications. This was not considered unusual and it was taken for granted that it was just one of the hazards of child bearing. But Ignaz Semmelweis noticed something strange. Some women were being delivered by midwives, while those in the hospitals were being delivered by doctors. He noticed that about two percent of those who were delivered by midwives died while 10 percent of those who were delivered by doctors in the hospitals died.

One day while Ignaz Semmelweis was with a group of doctors doing an autopsy on a dead body. One of the doctors pricked his finger with the scalpel, and he became sick and eventually died. Semmelweis noticed that this doctor manifested the same symptoms as the women who had died after giving birth in the hospitals. It occurred to him that perhaps what was happening was that these doctors were doing these autopsies on the dead bodies, then moving straight to these women who had just had babies and examining the birth passage with their dirty hands! Were the doctors, in fact, killing the women?

Semmelweis set up a carbolic cleansing solution and made it a rule in his department that anybody who was going to examine a patient would have to wash his hands in the solution first. The death rate in his department dropped dramatically! It went down to almost zero! The astounding thing was that when this became known, the other doctors in the hospital resented it and refused to comply because they thought it was too inconvenient to always need to wash their hands. It was many years before this simple life-saving measure was implemented, and it was not before

Semmelweis himself was dead.

Everybody thought that childbirth was killing these women, but actually, it was a different enemy. Those who were considered the greatest friends of the mothers were actually the carriers of death. Ignorance kept the death rate high because that's the way ignorance is. Knowledge is important.

Undesirable Knowledge

But let us now look at a perspective on knowledge that may give us a different understanding of its value. The Bible tells us that right at the beginning of the history of this world Eve was promised a certain kind of knowledge. In Genesis 3:5 we find Satan speaking to Eve and saying to her:

.... God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Gen 3:5)

God had set a tree in the midst of the Garden which was called "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil." We understand that this tree had to do with a certain kind of knowledge, and we have seen that knowledge is a good thing; it is something that people seek after. God told Adam and Eve, "If you eat of this tree you will die!" But now, Satan says to Eve, "What God told you is not true. God knows that in the day you eat from this tree you will be as God, knowing good and evil."

Did Satan Tell the Truth?

The question I want us to consider is, did Satan tell the truth? Did they receive that day the knowledge of good and evil? The answer is yes! When Satan told them that they would "know" good and evil, he told them the truth. But sometimes we tell the truth in such a way that it becomes an untruth because we only tell a half of it. We don't give the full understanding of what we are saying, and so our truth becomes a half-truth which is as dangerous as a straight lie or perhaps even more dangerous. Too often, when we operate on the basis of only a half truth, we don't really understand what we are involved in until we get too caught up in it, too far to back out.

What It Means to Know

What was the full truth involved in knowing good and evil? What was it concerning this truth which Satan did not fully explain to Adam and Eve? In Genesis 2:25 it says,

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:25)

The Bible does not say they were ignorant of the fact that they were naked, but it explains that in spite of this, they were not ashamed. The suggestion is that they were aware that they did not have on any clothes but this fact did not bother them at all. My friend and co-worker, Howard, has a little girl named Kay Kay who is two and a-half years old. The other day I visited the home and she greeted me with, "Uncle David, I'm a girl and Lukie is a boy. Let me show you!" and she was getting ready to show me! I told her, "No, no baby, you don't need to do that." She knows what nakedness is, but she is not aware of the implications of nakedness.

It was a similar case with Adam and Eve. The Bible says that they were both naked but they were not ashamed. Nakedness meant nothing to them. The fact that they wore no clothes did not bother them at all. In Genesis 3:7, it says,

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (Gen 3:7)

Now when we read this superficially it seems to be saying that, at this time they suddenly gained knowledge that they were naked but it doesn't make sense to suggest that before this they never know that they were not wearing clothes. The Bible says that they KNEW! What it suggests is that the word "knew," carries a different idea than simply, the acquiring of information. This knowledge that came to them was on a deeper level than simply information coming to their heads. It was an awareness that changed their perspective; an awareness that changed their view of themselves on a deeper level than simply a realization of a physical lack. In fact, in verse 11 God says to them,

Who told thee that thou wast naked? (Gen. 3:11)

Now if you were wearing no clothes would somebody have to tell you this? The problem was not that they suddenly

realized that they had no clothes on. The problem was that suddenly the fact that they had no clothes on became a reason for them to hide from God when it had never mattered before. Their nakedness took on different implications. Suddenly they became aware of the meaning of nakedness. In their minds what had been perfectly good, what had been perfectly innocent suddenly became shameful. Suddenly they recognized that God was coming and they could not appear before him like this. Nakedness became not just a theory in the head, not just the awareness of facts, but it became something that in their experience was shameful.

In a few more years Kay Kay (Howard's little daughter) won't want me to see her naked. It's going to mean something different to her. In a few years' time nakedness is going to mean "... time to look for a place to hide. I can't let anybody see me like this!" Probably she will not want even her own parents to see her naked then. At that time she will *know* nakedness, and she will understand in her personal experience the implications of nakedness instead of simply knowing how to *define* nakedness. Knowing something means more than simply being able to define it. This is the point. Adam and Eve had known *about* nakedness, but they did not *know* the shame associated with nakedness until they experienced sin.

Now let us apply this idea as we consider the name of the forbidden tree. The Bible says it was called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and Satan said, "In the day that you take of this tree you shall be as God knowing good and evil."

Now consider this question: Did Adam and Eve know *about* evil? I believe they must have. God had told them that in the day they ate of the tree they would die. So they were aware of right and wrong and they were aware of death. They knew that there was something called "evil" and they probably could have given a definition for it. They understood that certain actions would have made them enemies of God, but they had no personal appreciation of what this meant.

When they partook of that fruit an awareness came upon them that had not been known on this planet before. It was brand new and it was very strange because in that moment the person who had been their best friend became their worst enemy, at least in their eyes. As soon as God appeared,

who had never meant them harm, who had never threatened them, and who meant them nothing but good, they ran to hide! It was not because of what had happened to Him, but because of what had happened to them. Now they *knew* evil and this is the effect that the knowledge of evil has upon us.

This usage of the word “know,” meaning more than simply being able to define something, is very popular in the Bible. For example, in Genesis 4:1 we read,

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (Gen 4:1)

Notice how the word is used here, “Adam “knew” Eve.” This does not mean that he was simply acquainted with her or had some idea of the kind of person she was. This is referring to the close, intimate union between Adam and his wife which the Bible describes as becoming “one flesh.” When he knew his wife in this way the result was that she conceived and bare a son. We see the word being used by Mary, the mother of Jesus in the same way. When the angel came to her and said, “you shall have a son and you will call his name Jesus”, Mary’s answer was, “*how can this be seeing that I know not a man?*” (Luke 1:34).

So when the Bible says that Adam and Eve came to know evil, it means that evil had become a part of their experience. Satan had not told them the full truth. He did tell them they would become as God in knowing evil, because God was the only Person who had this awareness of sin, apart from Satan and his angels. But God was the only person who could know sin without coming under its power because He is God. He knew what it would mean to know sin. But the only way *they* could come to know evil was by coming under its power and pulling it into their own bosoms. They had to become joined to it like a man to his wife. When they came to this knowledge of evil, Adam and Eve recognized that they had been tricked and that Satan had not told them the full truth, but by then it was too late!

An Opportunity Provided

It is interesting to consider that there was nothing actually wrong with the tree itself, or its fruit. It was likely just another tree sitting in the garden. The real difference was

that God had made a law prohibiting them from eating of this particular tree. Normally when we ask somebody not to take what belongs to us it is because we have need of the thing. But when God put the tree there and said, "Don't eat of this tree," was it because God needed the tree? He could have created a thousand more! Why put a tree there and say, "Don't touch this tree," if He didn't need it? You could almost say that this was an unnecessary rule. Why put a restriction there if you don't need the thing that you're prohibiting me from?

This should tell us very clearly that the tree was not the issue. God gave them the rule simply to provide them with the option to sin. Some might prefer if I say that God gave them the opportunity to choose between good and evil, but the reality is, God did not give man the option to choose good. When Adam was created, he was created perfect! He was made in the image of God, he didn't choose it. It was his without choice. God made him that way. What God did was to give them any opportunity to choose evil because they already had good. What they didn't have was evil and God gave them an opportunity to choose it.

Why would God do this? It comes back to the root of the controversy between God and Satan. In heaven, Satan said to God, "You are not giving your creatures a fair chance. Why do You always assume that your way is the best way? I have set up another system and if they choose my way it will be better, and they will be happier. If You are fair, You have to allow people the freedom to choose."

So God set up an option for them to sin. That is likely all that the tree was; an opportunity to sin. But God gave them clear warning, "Don't go near that tree because there is nothing at that tree except sin. The moment you encounter that tree you are going to sin, but remember, it's the only place where there is this danger!" Of course, it didn't have to be a tree. God could have taken a stone and put it there and called it "the stone of good and evil," with the instruction that they should not touch this stone. So let's not give the tree too much blame because the tree was nothing. *The thing which really gave them an opportunity for sin was God's commandment.* If God had not made that rule they could have eaten from that tree for a thousand years and nothing would have happened. It was the rule that gave them an opportu-

nity to know sin!

But did God want them to know evil? No! In their case they should never have known evil and then things would have continued in this perfect state forever. But it was necessary that they should have been given a choice. It was necessary that they should be given an opportunity ... or option ... to choose Satan's way, because God is a God who believes in freedom.

The Knowledge of Sin

Romans 3:20 tells us:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 says basically the same thing:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! Nay, I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said thou shalt not covet.

All my life I had the understanding that what these verses are saying is that, through the law we obtain a definition of sin. This is the popular understanding of these verses. But is this what Paul is really saying?

Paul says, "I would not have *known* sin but by the law." Now there are two possible meanings to his statement. As I pointed out, there are two ways in which this word "*know*" is used in the Bible. One use of the word is to describe a theoretical knowledge, (such as a definition, or an intellectual understanding). The other one is to describe a personal relationship, where there is personal intimacy, in which something becomes a part of one's experience. There are these two usages of the word "*know*" and the second one is used in the Bible more often than we recognize. Many times the Bible talks about *knowing* something and we think it is giving us a definition, when that is not what it is saying at all.

Now Paul says, "I would not have known sin but by the law" and as we continue to read in that very passage in Romans 7, we discover that what he is saying is that he came to know something personally and intimately which was an integral part of his experience. What did he come to know? What was it that he came to have intimate experience with?

It was something which he calls *sin*!

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (Rom 7:18-20)

The work of the law

How did he know that sin dwelt within him? How did he know that there was a power in him that he could not fight and which he could not resist, that was greater than him? He says, “*I had not known sin, but by the law....*” (Rom 7:7), “*I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*” (Rom 7:9).

What Paul was saying was, “I like the law of God with my mind but I find another power existing in me which fights against the desires of my mind and makes me a slave to this sinful power which is in my body.” It is the *law of God* that makes him aware that there is sin at work inside of him. He would not have known sin but by the law because he says without the commandment sin was dead!

According to Paul, the main purpose of the law is to make us know sin! That is, the law makes us aware of this power inside of us, this enemy on the inside who is stronger than we are and whom we cannot resist by any power which we possess of ourselves.

Can we see that this is the very same thing that happened to Adam? God gave him a law so he could have the option of knowing sin. Adam might have said, “Without the tree I would not have known sin.” Paul says, “I had not known sin but by the law,” (Rom. 7:7). The law given to Adam and the law given to us serves the same purpose. Both laws are intended to provide an opportunity for man to know sin.

A Popular Misconception

The popular understanding is that the role of the law is to define sin and these statements of Paul are usually used to support this idea. Paul says, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” What Paul means is that through the law I become aware of sin, and I become aware of the presence of this

enemy inside of myself.

The Way of the Law

Why is it that we cannot know sin without the law? It is because that although sin is our constant friend and companion, and although sin is integrated into our very being, without the law we will always walk in perfect harmony with the sin. We will never try to oppose it; we walk hand in hand with it as friends because we are in harmony together with it. There is a side to sin's nature which we have not discovered.

At times I have tried to persuade someone to give his life to Christ and I get the answer, "I'm not ready yet!" Such people think that any time they choose they can stand up against sin and decide to live righteously! They believe that the power of change lies in their hands and that it is just a matter of that they haven't made up their minds yet, but that someday they will and when they do then they will just turn around, and live a Christian life! We have all met people like that. They think that they have the ability to just turn themselves around, and they don't know the truth because they have never yet met the law. They are walking hand in hand with sin. They are good friends and they think, "Anytime I want I can turn and go the other direction."

But then the day comes when they encounter the law. They come to recognize that the requirements of the law apply to them, and then they try to turn in the right direction, away from sin, and they try to move in a different direction from their life-long companion. This is when they find out who sin really is! Now they find out that they can't get away that easily. They come to know sin like they did not know sin before! Let the whoremonger, the thief, the liar, the deceitful, malicious person try to put away these traits and he is going to discover who sin is! Paul tried it and he tells us what he discovered.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (Rom 7:21)

He expresses his desperate position with the words,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:24)

That is what he discovered when the law came into his experience, and he came to know sin. There was a deadly parasite hidden inside eating out his life, destroying him, but for many years he did not know it. In his ignorance he walked hand in hand with this deadly enemy.

So what did God do? God introduced a probe into his life; something that could search into all the corners and expose this deadly thing called “sin” and bring it to light. Suddenly Paul recognized the truth, “there is a destroyer lurking inside of me. There is an enemy that I thought was my friend and I did not know it!” It was the law that brought him to this knowledge. Hebrews 4:12 says,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

That’s how the law of God works. It gets into the joints, into the marrow of the bones, into the thoughts of the mind, it divides and it splits and it sorts, and when we come face to face with the law of God, suddenly we recognize how deadly is this disease that is in us eating out our lives! But if we stop with the law our condition is most woeful because we end up beaten, condemned and hopeless, for this is where the law can take us and no further. It can introduce us to sin, but it cannot deliver us from it. That was the purpose of the law, and that is exactly what the law’s purpose is. The law is our school master to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

The person who does not know the law is better off than the person who stops with the law because the person who does not know the law is a happy sinner, but the person who stops with the law is a miserable sinner!! Both are still the slaves of sin, but it is better to be an ignorant happy sinner than to be a knowledgeable miserable sinner if that’s where you’re going to stop!

The Difference with Adam

Interestingly we can notice that there is a difference between how the law works for us and how it should have worked for Adam. In Adam’s case did God want him to know sin? No! But in the case of Adam’s fallen descendants God wants us to know sin! In Adam’s case sin was outside of

him. When the enemy is outside the gate you have no right to know him. In fact, if you get to know the enemy outside you are considered a traitor. You must keep him at a distance and let the enemy stay outside. Sin was outside and God wanted Adam to remain a stranger to sin. But when the enemy is inside, it becomes imperative that you know him. You need to know his power, to know his influence and most critically, you need to be able to recognize that he is an enemy. You need to know the enemy otherwise you'll never be able to protect yourself against him.

A Different Option

There are some Christians who believe that we come into this world in an in-between position, free to go left or right, free to choose to sin or not to sin. But this is not the truth. Adam was created good, and had the choice to choose evil if he so desired. Was the rest of humanity placed in the same position? No! We were not born with the choice that Adam had. All Adam's descendants are born separated from God, corrupt, and in need of being born again! Adam chose to turn to Satan's way, the way of self, and he put all humanity there with him. In Adam's case he had one option, the option to turn away from God and the righteous life which he possessed. In our case we also have one option (not two). We have the option to escape from Satan's way by choosing Christ. In the condition in which we are born, we don't have the option to choose evil. Adam already chose on behalf of all of us and we are born in that sinful, corrupt state, separated from God and incapable of doing righteousness.

Now, in Adam's case, it was not separation from God which caused him to sin, and it was not because he had a carnal mind. Adam made a free personal choice. Adam was created united with God. But in the case of all other men, the situation is different. We committed sin long before we were able to make an intelligent choice. We sinned before we were even aware of what we were doing. Is it because each of us made the same choice that Adam made? No, the descendants of Adam did not have that option.

So God's ways are wonderful. He used the law to try to protect Adam from knowing the enemy who was on the outside. But now that Adam has opened the door and let the enemy in, God uses the law to help us to identify the enemy so that we can get rid of him.

Don't Stop with the Law

Although the law is a critical part of God's plan it must find its rightful place in that plan. We must not believe that in finding the law we have come to the place where God wants us to be! The law is the investigator, the examiner and it says, "You have a problem, you're sick, you're diseased!" But the law cannot go any further. It condemns and beats me down, but nothing else, and so Paul says,

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (Rom 7:9)

The Greatest Knowledge

Adam's problem was that he let sin in. Our problem is that we cannot get it out. The law makes me to know sin, but when I come to know sin, I must go a step further. John 17:3 says,

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

The Bible is not talking about theoretical knowledge like the foolish virgins have. It is talking about a dynamic experience where our lives become integrated into the life of God in a way similar to how a man "knows" his wife. I was acquainted with my wife but I never knew her in this sense until I had the intimate union where our two bodies became one. That is what the Bible means! When there is this kind of relationship it produces fruit - a child is born. When you know God, when you know Christ, fruit will be born, and this will be the natural product of the union.

The law takes us to the place where we know sin; but let us not stop there! We must go on to the next kind of knowledge. We must know God and know His son Jesus Christ. This is what eternal life means. Christ comes in and destroys the enemy. The law found the enemy, but Christ destroyed him.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

Christ found the enemy lurking within and condemned and destroyed him. Thank God for Jesus!

Type Versus Antitype

Some of the greatest criticisms of Christianity have arisen because of the God described in the Old Testament and the things He commanded and did. The God described in the Old Testament is difficult to deal with at times. He is represented as the God of the Jews, not of other nations, and while He protects Israel He mercilessly destroys others, wiping out entire cultures with the command to spare neither sex nor age. Not even babies and dumb animals are spared in some of these annihilations which are today referred to as acts of genocide. How can we reconcile this with the picture of the merciful, gentle and loving Jesus whom we find in the New Testament and who insists that God is our Father who loves all men?

This is not the only area of conflict; the commandments of the Old Testament sometimes seem arbitrary and pointless and even more so when we see the terrible penalties imposed on those who failed to obey them. People were to be uncompromisingly put to death for crimes such as cursing one's father or mother, and homosexuals were not to be permitted to live. How can this be reconciled with the mercy and patience revealed in the God of the New Testament?

In other areas such as in the interpretation of prophecy, in the understanding of law and grace, and in the nature of Israel today - in all these and other areas, we see massive disagreement and confusion in Christendom. It is evident that there is need of a clear and consistent understanding of the difference between the Old and the New Testament and the reasons for these differences.

The key to harmonizing all these difficulties is to understand that the entire system of the Old Testament was a great model, a teaching tool in which God set up representations of future realities. In other words, the system of the Old Testament was not reality, and it was not the ultimate truth about God and His operations. It was rather a system of symbols and representations which represented the truth, but was not the truth. We see this fact taught in verses such as the following:

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (Heb 10:1)

Some Christians present a very good explanation of the difference between physical and spiritual Israel, or the sacrificial types versus Christ the true antitypical sacrifice, but at the same time, they have a very poor understanding of the law and its purpose in the Old Testament, versus the law and its purpose in the New Testament.

The following is a partial list of some of the types and the antitypical realities which are in the Bible. Most people are very familiar with these types and can easily identify the corresponding antitypes.

- The lamb vs Christ
- Blood vs Life
- The High priest vs Christ
- Palestine vs The New Earth
- Physical Israel vs the Church
- Levitical priests vs Christians

However, the list of types and antitypes is far more comprehensive than that. In fact, the *entire system* of the Old Covenant - everything in it - was type. This is a fact which is very poorly understood. The greatest misunderstandings in Christianity are caused by a failure to be consistent and to apply the same principle of type and antitype to the rest of the Old Testament. Many people are still absorbed in practicing the Old Testament types when they should be involved with the New Testament antitypes. Here are some additional examples of these types and antitypes.

- The Sanctuary furniture vs the real implements of salvation
- Feast days vs Salvation Events.
- Sins vs Sin
- Guilt vs Separation from God
- God's Commandments vs God's Character
- The system of law vs the Kingdom of God.
- Behavior vs Nature
- Doing vs Believing

- God as Judge vs God as Father.

It is not necessary to examine all of these types in this chapter, but we will focus on a few of them. Once we begin to think about it with an open mind and honest heart, these things are self-evident because truth is consistent with itself and always follows a logical path. Some of these misunderstandings have had devastating effects on the religious experience of millions over the centuries and have resulted in major false doctrines and significant misrepresentations of God.

In this article we will examine four of these Old Testament types and look at the New Testament reality. I have selected these from the list and will focus on them because misunderstanding of these in particular has done the greatest harm over the past two thousand years. Here are the four on which we will focus:

- Sins vs Sin
- Guilt vs Separation from God
- God's Commandments vs God's Character
- God as Judge vs God as Father.

Sins and Guilt

In the Old Testament, a person became a sinner when he committed an act of law-breaking. At that time he 'became *guilty*' and he had to bring an animal as a sacrifice. This animal's life would substitute for his life and its blood would take away the guilt of his sin. In this system the chief issues were:

1. The wrong *act* which he committed – his actions.
2. The problem he faced was the issue of how to remove his guilt. How to obtain forgiveness, how to make God think favorably of him again.
3. Under this system it was understood that the blood of the sacrifice cleansed guilt. Blood changed the mind of God.

We know that the animal was a type which represented Christ. We know that its blood was a type which represented His life. But we have held on to some parts of this picture as being realities when in fact, the entire picture, all of it, was type! What do I mean? I mean that the sin was also type and the guilt was also type! Both of these were also intended to

represent greater realities. It was not just the lamb and its blood which was typical, but the problem which they were dealing with was also typical. This is the first great misunderstanding which plagues Christian doctrine today.

Sinful actions were committed every day, and day after day the animals had to be slain to take away the guilt. But the real problem, sin itself was never taken away. Guilt was only cancelled until the next time a wrong action was done. The entire picture was intended to teach the lesson that man is out of harmony with God and needs a Savior to restore him to that harmony with God. The blood of the lamb represented the life of Christ in which humanity is reconciled to God. In the book of Hebrews we read:

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. (4) For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (Heb 10:3-4)

The issue itself was much deeper than simply the actions of sins. This is why forgiveness could not deal with the real issue. Nevertheless, in the type forgiveness was the focus. The real issue was the carnal nature - sin itself. This is the problem which needed to be dealt with and the sinful actions only served as a type to represent the true issue. We read again in the book of Hebrews:

... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb 9:26)

... we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:9-10)

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; (Heb 10:12)

Jesus came to make an end of sin, not to simply carry out the same function as the animal sacrifices of providing forgiveness. The type represents the antitype, but in no case is the type equal to the antitype, and in no case does the type perfectly represent the antitype. There are always aspects and depths to the antitype which are not represented in the type, just as a doll represents a girl, but can never represent the complexity and wonder of a living person.

Jesus, the perfect sacrifice for sin, did deal with the root of sin once and for all. He did not come to institute the same system which had existed in the Old Testament type of for-

giving sin over and over again. No. He came to destroy the root of sin, the carnal nature, and to put sin to death decisively, once and for all. In accomplishing this He did not simply cancel the guilt of all sins, but He reconciled mankind to God. In Himself He created a union between the human race and God which can never again be broken by sin. The word of God tells us,

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18-19)

Sins can never again be an issue between man and God. Our acts of sin are not a problem to God because as the passage tells us, God does not impute the trespasses of the world to them anymore. Jesus took care of all the guilt. But this is not all He did. More wonderfully, Jesus removed the very source of that recurring guilt, which is the carnal nature.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

The only remaining problem then is that man will not receive the gift of life which is in Jesus. Men will not accept the reconciled life in which sin has been abolished. Unbelief is what maintains the barrier between man and God and this is why God appeals to us to believe in Jesus Christ as the only criterion for being free from sin and being at one with God.

So, to sum up, in the antitype the issue is not “sins” but sin itself, the carnal nature. The issue is not guilt, but separation from God. These are the real issues which were only illustrated by the limited representations of the type. Today, we deal with the real things and leave the type behind.

Commandments vs Character

The next truth follows naturally from what we have just examined. In the Old Covenant the emphasis was the rules and in particular the Ten Commandments. This was the standard by which sin was defined, and it was the means by

which a person came to be recognized as either a sinner or a righteous man. Breaking the law was sin, and this sin made the transgressor guilty. The blood of an animal was required to cleanse that guilt.

But we have seen that the issue is not sins, not actions, but that it is the carnal nature which is really the problem. We have seen that the nature of man is the true problem. We have seen that Jesus did not die simply to cancel guilt, but more so to destroy the sin nature and to restore humanity to union with God. So, have we also been too limited in how we have viewed the law of God? Were the Ten Commandments also a representation of something greater? Were they also a type of a larger reality?

The Ten Commandments were placed in the ark in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. Every single thing which was in the sanctuary and related to the sanctuary was a type, a representation of some much greater reality.

The first item of furniture connected with the sanctuary service was the brazen altar of sacrifice where the sacrificial animals were killed. This altar represented Calvary, the place where Christ was crucified. Notice that it looked nothing like Calvary, it was not even built in the shape of a cross or a hill, but it represented Calvary, the meaning of it was the death of Christ.

The next item was the brazen laver where the priests washed. This represented the resurrection of Christ when He was born again from the dead, for when He arose from the grave He had already defeated sin and so in His body He was cleansed of that sin nature.

The next thing was the sanctuary itself and its furniture. These antitypes came into play after Christ ascended to heaven and represents His work for humanity in heaven.

In the first apartment the table of showbread represented the ministry of the word of God. The seven-branched candlestick represents the work of the Holy Spirit. The altar of incense represented the work of prayer in the experience of God's people.

Inside the second apartment, the most holy place, there was a golden box called the Ark of the Covenant. This box was covered with a slab of gold called the mercy seat. Hover-

ing above this seat was a supernatural light referred to as the Shekinah. The mercy seat represented the throne of God and the Shekinah light of course represented the very presence of God. Inside the golden box were the Ten Commandments.

Now let us consider carefully; every single item of furniture in the sanctuary was a symbol of something greater. Nothing was in itself the real thing; everything was symbolic. How then can the Ten Commandments be the reality of God's law? How then can the Ten Commandments be the true foundation of God's throne? In keeping with the rest of the sanctuary, these commandments must also be a type, a limited representation of some greater reality! This is a very important point and it cannot be denied if we are honest. It is totally illogical to say that everything in the sanctuary was figurative, but the Ten Commandments were the real deal.

Like everything else in the sanctuary type, the Ten Commandments told the truth, but only in a limited way. It represented the truth in a shadowy form but was far less than the reality to which it pointed. We can understand that the reality, or the antitype, of the Ten Commandments is the perfect character of God, something which can never be expressed in a mere ten sentences. God and His way exceeds the ten rules as greatly as a living person exceeds a doll.

When the New Testament tells us that God writes His laws in our hearts and minds, millions of Christians still hold to the misconception that what we have written inside is the ten rules. The truth is that what we have inscribed on our hearts is the very nature of the living God. It is the character of God imparted to us by the indwelling holy spirit, something far more complete, and far superior to a mere ten statements commanding behavior. It is something which reaches to, the very heart of man's need and provides a perfect antidote to the problem of sin. It had to be this way, because laws can only demand good behavior, but it takes a good nature to produce that behavior.

Judge vs Father

The God of the Old Testament seems harsh. Sometimes He seems to be merciless and racially prejudiced. The Bible

tells us that this is not an accurate picture of God, but that if we want to understand perfectly what God is really like we must look at His final revelation of Himself, that is, we must look at Jesus Christ.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Heb 1:1-2)

But the question still remains, what is the meaning of the Old Testament picture? Was it false? Are we to believe that the Old Testament Scriptures did not tell the truth? Not at all, but once again, it is explained by understanding that we are still dealing with type and antitype. The God of the Old Testament is truth, represented in type, by representation and illustration. The things recorded there really happened, but as they happened, they do not give an accurate picture of what God is like.

Consider the lamb that was sacrificed; the lamb really died, and the blood was really shed. God really did require the blood of an animal. It did tell the truth, but was it the reality of the truth? No, of course not! It told the truth in forms and illustrations. Unless the illustrations were interpreted and understood, one would end up with a very distorted idea of the plan of salvation. In fact, many people misunderstood the purpose and meaning of these animal sacrifices and oftentimes those who sacrificed thought that the blood of these animals really brought pleasure to God and that this blood appeased His anger. And do not the Old Testament scriptures tell us that it was so? Many times we are told that the smell of burning sacrifices was a sweet smell in God's nostrils and caused Him to show favor to men. But it is stupid to think that the smell of burning animals' flesh brings pleasure to God!

God wanted people to understand certain lessons and He wanted them to understand how important these things were. The truth is that all association with sin will destroy those who are infected with it. It does not matter if the connection is very small. Sin will ultimately destroy a person. This is the nature of sin. God wanted humanity to understand this great lesson of the relationship between sin and death and ultimate destruction. Therefore, God set up a type

in which He Himself became the agent of consequence. He became the source from which repercussions arose when men connected themselves with sin. Is this how it is in the ultimate reality or the antitype? No, in the reality it is sin which destroys people. All men suffer the consequences of their connection with sin and in the final analysis, it is sin which destroys, even if ultimately, God Himself will have to put an end to the suffering of sinners.

But if God were to wait on sin and nature to take its course and destroy the sinner, the lessons would not be learned because although sin is a certain destroyer, it is not open in its destructiveness. The vast majority of people on earth do not recognize the terrible danger of associating with sin. This is why God set up this typical system in the Old Testament in which He Himself became the agent of retribution and vengeance- the punisher of sin. All contact with sin was severely and uncompromisingly punished. Those who were represented as being completely joined to sin were mercilessly slaughtered, completely wiped out. Even His own people, those who were close to Him and His best friends were not spared in this typical system. Moses, one of God's best friends also had to die, to suffer this vengeance when he slipped up and disobeyed God in striking the rock when God told Him to speak to it.

Did God want to put Moses to death? Did He want to punish him? When Moses pleaded, "oh please let me go over and see this goodly land and Lebanon," God's answer was "no." Why was God so harsh on him? The answer is, it was a type and in this type, God was showing that sin will destroy and that there is no getting away from it. God could not have spared Moses without giving a distorted picture of the truth. But remember it was type, it was illustration. It was a lesson book, but it was not ultimate truth!

What is the ultimate truth? In the real system what really happened? In the real system, God brought Moses back to life as soon as possible and took him to heaven! He gave him something far, far better than what he had longed for. Grace and mercy were poured out upon Moses, but *in the type* he had to die, for the lesson had to be taught! This explains many of the seemingly merciless killings in the Old Testament: The death of Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their little children, the death of Uzzah who touched

the ark in trying to help and died instantly, the death of the disobedient prophet, the slaughter of the nations of Canaan and many, many more. These were all type and illustration and they do not represent the God of love and grace. They represent instead the law of consequence, and the unwavering consequences which follow association with sin.

In Jesus Christ we see the true nature of God, not the justice and mercilessness which is required by the law of consequence. In the Old Testament, God assumed this nature because the lesson had to be taught, but let us not believe that these stories tell it all. It is only in the resurrection that we will know the true destiny of many of those who died in the type, under “justice,” and “judgment.” Ultimately, in the antitype, it is grace and mercy which will triumph and there will be many surprises. This is what John was alluding to when he said,

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

Forgiveness and Justice

Almost every view of the plan of salvation shows the issue as a legal question. In fact, I have never seen an explanation of the reason why Jesus had to die and why sinners are condemned to death, which did not explain it in legal terms. The basic idea is this:

God has sentenced me to die. Why? I have committed sin. I have transgressed the law, therefore, a sentence of death hangs over me. How does God cancel that sentence? How does he clear the record of sin from the books so that He can declare me innocent? The popular concept says that when God sees the blood of Christ, God changes His mind about me and He says, "I forgive." Because of the death of His Son, God is able to change His mind.

What is Forgiveness?

The above popular concept views forgiveness as an attitude of mind. If one person does something that hurts another, then the one who is hurt should quit harboring ill feelings against the one who hurt him. This is seen as, "forgiveness." Men have attributed this concept of forgiveness to God, so the idea is, when I do wrong, God's attitude towards me changes. God has hard feelings against me, and God says, "Before I can change my mind and I can feel good about you again, I've got to have blood and if it's not yours then it's going to be the blood of my Son! When that blood is shed and I see that blood, I will cancel the record of your sin in my mind, and in the books and I will think well of you again." Maybe this is a crude way of expressing it, but ultimately, this is really how popular theology views the issue of God's forgiveness.

Something is very wrong with this concept. What does the Bible say about God? "God is love," and "God does not change." If God ever literally changes His mind about anything, then it cannot be true that God is unchangeable. All of God's ways are perfect, and all of His ways are ways of love, therefore, it is impossible for God to ever change. When we have to understand God's forgiveness in terms of God changing then

we should realize that this concept of God's forgiveness is a false concept. This is where people have gone wrong. They have not understood the biblical concept of forgiveness. The sacrifice of Christ was *not* made so that God could change his mind.

For Christ's sake

And yet the Bible says, in Ephesians 4:32,

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Eph 4:32)

Why has God forgiven you? It is "for Christ's sake." This is a basic, fundamental teaching of the Bible: God forgives "for Christ sake." But what does that mean? Does it mean that God's attitude changes because of Christ? Is forgiveness really a change of attitude, or is there something more to biblical forgiveness? Does forgiveness affect God or does it affect man? Does it affect some ethereal, intangible thing called, "justice," something with no name, no face to which God and man are subject? What does forgiveness really mean and who does it affect?

The undebatable truth is that God always loved me, and always had His hands reaching out to me. When I discovered this fact it changed my life. I learned to appreciate Him, and this appreciation has grown with every passing day. He never had a negative thought towards us! As we build upon that principle we will find that our understanding of God and His word will become more clear. Our picture of Him will be more in keeping with the truth that, "God is Love."

So, God's forgiveness is not, and never was, about God changing His mind towards us.

Biblical Forgiveness

Let's look at a passage in Luke that clarifies this issue:

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. (4) And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4)

In this statement, Jesus was trying to express the kind of nature that God has. He presented the scenario of a person who continually transgressed against another – as much as seven times in a single day. His command to us is that we should forgive such a person. According to the passage, what are the conditions on which we are to forgive that person? It is *on condition that he repent*. But suppose the person does not repent, am I to forgive him? The popular answer is, “of course we should forgive.”

But let us consider something for a moment here, if we do not repent of our sins, will God forgive us? The answer is, no. According to the Bible, God does not forgive if we do not repent, and God is not asking us to do what He does not do.

Why must a person repent before he can be forgiven? The answer becomes clear when we understand what biblical forgiveness really is:

Contrary to popular belief, forgiveness in the Bible is not a change of attitude in the mind. Forgiveness is actually a *restored relationship*. Forgiveness is not a one sided transaction, but is an experience in which *both* parties are reconciled. A better word for this biblical concept of forgiveness is really “reconciliation.” It is not just simply that God’s mind changes about us, but it is an experience which brings a person back into unrestricted fellowship and harmony with God.

If it was simply a matter that the mind of the offended party needed to be changed, then there would be no need for forgiveness, because God, the offended Person, always thought well about us. He never ever had a single negative thought towards even the vilest sinner. Yet God says the sinner must repent before he is forgiven. Why is this so? What is the reason for it? Let us consider the following scenario:

If a friend comes to my home and steals a thousand dollars, the common understanding of forgiveness requires me to forgive the person. This means that I should take the person back into my friendship as though it had never happened. So the next time this friend comes visiting I must let him have free access to my house again. This time he makes off with two thousand dollars! But I know that I am supposed to forgive him, so I keep a good attitude towards

him and treat him as though he never did anything wrong and I let him have the run of my home, yet again. Not surprisingly, next time he gets away with ten thousand dollars. If I keep this up, soon I won't have any house left, and even though I have the spirit of Christ, something in me is becoming more and more disturbed. The truth is, our relationship is deteriorating rapidly because a good relationship must be built on trust!

This person needs to at least come to the place where he says, "I recognize I was wrong and I'm sorry." If he does this at least there is a basis for us to rebuild our relationship. He might steal from me again, but at least, I know on the basis of his apology that this is not his intention. If he doesn't intend to do it and it happens, and I know he is sorry, I have something to work with because he wants to do better.

The problem is when he won't recognize that there is something wrong. If he doesn't repent then I will have to make sure he doesn't cross my doorway again, until he recognizes and repents that he has done something wrong!

In the Biblical sense of forgiveness God does not restore a relationship until we recognize that there is something wrong with us. When we repent and we say, "God, I have done something that hurts you, and I don't know how to help it, but I'm sorry I hurt you." Then God says "There is a basis for us to be friends again: I never expected you not to fail again, you are just a poor worm and you can't do anything without me, but if you recognize you need my help, I can work with you." That's why he says, "Repent."

We can see that repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing are not really different events. They are basically different aspects of the same experience. The Bible teaches in Col 2:10 that, "you are complete in Him." When we come to God, in Christ, we are forgiven, we are set apart, and we experience a life which is complete. The fact is that forgiveness, from the biblical perspective, is best described by the English word "reconciliation." It is a process by which humanity and God are brought together again in a relationship where the shadows and barriers between them are removed. It is not a process by which God's thinking is adjusted.

Limited Concepts

It is true that sometimes when we look at the Bible it uses terms which seem to suggest that it is God's mind which needs to change; but does God intend that we should accept these statements superficially without considering the kind of person He has revealed Himself to be? It is important for us to consider the entire revelation which God gives of Himself in the Bible and not just to limit ourselves to some sections of His word.

When people asked Him, "shall a man put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus' answer was, "No." When they responded by pointing out that Moses had given permission for divorce on trivial grounds, Jesus said, "Moses allowed this because of the hardness of your hearts." But was it Moses who had given the command authorizing divorce? Of course not, those commands were from God – in fact, it was Jesus Himself who had given those instructions to Moses back at Mount Sinai. Jesus was not going back on His own word, and He was not contradicting Himself. In essence, He was saying, "there was a time when I dealt with you in this way because of your limited understanding. There was a time for childish reasoning, but now you are going into the light of something greater, and it is time for a greater understanding of God and His purposes. God is leading you into a greater understanding of His true nature and you can't stay with those limited concepts."

Many of us are still limited to Old Testament thinking in too many things! It is true that in the Old Testament, there is a major emphasis on forgiveness of sins rather than the removal of sin, however, a proper understanding of the gospel as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus and His apostles, leads to the conclusion that the gospel is about *removing sin*, and removing the *nature of sin*, instead of simply overlooking individual actions of sin, as was emphasized in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament when a person stole something he got forgiveness for one action. He brought his lamb and by this act, said, "I'm sorry I stole." He killed the lamb and his individual act of sin was forgiven, but at the same time there might have been covetousness in his heart and he might have had eyes on his neighbor's wife. Those sacrifices never took away sin -they only expressed regret for individual actions.

The Real Problem

In the Old Testament every act of transgression was treated as an individual sin, but in the New Testament a greater understanding of sin is revealed. Here we see that the problem is not what we are doing, and it is not the one sin. In solving the problem of sin, it is not the stealing or the killing or the lying which needs to be dealt with, rather, the root of the problem must be dealt with and the root is whatever is causing these harmful actions. Jesus made it plain in the following passage:

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. (21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: (23) All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:20-23)

I once heard the story of a woman who went to prayer meeting week after week and constantly prayed the same prayer. Every week her prayer would be, "Lord, please take these cobwebs away from my heart." At first, there were many hearty 'amens' from the other brethren, but as the same request continued, week after week, month after month, the amens were fewer and more muted. Finally, one night when it was the turn of another brother to pray, he said, "Lord, please *kill* the spider which is making all these cobwebs in our sister's heart!"

The problem is not the cobwebs- the problem is the spider. The problem is not the wrong actions which men do or the resulting sense of guilt, the problem is the nature which is producing these wrong actions. Our actions are only the result of what we are.

At the end of time there will be a judgment based on an examination of our actions, there is no question about that. But it is not because actions really are the problem- it is because those actions reveal the truth about a person's nature. Those actions prove that a person possesses either the carnal nature of the lost sinner, or the nature of Christ with the heritage of the born-again Christian. Our actions will be examined, but our actions are not what saves us or makes us lost. It is our relationship to Christ. It is whether we have the carnal, or the spiritual nature.

In the Old Testament God presented His truth in heavily veiled illustrations. God was teaching people that sin is the thing which brings death. Every sin was accompanied by the corresponding death of an animal. But as the Bible tells us, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. *Forgiveness never really solved the problem*, it never really dealt with the underlying problem, it just expressed the reality that there was a deeper problem. It is in the New Testament that we come to grips with the real issue. God is not trying to cancel actions, God is trying to get rid of the root and the disease inside.

Why Jesus Had to Die

This is why Jesus had to die. This is why He had to take our humanity with its weakness. This is why he had to bring divinity to unite with humanity so that divine nature could defeat the sin principle and put it to death in human nature, thereby producing a new human life where sin has been defeated.

Now he says, "I have this life, do you want it?" It is ours if we choose to believe and to unite with Him by faith. Jesus came to do for us what we could not do. The Bible tells us in Roman 8:3,

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3,4)

No wonder the apostle Paul exclaimed, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" God has given us eternal life and this life is in His son. It is a gift of God, a life that is divine, and also human, coming from the new father of the redeemed human race; from one who has conquered on our behalf and gives us His victorious life freely as a gift.

Can we, by trying, change the color of the Ethiopian's skin? Can we, by trying, remove the spots from the leopard? Only God can work this miracle. No human being can accomplish it. God could not have left salvation in my hand, He could not have left it up to me, for I, myself, could never have accomplished it, but I thank God for the gift of His Son.

All of us were cursed by Adam. His actions put all of us

under the curse, but God says, "I am not sending my son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. I am going to do for you what you cannot do, and if you will believe, that's all I'm asking of you." The wonderful thing is, even the most worthless one of us can believe. We each have that capacity. We can read the word of God and believe it, and He says, "If you believe what I have done for you in my son, and will accept my grace and my gift you shall have salvation."

When we view things from the perspective of the law, from an Old Testament perspective, we find our understanding of the plan of salvation being based on legal issues. The law cannot condemn a person for being a carnal person, but it can condemn him for committing acts of sin. The law does not ask what we are or what goes on in our hearts, it asks, "what have you done?" and it condemns the individual action. Therefore the law keeps us always measuring ourselves from the perspective of our actions, rather than the perspective of our nature. When we relate to God on the basis of law we fail to deal with the true issue, and we have to stay on the legal level. Everything about our Christian structure has to be built on that idea that it is a legal issue, and we inevitably build our ideas on that foundation.

A Miracle of God

We need to see that it is not about a response to the law, it is about God changing our nature. It is about a miracle which *only God* is able to accomplish. When I started focusing on the message of 'Righteousness by Faith' somebody commented, "You know what I realize? I realize that many Christians are denying the new birth. What they believe in is salvation by education." The more I have become familiar with the arguments, the more I have come to realize that it is true. People teach you that if you are educated the right way from childhood you will grow into righteousness. But why does Jesus say, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven?" The word of God says we must be born again because the way we are born the first time puts us at enmity with God. The carnal mind is not subject to the will of God and indeed, it cannot be

The Christian life is a miracle. It is an act of God and can only become a reality by the supernatural indwelling of His holy spirit. We need to understand that we must come in

contact with supernatural things. Christianity is not just another religion where its advocates grope around trying to achieve moral excellence by studying a certain philosophy. It is not a matter of Christianity teaching more noble morals than other religions. The God of Christianity is a God of miracles and He accomplishes one of the greatest miracles when He transforms a carnal sinner into a spiritual saint.

Adam brought sin, but Christ brought righteousness. The problem is solved. There was death, but Christ brought life; there was condemnation, but He brought righteousness.

Why the Law?

The question is, “why then, the law?” What part does the law play, since death is solved and condemnation is solved by Christ alone? Romans 5:20 says,

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Rom 5:20)

In other words man was condemned by Adam’s sin. Adam’s offence brought all of us under condemnation. We all felt the consequences of “the offence.” But the law came into the picture to make that condemnation even greater. Adam’s sin resulted in the condemnation of all men. All men became carnal and capable of only sinful actions. But most people don’t understand this. God brought the law into the picture to show us what our behavior should be like, and so the law says to us, “you must obey,” and you say, “I shall, I shall,” but you don’t, and you discover something is wrong with you. “I can’t, I can’t,” and the law becomes our school master to drive us to Christ.

May God help all of us to come to the place where we recognize that when the law says, “you must, you must,” our response must be to turn to Christ. We must not stop with the law, otherwise it will be the end of the road for us, we will obtain nothing but disaster, frustration, emptiness and eventually death. The law’s purpose is to point us to Christ, that’s why it entered the picture, that we might be justified by faith. So the law has a legitimate purpose, it has a good place in God’s plan, but that place is not to save us, but to bring us to Christ to make us understand our incapability, our nothingness so that we might turn to Christ.

Justice

If we continue our reasoning on the basis of the limited Old Testament concepts, then we come to this question, “what is the opposite of forgiveness?” If a man is not forgiven, according to the limited concept where we are dealing with justice and legal issues, what is the consequence? Justice demands the person’s condemnation. If the person is not forgiven, then justice must take its course. Human beings work on the level of justice, because no man can change a man’s heart, so we have to operate on the basis of justice. We don’t have a problem with legal systems, because the Bible says that God puts them in place to be a terror to evil doers. Where people don’t have natural inclinations to do good, rules have to be put in place to discipline them and to preserve order.

The law is placed there for the person who is naturally against it—the law is not made for a righteousness person (1 Tim. 1:9), but if we deal with the limited concept of the legal system, we would recognize that the opposite of forgiveness is justice and condemnation. The systems of this world operate on this judicial level.

Let us suppose that a man killed somebody forty years ago, then ten years later he became a Christian and turned his life around and became a model citizen. All thoughts of murder are removed from his mind. Forty years later the police discover that he had committed this act of murder so long ago in the past. What will happen to this man? He will be condemned and possibly be executed. What he is now, does not matter, it is the action which he committed forty years ago which is considered. The law must be satisfied, this is how justice works,

When people understand things only on the judicial level, they naturally begin to impute attitudes and motives to God in keeping with their own limited understanding. Out of this kind of misconception has grown doctrines like “eternal burning hell.” Those who teach this horrible doctrine, say that God’s judgment is of such a nature that if you sniff your fingers at the wrong time and you don’t happen to say, “I’m sorry,” God will roast you over an eternal burning fire for all the ages of eternity. They will say that “justice demands it!” What a tyrant would be this thing called “justice,” so that even God must subject himself to it, and do

things so utterly contrary to His nature of love and mercy! That is where we end up when we view the great controversy and the plan of salvation as a legal issue.

In the Old Testament, the issue was, sinful actions and penalties. This cannot be denied. The law entered at Mount Sinai, and where the law enters there must be penalties. Where there is law there must be penalty, So when God brought in the system of law He also introduced penalties and judicial systems; but there is a higher level where God is operating on the basis of action and consequences.

Adam brought death and corruption into the human family. The real consequence of sin is separation from God, which leads ultimately to death. So sin kills us not because God chooses to separate from us and hurt us, or wound us, but it kills us because it brings a barrier between us and God which results ultimately in our death.

If we look at the people in the Bible who never died, such as Enoch and Elijah, we will see that they were people in whom God abolished sin. Moses almost made it into that number, he almost never died, but at the end, self-will (sin) got the better of him, and so God could not allow him to go into the promised land. God had to teach the lesson that sin in the smallest degree will destroy us. So Moses had to die, the lesson had to be taught.

When we think of justice, what concepts do we often associate with the word?

1. Punishment: We associate this with justice, and what is punishment? It is *suffering* imposed upon a person because he does wrong.
2. Retribution: We also associate justice with retribution, which is *suffering* in proportion to the transgression.
3. Vengeance: Then there is also vengeance. Vengeance is hurting a person to satisfy your own feelings of being hurt.

All of these are attitudes we have attributed to God because we have dealt with him on the judicial level. People attribute these things to God and so they end up dead scared of Him, anxious to please Him so that His punishment wont fall on them, so that His vengeance wont reach them. They

think that He wants to cause them suffering because of their wrongs, they think that He wants them to suffer in proportion to the sins they have committed, they think He wants to hurt them to satisfy Himself for the hurt they have caused Him. They don't understand that all this time God's heart is wounded and bleeding as His hands are stretched out and He is pleading, saying, "come to me that I might give you life, don't you understand that I love you and all I want to do is to take away your sin forever so that your suffering and mine will come to an end?"

A True Picture of God

In the New Testament we see Jesus working hard to give humanity the right understanding of God and to enable us to grasp these truths:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:17-18)

He that believeth not is condemned already, but not by God. God never condemned him, his own resistance of God, his unbelief, condemns him to death, condemns him to a life of separation from God, condemns him to a life of misery not because God wants it to be so, but because God is unable to save those who refuse to come to him. In Luke 9:52,55 we read,

. . . and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. (53) And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. (54) And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (Luke 9:52-55)

Who was it that sent fire from heaven in the time of Elijah? It was God who did it. Now the disciples came, and they wanted to do the same thing because these Samaritans were also rejecting the Son of God. They thought they had as much justification as Elijah did, but Jesus rebuked them sharply, saying, "you don't know what manner of spirit you possess."

But if it was right in Elijah's time, why was it wrong in the disciples time? does God change? No He doesn't. In the Old Testament God had to teach some lessons graphically, insomuch that he did certain things that are not always easy to understand. He had to operate in harmony with the system of law which He had set up. Laws require penalties and those penalties must be carried out, otherwise the system of law means nothing at all. This is why Moses had to die when he broke the law at the last moment before entering the promised land. Nevertheless, we should always remember that although Moses died without seeing the promised land, under the system of law, yet, under the system of grace, he has already received his reward in heaven!

God had to deal with people that way under the Old Covenant, because they were primitive in their understanding and in their religion, and they had to be dealt with in keeping with the primitive system. But now Jesus had come to introduce the age of the kingdom. He was bringing greater maturity and understanding of God's nature, character and ways and Jesus had to let his disciples see things as they really are. Basically, He was saying to them, "you don't understand what was happening in the Old Testament. You thought that was God's attitude and God's mind, but that is not how God feels about people. Even when I did it back then in the Old Testament, it hurt me badly to have to do it, but now the time has passed when I teach people by those methods. Now is the time for the reality and it is time to understand what God is really like."

Let us learn the difference between the symbol and the reality. If we don't understand what was happening there under the Old Covenant, we get very confused and we end up with a kind of Mosaic God who sometimes is nice, but sometimes is very harsh and merciless.

Our God is not like that. It is true that God killed persons in the times of the Old Covenant. It is true that He commanded the death of many thousands of people. These things cannot be honestly denied by any Bible student. However, when we realize that the entire system of the Old Covenant was representational, that it was a type and a teaching tool, then we recognize that the Old Testament behavior of God does not represent the way He really is in terms of His character, and that many of the actions which He commanded in the Old Testament are not necessarily eternal actions.

For example, when He put Moses to death on Mount Horeb, this was an illustration of the danger of sin, but it was not the reality of Moses' destiny. God Himself brought Moses back to life and gave Him everlasting life. Moses' reality is everlasting life, through God's grace, not eternal death as suggested by his death on Mount Horeb, because of his transgression of the law. The death on Horeb was illustrative, not reality. There were undoubtedly many, many such instances in that age and under that system. That is why when we consider the ultimate destiny of people, we must view the question from the perspective of God's love and grace, and not the perspective of the system of law, nor even from the perspective of God's actions in the Old Testament.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (Rom 8:15-16)

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, (19) And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (20) (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: (21) And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) (22) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Heb 12:18-24)

Do you have the assurance that He is your Father? Can you speak to Him freely and openly without reservation, knowing of the unfathomable love of the Almighty Being who condescends to be our Friend? Do you know it?

Let not the spirit of fear abide in our hearts, let there be no reservation between our wonderful God and us. Love Him, cleave to Him, and believe His promises. He has glorious things in store for us.

The Place of Faith

Chapter 22

Righteousness by Faith

One of the most thought-provoking definitions of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1. Paul begins this great chapter by saying,

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

Not many people would have described or defined faith in this way. Probably the popular definition would run something like this: “faith is believing something with all your heart even when you cannot see it.” There is merit to that definition of course and that is why Paul’s definition is so intriguing. Why did he choose this definition which is so evidently carefully thought out and precisely worded? The very fact that it is so unorthodox compels us to take notice.

Recently I asked myself a question which helped me to come to grips with Paul’s definition of faith and to grasp the true impact of this verse. The question was, “how do you know that you are in Christ and that you have received the holy spirit?” I mean, there were no tongues of fire as at Pentecost, there was no speaking in other languages, there has not been many healings of the sick or raising of the dead. How do I know? What evidence is there that I am in Christ and have received of His life? This question was not mine originally. As I have spoken on the subject of what it means to be in Christ and rejoiced in the truth of complete salvation in Christ, more than one person has asked me, “where is the evidence?” So I had to face the question, what is your proof? Where is the evidence indeed?

Faith is the evidence

Paul’s unusual definition seems tailor-made for just such a question. “Faith,” he says, “is the evidence ...” But what does he mean by this and does it make sense? When we speak of evidence we mean demonstrable and tangible realities, we mean measurable facts which may be put on display for all to examine. In stark contrast Paul speaks of “things not seen.” Faith is the evidence of *things not seen*.

Here we have a contradiction. In today's material world of statistics, data, facts and figures we find ourselves bemused by Paul's statement. But Paul is not speaking figuratively or symbolically. What he is saying is that the true evidence of spiritual realities (including the new birth) is not what we see, feel or are able to measure. It is not what other people can assess or examine. The true proof, the substance, the evidence, is faith itself.

In this definition of faith, is Paul speaking of a person's own personal faith? Does this definition encompass the question which I asked myself, "how can a man really know that he is in Christ?" I believe that Paul's definition of faith covers this question. A person needs to look for no evidence as to the fulfillment of God's word other than the fact that he believes it. All the evidence to the contrary in the entire world cannot overthrow the faithfulness of God's word. Our eyes, our feelings may tell us otherwise, but the word of God is the truth, regardless. It is the statement of how things really are. When we believe, then that is the evidence? Faith is its own proof. When a man believes then he knows it is so and no evidence in the world can be stronger than that or can overthrow such proof. So a person will rejoice with all his heart in what he believes even though all the evidence in the world seems to contradict what faith proves to him to be true. We read in 1 John 3:9,

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

What should a Christian do when he reads this verse? Well, he may say, "since this is so, then I must endeavor not to commit sin," and he sets out to try not to sin with all his might. Does this man believe the word of God? Another man may read the same verse and say, "since this is so, then sin is no longer my problem." He is filled with joy at the realization that in Christ he has been set free from sin and he goes about rejoicing that he has been delivered. Which of these two responses is the response of faith? Which man really believes the word of God?

Faith is the evidence, faith itself is the proof. The fact that I do truly believe God's word is all that I need. To require further evidence is to demonstrate that I do not really believe and is the surest guarantee that I will not have the

promised blessing.

A gift received by faith

So in the light of this, what is the true significance of the term, "Righteousness by Faith?" Here is how Paul describes this blessing:

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (Rom 3:22)

God's word tells us that this righteousness comes upon all them that simply believe, and that it is by the faith of Jesus Christ. The verse is very clear and in fact the entire passage from which it is taken is equally plain. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, when he believes in the gift of God then at that very moment he receives that gift. Righteousness is purely and entirely the gift of God bestowed upon all who simply believe. Paul says it as plainly as words can say it (Rom. 4:4,5).

The real question is, how long does it take to receive this gift of righteousness? This is the thorny question which often causes much debate and difference of opinion.

- a. Is this gift of righteousness instantly imparted to a person the moment he believes so that he is instantly transformed from a sinner into a saint? Is he immediately made into a new creation? Have old things indeed passed away and all things become new?
- b. Or is it that when he believes, God begins the work of making him righteous so that in the meantime he is only partially righteous, partly a sinner and partly a saint?
- c. Is it that he is instantly regarded by God as righteous while in actual fact he is not really righteous? (this would suggest that God accepts what is not really true).

If righteousness is by faith and only and purely by faith, and if it is wholly and entirely the GIFT of God, then the question is, why would God fail to give this gift immediately to a person the moment that he believes? It could only be either that God is unable to give it immediately or that He is unwilling to give it immediately. Neither of these sug-

gestions make any sense. If righteousness is one hundred percent the gift of God, then it seems reasonable, logical and biblical to accept that God does give this gift in its entirety to a person the moment that he believes.

Instant righteousness?

But let us examine another objection. Is it possible for righteousness to be just instantly placed upon a person so that he instantly changes from bad to good? Can a person's character be transformed in a moment so that the habits of a lifetime are erased and new attitudes immediately implanted? We must not answer this question on the basis of our own experience but on the basis of the word of God. This word is very clear and leaves no room for misunderstanding.

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)

In many places where the Bible speaks of the righteous life of the born-again Christian, of the life of victory over sin, it does not present this victorious life as the result of hard struggles with sin or as the result of a process of developing righteousness. No, righteous living is presented as the fruit of a single decisive and revolutionary event in the life of the believer, the result of a single action at a specific point in time. Let us look at a few examples of this.

(Rom 6:3-7) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Notice that our freedom from sin is accomplished by one thing, that is, the fact that we died with Christ. Our old man was crucified with Him, the body of sin is *destroyed!!* How is it then possible for sin to still be living in me? The logical conclusion is, he that is dead is *freed* from sin. The ques-

tion is, do we believe it? In this passage we are not delivered by hard work or by a process of character development, but simply by an act of death experienced by faith.

(Col 2:11) In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Here again we see that the sins of the flesh are “put off” by a single action. It is by the circumcision which we receive in Christ. This circumcision consists of putting off, getting rid of, the body of sin (the carnal mind). When we entered into Christ the experience not only gave us the fullness of the godhead, but it delivered us from the fullness of carnal humanity.

The symbolism of circumcision is graphic. In circumcision, that which was the cause of potential impurity and disease was cut away and cast off forever. The same thing happens in this spiritual circumcision accomplished in Christ. The carnal mind, the old man, the body of sin, is taken away in Christ. Cut off and cast aside, so that the thing which causes spiritual impurity and disease is removed.

(1 John 3:9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Again we notice the extremism of the word of God. There is little room here for misunderstanding. Not only is it difficult for a person in Christ to sin, but it is impossible. While His seed (God’s seed, God’s life) remains in him he *cannot* sin. What is it which gives him this life which sin cannot touch? Is it hard work? Is it diligent effort? Is it much struggling? Is it the long drawn-out process of character development which finally gets him to the place where he cannot sin? Absolutely not. It is the simple fact that he is born of God and that the seed of God is in him. This and this only is what destroys the power of sin in him and produces the righteous life and character of God. Again we see that this is not something which requires long drawn-out and agonizing struggles, but simply the faith which believes and accepts the word of God and by which we receive the gift of the new birth, the new existence in Christ.

The place of human effort

How then do we reconcile this with the undeniable fact that there is effort, strife and struggle associated with the life of the Christian? What is the place of these endeavors if it is faith alone which may lay hold on these gifts of God? Why do we need to fight if righteousness is wholly the gift and the work of God? Let us answer this question by examining an event in the life of Christ.

When He came down from the mount of transfiguration with Peter, James and John, Jesus was faced with a situation which would have embarrassed His cause had He not arrived on the scene at that moment. A man had brought his demented son to the disciples with the request that they deliver him from demon-possession, but all their attempts at casting out the devil had failed. We can only imagine how hard they must have tried. Possibly they rebuked the devil with stern commands, lifted their hands to the skies, called upon God and maybe even retired to the side to pray, but all their efforts were vain. The devil mocked all their attempts to cast him out and only displayed his power with greater ferocity as they commanded him to depart.

Jesus' frustration with His disciples was expressed in His disappointed words,

... O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. (Mat 17:17)

Immediately He rebuked the devil who speedily departed. The bewildered disciples sheepishly asked Him, "why could not we cast him out?" Notice the answer of Jesus:

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. (21) Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. (Mat 17:20-21)

Now look at what Jesus said. Examine the reasons which He gave for their failure. Firstly He says, "because of your unbelief," and this is easy for us to understand because it agrees with His first words to them, "O faithless and perverse generation." Obviously their problem was lack of faith. Faith is what pleases God, faith will move mountains, noth-

ing is impossible to those who truly believe.

But then Jesus continues by saying something which at first sight seems to contradict everything which He said before. "*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.*" What is His point here? What really was the problem which the disciples had, was it lack of faith or was it lack of fasting and prayer? Jesus rebuked them for a lack of faith and then stated that such a devil could only be cast out by fasting and prayer. Did He contradict Himself? Of course not.

Faith requires work

The fact is, there is nothing, absolutely nothing which God requires from a surrendered soul except faith. Faith alone pleases God, faith is the hand which lays hold on God's power and casts out demons. Fasting and prayer does not cast out demons. So what then is the purpose of fasting and prayer? When we examine these statements of Jesus carefully we come to the realization that while fasting and prayer cannot move the hand of God, it is a means of STRENGTHENING FAITH! It is a means of producing that which alone may please God and receive His blessings.

So while faith alone pleases God, efforts need to be made to maintain faith. Our focus is not always perfect. Living in fallen, weakened flesh with impaired faculties in sinful circumstances, the fight to maintain the focus of faith is a fierce struggle. Faith alone pleases God, but the maintaining of that faith requires diligent effort. Peter's aborted walk on water illustrates that lesson graphically. Therefore Paul admonishes us, "fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12)." Fasting and prayer is one of the things which helps us in turning our focus away from the trivia of earth and towards the things which are real and eternal. There are other things which are equally helpful. There is Christian fellowship, Bible study etc. None of these things have saving merit in themselves, none of them obtain God's favor. Faith is what pleases God and is the only thing which may obtain His blessings, but these other things are helpful because they assist us in obtaining the one truly necessary thing, that is, faith.

So this is where our input comes in. The fight against sin is not ours. It is a conflict which has been already fought

and won. The life of victory is a gift, freely bestowed on all who will *BELIEVE*. Our challenge is to believe. This is our fight, this is where fasting and prayer come in. They are aids in our quest to believe.

Perhaps we have always fasted and prayed. We have always read our Bibles, attended worship services and labored diligently in witnessing to others. So did the Jews who crucified Jesus. It is possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. In these religious exercises they endeavored to *purchase* the *gift* of God by their religious services and diligent endeavours. It profited them nothing. Because their concepts were wrong, that which should have been the means of establishing their faith became the means of obstructing it. They became so absorbed in and so dependent on their religious rituals that they could not see beyond the forms to the reality and so it became impossible for them to obtain true righteousness which is wholly a gift of God, received *ONLY* by faith.

Today we need to be careful that we do not repeat the mistake of the Jews. There never was and never will be a time when we can contribute anything to our salvation. Justification is God's gift, sanctification is God's gift, glorification is God's gift (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 6:11). It cannot be a gift if we must work to obtain it, or if we must make a contribution towards it (Rom. 4:4,5). All God requires is that we accept the gift by faith.

Let us recognize that our problem all along has not been a lack of labor, discipline, striving or effort. How we have labored and struggled! It has not brought us one step closer to perfection or heaven. It is "RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH." Let us labor therefore to enter into God's rest by faith (Heb. 4:11) and let us cease from our own works as God did from His (Heb. 4:10)

Chapter 23

The Art of Water-walking

One of the most unusual events which occurred in the experience of the disciples of Jesus, took place one dark night on the sea of Galilee. As they sat exposed and helpless in the boat they beheld through the gloom a mysterious figure approaching them apparently walking on the surface of the water. Their terrified cries brought the reassurance that the eerie figure was none other than Jesus and their fear was replaced by a sense of awe.

What happened next is not easy for me to understand. It is difficult to follow the workings of Simon Peter's mind. I cannot quite put myself in his shoes and see myself making the same kind of request which he made. But the record is plain. Upon hearing that it was Christ, he instantly called out, "*...Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*" (Matt 14:28).

Peter did not make this request in order that his faith might be strengthened. The wording of his request makes it seem that he was saying, "I am not sure that it is you, but if it is you, then tell me to come and I will come." If Peter had been uncertain of the identity of the figure on the water would he have dared to venture out of the boat? I don't think so. He knew that it was Jesus and it was on that basis that he made his request. What is more difficult to understand is, what was his motive in asking? Was it simply that he wished to experience the thrill of walking on water? Was he thinking of what a great story he would have to tell his grandchildren? Was it that he was so anxious to meet Jesus that he could not wait until He got into the boat? None of these suggestions make much sense, but what is certain is that Jesus immediately spoke one word. Without hesitating He said, "come."

Jesus' response is as puzzling as Peter's request, but it was not untypical of the way He operated. There rarely ever was a time when He denied the request of any person no matter how unreasonable or unrealistic it seemed. For example, when He was asked to turn water into wine in Cana

of Galilee, He complied, even when it seemed that it was contrary to His plans. There was no apparent need to grant Peter's request. On the surface of it, it seems that Peter just wanted to get a thrill, or to show off to the other disciples. Whatever the reason, Jesus told him to come, and immediately Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water.

It was as easy as breathing. Peter had never studied the theory and practice of walking on water. He had never trained himself to walk lightly, he had never discussed the mental and spiritual attitude or the physical qualifications necessary to successful water-walking. His eyes were fixed on Jesus and on the strength of that single word, spoken by lips that could neither lie nor fail, he stepped out of the boat in perfect peace and confidence. No human being will ever be able to explain the mechanics of what happened. It is useless even to think about it. Perhaps the sea suddenly became as solid as stone, or maybe Peter became as light as a helium-filled balloon. Probably none of these options is correct, but the plain fact of the matter was that he was involved in doing something which was impossible, and he was doing it with no effort.

What was the secret of Peter's successful walk that night (for as long as it lasted). What were the vital elements necessary in order that walking on water could be successfully carried out and maintained?

First, there was the word of Jesus. That single word, "*come*," was backed up by the integrity of a life in which there was no shadow of guile, no variableness nor shadow of turning. It was spoken by lips which had never lied, nor ever been involved in idle jesting. There was no question that the word carried the stamp of infallible truth and authority.

Secondly, there was the presence and power of Christ. In Him was power which had never failed to perform even the most seemingly impossible tasks, even to the raising of the dead. In Him there was the assurance of infallibility and omnipotence.

Thirdly, there was the faith of Peter. It was not bravado which caused Peter to step out of the boat in the perfect confidence that he would walk on water. It was not mere suspicion, or hope, or the thought that it might be possible.

With his eyes on Jesus there was not a question in his mind as to what would happen when his feet touched the surface of the water. When he found himself walking on the water, he was not the least bit surprised. He had known exactly what would happen and that was the reason why he had stepped out without a life jacket, without a lifeline, and without asking any of the other disciples to standby in case of an emergency.

We may not know exactly what thoughts went through the minds of Peter and Jesus that night, but we can be confident that this remarkable miracle has been recorded and preserved in order that we might learn some vital lessons from it. Who knows, perhaps it is the very reason why Jesus consented to Peter's request. Jesus performed many miracles while He was here and while not all of them were recorded, in each of those of which the Bible speaks we can find vital truths and principles which have powerful lessons to teach with respect to the Christian life and how it is lived. In Romans 1:16 the apostle Paul tells us,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

In these miracles of Jesus we most often see the power of God applied unto physical restoration. Paul says that the gospel is the same power, but applied to salvation. In both cases it is the power of God. There is no difference in the way that healing is applied in both cases, only that in one case, the body is affected and in the other the soul, the mind, the spirit is affected. Why should we believe that it is a more difficult thing for God to heal the spirit than it is for Him to heal the body? The truth is that the miracles of Jesus are full of lessons which, properly understood will enable us to grasp the most critical principles necessary to the healing of the soul.

So let us see what lessons we may glean from Peter's extraordinary achievement.

The most obvious lesson is that the victorious Christian life is not difficult. It is no more difficult than walking on water. Both tasks are of course, humanly impossible. No amount of will-power, concentration, dedication, or studiousness will enable a person to perform either task for even

one single second. Humanly speaking, they are impossible, yet, both await only one thing, that is the faith of one who simply believes the word of God. Faith in that word makes the impossible not only possible, but easy and effortless.

Another lesson which we learn is that the accomplishment of the task is entirely the work of Christ. What did Peter do to help Christ? What did he do to prepare the way for the miracle? What did he do to prepare himself to do the impossible? The answer is, he did absolutely nothing. All he did was believe the word of Christ. That was all. When he believed that word, he stepped out of the boat and into the world of the impossible. The task was Christ's, the preparation was Christ's, He took care of the physical difficulties. All Peter did was believe in Him and in His word. Is the method of overcoming sin and living the victorious life any different? Do we help Christ? Can we do anything at all to make the work easier? No, all we need to do, all we can do, is believe God that He has accomplished our salvation, our sanctification, our righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Yet another lesson which is most vital, is the lesson of the need to maintain our focus. Walking on water was not an event which transpired and passed in a single moment. It required maintenance, not just for a moment but for many steps over a period of time. Peter started out well, but he did not maintain his focus. If his journey had been 10,000 miles long and had taken him a year, would it have required anything different along the journey than it had at the beginning. How different was the walk than the start? There was not a bit of difference. The same method by which he started was the method by which he continued. Did the journey become more difficult? Was there a time when he had to concentrate on the steps which he was taking? When he had to think about the techniques of the task? Absolutely not!! All he had to do was simply keep his eyes on Jesus and ignore all distractions. In that relationship Peter *did* the impossible. In that relationship he *maintained* the impossible. He only failed when he took his eyes off Christ.

Is it the same for the Christian walk? It is interesting that the Christian journey is often compared to a walk in the Bible. We are admonished to "walk in the spirit," to continue to walk in the Lord Jesus as we have received Him etc. The emphasis is on the maintaining of the original

experience, the original focus. When we have faith in Christ we have found the only method that is needed and that will ever be needed to receive each and every blessing of God.

The fourth important lesson is the lesson of the need to avoid distractions. This cannot be over emphasized. When Peter walked on water, he was in effect a supernatural being. He did what mere humans cannot do. With eyes on Christ, he entered the supernatural world and exercised the powers of the world to come. But there were several distractions which rivaled Christ for Peter's attention that night.

- (a) There was the majesty of the wind and the waves to be admired.
- (b) There was the terror of the storm.
- (c) There were the admiring, awe-struck disciples in the boat.
- (d) There was the contemplation of the stories he would have to tell his grandchildren.

His task, his only task was to keep his eyes focused. He had no need to learn the theory and practice of water-walking. All he had to do was keep focused on Jesus and ignore the distractions, but in the face of all that was going on, this was a challenge and it was one which he failed to meet properly. He allowed his attention to be drawn from Christ and immediately sank into the water. This is the same situation which faces us today. Nothing can defeat us, we will not sin, we will not be overcome by the enemy. We can do this as simply and easily as Peter walked on water. The only condition is that we focus on Christ and His word in faith, and that we keep our eyes focused on Him.

The question is often raised as to how a Christian may be absolutely victorious over sin. The real question is, how can it be otherwise if we truly have faith in Christ and His word? There is no failure in Christ, only in man. When we trust in Him, He will do the job and He will do it perfectly. We have only one thing to fear and that is, that we may take our eyes off Him. There lies our great danger.

So, let us take heed. No matter how mountainous the waves are, no matter how awesome the distractions, no matter how men may admire and commend us, no matter how Satan attempts to intrude vain thoughts into our minds, let us never permit ourselves to be distracted. He is our

hope, He is our life, He is our everything. Believing this and living by it is our only safety. May God help us that we may learn the art of walking on water. If we do not know how to do this, it is unlikely that we will ever learn how to overcome sin.

The Place of Surrender

Chapter 24

Surrender

There can be no true conversion or revival or rebirth without surrender. Faith is critical, yes, but it is impossible to have true faith and not be surrendered to Christ. A profession of faith without surrender is a lie and a deception. In Luke 14:26, 27, 33, Jesus says:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

There is a critical word which comes up in all three verses, it is the word, “cannot.” The word “cannot,” simply means it is impossible. The person who has not fulfilled what these verses specify, will find it impossible to be a disciple of Christ. Jesus himself stated these conditions and said that they are absolutely necessary in order for us to be His disciples.

He says first of all we are to “hate,” and of course we know that the One who told us to love even our enemies could not mean that we should literally hate those who are closest to us. Jesus uses the word “hate,” but He is not really speaking of the emotion and attitude of hatred. But what is He saying really?

Jesus identifies the things and the people which are closest to us and says we must “hate” them. Is He saying that in order to become a Christian I need to abandon my family? Of course not! There are some Christians who are asked to become missionaries to far countries and they have to leave their families but certainly God does not require that of all of us. But why does Jesus say, “hate?”

Let us notice what Jesus has done; He has selected the things that fill our world, the things which give us our identities. What are the things that concern me most in life and make up the center of my existence? I think of my wife at

home, my house, my children, my parents. These are the things that make my world go round, they are the reason I get up in the morning and go to bed at night. The circumference of my existence are these people and these things.

Jesus was saying that, in order to become His disciple, I must choose to give up my identity, I have to stop seeing myself as the person I always was. Since my identity is linked to the things and people who are closest to me, Jesus said that these are the things I must “hate,” or give up. This has to be done because unless God has all of us exclusively to himself, He can never make us into the people that He wants us to be. What He is saying is, from this moment on your wife is no longer your wife, your children are no longer your children, you have become my exclusive property if this is not true, you cannot be my disciple.

God is not taking these things away from us, but when we become His exclusive property, then God says, “ok, now go and love your wife, but this time you love with the love of Jesus, and in the way of Jesus, instead of the way you were.” He says, “now go and care for your children as the children of Christ, instead of as your children.” Your relationship to them has changed, it is no longer your wife or your children, now they are the property of Christ, because He is now your life.

If we put limitations on our relationship to Jesus, He cannot work in us. We will find our own desires and our own affections obstructing Him at every turn? One man said to Jesus, “Lord I will follow you anywhere, but let me go first and bury my father.” Was such a man a follower of Christ? Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:60).” How can God do a complete work of changing us unless we have chosen to give up all, with no limitations, and no holding back? When we have made that kind of decision, then we can be His disciples, that is what He is saying.

A voluntary service

In the next verse Jesus says,

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

If you saw a man carrying a cross in the time of Jesus you would know that he was going to die. Jesus was saying, not

only must you die, but you must voluntarily choose to take up death. It is you who must take up the cross voluntarily, of your own will. It is interesting that when we look in the bible, we see that the illustration of death is used consistently to illustrate surrender. Some people regard this death as some kind of mystical experience because although the Bible speaks of death, yet, we still somehow remain alive. How do I die if I am still alive? As we examine the Bible closely we recognize that what it is talking about is a surrender that is so absolute that the only thing it is comparable to is death. That is a fearful thing to contemplate! Unless we really trust Christ, that is a fearsome thing. It is frightening to put yourself so much in the control of another person that none of your preferences matter anymore. In fact, it is voluntarily making yourself the absolute slave of another person. It's a frightening thing unless you trust the person that you are giving yourself to, with absolute confidence.

Jesus says we must, "take up the cross daily," this makes it clear that we don't run in automatic mode when we become Christians, the relationship must be continually renewed. This is because we are human creatures in human bodies and the way our minds work is that one day we are full of enthusiasm and zeal, but the next day we are in the valley, depressed and discouraged. Therefore we must continually renew and refresh the things that develop faith. We must die daily, our commitment to Christ must be renewed continually.

Is it true surrender if I say, "I surrender my television watching, I surrender my appetite," but when it comes to my hairstyle I say, "Lord, you have got to allow me to keep this. This is something which I cannot part with." Partial surrender is not really surrender at all, partial surrender is saying to God, "I will choose what you can have, I will still remain in control." Until a person surrenders all, he has not surrendered anything at all! He is still his own god, he is choosing to give God a little portion as he sees fit, and he thinks that if he gives God a little bit more it will please Him more, but he remains in control. But such a person is not really God's property at all. God cannot do anything with such a person until there is a hundred percent surrender. True surrender is a complete experience, it is an absolute thing, and so Jesus says in verse 28 and 33:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? (Luke 14:28)

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

It sometimes seems that Jesus was always trying to discourage people. One man came to Him and said, “master I will follow you anywhere you go.” Jesus answered him by saying,

“foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay His head.”

He was saying to the man, “think about what you are doing before you take this up, consider what it’s going to cost you.” The rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, “I want to be perfect, what do I lack yet?” Jesus told the man the hardest thing in the universe for that man to do. The man thought he was surrendered because he was keeping the Sabbath, he was not lying, stealing, killing, he honored his mother and father. But Jesus found the most difficult thing for him, and instructed him to do it. He put His finger right on that man’s god! In actual fact, that man really was not surrendered to God because he was the ruler of his own life. The god that he loved best of all was his money, and Jesus knew it. And yet, it wasn’t really his money that was the issue, money itself was no issue, but his money was the thing around which the man’s life revolved and so Jesus got right to the heart of the matter and showed him that his life was centered on the wrong thing. He did not really belong to God, in spite of all his commandment-keeping.

This is what we need to understand, the need to give up all. Without this it is impossible to serve Christ. This is why as the Bible speaks of surrender to God, it uses the illustration of death over and over again. In Romans chapter six, we find the illustration used again. At the beginning of this chapter, Paul says,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1-2)

Everything that I ever do which is wrong, is done because I am at the center of my universe. Do I sometimes eat what

is not good for my health? Why do I do it? It is because it pleases me. But if I am not the center of my universe, do I live to please myself? Do I care about my own preferences concerning the kind of clothes which I wear? If I am not the center of my world, do I care what people think about my clothes? If I am not the center of my universe, where does self-will come in? it doesn't exist. The reason sin lives is because self is alive. A person who is dead to self has no problem with sin. If our minds can ever be brought to that state where self no longer lives, then in that moment sin will be destroyed. This is the point which Paul is making: How can you sin when you are dead? Paul continues by saying:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:3)

Can we know something that is not true? We may *profess* to know something that is not true, but the word "know," has to be based on reality. The word "know," implies that the thing actually exists. Paul says, "don't you know that those who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" But is this to be taken literally? I was baptized into the water, I came up out of the water. Did that really put me into Christ's death? Most people think of this as a mental exercise, they think, "it must be in my mind that I was put in Christ's death because when I went under the water I didn't really die, when I came up out of the water I wasn't really resurrected it was a symbol, so being put into Christ and participating in the death of Christ must be a symbolic thing as well." That is how Christians have thought about this. However, the baptism into Christ is not just something that happens by water. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

Notice that this is not talking about water baptism. It is the holy spirit of God which has baptized us. What does that mean? Has that really happened? Has it really taken place? Is that a figurative experience or is it something real? Has God done something supernatural? Has His holy spirit taken me and implanted me into the body of Christ? These words cannot be understood to mean anything else. We have been baptized into the body of Christ and been made to drink of

the one spirit, which is the very life of Christ. Now let us apply that to Paul's words:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:3)

Through the experience of the baptism of the holy spirit we have been implanted into Christ where death to sin is something which has already happened. It is by entering into Christ's existence that I receive the crucified life. I was crucified with Christ, it's His crucifixion, His crucified life that has become my reality and Paul asks us to recognize that it has happened. It is not an imaginary or a figurative experience, it is real. The self-life really is put aside, subdued, destroyed when we are in Christ. Verse 6 says:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Romans 6:6)

Paul says, "the reason why you don't serve sin is simple, you are a dead man." He emphasizes this point in verse 7.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom. 6:7)

Our freedom is accomplished by death. But the wonderful thing is that we are not only dead to sin, but we are resurrected to righteousness. And therefore, Paul says we are to reckon it to be so, "reckon yourselves to be dead." To reckon ourselves to be dead when we are really alive is to make ourselves liars. Paul is not asking us to pretend like children, he is not asking us to believe something that is a lie, he is saying, "take facts into consideration and deal with them, reckon yourself to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God. Consider it to be so, because it really is so." Remember that it is faith that puts us there. Christ did it for us, but if we don't reckon it to be so, we will never experience it. Reckoning something to be so means we take the facts into consideration and apply these facts to our experience.

We must accept the word of God that we really are indeed dead unto sin and alive unto God. When we believe the truth then we will choose to live the truth. The rich young ruler made a terrible choice, but one thing which we can admire about him is the fact that he was honest, he made an honest decision. He is going to end up losing eternal life be-

cause of it, but he looked Jesus in the eyes, and he looked at his riches and he made up his mind. He chose his riches and walked away. Jesus, as sorry as He was, didn't say, "come back, I'll make it a little easier."

We would prefer if Jesus would say, "give me fifty percent, or even ninety-nine percent, I'll allow you still to keep that one percent." This would leave me the freedom to be still the supreme authority in my life. At any point I could say to God "give me back a bit more." But God must have everything, or else He cannot make us what He wants us to be. That is why the Bible speaks of surrender, as being death, because it is a position where there is no compromise, it is the only place where God alone can have His way. So we need to understand that accepting Christ brings us to the place where we can say, "anything and anywhere, no matter how big or how small it is, I am yours unconditionally, you shall live and not I."

Our Fight

Even though God works with us and the spirit strives with us, in bringing us to that place where we believe the truth, yet it is true that ultimately, this is really our fight. God has never taken the power of choice from us. The decision is ours to make. The spirit will plead with us, God will put advantages in our way but we have to make that decision to accept His life and death, and when we make that decision, the struggle comes to an end. There is a saying which goes like this, "it's easy living after you're dead." As long as you're alive you will be fighting and struggling. You will be beaten sometimes and you may think you are winning sometimes. But God is never beaten, Christ does not lose, sin is a defeated enemy where Christ is concerned. As long as He is able to live, sin will not be your problem.

In the drug addiction programs and the smoking programs and the "how to overcome sin," church programs, they tell us that we must learn to "control self." There is a lot of emphasis on counselling and psychology, but the solution is not to learn to "control" self. That is not our problem, our problem is that we have not denied self, self is still alive. When self has been crucified with Christ, sin is no longer a problem.

When freedom finally came to the slaves in Jamaica, the

document proclaiming freedom was sent to the island from England. The slaves had been set free, but there was a transition period in which though they had been freed, they were not to be told. The masters knew, but the slaves didn't know because there was a time allowed for the slave masters to adjust themselves and get ready for the time when the slaves would no longer be able to work the plantations. But the slaves suspected what had happened, and the rumor passed around that the "free paper" had come, and the masters had burned the "free paper," so they really were free, but they were still slaves and there was a lot of discontent.

As we look at that situation, we recognize that they were declared free, but they were still effectively slaves. Is this what Christ has done for us? What do we say by the lives that we live? are we so defeated by sin that we are saying to the world that God has declared us free, but has left us slaves? We must understand that God's word is true, we must let our minds take hold on the reality that God cannot lie. When we do, it will become our experience.

The fight of the Christian is the fight of faith. Faith is the thing that maintains this relationship and keeps us there. Our fight is the fight of faith, that's where we need to fight.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20,21)

Christ is working in you to do that which is well pleasing in His sight. He is not presenting an impossible ideal. The apostle speaks of this because he knows that this victorious life is a reality in Christ? The Bible never gives us dreams and a fairy tale world. What the Bible speaks about is reality, we are the ones who are living in a false world. The god of this world has blinded our eyes so we have not recognized the privileges that are ours, that have been given to us in Christ Jesus. We must believe and choose to live by the facts presented in the word of God.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

When I learn that there is nothing good in me, and I am a

hopeless case, and I can really believe it from the depths of my heart, then I am on the way to finding the experience that really counts. God can work with the person who knows that he's little, He'll work more with the person who knows that he's less, but the one whom God works most mightily with is the one who knows that he's nothing at all. Such a person will give all to Christ because he knows there is nothing in himself on which he can depend.

Chapter 25

The Meaning of The Cross

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Gal 6:14)

In this verse Paul speaks of his determination to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ. But what does he mean when he speaks of the cross? What is he speaking of? Is it the wooden instrument? Is it the historical fact of Christ's death? What is he referring to?

We see that Paul's glorying in the cross was as a result of what the cross had done for him.

- (a) It had crucified the world unto him
- (b) It had crucified him unto the world.

What does this mean? Crucifixion signifies death – nothing else. What Paul was saying was that by means of the cross his relationship with the world was one of death. As far as the appeal of the world was concerned it did not exist and as far as his response to the world was concerned it did not exist. What was it that had accomplished this? It was the cross of Christ.

The cross signified not just death, but voluntary death. Death to self-will, death to sin, death to Adam's life, death to all this life and this world offers. But how did the cross, the instrument which killed Christ, accomplish this for Paul (and for me)? Notice it was not discipline or obedience which had delivered Paul from the world, it was the cross.

The simple, but wonderful truth is that the cross which killed Christ delivered Paul because it *killed* him also! It was the means by which Christ put him to death, thereby delivering him from the world, from sin and from himself.

The cross sets us free, not simply because Christ died there for us, but because *we died there in Christ!* The power of the cross is the power of deliverance from our past, from the world, from ourselves and all we have been. However, this power is only available, only a reality when we have

become one with Christ, when we have entered into His life, thereby partaking of His very existence.

The Problem

The problem is, in the understanding of most people, the cross has become (like everything else) a symbol of what Christ did 2000 years ago, an experience which was on my behalf, which motivates and challenges me, but which has no actual effect on my own personal experience (apart from my response to the challenge).

This is not how Paul related to the cross. The cross of Christ in His experience was an actual thing; an event which had put him to death. It was not he who endeavored to die, it was the cross which had accomplished his death. This became his reality, he was crucified with Christ and received this crucifixion when he believed in Christ.

The whole problem with Christianity is that we are trying to do again what Christ has already done. We see the Christian life as a challenge rather than a finished reality. We perceive our duty as one of work and effort rather than trust and rest. Conversion means we begin a work rather than accept a finished one. The focus is all upon us and what we must do rather than upon Christ and what He has done, life is a struggle rather than a victory.

Paul gloried in the cross not because it challenged him, but because it delivered him. Of course, such a deliverance could only be because he believed in Christ – that is, he believed that He and Christ had become one, participants in the same existence so that all which Christ had accomplished had become his reality.

He lived the life of Christ. In Him, Christ lived again on earth. All that Christ was, he was, all that Christ had accomplished he had accomplished. So he partook of and lived a life in which self had been crucified and the power of the world destroyed. So he gloried in the cross for it was there that his deliverance had been accomplished.

Christians have become accustomed to regarding the emblems of Christianity as just that – mere emblems and symbols (baptism, communion, the new birth – even prayer!). They have not gone beyond the symbols to the reality. For them these symbols have been just rituals to stimulate and

motivate. They have not BELIEVED in the realities of which these symbols are only illustrations.

In his writings Paul dwells prominently on two things:

- (a) The cross of Christ
- (b) The resurrection of Christ.

Both these things are critical in the life of the believer. The cross delivers me from the dominion of sin, while the resurrection transports me into the life, power and realities of Christ's present existence – a life lived wholly unto God.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom 6:6-7)

Paul says that our old man is crucified. What is this "old man?" In the simplest sense this refers to the person I used to be before I became a Christian. This person has been put to death, has come to an end. Has ceased to be a factor in my existence.

Notice the emphasis; this old man has been put to death not only *by Him*, but *with Him*. Again, the emphasis is on the event which occurred 2000 years ago. This might have been stated, "I have entered into His crucifixion." He was crucified 2000 years ago but I have just now accepted Him. How could I be crucified with Him? This is true, only because it is His crucifixion which I have received. It is His death which has become effective in me through the holy spirit which has baptized me into His existence. (1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 4:10,11).

"So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27)

Notice that it is the body of sin which has been destroyed That is, the part of me which causes me to sin, the part of me which is helpless, enslaved, sold to sin. Here referred to as the "body" (also in Rom. 7:24) but evidently referring to the "carnal mind." (Rom. 8:7,8).

The main reason why people sin is not because of sinful flesh, (biological factors) but because of sinful mind (spiritual factors). Let us remember that Lucifer and the fallen

angels, as well as Adam and Eve, all sinned while in *sinless* flesh. This was also true of millions of angels who followed in the steps of Lucifer. On the other hand, Jesus lived without sin in sinful flesh, that is, in a body which was suffering from the effects of many generations of degeneracy.

It is obvious that the real root of sin is not my sin-affected body, but rather my sin (self) centered mind. It is also evident that there is only one aspect of my person which needs to die in order that sin may be overcome. This aspect is not my physical flesh or body, but rather my self-centered mind.

Paul uses a very strong word in speaking of what happens when we have been baptized into Christ. He says this results in our being crucified with him so that the body of sin might be *destroyed*. This word “destroyed,” is from the Greek word “*Katargeo*” and means to do away, abolish, cease. Paul chooses extreme, uncompromising words to describe what happens to the sinful part after we have come into Christ. It is dead, crucified. Here he says it is destroyed. Why choose such words? What message does he wish to convey to his readers? Why does he not say the body of sin is weakened, crippled, subdued? What is his reason?

His intent is that his readers should understand that in Christ, sin has come to a complete end. There is no longer any rationale for sin. Something which has been destroyed no longer exists and this, according to Paul, is what has happened to the “body of sin” (the sinful mind). It no longer exists. Why is it that the experience of so many Christians contradicts this plain truth taught by Paul? It is because they have not accepted their death in Christ, they have not “reckoned” it to be so (Rom. 6:11), they have not believed.

Paul says this experience is so that “*henceforth*,” this might be our experience. That is, from this point forward. Here we find no allowance for a life of constantly falling under sin’s power, of being frequently defeated. Here we see finality, an end and a beginning. From this point onwards, sin ends, righteousness begins. Why is this so? What has accomplished this revolution? It is the crucifixion, the death, the destruction of the old man, the body of sin.

If this change were achieved by the *subduing* or the *restraining* of the body of sin, then there would be the option of periodic sin and the necessity of a constant struggle to re-

frain from sin. But since this change is achieved by death, crucifixion, destruction, there is no room, no allowance for sin to creep in (although we need to remember Galatians 2:17,18).

The whole purpose of this crucifixion, the whole point of the death of the body of sin is that we should not serve sin, that we should be freed from sin, that sin should have no dominion over us. If, therefore, sin continues to be a part of our experience then it is evident that the gospel has failed, or rather, that we have not truly believed the gospel.

The Place of The Word

From time to time across the centuries there have been movements which have arisen which have emphasized the truth that salvation is in Christ and Christ alone. Usually this emphasis has come as a response to a system where much emphasis has been placed on man, on human works, and on rules and regulations. One such outstanding movement which comes to mind is the reformation of the sixteenth century.

Two Extremes

There is a danger which always seems to accompany such movements. There always has been and there always will be. It is the danger that as the emphasis is placed on Christ and on the reality of His life in us, people may begin to think that there is no more need of the written word, now that we actually have, and live the very life of Christ. This was the thinking of the fanatical munsterites who arose in the days of Luther. Their cry was “the Spirit, the Spirit.” They concluded that since they now had Christ Himself there was no longer any need of the written word and that Christ Himself through the Spirit would lead them to automatically know, and to do what was right. Having cast away the word of God they depended on their feelings to direct them and of course the result was that they drifted into fanatical and disorderly behavior. We see much the same thing happening in the Pentecostal movement today.

On the other hand, there are many who speak about righteousness in Christ, who refuse to emphasize the reality of His life in us. Their main focus is on what Christ has done **for me**, but they say very little of what He does **in me**. The consequence is a religion in which there is a great deal of talk about Christ and justification, but very little manifestation of the life of Christ.

Righteousness in Christ is a wonderful truth. In fact, it is all truth wrapped up into one. When we understand it, not only do we see man’s deliverance as a simple, complete thing but we are filled with admiration and love for God and

His Son. But the question must be asked, how can we escape these two extremes, one which throws us into the fire of fanaticism and the other which leaves us stranded on the ice of formalism?

In every case, faulty knowledge leads to wrong beliefs and of course wrong beliefs lead to wrong experience. We see then that the foundation of Christian experience is correct knowledge (Rom. 10:14). It is true that knowledge in itself will not benefit a person, but at the same time there is no development, no change without knowledge. If people will believe when they learn the truth, the result will be seen in lives in which Christ is revealed. So as we move forward in the experience of the life in Christ let us be certain that we proceed with correct knowledge and understanding. This is the only way to ensure that we are shielded from the pitfalls into which others have stumbled.

Experience contrary to truth

Christ Himself lives in the believer. This is a truth which the Bible clearly, emphatically and repeatedly teaches. This life of Christ in us gives us complete victory over all sin. This is also something about which there can be no question if we accept what the Bible says. Yet in spite of these facts, we still very much need the Bible. Why? Will not Christ Himself teach me personally? Will I not automatically know to do what is right since it is Christ who lives and not I? What need do I still have of written words if I actually have the living word inside of me?

Questions such as these are the reason why it is vital that we understand what is involved in true Christian experience.

First of all, let us settle this matter: All things, absolutely all that we need or will ever need have already been provided. All things are already ours (1 Cor. 3:21,23). God took everything which man could ever need – wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, power, life etc. (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3; 1 John 5:11) and He put them all in Jesus Christ. There they exist as a reality independent of our experience. Whether we want them or not, whether we believe or not, they are there. When a person receives Christ, then all these things are His, because they are Christ's and he and Christ have become partakers of the same one life (1 Cor.

12:13). In Jesus there dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily and we are complete in Him. All that He is and has is what we are and have.

But why is it that we see so little of the life of Christ in so many Christians, even in those whom we believe to be honest and sincere? If we do indeed have the life of Christ with all these qualities, why is it that the theory and the reality are so far apart?

The Written and Living Word

In order to answer this question we must understand the place of the word of God in the experience of the Christian. Consider the following verses

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.
(1 Pet 1:23)

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17)

A person may read these verses and conclude that the words themselves, the actual phrases and sounds are what actually accomplishes these things in us but this would contradict the passages which teach us clearly that it is Christ Himself by means of His spirit who actually lives and works in us. The key to understanding this is to see the relationship between the work of Christ, the living word, and the Bible, the written word.

Generally speaking, God does not act in us outside of our will and consciousness. Christ's life in us is manifested in our conscious and willing submission to His will as it is revealed to our minds. In other words, the life of Christ in us is manifested by a cooperative, conscious intelligent response to the truths which He reveals to us. It is not usually God's way to take control of a person's body or mind and induce him to behave in a certain way outside of his conscious intelligent choice.

Knowledge Precedes Faith

When we understand this then we can see that no matter how much God has given us, we can receive only as much as we *consciously* know and therefore believe. We may be kings, but ignorance will keep us living like paupers.

It is through the word of God that our eyes are opened. It is by the word that the life of the spirit, already ours, becomes known to us, thus enabling us to experience it. In other words we already are inheritors of all things, but we do not know it. We receive little, because that is what we expect to receive.

I would compare it to a man who has inherited a book from a millionaire friend, which is written in a mysterious code. As far as he knows the only thing which he has inherited is this book. But as he studies the book day after day, he gradually begins to understand the code. Finally he deciphers one page and learns that there is a certain bank account set up in his name with a million dollars!! All this time he was a millionaire but did not know it. Now that he knows he can begin to spend. But he is eager to get to page two because who knows what other treasures are waiting to be discovered!

The thing is, he was just as rich on day one, as he was on the day when he deciphered the code, but he did not know it, so could not benefit. This in a way illustrates the relationship between our experience and the word of God. Already given all things, yet we need to know and to believe. *Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.* (Rom. 10:17).

The life of Christ in me changes my nature, but generally speaking, that life does not supernaturally educate me. It is still by the word that Christ reveals his will to me. So though in Christ, I have a perfect spiritual nature - the nature of Christ, I still only have human knowledge and can only live that perfect nature in harmony with what I know to be right. Therefore Christ continues to educate me through His word, enlightened by His spirit so that day by day, already perfect in Christ, I become more mature and more perfectly manifest the image of Christ in my behavior.

So *all* things have already been given to the Christian. In fact the Bible states that "*the world*," has already been reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19), not just the Christian! But it is only by means of the word that we can enter our inheritance. Without the word of God we may just as well have nothing, for how can we believe if we do not know (Rom. 10:14)? And if we do not believe we cannot receive. So Paul

tells us that the gentiles are “*alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.*” (Eph.4:18)

The written word reveals the truth, it does not make the truth. It reveals the reality of Christ who is the truth, the living word, Himself the fulfillment of all the word of God, all it promises and requires.

For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. (2 Cor 1:20)

Faith Receives Life

But the written word, accepted by faith is a vital key. Although all things are *already* ours in Christ, the Christian life is lived ONLY by faith. Faith accesses all God has given, but unbelief receives nothing. All the omnipotence, all the blessings, all the might and grace of God mean nothing, avail nothing for the person who does not believe. Faith is the key which unlocks, releases, accesses all the infinite resources of God which have already been given to us in Christ, but of which we are so ignorant. The written word produces faith (Rom. 10:17) which receives the living word. But how much of the living word do we receive? *Only* as much as we expect to receive. Only in proportion to our faith Which is based on the written word.

So it is clear that as we learn more of the written word of God and believe in that word, there will be a corresponding increase in our experience in Christ, the living word. But let us remember, it is not because we have not ALREADY been given all things in Christ from the very beginning. No, it is only because our understanding and faith are limited and are only gradually being enlightened by the word of God.

This is why the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened so that they could come to appreciate how much they had been given in Christ (Eph. 1:15-23).

Gideon’s Story

The story of Gideon is a good illustration of this point. Gideon lived in Israel at a low point in their history. It was a time when they had been overrun and subjugated by the Midianites. Their condition had become so desperate that whenever they reaped their crops the Midianites simply

came and collected the fruits of their hard work and there was absolutely nothing they could do about it.

One day Gideon was threshing his wheat. He was not threshing it at the threshing floor, he was threshing it at the wine press, hoping to deceive the Midianites and so preserve some of his precious crop from their piracy. Gideon lived in a nation of dispirited and defeated people. He was just like them, a man without spirit or hope. All he could hope was that by changing his habits and hiding from the Midianites he might be able to obtain enough food to live.

Suddenly he was startled to hear a voice behind him which said,

“The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” (Judg 6:12-14)

Gideon looked around in amazement to see who this person (an angel) was talking to. Surely it could not be him because he certainly was not a mighty man of valor! But when it dawned upon him that it was indeed he to whom the angel was speaking he replied,

“Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” (Judg 6:15)

Basically Gideon was saying, “my Lord, you are wrong. I am not a mighty man of valor. My father’s house is little in Manasseh (which is one of the small tribes in Israel) and I myself am the littlest, the weakest, the least significant in my father’s house. So basically, I am nobody and I have very little might or valor!”

Now who was right? Was it the angel, or was it Gideon? If God said that Gideon was a mighty man of valor, was Gideon a mighty man of valor? Of course he was! God cannot lie. Even if it were not true before, as soon as God said so it became true. However, the fact is that in spite of the fact that he was a mighty and valiant man, Gideon could only live like a weak, puny coward because that is what he believed himself to be!! All the might which was already his was of no avail unless he believed it. So God had to do something to strengthen his faith (not to increase his strength – he already had all the strength he needed). So God gave him a sign to show that He really was with him. Gideon put

out a sheep skin two nights to prove God. On one night it was wet all around but dry on the sheep skin, on the other night it was dry all around but wet on the wool (Judges 6:36-40).

Finally Gideon believed the word of God because God was gracious enough to give him some evidence. But long before he received the evidence, Gideon was already a mighty man of valor, the problem was that he did not know it. When he finally believed, God did nothing to him that He had not already done. The only difference was that now, Gideon believed and because he believed he was able to live the reality of that life of might and valor. He went out with three hundred men and totally devastated the army of hundreds of thousands of Midianites. Because he finally believed.

When a person believes, God needs to do nothing to accomplish his salvation which He has not already done. It was already done before He believed, but now, because he believes, he is able to access the reality, to realize and experience what was already true before he believed.

We can see then the true meaning of the phrase, “grow in Christ.” This is not saying that we should become more like Christ, but that we should receive more of Christ by believing more (as the word reveals more of Christ to us). We expand and increase in the life, privileges, authority and power of Christ as the word leads us from faith to faith (Rom. 1:17).

A Guide of Right and Wrong

While the word reveals the life of Christ and all the glories present in that life, all given to us in Christ, it also reveals more perfectly God’s character and standard of righteousness. Though we are already complete in Christ, partakers of His righteous nature, victorious over sin, yet again it must be emphasized, we do not have perfect knowledge. It is possible to be one hundred percent obedient to God and yet still to be doing something which is not in harmony with His perfect will! A genuine Christian desires only to please God. He only wants to do good because he has the nature of Christ and this is how the nature of Christ reveals itself – in a desire to do only good. However, he does not have all the knowledge of Christ and so his concept of right and wrong may still be faulty. He may do something wrong, sincerely believing that he is doing right. This does not mean that

Christ is not living in him, but simply that he is a babe in Christ. A baby has the nature and the life, but not the knowledge of an adult.

God does not count such faulty ignorant behavior in a Christian as sin – no more than we would regard it as sin if a baby of two years old, in imitating an adult used a bad word, or bowed before an idol. However, such faulty behavior certainly misrepresents God’s character and it is not God’s plan to leave any of his children in such a condition. So there we see again, the vital place of the word of God in educating us, in revealing God’s character, and His will to us so that we may not only live the life of Christ sincerely, but that we may also live it perfectly.

There is perfect balance, harmony and interdependence between the written and the living Word. Often we become unbalanced on one side or the other and we set these agencies against each other. We say “the spirit, the spirit,” or “the word, the word.” But in the proper understanding of the place of both, a wonderful beauty emerges and we find that the various elements of God’s work come together in perfect harmony.

Sanctification

Chapter 27

The Work of a Lifetime

What is sanctification? The *popular* concept of sanctification is that it is the process by which we are fitted (made fit) for heaven. In most cases this has been interpreted to mean that it is a process by which, little by little, we become more and more holy, more and more like Christ until eventually we are just like Him. It is interesting to note that the word sanctification carries a different meaning in the Bible and nearly always speaks of a finished work. For example, “God sanctified the Sabbath day (Gen. 2:3).” Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers and says, “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified ... (1 Cor. 6:11)”. Again he says, “for by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14). Here the word signifies to be set apart for a holy purpose and signifies an immediate experience. But admittedly, the word as used today refers to a process by which a person becomes progressively more holy.

Let us consider something right at the very beginning: When we say that sanctification is the “work of a lifetime,” whose lifetime are we talking about? Do we mean the lifetime of Methuselah which was 969 years, the lifetime of Enoch (365 years), the lifetime of Moses (120 years), or the lifetime of today’s average person (70-80 years)? And what about the lifetimes of those whose lives are cut much shorter by sickness or accident? How long does it really take to be sanctified? How long did it take for the thief on the cross who lived for only a few hours after he was converted?

Immediately we can see that we have to revise our ideas of sanctification. The idea that sanctification is a process which comes to an end when we have attained to a certain level of holiness or perfection is a false idea. If it were true, then what it would mean is that most Christians never ever are fully sanctified. Maybe we all need a longer lifetime. Perhaps we all need 365 years like Enoch, but then again, even that may not be enough because it seems that even Methuselah who lived almost three times as long as Enoch never reached the place where he walked with God as closely as Enoch did.

If sanctification is what makes us fit for heaven then why did it happen so quickly as in the case of the thief on the cross and happen so slowly in the case of others whose lifetimes are almost a hundred years?

In Hebrews 4:9-11, Paul tells us that there is a rest which remains for the people of God. He explains that the person who has entered into God's rest has rested from his (the person's) own works just as God rested from His works at the end of creation. If we have rested from *our* works, does it mean that there will be no more works done by us? Absolutely not! As Paul again says, "*it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phil. 2:13)." Notice, there are works in the life of the believer, but they are not his works, they are the works of Christ. In a strikingly paradoxical statement, Paul tells us,

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Heb 4:11)

I had to smile when I recognized what Paul was saying. Here he says that we must "labor," we must work. For what purpose? So that we can *rest!* We must labor so that we may rest! Is this contradictory? Not at all, here we find the harmony between both ideas of sanctification, that is, that it is the "work of a lifetime," as opposed to the immediate experience of being set apart wholly unto God.

The danger against which Paul warns us in Hebrews 4 is the danger of UNBELIEF. He says we must labor so that we can enter God's rest, but how do we enter? It is by faith that we enter! So it becomes evident that all our labor must be to help us to have faith, not to do works. Where works are concerned, we rest, we enter into God's rest. Our work is finished. Our only problem is that unbelief may keep us from this rest and so we must labor, we must struggle to keep the focus of faith. This is the sum totality of the Christian's struggle, the fight to maintain faith, because where there is faith, the fight is finished, where faith is, God works and the battle is over.

If the life of victory over sin is ours simply by faith in Christ, then it is evident that we may have this experience immediately, as soon as we have faith. However, it is equally evident that since this victory is ours purely by faith, then it is the maintaining of faith which determines whether or not

we keep it. God's work is always perfect but His ability to work in us is dependent upon our faith. So there is a battle to be fought, but, notice, it is not a battle to do right, it is not a struggle to overcome sin, it is the "good fight of faith." It is the struggle to maintain our faith.

This explains why sanctification, the work of being set apart unto Christ is an instant work which takes place as soon as we are in Christ, but at the same time is a process which lasts for the rest of a person's lifetime. A man in Christ is wholly acceptable to God and such a person is complete in Him (Col. 2:9). He is sanctified or set apart unto God. However, every day of his life for as long as he lives, whether it is 969 years or 70 years, this person must continually maintain this experience in Christ, by faith. It is not an automatic process in which the relationship maintains itself. Faith must be nurtured, fed, exercised, jealously guarded and this "fight of faith," continues as long as a person lives. It is not that it takes a whole lifetime to become holy (!!). No, it is that this holy status which we receive at the very beginning, must be maintained for the rest of our lives whether that is 2 years or 969 years. It is the "work" of a lifetime.

So, the thief on the cross who lived only a few hours was sanctified during his lifetime, and so was Methuselah who lived 969 years. The work never came to an end while they lived. They never came to the place where they could say, "now I am sanctified and there is no need to have the experience tomorrow."

Notice, it is not sanctification which requires work. This was the work of God. It is the faith which brings sanctification which must be maintained during the "work of a lifetime."

The Rest Which Remains

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Mat 11:28-30)

It was Jesus who spoke these words and since the time when He spoke them, many well-meaning persons who have not understood the gospel have had to ask themselves the question, “what did He really mean by these words?”

Jesus’ promise was, “I will give you rest,” and the question is, when Jesus promises rest, what is the problem from which he is seeking to relieve us? Obviously the opposite of “rest” is “work” or labour. What is the difference between rest and work?

Work is an activity. Work requires effort, energy. Sometimes energy of the mind as well as of the body. And rest? **Rest** is the opposite isn’t it. Rest is non-activity, it is a state of relaxation.

Let us consider still another question: Can a person who is working be resting at the same time?

Strictly speaking we cannot work and rest at the same time, and Christians who find that the effort to serve God is a hard job and a constant strain may know that they have not experienced the rest promised by Jesus and that they have not found the true gospel.

Jesus’ appeal is to those who are “heavy laden.” What does this mean? It suggests that these persons are carrying loads and of course they are bound to be tired! Is Jesus here talking about people who are out in the field carrying sacks of potatoes on their backs? Is he talking about this kind of load? What is it that has burdened these people and made them “heavy-laden” and in what are they labouring?

Clearly they are labouring in trying to be righteous! That is what their hard work is all about. The burden which they are carrying is the burden of sin and guilt, it is the weight

they bear as a result of the knowledge of their wretched sinfulness and failings and they are labouring hard in trying to get rid of that burden, to somehow obtain righteousness.

Jesus says, “come unto me all you who are working and are under this load, and I will give you rest!” So then if you claim to be a Christian but yet you find yourself in this heavy labour to achieve righteousness, the fact is, you have not yet found what Jesus has to offer!

Again he says, “Take my yoke and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your **souls!**” This makes it clear that the part of us which is heavy-laden is the soul. That is where we need rest. Jesus continues by saying, “for my yoke is easy and my burden is light!”

A yoke is an instrument which binds one to another in such a way that it compels him to travel in the same direction as that other person. It is not just cows on which a yoke is put. In the wicked days of slavery, when slaves were being transported they often led them in a line and put a yoke around their necks so that no slave could get out of line. Each one had to follow where the one in front of him led. This is the main reason for a yoke, its main purpose is to bind one person to another so that where one goes the other must follow. Jesus says, “you are working hard and you are carrying a heavy load, what you must do is to take my yoke, bind yourself to me because the yoke I give you to wear is easy and the burden is light and if you take it you will find rest for your souls.”

In Isaiah 11:10 it says,

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. (Isa 11:10)

His rest shall be what? GLORIOUS! The one who comes from the root of Jesse will give rest to his people and that rest will be glorious.

The Obstacle to Rest

Now let us turn to the book of Hebrews and see what it says concerning this rest which Christ gives.

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear

his voice, (8) Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: (9) When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. (10) Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. (11) So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) (Heb 3:7-11)

God said the Jews could not enter into His rest. That experience of rest which Jesus promised was not attained by them because their hearts were hardened.

Further on it says in chapter 4:1-3,

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. (2) For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. (3) For we which have believed do enter into rest . . . (Heb 4:1-3)

Now what are some of the things that can stop us from coming into that rest which Jesus promised? It is evident that one of the problems is unbelief. But I would like to suggest to you that another serious hindrance (which is really linked to unbelief) is **LABOUR!!** If we are working how can we rest? Struggling in labour, to do things ourselves will certainly prevent us from experiencing that rest which Christ promised and we will see in just a moment that the greatest reason for unbelief is this labour.

In verses 9-10 it says,

(Heb 4:9-10) There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (10) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

Those who are doing their own works cannot have God's rest. The one who has entered God's rest has ceased from **his own works**. It does not mean that works will not appear in you, but you certainly will not be the one who is working. Somebody else is going to be working in you to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13). You wont be working and that is why the burden is lifted off your back, that is why the yoke is easy, because it is not your problem anymore. Somebody else is dealing with that problem and that is the reason why you are able to rest.

The Struggle Ended

In the J.B. Phillips translation of the New Testament, Romans 10:4 reads as follows:

“For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him.” (Romans 10:4 - Phillips)

Hallelujah! Christ is the end of the struggle for righteousness by the law. When you have come to Christ the struggle is over, Christ brings it to an end.

Now it is interesting that Hebrews 4:11 says that we should **labour** to enter into God’s rest. Is there a contradiction here? How do we labour if we are resting? How do we work so that we may not work? It is evident that the word “labour” as used here means, “be diligent,” “seek earnestly,” because one of the things that the Bible does say is that he who seeks will find. But there is a difference between seeking the right way and seeking in the wrong way. In labouring here, what is it that we are seeking to do? In this case, we are “labouring,” we are seeking to find Christ, whereas before, we were labouring to do good, a different thing entirely. Fighting to do good, is labouring to be righteous by our own works - a vain effort. But fighting to find Christ is what all of us must do because when we have found Him we have found wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, eternal life, the fullness of the Godhead, perfection, - all that we need.

So in one stroke we have everything we have been working for and couldn’t have, Christ is the end of the struggle for righteousness by the law.”

By Faith Only

In Galatians chapter 3 Paul writes,

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (2) This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal 3:1-2)

What is Paul saying? The fact is that these people were filled with the spirit, isn’t that right? Paul was saying, “how did you get the holy spirit, was it by keeping the law or was it by believing?” What is the obvious answer? Evidently it

was by believing, it was not by anything they did. He says “you silly people, how did you receive the Holy Spirit?” And that is the question I want to ask us all. How do we expect to receive the Holy Spirit? Is it by gradually becoming better, by fasting and praying and similar works for days and weeks and months and years, or simply by faith? How do we expect to receive it?

Again he says in verse 3,

“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

When he says “the flesh” what is he referring to? He is referring to works! He is saying, “you began by faith, why have you gone back to works?”

In verse 5 he goes on to say,

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?”

How does a man perform miracles? Many times we have heard the arguments: “Well we don’t see anybody raising the dead, we don’t see anybody healing the sick, we don’t see anybody prophesying, what is the reason? Is it that we are not righteous enough, we are not holy enough, nobody is dedicated enough?” Paul says, “you foolish people, don’t you know it was just by faith that these things were done? It was not by any work on your part, it was just by faith, you silly people!” And two thousand years later we are still facing the same difficulty! Striving to become righteous enough so that we can one day perform a miracle, so that God can use us.

But the wonderful truth is that through faith we have already reached the pinnacle of human existence in Christ Jesus! What a privilege God has given to His sons and daughters, what a wonderful thing it is to know that we are complete in him.

Epilogue

The good news can never be fully told in one single book. As one songwriter puts it:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of
parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe
by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched
from sky to sky.*

Yes, it is true, when we have done our best to tell the wonderful story, there are still a thousand more aspects of it that we have not touched. Every day we are learning more of the depths and the heights of the love of God. If we should attempt to write a book that tells it all, then such a book would never be finished. But here we have attempted to touch on some of the highlights of the great plan of salvation; here we have endeavoured to show glimpses of the love of God and of the greatness of the gift which He has given in His Son. It is our hope that as you have read, God has become more real to you and also more attractive. It is our prayer that some of the misconceptions about God which have caused people to be afraid of Him have been removed and that a desire to know and to serve Him with all your heart has been awakened in you.

Have you come to understand how much God loves you? Have you come to appreciate the truth that in Jesus Christ God has fully reconciled you to Himself? Have you realized that in Jesus you are already entitled to every blessing which God has to give? Do you know the truth that your sins and failings are no longer an obstacle between you and God? Do you recognize the truth that in Christ, you have

the power and the motivation to overcome all sin and to live a life of purity and power? If in the reading of this book you have come to recognize these truths, then this book has served its purpose. From now on, you will never again live as a normal person. In Christ, you are a child of God and the normal life is not for you anymore. You have seen the glory of God and the world will never again have any appeal to you.

May the blessings which are yours in Christ flow from you to bless the world as you live the truths which you have learned in this book.

