

FOUNDATION TRUTH

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Ezekiel 43:10-12

Dear Reader

A young Jew named Jonathan begins to hear about and see Jesus, and has many mixed feelings about him. He has a disturbing encounter where Jesus looks into his eyes, and he feels his great sinfulness and unworthiness before God, and determines to avoid Jesus from then on. But then he has a further discussion with Nathanael, one of Jesus' disciples. After a brief pause:

Jonathan said, "I wish I had that which he has!"

"The power to heal?"

"No, no! To rid myself of that nagging unrest within me. That which no ceremonial cleansing, no offering of sacrifice seems to relieve. I desire his peace!"

"Seek then, as he does, to do the will of God."

"How can man know the will of the Holy One?" asked Jonathan derisively. But as he looked at Nathanael's plain face, now a-shine with a light which reminded him of the Nazarene, he lost his scorn.

"You can listen to the teaching of the rabbi," said Nathanael. "He knows the will of God."

"I will!" said Jonathan with sudden decision. "I go soon into Galilee to pay my uncle's tribute to Rome."

—*Behold Your King*, by Florence Bauer

Jonathan's decision leads him in the end to the desire of his heart. Oh, how much we all need to say, "I will!" with decision in our hearts to every call of the Spirit of God.

Listen to the young man who has wasted his life in rebellion and riotous living and is now in abject poverty: "***I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.***" ^{Lk. 15:18}

Hear the disobedient son change his answer to "I will" in repentance: "***But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.***" ^{Mt. 21:28-29}

Look at Simon Peter and Andrew say "I will" with their feet: "***And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.***" ^{Mt. 4:19-20}

Listen to our Savior's "I will" to the heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: "***And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.***" ^{Mk. 14:36}

Observe Paul, stirred by God's mercies and love to him, say "I will" to the call to love as God loves: "***And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.***" ^{2 Cor. 12:15}

See the blessing that comes as two men say "I will" to the light God shines on their path: "***And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.***" ^{Acts 10:28-33}

Oh, let us say "I will" to the Lord!

Love and prayers,
The Editor



About Us

We want to be of assistance to those who desire to live for God and make heaven their home, and we want to work with the Holy Spirit in stirring and awakening all others to the great necessity of doing so.

Foundation Truth is meant to be of general interest, but different articles may be of particular interest to different members of the family (which we attempt to indicate in the table of contents), but we look to the Lord for direction on what to include, and the structure may vary from issue to issue.

We publish *Foundation Truth* by faith, its only support being free-will offerings that God lays on the hearts of His children to keep this ministry supplied. If the Lord lays it on your heart to contribute, please make out any checks or money orders to Richard Erickson—we have difficulty depositing any monies made out to *Foundation Truth*.

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TIMELESS TRUTHS PUBLICATIONS was founded with the purpose of spreading the timeless truths revealed in God's Word. We publish literature that encourages folks in walking the straight and narrow road that leads to heaven. Our chief corner-stone is Jesus, and with our focus on Him, we try to avoid putting too much attention on any person or persons. If you are interested in knowing more about us and what we believe, feel free to contact us.

In addition to *Foundation Truth*, we also publish *Treasures of the Kingdom*, "Casting Up a Highway for the Children of This Generation"—a quarterly magazine for children ages five to ten.

Back issues of our periodicals, including the former *Dear Princess* magazine, are available at our website, timelesstruths.org, as well as a growing collection of hymn sheet music and online books, tracts, articles and sermons.

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edited by Rick Erickson and others

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THE WORD OF TRUTH

*Study to show thyself approved to God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth. - 2 Tim. 2:15*

Natural Flesh vs. Depravity

Dear Brother,

"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." ^{1 Jn. 3:20} I marvel at just how much greater He is than the best our heart can be and can do. He knows what He can do for us, what is best for us, and how to help us to understand His will for us.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." ^{Ps. 139:14} I take great courage from this last statement of David. God is able to make us know "right well" the fearfulness and wonderfulness of our makeup and the marvelousness of the works of God. We are a confusion to ourselves quite often, but this confusion is cleared in "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" ^{Rom. 1:16-17} in the gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Truly He is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. See also 2 Cor. 2:10 and Phil. 3:15.

When we are unsaved and in rebellion against God, our entire self (body and soul) is in a state of war against our Creator. When we surrender ourselves to God by His assistance, we abandon the war

against Him and are at peace with God, and we stop the sinning business. We want to please Him and do what is right. As we endeavor to carry out our implanted motive to love Him and do what is right, we become aware of a need within us to be purified in the motives of our heart. Our love for our Lord is not completely pure, and He shows us what to do about our newly-discovered problem. When we have been led by the Holy Ghost to the cleansing fountain again for the washing away of this different kind of sin and the work is done, we find that the motives of our heart are now pure, but now we become aware of a new kind of battle yet again. This is the other kind of life that all possess who live in the flesh, for man is twofold (body and spirit) and the natural flesh has its own life and desires.

When we were unsaved, the desires of the soul were in harmony with the natural desires (lusts) of the flesh, and we fulfilled them naturally. When we are first pardoned, cleansed of our transgressions, and justified by the blood of Jesus, then we want to do what is right, and we resist the body and the little-by-little discovered treachery of something in the soul that is (still) in sympathy with the body's wants.

When we are purified from that inherited disposition, then the entire soul is all out for God, but the body remains corruptible and earthly.

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." ^{1 Cor. 9:27}

This is the testimony of Brother Paul, and it is the testimony of our Lord, as well, when He was in the body. The Master says that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," ^{Mt. 26:41} but He kept His body under while down here in the flesh. The body of Jesus hungered for the things that all bodies desire (food, rest, relaxation, learning, sexual needs, etc.), but He controlled it. All was subjected to the law of God. The body was kept under. **Its desires were not changed; they were subjected.**

The entire scheme of things is brought out in Philippians 3. In verses 3-7, Paul speaks of his life in sin away from God. He describes it as "trusting in the flesh." He describes his religious efforts while trusting in the flesh at that time, but in verse 7, he speaks of a great change. The old life was "gain to me [and] loss for Christ," but the new life is loss of the old life and gain to Christ. In verses 8-11, he describes the completeness of full salvation as his current status. He is all out for Jesus. But he has hope of something better yet than his sanctified experience. What is it? "The resurrection of the dead." ^{vs. 11} What happens then? "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." ^{1 Cor. 15:53} "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." ^{vs. 50} At the resurrection, this body is changed. Yes, this vile body (in the sense that it has a life of its own that is not according to the life of God written in the soul) will be changed (Phil. 3:21).

We see then that there is a change for the believer beyond the justification and sanctification of the soul. It is the change of his vile body. The Lord Jesus has already had this change in His body. It took place at His resurrection. His body died down here, but it was resurrected in power. The corruptible has been made incorruptible.

The body of Jesus hungered for the things that all bodies desire, but He controlled it. All was subjected to the law of God. The body was kept under. Its desires were not changed; they were subjected.

There is now no battle to keep it under in the Lord Jesus. The glorified body is in complete harmony with the purity of the heart after the resurrection. And of this resurrection (change of the body), our Lord is the first fruits. So Paul states, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* Phil. 3:13-14

We see then that Paul regarded the resurrection as *“the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* And he pressed toward that mark by keeping his body under and in subjection to the clarity of vision of his saved and sanctified soul. When he attained that mark for the prize, his conflict with his body would cease, and all his being would be in harmony with itself and with God. Then he goes on to state, *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”* Phil. 3:15-16 The wording is very instructive. He was already “perfect” in soul. Others were too. *“As many as be perfect.”* And, in the battle over the natural flesh (the body) to keep clear and live the life of an overcomer, he speaks of God’s assistance: *“God shall reveal even this unto you.”* What is revealed? *“If in anything ye be otherwise minded.”* Anything that the body would think or desire in the mind that is contrary to the light of God in the soul. Yea, *“casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”* 2 Cor. 10:5

There is a perfection to be lived and used right now, even the perfection of motive in the human heart, and there is a perfection (of the body) to come at the resurrection.

This framework of understanding provides a foundation to answer your questions.

How do we keep the body under? Many times, things just crop up in my mind and before I catch myself and stop the thing going on, I have already gone some ways thinking the thoughts.

Replay: I will paraphrase. “I am riding my horse in the direction I want to go, but he has his own mind about things. While I am distracted, he manifests his own separate life from mine by (1) eating grass by the road instead of traveling as I directed; (2) actually starting to turn around and head where he wants to go.” Now you can see that you are in control, but it may take a moment or longer for you to realize that your control is challenged, and that you must exert yourself to **stay in control**.

Now here is the question. Did the motive of your own human self on the horse become the same as the horse’s motive?

No. You just realized that his had deviated from yours. What is in your mind? It is shown by what you do **when** you realize it. The horse represents our body. It has its own life. It will not be changed until the resurrection. But we are riding on our horse, not the other way around, and the wonderful grace and mercy of God has transformed our souls and assists us so that we can be overcomers over our body. It is not wrong for the horse to be a horse. But he cannot be allowed to do as he wishes to do. It is not wrong for the body to be the body. It simply cannot be allowed to reign.

The prospect of income naturally brings with it the prospect of how to use it. Here is an example from *Highways and Hedges* about the experience of some who were trusting the Lord:

One morning, looking over the incoming mail, they found a check for one thousand dollars. The amount was so unusual that they read the figures over and over to make sure they did not make a mistake. But the check was genuine, and the two American girls who had come to India on the return from her trip home were joyful and at once began to plan several much-needed improvements.

But the missionary stopped their planning. She said to them, “God does not send money to a mission field just for nothing. There is a special need for this amount,

or it would never have been sent. We dare not spend one dollar of it until God speaks. We will lay it aside until we hear definitely from God as to its use.”

The story goes on to tell that a great hurricane swept over the mission soon afterwards, and the money was needed for the repairs, almost to the penny. But I want to draw your attention to the ascendancy of the soul over the natural imagination of the body. You wrote, “So these days, I find myself praying, even though I know the Bible teaches some things, until the Lord ‘illuminates’ the scripture in my heart to such an extent that I am sure He wills me to do the action of love.” Compare the

*But we are riding on our horse,
not the other way around,
and the wonderful grace and
mercy of God has transformed
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can be overcomers over our body.*

words of the missionary: “We dare not spend one dollar of it until God speaks.” Both of you were waiting for guidance.

The natural mind will presume to understand how to do. It will look logical and compelling. I expect that the seven that served tables in Acts 6 had very great need to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Their actions and lack of actions with the needy caused murmuring among those who were not filled with the Holy Ghost. And to these others looking on, who were not filled with the Holy Ghost, Stephen and the other brethren seemed arbitrary and unworthy of esteem. Just as Jesus appeared to most around Him (Is. 53). You had better keep waiting and praying until the Lord illuminates you, dear brother. Trust Him to direct when to give and to direct you when not to give.

Now as to “why would the Holy Ghost [not] just take over and keep the thoughts running for the glory of God,” we choose again the sweet will of God each time that the trial is permitted. It is an “*if need be*” that God designs to do us good. It is a

choosing beyond the lips. It is respect for and delight in our free-will choice of Him that restrains the Holy Ghost from just taking over, yet leaves perfect room for Him to interfere if we are outmatched or overwhelmed. Brother, it is measured out! We can make it all the way to heaven and live right because God measures it out.

At this point, a crucial question arises. What is the difference between the natural self-life of man and the inherited depravity? The difficulty of distinguishing the two can be seen when looking at two different kinds of individuals. Consider a man who is naturally of a restrained, careful nature compared with his opposite—an easily excitable, mercurial, and highly-strung man. To consider to a further degree the complications that exist in such a comparison, let us think of the second person as a woman, while the first is a man. The one common factor is this: the natural temperament **can be subjected** to the law of God, whereas the depravity **cannot be**. “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” Rom. 8:7 You will notice that the following verse refers to this condition (cannot be subject) as being “*in the flesh.*” If this referred to the natural flesh, no one (including Jesus, when He was in the flesh) pleases the Lord while living in this world, but the next verse tells the saints at Rome, “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*” vs. 9 Since they were still in the body, it is evident that there is a condition while in the (natural) flesh where we are **not** in the flesh (carnality, depravity, inherited sin).

It is plain that depravity camouflages itself as a natural trait. It is extremely difficult to detect the difference between an unsanctified man and a sanctified man who is having difficulty bringing his body into subjection until one gets a look at the hidden motives of the heart. One is experiencing imperfection in the motives of the soul, while the other has a perfect love for God and His ways, but is laboring to be an overcomer. Here is the same comparison with a foregone conclusion: Jesus, praying in the garden of Gethsemane. “*Let this cup*

pass from me.” Mt. 26:39 “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” Mt. 26:41 Is this the prayer of a person troubled by a lack of consecration? An unwillingness to suffer to carry out the will of God? No, absolutely not. Why the struggle? Our Lord’s love is perfect. He tells us: “*The [natural] flesh is weak.*” But His heart is pure, and He perseveres and overcomes. It does not come easily, although He is perfect in spirit. **The struggle is not evidence that something is wrong in His heart.** So, again, why the struggle? Because at that time, the Lord Jesus was in the same position as Paul.

*The pure in heart see God
and our great need of Him as
never before. Man at his best
is only vanity. He has not the
ability to direct his steps.*

“*Not as though I had already attained [unto the resurrection of the dead], either were already perfect.*” Phil. 3:12 After the resurrection, we find no evidence of struggle with the flesh, for the flesh was perfected. In other words, Jesus, with a perfect heart, conquered an imperfect body, to carry out the will of God; and this is an accurate and informative picture of what it means to live saved and sanctified, just as our Lord did. Yes, to say over and over in different battles, against the strong desire of the natural, “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” Lk. 22:42 And to continue in this victorious way of life until our vile body is changed, even as our Lord’s body was changed.

“Well,” you might say, “what if I don’t detect the difference between the flesh (depravity) and the flesh (natural)? How can I know whether I am sanctified in heart or having horrendous battles with my natural?” Answer: “*And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*” Phil. 3:15 That is our only hope. This is too much for us, otherwise. God has obligated Himself to reveal even this to you and to me. How does He do it? “*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 Please note that this is the Word of God **in the hands of the Spirit of God**. You will not get this result by trying and prying on your own. But the Spirit of God is capable of portraying sin as sin, both actual sin and inherited sin. And He is just as capable of portraying weakness as weakness, fleshly imperfection in the natural life of the body for what it is. Furthermore, the same precious Comforter is quite capable of bringing the justified man to the point of recognizing carnality in himself, leading him to the consecration necessary to have faith in the cleansing blood of Christ, and actually purifying his soul. And this same Comforter is just as capable of helping the man stay pure in heart and overcome his natural flesh over and over again, until it may be said that this man, by the power of God, **reigns** in this life.

We see then that Romans 12:2 applies in both ways. It applies to the transforming of the soul when a person is wholly sanctified. And it applies in the process of living a life from a pure heart, which produces a steadily growing transformation of a life in which the soul dominates the body. The renewing of your mind applies to both, as well. In a justified (pardoned, forgiven) life, the implanted nature of Christ wars with the depravity of the soul. It becomes clear to the believer that something is wrong, fundamentally wrong in him, even while he knows that God has put in him a strong desire to love things that are right and to always do what is right. There is something within that is not in agreement with the implanted nature of Christ. He is of two minds (Jas. 1:8), and in his consequent instability, has to labor hard to keep a clear conscience. It is much harder to live right than it should be. He gets grace from God to live free from condemnation (the renewing of his mind), and this proves what is good, acceptable, and perfect, the will of God for a righteous man; but the renewal does not work as efficiently as it should because something in him is against his desire to live right. How faithful is the

Spirit of God to reveal this to us! How He endeavors to lead each child of God, step by step, through the wilderness to the land of promise. There are battles to fight there, too. There is a constant renewal of this same mind (the very mind of Christ given to us) to win those battles with the natural flesh and attacks from without. Romans 12:3 is the standard of a sanctified life, and it is the standard lifted by the Holy Ghost before the eyes of the justified. God has an experience for you like Brother Paul had, who wrote, "*For I say, through the grace given unto me.*" That grace enabled him to not think of himself more highly than he ought to think. What precious victory is this! Here is the practical result of the wonderful workings of the Spirit of God. It produces a measure of faith that is superior to that obtainable in justification (precious as that is), and the end result is that the saved and sanctified person **thinks soberly—realistically**. This is of infinite value in the battle to control and subjugate the body. It will cause you to wait on the Lord. It will teach you to distrust your own thinking. It will destroy the basis of fleshly assumption and presumption. You will be transformed from a man on his own to a man under the leading and control of the Holy Ghost. And all this will be accomplished without making you into a puppet. You will walk with the Lord as a free-will agent under control because you choose to love Him voluntarily. And in this the Lord takes great delight. Such a man's life "*prove[s] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"^{Rom. 12:2} Such a man lives as Jesus did while He was in the body. He follows in His steps.

How is this transforming to be done?

Reply: By the eradication of carnality in the soul. "*By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"^{Heb. 10:10} Then: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*"^{Gal. 2:20} The first answer is a transformation "*once for all*" that lays the foundation for a life of transformation as

the natural flesh is held in subjection and become steadily more subjugated as the mind is steadily and increasingly renewed. "*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*"^{2 Cor. 4:16} Here is a picture of "*the abundant grace*"^{vs. 15} life in action. It produces a steadily-increasing spiritual vision (vs. 18; 5:1-8). "*Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident.*"^{2 Cor. 5:5-6} Praise God! The pure in heart see God. They *know* all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28).

"Welcome the storms,
my hope is abounding;
Let the waves come, my anchor is sure;
Fixed in the Rock
on which I am standing,
How can I fall when all is secure?"

What is our personal part in this transformation?

Reply:

"But Thou art making me, I thank Thee, Sire.
What Thou hast done and doest
Thou know'st well,
And I will help Thee: gently in Thy fire
I will lie burning; on Thy potter's-wheel
I will whirl patient,
though my brain should reel;
Thy grace shall be enough the grief to quell,
And growing strength perfect
through weakness dire.

"I have not knowledge,
wisdom, insight, thought,
Nor understanding, fit to justify
Thee in Thy work, O Perfect.
Thou hast brought
Me up to this—and, lo!
what Thou hast wrought,
I cannot call it good. But I can cry—
'O enemy, the Maker hath not done;
One day thou shalt behold,
and from the sight wilt run.'

* * *

"Thou workest perfectly. And if it seem
Some things are not so well, 'tis but because
They are too loving-deep, too lofty-wise,
For me, poor child, to understand their laws:
My highest wisdom half is but a dream;
My love runs helpless like a falling stream:
Thy good embraces ill, and lo! its illness dies!"

It is our privilege to cooperate with the Spirit of God, to let Him have His way.

"I can see far down the mountain,
Where I wandered weary years,
Often hindered in my journey
By the ghosts of doubts and fears;
Broken vows and disappointments
Thickly sprinkled all the way,
But the Spirit led, unerring,
To the land I hold today."

How different should I be in my feelings from other people after this transformation?

Reply:

The overall effect is that one sees the need of God in the human heart as never before. A great turning away from human gifts and abilities. A great burden that all would enter in rest and cease from their own labors as the Lord has caused you to cease from yours. The pure in heart see God and our great need of Him as never before. Man at his best is only vanity (Ps. 39:5). He has not the ability to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23). "*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*"^{Phil. 3:3}

I also feel burdened to address a certain aspect of walking with the Lord that you did not ask about. That is what happens when a sanctified person loses ground or goes backward. The picture is perfectly portrayed in the experience of Eve, at a time when she had never known sin, had a pure heart, and walked and talked with God each day.

Eve had a human body with a life of its own. This scripture was true of her: "*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.*"^{Rom. 8:20} Both she and Adam had bodies; therefore they could be and were tempted. The source of temptation appealed to Eve through the natural life of the body, and it spoke of wisdom, nutrition, and eye-appeal. We are not told how long the temptation ran its course, nor the details of how Eve struggled with it. We are not told of whether she asked God about this matter, received light, but went on over it; or whether she simply

chose to abide without His counsel. One thing is certain: if she had asked Him about this matter, God would have helped her. Eve did not have to sin. But we are told that she sinned. So did Adam. And in the heart of each, when they sinned, something horrible happened. They died to God, instantly. Just as dreadfully and solemnly as people die physically; so they did spiritually. A great barrier stood between them and God. The purity of heart was gone. Not only was there transgression—their transgression—but the very moral nature of the soul was warped and twisted by the acquired sin, and a sentence, a curse of death lived within them, in their very souls. It was inescapable in their offspring. The very enticement of wisdom that had drawn her from God, with hopes of her own devising for her future little ones, was revealed to be a horrible heritage. She and her husband would pass on a defiled, depraved nature (*“the nature of wrath”*) to each of their offspring. It was a sentence of death.

And thus we see that actual sin wrecks the moral nature of a human heart, if that moral nature is pure and holy. Just as a Styrofoam object shrivels and warps when it is touched by the fire, so the moral nature of man becomes perverted when it rebels against God. When the little boy thought that the ice cream was for his sister, he said, “Not so much, Grandma, not so much!” But when told that it was for him, he replied, “My, my, such a little bit!” His sense of rightness was all distorted in favor of self. And a person who has been washed and purified so that he is like the Master (1 Jn. 3:3) is once again defiled, perverted, and distorted in the moral nature of his soul if he rebels again against God. To sin again is to need to be forgiven of the transgression and the stain of it and also to be purified again of the depraved nature.

But what if the pure in heart does not go back to sin? What if he manages to avoid transgression, but his love has grown colder to the extent that he is lukewarm and he uses his liberty as an occasion to give the (natural) flesh too much room in his life? He is in great danger of actual sin, of course. He has gone back on his consecration, perhaps without fully realizing it. This almost-dead condition is described in the Bible. “A

bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” Mt. 12:20 Although bruised, the reed is not dead; although not flaming, the smoking flax has not lost all that it had; there is still smoke. God gives it some time for recovery. “*And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”* Lk. 13:8-9 If the person did not rebel; if their repentance was not of rebellion, but that simply their blessing “leaked” away, then the moral texture of the soul may be untouched, and the Spirit of God will not lead them to start all over again from the beginning. Only God knows the heart well enough to say what all happened in there, and He does know, and He is faithful. If you claim more than you actually have, the fruit will prove you wrong. If you claim to still have a pure heart, your claim will be validated or invalidated by the fruit of your life.

A great deal of confusion and accusation is experienced by careful and conscientious people who believe that listening to the voice of the body and giving room to the desires of the natural flesh mean a betrayal of their consecration. In other words, to be human and relax as a human, is thought to be sin, or at least as not as consecrated as one should be. But to be a human being is not sin, nor is it true spirituality to live with our humanity so suppressed that we can scarcely be human. We find that Jesus sought a little leisure to eat (Mk. 6:31). We find such commandments as these, “*Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.*” Ec. 9:9 “*Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*” 1 Cor. 7:5

God does not sanctify us to make us super-human or unhuman. He sanctifies us to live sanctified human lives. “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*” Gal. 5:13 This is very plain. I have liberty to be a saved, sancti-

fied human being, but there is reason to be careful. If I allow the body to master the soul, I will use my liberty as an occasion to the flesh. This will bring leanness to my soul. The veil of the (natural) flesh will be thicker. My spiritual vision will be hindered. It can even bring me to sin (rebellion). Then I will have to start over, repent, and do the first works.

The Word and The Spirit

Do we just “mechanically” obey the Scriptures?

In the past, we have just been going on the preaching missions as a team. Mostly we felt we were obeying Mt. 28:19-20: “*Go ye....*” But these days, I personally have slowed down and pray until I am very sure the Lord wants me to go. My question is, shouldn’t we just obey the scriptures—just mechanically—and leave the rest to the Lord? Is it wrong to pray and wait on the Lord until one is sure He intends for us to do the thing? Please, do not treat this question lightly as it seems to be the greatest cause of many problems here.

Reply:

In Mark 16:15 we read, “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” In Acts 16:7 we read, “*After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.*” This pretty well answers the thought of just mechanically obeying the scriptures. That idea is built on the thought that Jesus is happy with us just being busy for Him, and that pinpoint direction is not necessary. But this assumption is not borne out by the scripture record.

There are two witnesses, the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The voices of both are absolutely vital to a successful Christian life. Successful, in this case, would be a life that pleases God. The Spirit to interpret the Word, both in direction and in timing. The Word to interpret the Spirit, so as to avoid mere zealotry and enthusiasm engendered by emotional excitement. In Zechariah 4, we read of these two witnesses as living olive trees, connected by golden pipes to a golden

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candlestick. Oil from the two trees flows continually into the candlestick, enabling it to burn and give light. The candlestick represents the church of God, and also each member of the church. The light of regeneration burning in our hearts, individually and collectively, is caused by the inflow of the living Word of God and the living Spirit of God. Now, if I get too much of the Word and not enough of the Spirit, I will become a religious fanatic, ritualistically and mechanically grinding through the commandments of the Word of God as interpreted by my own mind and the spirit that influences me. On the other hand, if I get too much of the Spirit of God and not enough of the Word, I will become a religious zealot, ignoring clear commandments in favor of strong feelings and "leadings." One person I knew under the influence of this latter condition stated that "we shouldn't pay much attention to what the Word of God says; it was how the 'Spirit' led that mattered." This is obviously terribly lopsided. But God knows how to balance the inflow of the Word and the Spirit into the heart of every person.

It is a bad mistake to pray to be "illuminated" about things that I already understand, such as whether or not I should steal. I don't need light from God on this point; I already have it. My "quest" for light is really a wrestling of the scriptures at this point and opens me to a deception. One woman who went down this path began to be "convicted" that the scripture stating that "all things are yours" meant that she had a right to take what didn't belong to her. It was a deception, of course.

But on other points, such as just where I am to labor in preaching the gospel, or where the Lord would have me give out His money as a good steward, I need specific direction very much to obey the Word of God. This is why the seven brethren who waited on tables for the widows in Acts 6 needed to be filled with the Holy Ghost. They did not just mechanically divide up what had come in. They prayed for specific guidance, not only in how much and to whom, but also who should be denied

and why. I am certain that as they got it right, it fitted precisely with the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all, both in the folks they helped and in the folks they **did not** help.

It is the will of God, generally speaking, that the gospel be preached everywhere. But the timing of each particular effort may vary considerably. **At times**, God doesn't want the gospel preached to certain people in certain places. It just isn't the right time. God wanted folks to believe in Jesus from the very beginning of human history (and even before the fall of man), but He **waited** until the fullness of time to send His Son into the world (Eph. 1:10). "Is it wrong to pray and wait on the Lord until one is sure He intends for us to do the thing?" Hear the Word of God: "*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*" ^{Is. 40:31}

There is something about this waiting on God that destroys fleshly confidence. I have sat through many meetings where a message from the Lord burned in my heart from the time I first arrived (and sometimes well before I arrived), while the Lord used other vessels and kept me waiting. Sometimes the burden was so great that it hardly seemed bearable to refrain from delivering the message on my heart. Occasionally I took a message home, but usually God opened a way for that message later in the meeting. Then I noticed something. The waiting had put something in the message and taken something out. It whittled it down. Less of my enthusiasm and more anointing. More humility. Eyes less on the people and more on God. For some years now, I preach weekly without this waiting for opportunity to deliver, but I find that the . . . waiting . . . to get to this point has put something in there that would not be there otherwise. I tell you, brother, God knows how. He knows how to strip us down; He knows how to load us up. We need our steps ordered (Ps. 37:23) by Him who knows what He is doing with us humans.

God knows when we should do something... and do something... and do something... over and over, until we feel we are mechanical. Sometimes we need that, especially if we are troubled with wild enthusiasms and are inclined to bursts of emotion and want to rush off on wild tangents.

We can only do the work of God as He supplies, and I am satisfied that He has designed that the poor are always with us. We can give all our goods to feed the poor without giving much spiritual benefit to them or us if we are not in God's order. We can also suffer great spiritual loss if we **do not** give all our goods to feed the poor if that is the will of God for us (Lk. 18:22-25). Here is the reconciling point: "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*" ^{Eph. 5:17} We **must** pray and wait until we understand what the will of the Lord is. "*As we have therefore opportunity [as interpreted by the Spirit of God], let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" ^{Gal. 6:10} What may look like an opportunity to us may not be God's opportunity for us.

Church Government

How should services be ordered?

It is now my understanding that we were ministering wrongly in the past. Our services would have a person to guard the pulpit. It was usually the "chairman" or "the Pastor" in charge of the congregation, or a song leader or someone. We just would not let the pulpit be occupied by anybody without the sanction of the one chairing the congregational meeting.

But I still need more explanations as to how a congregational meeting should be handled. When the saints get in, do they just sit and wait for whoever is led of God to get to the pulpit? Is there any room for the pastor as such to lead the services? Is there anyone to stand and call a song leader to come up to the rostrum? Or for testimonies, or for special songs or for prayer time?

Repl^y: The great issue here is not precisely how the services are conducted, whether anyone leads the songs or who it is that does so, or who the pastor is and precisely how he conducts himself. The issue is where the **trust** is placed of the children of God that are assembled. The entire concept of things in sectism is based on an **absent** Christ. It then follows that men must do the best they can to please Him in His **absence**. But here, in this scripture, is something else: *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them.**”* Mt. 18:20 To those who live by faith in the ever-present, invisible presence of Jesus, it is as natural as breathing to come to services looking at and trusting in Him who is not seen.

Now this is the indispensable foundation for an acceptable (to God) meeting of God’s little children. And in this effort, the weak faith of some should be bolstered by the strong faith by others in the present, invisible Head. We beg the Lord to manifest His presence in our services, especially to all of us who walk with Him. We confess our inability to feed ourselves. We openly admit that we are but rough, ugly, earthly vessels, and that only God

Our prayers are answered. God graciously visits us as a group, and He is recognizable because of those who walk with Him (and thus recognize Him) individually. When any participation is made by any who are not known to the group, the immediate question in the mind of those who do know each other is, “What does the Head think?” Or as it is more commonly phrased in my mind, “Is this right? Does it proceed from a life taught of God?” Sometimes the answer to this question is “no,” and the matter is suffered as the saints reach out in faith to God to discern how Jesus feels in terms of forbearing or resistance. Quite often it is borne. But I have this confidence in the saints here that they would obey God to the extent of leaving the room or singing someone down or openly questioning or praying in contradistinction to respond to the thing that is not of God if the Lord so led. They would do this if the ministry was present or if they were not.

But the great question is, “What does Jesus think? What does Jesus want us to do?” Here, again, we want, with all our heart, to understand and do what the will of God is. We are not guided by custom or just human courtesy. We must know the will of our Leader. We must do it. We want Him to be pleased.

“Is there any room for the pastor as such to lead the services?” If the pastor is called of God to pastor that work, he/she has a place, given of God. A brother

called the young ministers of a congregation together. “The morning service is my time,” he said (he was speaking generally; there can be exceptions), “but for the evening service, I want you to look to God and pray about who should deliver the message. I don’t want to see any running for the pulpit. Pray that the Lord will have His way.” This congregation was very spiritually-minded and the blessing of the Lord rested upon it in a very definite way.

Without knowing all this, I visited this place as a young minister. I was on my way to the Northwest with a car full of tracts and this congregation was in the first major

city on my way. I arrived in town in the evening during the week and put out some tracts in local shopping centers, etc., finally making my way to the pastor’s home. We ate supper together. Then he looked at me in a peculiar way. I know now that it was the Spirit of God talking to Him. He said, “Let’s have meeting tonight.” It was about 8:00 or 8:30 in the evening. He began to call around, and they in turn called others. I went to a room to pray. The Lord gave me a message.

Sometime after 9:00, we assembled at the chapel for services. I had never been there before. The chapel was huge. The people poured in. The brother told me that because of the lateness of the hour and the suddenness of the thing, many were not able to come, but it looked like a multitude to me. A great anointing rested on the singing. At preaching time, a great liberty rested on me. An altar service followed. People got saved. The whole thing was incredibly uplifting. I went on my way the next day so encouraged and blessed. I don’t doubt that was the experience of many there, as well. The reason for all this, of course, was Jesus was there in that assembly. He was expected; He was honored and held in reverence. As soon as the pastor understood what He wanted, then he acted. That was the way that the pastor did all the time.

If we get this inside adjustment that sees Him present and looks to Him in everything, then all else will fall into place. With some saints, the inside adjustment has already taken place in how they live their lives, so all they need is a little pointing to Jesus, and this freedom in meeting is simply an extension of their lives. Others do not understand that the focus is on Jesus in their individual lives, so they need help there before they can trust Him as they should in services. Some are much hindered and need to die to themselves and a general disposition to see and depend on something other than God. Those who are dead to self and alive to God need to earnestly contend for the faith delivered to the saints, praying that the others will catch fire, looking the problem squarely in the face, and relying on the ever-present Lord to lead in the battle. God forbid that we settle for anything else than what Jesus has bought and paid for! ➡

If we get this inside adjustment that sees Him present and looks to Him in everything, then all else will fall into place.

can put in anything worthwhile or profitable. We beg Him not to leave us to our own efforts, even efforts of our own in His name. We might say that the saints just get in and **trust** God, and the nature of their trust is manifest in calling on Him and in any exercising (testimonies, preaching, praying, singing, exhortations) **in His name** being done as an oracle of God. No room is given in our own minds and hearts for any exercising outside of this. We are only interested in what is of God as the invisible Head does allow. Thus, the focus is on Him, and any other focus stands out as something different.

A Testimony of — God's Grace to — OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

Dear Friends, Dec. 2006

I went through quite a trial last year when my carpenter walked away from the unfinished job after already being paid for certain aspects. I felt that no one had ever done me such a great injustice in all my life. I was strongly tempted to take legal action against him. But the Lord dealt with my heart in a very personal way and showed me that I needed to just commit the situation to Him. I made my decision to do that and the Lord gave me grace to forgive the man and keep sweet and pure in my soul. Also, the Lord supplied all my financial needs that arose from the situation and worked everything out. God is so good and so wonderful! But the story gets even better!

The apostle Paul said, *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* Rom. 12:19-21

This year I got my chance to experience firsthand just how this scripture works! The carpenter who did me wrong got into some very serious trouble. A year ago this month, he went to jail, where he stayed until this past September. It was over an incident that happened at a bar in June of 2005. He was charged with four counts relative to an alleged rape.

After reading of the charges in a local newspaper, I assumed that the man was probably guilty. I figured he would probably end up going to prison for quite a few years. I had a concern for his soul, but I really didn't feel too sorry for him. I figured he probably deserved it. But I had a desire to go to his trial and hear the testimonies of the witnesses and see what the final verdict would be.

His trial date finally came on Sept. 27-28, 2006. It was a jury trial, held at D——, MO, on change of venue from W——, MO, where he lived. As I look back on it now, I can see that God had His hand in causing the trial date to be set at the time it was. That was the week I was on lay-off, therefore I was able to go. Had it been during a week when I was working, it would not have been possible for me to have attended the trial. I know now that God wanted me there.

I'll never forget the look on J——'s face when he saw me in the courtroom that day. It was like, "Oh no, what now?" But I was looking for an opportunity to speak with him. (I had not spoken to him since he walked away from the job I hired him to do a year before.) I finally got my chance to speak to him in the courtyard as he was standing with his guard during a recess. At first he turned his back to me and seemed to ignore me as I was walking toward him. But I walked right up beside him and said, "Hello, J——!" He then turned to me and returned the "hello." Our conversation was rather strained at first, but at a certain point I told him I wanted him to know that I was praying for him. It was at that point that he let his guard down. He said, "Harlan, I appreciate it. I sure do need it." From that point on, he seemed to appreciate my presence in the courtroom.

The trial lasted two days. There were many, many witnesses called. As I sat and listened to all the testimonies that were given, I began to realize that this man must not really be guilty of all he was being charged with. He had sinned greatly, yes, but I couldn't see how the woman who brought the charges against him could justly say she was raped in

light of what the other witnesses testified that they had observed of her actions that night at the bar.

The jury deliberated less than an hour before returning with their verdict. During this time I noticed that J—— had his head bowed as if he were praying (which I found out later from him that he was). I also bowed my head in prayer and asked the Lord to show him mercy, if it could be His will. Each of the charges they had against J—— carried a minimum of 5 years in prison up to life in prison. His life was resting in the jury's hands.

When the jury returned with their verdict the atmosphere in the courtroom became very tense. As the bailiff carried the verdict from the jury to the judge, I noticed that J—— began trembling and shaking. My heart went out to him. Then the judge began to read the verdict on each count, one by one. It was, "Not guilty. Not guilty. Not guilty. Not guilty." After the very first "not guilty" was read, J—— began to weep uncontrollably. As each "not guilty" was read he began to cry harder. He bent over the table he was sitting at there in that courtroom,

"I don't think I ever saw a man more appreciative of mercy."

and wept and wept and wept. I heard later that one of the jurors said, "When we saw that, we knew we had made the right decision." I don't think I ever saw a man more appreciative of mercy than J—— was that day. It was so heart-touching. I'm a tenderhearted man, and I couldn't sit there and watch all that without shedding tears myself.

After the judge had dismissed the court, I walked forward to shake J——'s hand. I had assumed that when the trial was over, I would go my way, and he would go his way. Little did I know what the Lord had in mind! When I stepped up to J——, he threw his arms around me and I threw

my arms around him and we stood there crying on each other's shoulders. He said, "Thank you, Harlan!" After we withdrew from our embrace we stood there side by side with tears streaming down our faces, not knowing what to say next. Then J—— said, "Harlan, I don't know what to do now. I don't have anything. I lost everything I had." For the first time it dawned on me that this man was totally destitute. He had lost his home in a divorce about a year and a half before. Then, because of his loneliness and broken heart, he got into heavy drinking and bar life, which led to the trouble he got into. Then, while he was in jail, he lost the house he was renting in W——, and his so-called friends came in and took all his personal belongings, his tools, and his truck, and disposed of them as they saw fit. Somehow they falsified the title to his truck, sold it, and kept the money for themselves. (I guess they thought he would be going to prison, so it wouldn't matter anyway.) So poor J—— came out of the ordeal with absolutely nothing left to his name but his jail clothes, and the clothes they bought him for his trial, and a few personal items that were given to him in jail. (If I remember correctly, he said not one person came to visit him during the whole nine months he spent in jail.) Also, he had no family in this part of the country to turn to for help.

So now, here I stood, side by side with the man I once felt had wronged me more than any man ever had. And now, he was needing help. What should I do? My mind was whirling. Finally, I said what my heart told me to say, "J——, do you want to come home with me?" I could tell he hardly knew how to take that. He seemed really reluctant. He said, "Well, I believe there's a shelter in P—— where I can go and stay until I can get back on my feet again." Also, he said he wanted to just go walk in the sunshine for awhile and be alone and think. He said he had hardly been in the sunlight at all during the nine months he had been in jail and he was anxious to just walk and enjoy the outdoors. So I gave him my phone number and told him to call me collect if he needed to.

I left the courthouse in D—— then and drove on home. On the way home I burst into tears several times just thinking about everything. I felt so good and so inspired in my heart. I felt that God was doing something good and something wonderful beyond my ability to really comprehend.

A few hours later, J—— called me. He had hitch-hiked to P——, and he had also called his dad in Connecticut. His dad had told him that if he could somehow get back to Connecticut, he would give him a place to live and help him get back on his feet again. But his dad had no money

"It is beyond my ability to comprehend how God can take something that was such a setback and trial to me a year ago, and turn it around into something so blessed and wonderful!"

to send him to make the trip. J—— said, "Harlan, could you do me a great big favor? Could you buy me a bus ticket to Connecticut?"

I said, "Yes, J——, I'll do that for you." But I added, "J——, I want you to see my house before you leave."

He said, "Come and get me."

He told me where to meet him, and I took off to P—— to pick him up. He was very tired and hungry when I picked him up, so I took him to McDonald's in D—— on the way back home and bought him something to eat. (I didn't realize he hadn't had anything to eat all day until he told me.)

After we got home, the first thing was a tour of the house. He was very impressed with how it had all turned out. But he was so tired, he could hardly stand up, so he wanted to go to bed right away. I told him he could have the master bedroom. But I said, "Let's have a word of prayer before you go to bed." I then had prayer with him, and he thanked me.

He slept like a log that night. I hardly heard a noise from his bedroom until around 10 o'clock that next morning. After he got up, he said, "That was the best

night of sleep I have had in nine months! It was just so good to be able to lay down and sleep and feel secure."

We had a wonderful visit together that day before we left my place, as well as on the way to the bus station.

He said, "Harlan, you've been so good to me, after the way I treated you! I hope I can do something for you sometime."

In our conversation I said to him, "J——, you don't even seem like the same man I hired to build my house last year."

He said, "I'm a whole lot more humble!" He went on to say, "Harlan, I was so proud. My whole life revolved around my possessions and what I had. I believe God allowed all this to happen to me to bring me down and show me just how nothing I really am. I want to give the rest of my days to God, however many they are. God has been so good to me, and I'm so unworthy."

He also told me how that on the night of July 4th, he tried to commit suicide there in the jail. He devised a plan to hang himself and carried it out, but the jailer found him and they were able to revive him. He had already lost consciousness when they found him. But he said that during that time he was unconscious to this world, he looked up and saw his dear grandmother who had died years ago. He said he reached for her but he couldn't get to her. Instead, he felt himself sinking. He said he knew he was going to hell.

Before taking him to the bus station, he gave me his dad's address and phone number so that I could keep in touch with him. I also gave him some tapes and CDs and a couple of booklets to read. One of them a brother's testimonial booklet, titled "From Darkness to Light."

Since J—— has returned to Connecticut, we have continued to have steady contact through phone calls and letters. He told me on the phone, "If it hadn't been for you, Harlan, I don't know what I would have done.... I think about you all the time, and I pray for you every night before I go to bed." He also said he wants to buy a Bible. And in a recent letter he said, "Things have been going well for me.

Work is going good, and staying clean and sober is a wonderful feeling... You are such a wonderful friend, and I thank God for that. God bless you, Harlan, and I'll write again soon. Your friend, J—.”

There is no way I can put into words the joy and blessing that this experience has brought to my heart. It is beyond my ability to comprehend how God can take something that was such a setback and trial to me a year ago, and turn it around into something so blessed and wonderful! As the song “He Will Hide Me” says, “He will turn what seems to harm me into everlasting joy.” That is just what the Lord has done for me in this situation. I am so glad I put it all in His hands. If I had chosen to have avenged myself on J— by taking legal action against him for what he did to me, who knows, maybe that would have pushed him over the brink of despair and he might have actually committed suicide. Or, even otherwise, I would have made an enemy of him for life. But like I told him in one of my letters a few weeks ago, “It’s so much better having you for a friend than an enemy.”

I know I’ve truly gained J—’s confidence and friendship for life. He holds me in high esteem. He wants me to come to Connecticut and visit him sometime next year. Also, his father has expressed a desire for me to come visit. (He seems to appreciate so much what I did to help his son.) I am hoping that it will work out for me to do that. I’ve never been in that part of the country and I would love, not only to see the country, but to go spend some quality time with J— and meet his relatives. He has offered to take me on a tour of the New England states. So that’s something I’ve got in the back of my mind and looking forward to in the year of 2007, if the Lord wills.

I have thought much lately of the words of the song, “The Precious Seed”:

“We are sowing every moment,
Seeds that yield much good, or bad;
And each one is surely growing,
Cheering souls or making sad;
Let us sow good seeds for Jesus,
In the hearts of fallen men,
Many happy souls will bless us,
And a crown of glory gain.

“Let us sow each seed in kindness,
Praying God the fallow ground
May be broken up in softness,
And the fruits of peace abound;
When the heart with sin is heavy,
He will start the flowing tear,
And the gems of truth from heaven,
Fruit of life eternal bear.

“Give us, Lord, much grace and wisdom,
With the countless seeds we sow;
Though we scatter some at random,
They may germinate and grow;
Some may fall in crowded places,
On the dry, unyielding plain,
But, if watered by Thy graces,
Not a seed is sown in vain.

“Help us, then, O loving Savior,
Bless the precious seeds that fall;
We will sow in hope of gath’ring
In this final harvest call;
And the toilers who have mingled
With the seed their anxious tears,
Will return with shouts, and bringing
Many sheaves in coming years.”

My great desire and prayer is that J— will come to know the Lord in a real “born again” experience. I ask those of you who thus know the Lord to join with me in prayer to that end.

As we live our lives from day to day, let us live by these scriptures: “*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*” ^{Eph. 5:1-2} “*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*” ^{Col. 3:12-14} “*Let all your things be done with charity.*” ^{1 Cor. 16:14}

If we will live by these scriptures, then we can know the meaning of the angel’s proclamation, “*And on earth peace, good will toward men.*” ^{Lk. 2:14}

Love,
Harlan ➔

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.—M.L. King, Jr.

— from one sister to another —

DID I EVER TELL YOU HOW I STARTED LEARNING TO COOK ?

All my growing-up years I didn’t care much for being in the kitchen. I was glad that my mom and sisters took charge of that area. After the Lord healed me last year I spent more and more time outdoors: pruning, weeding, taking care of the animals, etc. As I worked the Lord began to talk to me....

Right now you could be putting your efforts into learning how to cook. Mom needs your help making supper. Oh, yes, you help with suppers (putting on leftovers, etc), but what about the real thing? You said that when I healed you, you knew it was for a reason, this is what I want you to do. If you never start, you are never going to learn how—this is your time to learn the easy way.

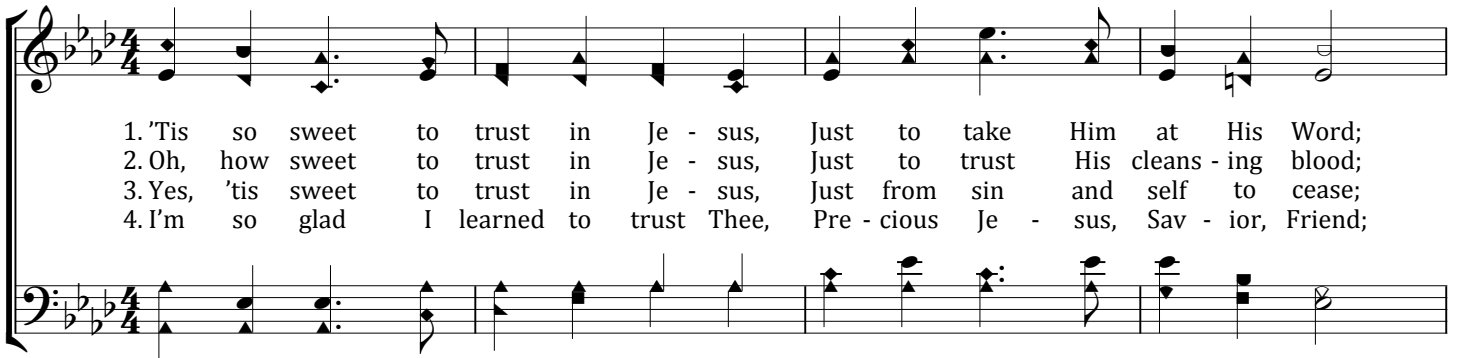
One day I humbled myself and said, *Yes Lord. I really will do my part and set my will to learn how to cook. Please help me.*

At first it was pretty hard. It seemed I didn’t know anything about cooking and was forever having to ask Mommy how long this was to cook or how much salt to put in that. I also forgot to plan ahead for my meals and make sure I had the ingredients on hand. Often when I had the ingredients I didn’t have the time. My poor time management caused suppers to run late a lot of times. I also planned too fancy of a meal and would end up being in the kitchen more than half the day, which was hard to bear.

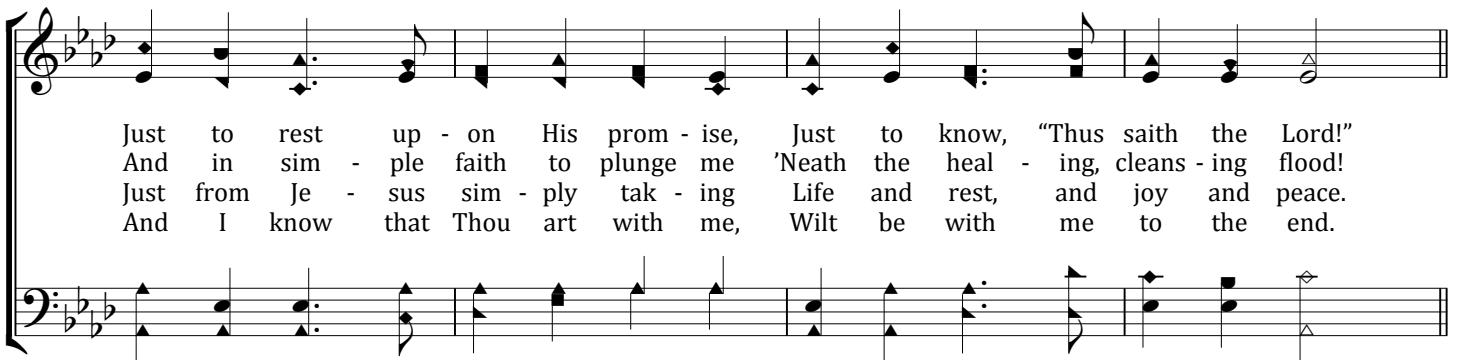
But in all these trials I see how the Lord has used them to mold me—as I humble down in them and seek His help. He is good and stands there ready to help. I know I have a lot more to learn but I thank God for these lessons. I want to learn them well. I think that maybe this is a part of the noble (godly) womanhood God has been teaching me. God’s dealings go so far that I can’t write them down in entirety. I want to be in the place where He can have His perfect way in me. ✿

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Pr. 30:5

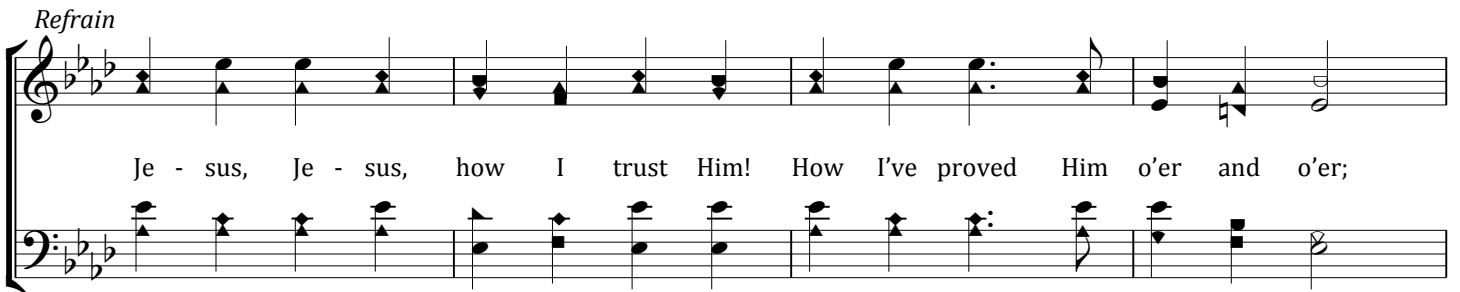


1. 'Tis so sweet to trust in Je - sus, Just to take Him at His Word;
2. Oh, how sweet to trust in Je - sus, Just to trust His cleans - ing blood;
3. Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Je - sus, Just from sin and self to cease;
4. I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee, Pre - cious Je - sus, Sav - ior, Friend;



Just to rest up - on His prom - ise, Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"
And in sim - ple faith to plunge me 'Neath the heal - ing, cleans - ing flood!
Just from Je - sus sim - ply tak - ing Life and rest, and joy and peace.
And I know that Thou art with me, Wilt be with me to the end.

Refrain



Je - sus, Je - sus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;



Je - sus, Je - sus, pre - cious Je - sus! Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

Spirit Holy

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Jn. 14:26

1. Spir - it ho - ly in me dwell - ing, Ev - er work as Thou shalt choose;
2. Oh, how sweet is Thy a - bid - ing! Oh, how ten - der is the love
3. Thou hast cleansed me for Thy tem - ple, Gar - nished with Thy grac - es rare;
4. In me now re - veal Thy glo - ry, Let Thy might be ev - er shown;

All my ran - somed pow'rs and tal - ents For Thy pur - pose Thou shalt use.
Thou dost shed a - broad with - in me From the Fa - ther - heart a - bove!
All my soul Thou art en - rich - ing By Thy full - ness dwell - ing there.
Keep me from the world's de - file - ment, Sa - cred for Thy - self a - lone.

Refrain

Spir - it ho - ly, Spir - it ho - ly, All my be - ing now pos - sess;
Spir - it ho - ly, Spir - it ho - ly, All my be - ing now pos - sess;

Lead me, rule me, work with - in me, Through my life Thy will ex - press.
Lead me, rule me, work with - in me, Through my life Thy will ex - press.

The testimony given by Joel and Coquette Erickson at their wedding, October 22, 2005.

Part 1:

TWO YOUNG *Fools* AND THE GRACE OF GOD

Joel —————
 I grew up in a family with parents who wanted to please the Lord, and who wanted their children to love and obey the Lord, too. But the devil laid out a subtle path for my life, and I took that path. According to my thinking, I was part of a Christian home, and I wanted to do what was right, so therefore I was a Christian. By God's faithfulness, my conscience would often prick me that I had disobeyed, but I clung to the hope that I was doing the best that could be expected. I was led farther and farther down the path of self-deception through many years.

My parents had attempted the best they knew to instill good character in me, and though this was indeed a benefit to others, and in many ways to me as well, yet what virtues I had were used to convince me that I was doing pretty well. Of course, I sometimes had to admit to myself, there were those ugly places, mostly hidden from the public view, where it seemed I would always fail. But if I tried really hard, I could sometimes master myself and feel like I could claim to be saved. And also, after I had sinned, I would always tell God I was sorry, so everything would be patched up and be okay with Him.

I remember very vividly a certain Sunday school lesson about the binding habits of sin. It was an object lesson, and much to my mortification, I was the victim chosen. First a thread was wrapped around my hands, which was quite easy to break; then a yarn, which took considerable effort to snap, as I recall. But when a thin cord, and then rope, was wound around me, I knew it was hopeless to free myself. Last of all a chain was draped over me, which, in addition to being impossible to break, was also quite heavy to wear. And then, to add insult to injury, my family wanted to take a picture of me wearing all this. The reason my family has never seen that picture is because I made sure to

get ahold of it as soon as it was developed, and cut it up into the garbage.

But the very real chains of sin could not be so easily disposed of. And just as surely, they were growing thicker and stronger. Oh, I could move about, but though it sometimes felt like I could be as good as I hoped, just as sure was the bondage of those awful temptations I had little power to resist.

Where was God? Didn't He love me enough to destroy the chains that held me? But it was my deception that held me, not any short-coming on His part. Through my teenage years, when I occasionally doubted my experience, I would ask God to somehow make it clear to me whether I was saved or not. And though it took time, God was faithful.

One day when I was 18, God made it clear to me. He made it so clear that I could not doubt it. He showed me that I was a sinner being dragged toward hell, and that I couldn't do a thing to stop it. Except for one thing. To plead that He would save me. I couldn't even get saved by my effort. All I could do was ask. I had been made so convinced of my sinfulness that I determined I would not delude myself into thinking I was anything other than a sinner until God saved me. And soon I realized I could not stand to be a hypocrite, and so told others that I was lost.

That was a fearful time in my life. Sometimes I would try to pray; others would pray for me. I became thoroughly con-

vinced that I could not find God's salvation by my efforts alone. I was also thoroughly convinced that there was a life of wonderful grace available, for I saw it in the lives of those around me. I thank God for those

Savior sent, still He stands,
 sacrifice from Heav'n,
 Gift so great—do not wait,
 come and be forgiv'n.

examples. But there I was excluded from it all, and I felt very lonely.

I had to do my part. I had to want the gift; I had to be willing to receive the gift. There came another day, months later, when the Lord again dealt with my heart and called me to come. I didn't know what I could do to enable me to be saved. But I saw a fearful choice: if I put off the decision until later, that day might never come, so I willed myself to continue until I got what the Lord had for me. And so others stayed and prayed with me long into the night, until finally by faith I took the Lord at His word that He would forgive me and save me.

God made a way, He sent salvation
 To make of man a new creation,
 To lay, in Christ, a firm foundation;
 Oh, what a wondrous transformation!

I didn't experience any wonderful emotions, and my insides didn't suddenly feel as if they were brand new. In fact, the devil immediately began to suggest that there really wasn't anything different about me anyway. But I clung to God's promise, and in the days and weeks that follow, both I and others could see that He had indeed adopted me into His family. Praise the Lord.

But life wasn't all a bed of roses. I soon found that I had to face and fight those same old temptations that had bound me so long. I had weapons to battle with now, but oh, how distressed I was when I came short of the grace of God and sinned because I did not stay close enough to Him. I would draw near to God and stay close to Him for a time and His saving grace kept me, but sooner or later I would let down my guard. And just as

Where was God? Didn't He love me
 enough to destroy the chains that held me?
 But it was my deception that held me,
 not any short-coming on His part.

And then, to add insult to injury, my family wanted to take a picture of me wearing all this. The reason my family has never seen that picture is because I made sure to

surely would I be smitten by the enemy, for there was still the natural bent within me to be attracted to the temptation. I longed for more grace, to somehow rise above in constant victory, to be free from the hidden root of wrong desires within me. And again I saw examples of such a life in those around me.

Wand'ring through the wilderness,
Oft I stumbled in distress;
Yet by cloud and fiery flame,
Led o'er shimm'ring sands I came.

Like the children of Israel on the way to the Promised Land, the Lord was guiding me as much as I would let Him. I was on the wheel of the Master Potter, and wanting to be clay that yielded thoroughly to His working. And so gradually one thing and then another was adjusted, and like Much-Afraid on the way to the High Places, I collected memorial stones of consecration.

And then He brought me to Jordan's bank, and I was bidden to cross over into the land He had willed me for an inheritance. He showed me what I needed to do to be a living sacrifice, and so once more by faith I stepped across the line. And no, there were no fireworks, no cheering crowds to greet me, except perhaps the great cloud of witnesses in heaven. And no, I wasn't transported into some mystical glow; I was still myself, Joel Amos Erickson. But there was this difference: no longer did an inner voice respond to the temptations. I had entered into the land of spiritual grace and glory where the giants could be destroyed, and where God could work with the clay as it pleased Him. For as the song says, "He's still working on me."

Coquette _____
I was born to parents that loved each other. They wanted to do what was right. When we were very little we were taught to never go to bed with something between you and God. This stuck with me. I determined to make sure I was always "safe" at night.

I was not exempt from temptations to be naughty and to whine. But I always felt terrible when I knew I had not been

nice. I could run into my room or away outside to ask God to forgive me. And He always did.

I was twelve when God began to talk to me about a sin that I fell prey to the most often. He told me it was time to get rid of it. And it *did* look good to never have to be guilty again because of it. But I put it off. I said I would deal with it later. He would not leave me alone about it. When I was thirteen, He warned me that it would come between Him and me. That someday I would ask forgiveness of Him and He could not grant it. I didn't like to hear that too much. I wanted my way, and I wanted to have the safety of forgiveness, too.

"How dark my prison house of sin!"
a song writer said. Amazing that God
wanted to visit me there.

It happened just like He said. But not so dramatically as I had imagined. My love for God cooled down so much that I couldn't really ask forgiveness. And of course if we can't ask, then He will not grant us forgiveness, either. So there I was—unforgiven, and not caring too much.

It was not a good state to be in. And the devil had quite a bit of room to work with me. He finally convinced me that God did not love me, and that I had better find something that satisfied me. So then I turned from the One who loved me the most and severed the last tie of my salvation.

I promise you that it was not the most happy time in my life. It was the darkest. And the most hurtful.

God left me alone pretty much.

And so it was that when He did call to me, I had changed a great deal. "How dark my prison house of sin!" a song writer said. Amazing that God wanted to visit me there. That He would look into a selfish heart barren of love, for the enemy had carted practically everything of value to his treasure house. I still didn't really care but for one thing. It was someone I saw every week.

That someone always stirred me one way or another. Either I wanted to get

away from his sight, or I wanted to live a better life.

So it was that God used Joel Erickson's influence when He talked of His ability to help me live a better life. And since we saw each other twice a week, the message repeated itself constantly in my ears. God added to this head seizures which began to get worse and worse. They had the affect of weakening my stubbornness, of which I inherited plenty. :-\

And then at last my stubborn will yielded. I admitted I really would like to be a better person. I prayed like I hadn't for years that He would have mercy and help me if there was any chance left. It didn't seem possible until—until—*God*

worked a miracle. A miracle, folks. It is incredible. He *changed* my heart; I don't want to sin. He's freed me from so many harmful habits of thought that I can sing for a thousand years when I get to see Him. He's helped me enter the path of life, and in His presence is fullness of joy.

The Blessing Bestowed

"With a heart full of anxious request,
Which my Father in heaven bestowed,
I wandered, alone and distressed,
In search of a quiet abode;
Astray and distracted I cried,
"Lord, where would Thou have me to be?"
And the voice of the Lamb that had died
Said, 'Come, My beloved, to Me.'

"I went—for He mightily wins
Weary souls to His peaceful retreat—
And He gave me forgiveness of sins,
And songs that I love to repeat;
And oft as my enemies came,
My views of His glory to dim,
He taught me to trust in His name—
To triumph by leaning on Him.

"Made pure by the blood that He shed,
My heart in His presence was free;
I was hungry and thirsty—He fed;
I was sick, and He comforted me;
He gave me the blessing complete—
The hope that is with me today—
And a quiet abode at His feet
That shall not be taken away."



to be continued...

Sirs, we would see Jesus." Jn. 12:21

If you had been a child of God during the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, all would have seemed desolation. Jerusalem, the city of David and of Solomon, was completely ruined. The temple was destroyed. The walls were heaps of rubble. All of the people except the poorest were taken captive to the pagan nation of Babylon.

If you believed in the hope of Israel, if you were one of those who was persuaded that in God's dealings with this people that all the nations of the world would be blessed, if you were one of those who waited and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, then where were your hopes and faith at that point? Where was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Where was the glory that so filled the temple that the priests could not minis-

ter? Where was the power that divided the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh and his army? How could the temple have been destroyed? How could God have allowed things to come to that?

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Ps. 137:5-6

There was no longer a city of Jerusalem. There was no longer a temple. And the people were captive in a strange land. *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange*

land?" Ps. 137:1-4 It was a time of great grief, of bewilderment, of confusion and consternation for those that really had the work of God at heart. As the prophet Zephaniah put it, *"This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand."* Zep. 2:15

Because of the failures of men to obey God, it seemed that all that had been established that was good had been destroyed. God destroys all that can be touched by men when it becomes corrupt, while preserving that which cannot be touched to revive and regenerate the work of God in the hearts of men again. To be encouraged in the midst of desolation and to find the truth all over again, we must see the things which are not seen—the invisible power of the almighty God behind His work—and we must reconnect with that power and feel its strength in our lives to please Him and do His work acceptably.

According to this understanding, the gates of hell do prevail against the visible, touchable work of God often, but they cannot prevail against the untouchable. Therefore, in an overall sense, the devil always loses; but in an immediate, tactical sense, he overthrows the faith of many and works havoc and apparently complete destruction. (For instance, consider the seven congregations of Asia, mentioned in Revelation 2-3. One congregation is dead, others are in great danger of losing their candlestick, while only one is completely commended.)

To an Old Testament saint in Babylon, the promises of God and the stories of His doings must have seemed very far away. Perhaps the thoughts of such brethren echoed the words of Gideon when the angel came to him as he secretly threshed wheat in fear of the Midianites. *"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring*

RECOVERY

FROM DISASTER



us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” Jdg. 6:13 This dear child of God needed to see God and to see the work of God in his time, and that is exactly how the angel of God dealt with him.

And that is how the prophet Ezekiel was sent to the battered and bewildered captives in Babylon. That is what the book of Ezekiel is all about.

The message of recovery starts with a vision of the work of God. It is presented as a great wheel within a wheel in perfect harmony with four living creatures, all operating far beyond the capacity of man. After placing this vision of God’s ways before Ezekiel, the prophet is warned of how difficult it will be to get this truth over to the defeated people of God, and the prophet is especially strengthened and prepared for the work. “Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.” Eze. 3:8 He is in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, so to speak, and he is sent to put before them life and hope, whether they will receive it or not.

After this anointing and this personal digesting of the Word of Truth, Ezekiel is sent to the children of Judea, and his testimony is, “The hand of the Lord was strong upon me. Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.” vs. 14-15 He sat where they sat. He entered into their burdens and grief to the extent that he was astonished. He was astonished at their lack of spiritual vision, at the spiritual deterioration and breakdown, and at the lack of faith which was the result of long years of idolatry and pride. He was not called to preach the truth to them in an abstract way or as the scribes and Pharisees would do, in a later time. But his word was with power, and he went for the root of the problem.

To get a hold of what God has for us, we must be ruthlessly determined to let go of everything else. “Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.” Pr. 18:1 Note the absolute significance of these words, “having separated himself.” If one seeks truth without this living consecration to put away everything else, no matter what

it costs, then one seeks in vain. You will probably get something, but it will be less than a clear, accurate picture from God. It is impossible to buy the truth if you are only a spectator—you must have the heart and mind of a potential participator. God is only found when one seeks for Him with all the heart (Jer. 29:13). The mixing and “intermeddling” (what a descriptive word!) of our lives with what is true and right is a wonderful privilege, and it is surely blessed to live this way, but it is only available through the separation process. We must break every yoke; we must go to the bottom for a thorough clearing of ourselves to get a hold of God’s way. Do this and thy soul shall live. “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” Mt. 15:13

This was the point of Ezekiel’s burden to the people of God. He was to show the house (the invisible house, as God had made it) to the house of Israel. “Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.” Eze. 43:10 This is the way that God deals with human failure and resultant disaster. He allows people to come to grief, barrenness, and desolation by making their own measurements. Then, as they wallow in their misery and need, He sends a message of how He designed it and how it is supposed to work. The question is: Will you be ashamed? Will you humble yourself enough to measure the pattern? Or will you ignore Him and continue in your own way? He will leave you to yourself if you do. You can continue on, boasting that you are a child of Abraham and are not in bondage to any man, closing your eyes to reality and truth, or you can humble down and really get something worth having.

We see readily that the churches all around us have been through this process. God has been faithful to deal with all, and just about all of them have consistently rejected God at some point in some way. This rejection is usually deep-rooted, buried some distance back, usually a generation or two, sometimes more. The rejection

eventually solidifies into corrupt doctrine. It is all the result of measuring with some other measuring device than the heavenly reed. “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” Jn. 5:44 The current generation has not done exactly the same things as their predecessors in rejecting points of light—they have just built on that foundation. But they “fill up then the measure” Mt. 23:32 of their fathers. There is no getting back to God without facing things for what they are, abhorring what is evil, and clinging to what is good. The status of any group of people in God’s eyes is manifested by showing the house to the house.

I talked with a young man who earnestly tried to prove what the true church was by succession. He thought he could trace a clear line of heritage back to the apostles that proved that the Mormon Church of which he was a member was the right church. The Catholic Church advocates the same reasoning. They hold that Peter was the first pope. But all of this is false reasoning. The true church as shown in the lives of men is only found by comparison with the pattern that God established. “Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.”

It is impossible to buy the truth if you are only a spectator—you must have the heart and mind of a potential participator.

And so Brother Ezekiel came to the folks in trouble in Babylon. What did he have to tell them?

We pick up on the message in chapter 40. Here we find that the brother is preaching about the mountain and city that cannot be touched (vs. 2). There was no use preaching about the mountain (Zion) and the city (Jerusalem) that could be touched. They were gone. They were destroyed. But the failures that had brought about the destruction and unavailability of those things which was seen and touchable had not had the slightest effect on the eternal mountain of Zion or the spiritual city of Jerusalem (Ecc. 3:14). “And he brought me thither, and,

behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.”^{Eze. 40:3} Here is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He stands in the gate. This same man appeared to another brother at this time. You can read about it in Daniel 10. And this brother was told, “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent.”^{Dan. 10:11} We want to understand, and we need to understand that Jesus greatly loves us. He has not willingly afflicted us or plunged us into trial. The apparent destruction of our hopes around us will redound to the honor and glory of God in time, as doubtful as that may seem at present. We should say that healing and restoration will occur if we take God’s way.

Now this One who loves us so greatly has something to show us which will steady us, and fortify us, and establish us. He has a vision of the work of God for us. He wants us to see what cannot be seen with the natural eye. “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”^{2 Cor. 4:18} He had this for those who loved the Lord back there in Ezekiel’s time, and He has it for us today.

Now our Lord is a measuring Lord. It is an article of faith among those who are not all out for God that the ways of the Lord are not practical. According to this skepticism, God’s commandments are nice, idealistic goals, but they are really beyond the aver-

ers who profess to be God’s children. This insidious doubt is flat-out contradicated by this picture of a measuring Jesus that Brother Ezekiel was anointed to preach.

Practical, human life is not possible without measurement. Children will build a clubhouse without measurement, but is the result desirable? Or useable? Consider the need of measurement in clothing, food preparation, manufacturing, etc. But human wisdom doubts God and fails to see His great skill and accuracy in spiritual measurements. “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.”^{Pr. 16:2} Here is a spiritual measurement indeed!

At one time I failed to see the practicality of measurement units in lengths of wood, sheets of plywood, steel and plastic pipe, and other things. Why should a sheet of plywood be eight feet long? Why shouldn’t it be nine? Or six? And so on. Eventually I came to realize that these measurements evolved through human ingenuity to satisfy human problems. The length of a sheet of plywood (eight feet) is taller than human height, for example, but it is not so long as to be unmanageable, etc.

God has the ways that will satisfy the heart of man, and He has them accurately measured. Man has always tried to devise his own ways to direct his steps, and they have never proven out. He has been deceived by the adversary and the complexity of his own nature, and the result has been disastrous. Part of this mixing and inter-

He is standing in the gate that leads to what He has constructed right now, and the line of flax and the measuring reed is in His hand.

“And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.”^{Eze. 40:4}

I have seen human skill on construction crews, such that one man would be calling measurements from the roof of a building to another man cutting those measurements on the saw. The cut pieces would be tossed upon the roof as fast as they were cut, and all this would happen in a continuous stream. But this human skill, good and impressive as it is, pales to nothing beside the all-knowing, measuring ability of the Author and Finisher of our faith. Salvation was designed perfectly, and if followed without leaning to our own understanding, it will produce a perfect trust in and perfect reliance on the will of God.

There follows, in the preaching of Ezekiel, an incredible picture—a measured picture. A picture that does not make any sense in a touchable sense, but perfectly describes the work of God. Everything, the wall, the building (both breadth and height), the gate, thresholds of the gates, each chamber in the building, and the porch, are each one reed in length. In addition, we are told that each chamber in

the one-reed building is one reed square and separated from the “other” chambers by five cubits! Physically, this makes no sense at all. It is impossible. And

on and on the description of the measuring goes. There are porches, doors, windows, arches, palm trees, an outward court, and steps in different directions of the compass. There is furniture; there are the implements for the offering of sacrifices. The measuring proceeds into the forty-first chapter, and the mind boggles at the detail and complexity of it all.

I once thought that kitchen cabinets were basically just boxes and not so much of a challenge to build. I acquired a great

He has measured what it means to trust Him completely. His measurements take in trusting Him with our bodies, our livelihoods, and with each other. It is all measured.

age, everyday reach of men in general. “Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal [fair].”^{Eze. 33:17} This is a God-dishonoring doubt that is poisonous and undermining. It lays a foundation for disbelief in those who claim to be believers. It professes to reverence the Bible while actually following a way of human wisdom. It will attempt to reconcile the Bible to human thinking, rather than submitting human thinking to the Word of God. It has produced a great multitude of Bible-doubt-

meddling with all wisdom is separating ourselves from the ideas of men (including our own) and devoting ourselves to finding and following the measurements of God. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”^{Pr. 3:5} It is only when the leaning is taken out of us, and the eye is single to trust in the Lord with all thine heart, that we began to really appreciate just how perfect Jesus is at what He does and what He has prepared for mankind (2 Pet. 1:3).

respect for the craftsmen who build these for a living after I attempted to build cabinets for a kitchen once. There is a lot of measuring.

But this is nothing compared to the habitation of God which He has built to dwell among men. Behold, He has measured what it means to trust Him completely. His measurements take in trusting Him with our bodies, our livelihoods, and with each other. It is all measured. Nothing is left unanticipated. Nothing is left to happenstance or makeshift. We serve a measuring God. A God of perfect measurements.

This is the message of Ezekiel to the fallen children of Judea: You have messed up, but God has not. Abandon your notions and ideas and embrace what He has had right all along.

I heard a story about an old lady who got in her mind that she wanted an additional room to her house that was exactly ten feet wide. Those who were to do the work remonstrated with her about that ten feet. The measurements of lumber are such that eight feet or twelve feet was much more practical. Otherwise, there is waste. But she didn't see that. She just wanted her room exactly ten feet wide. Eventually, they ignored her and built it twelve feet wide. She never forgave them for that. To the end of her life, she grumbled about how they didn't make her room ten feet wide.

There are a lot of people like this spiritually. Except that the Lord doesn't go ahead and build their lives like they want it. He just lets them make their choices. They think their own thoughts, wear their own apparel, and eat their own bread. They claim to be His people, but the truth is, they are on their own.

This is what the captives in Babylon had done. Many had done it individually. Some were innocent of that, but went along with the others. Some were new to the scene. Would they go deeper into the roots of all that had happened, or would they settle for what had happened to those who were there before them? The great question was and is: Would they be ashamed? *"And if they be ashamed of all that they have done..."* ^{Eze. 43:11} This is a gigantic IF. Many things can be made right if people will allow themselves to be ashamed. And conversely, many things cannot be fixed

because there is an unwillingness to be ashamed.

The immediate objective of discipline with children should be to bring about a sense of shame on the part of the child. And this is the usual, immediate point of resistance. If the child will allow themselves to feel shame, quite a bit of good can be accomplished.

This is just as true of grownups as it is with little people. A multitude of wholesome instruction and sound reasoning is wasted on an unashamed people. People who will not consider at all the house that God has prepared, or will not look until they began to feel remorse, do not have a chance. Without shame, their damnation is certain.

Listen to the words of Ezra, that man of God so used of the Lord in the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. *"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens."* ^{Ezra 9:6} It is a lost trait—this ability to feel deserved shame and the ability to blush. It is a rare thing in our time, and it was a rare thing back then, too. Without hesitation, we would declare that the ways of help are closed to most because of their lack of shame. People are proud and brazen. *"Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness."* ^{Pr. 30:20} She had excellent reason to feel a heavy burden of shame, but she did not feel it. Something in her denied it. Most of our adulterous generation today feels no sense of shame. They are capable of observing how the children are ravaged by their adultery, but without shame. When the president of the United States committed adultery with a shameless young woman in the White House, behold the lack of shame! Behold the sympathy of others who were also not ashamed! This shamelessness is taking people to hell; it is exceedingly dangerous.

It was just as true of the captives in Babylon as it is today. God had been dealing

with these people all along, and they had refused to be ashamed. *"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush."* ^{Jer. 6:15} To do shameful things and not feel even a little sheepish or embarrassed about it was a way of life to them. They were forward and audacious. They didn't want anyone to cross them

Many things can be made right if people will allow themselves to be ashamed. And conversely, many things cannot be fixed because there is an unwillingness to be ashamed.

or tell them what to do. No matter how wanton or outrageous their behavior, they resisted feeling the disgracefulness of it all. They had murdered servants of God like Ezekiel for telling them things they didn't want to hear.

Do you think this all disappeared because they were taken captive to Babylon? Severe judgment, no matter how devastating, does not of itself bring about a sense of shame, which leads to godly sorrow, which moves men to genuine heart-felt repentance. It gets people's attention. It forces them to confront some things. But people can sit under ever so much gospel truth and remain hardened. They can absorb judgment after judgment without humbling. This is because the hardening is an act of the will.

We pray for people constantly who have the will set not to be ashamed, not to seek God, not to acknowledge truth, not to think or consider what is right. We pray that they will soften. We pray that things will happen that will stir them to want to change. And God answers those prayers. He brings before them different realities. At times, different ones are much inclined to forsake their ways and follow God's way. They are disposed to change, for a while, but they do not allow themselves to get stirred enough to really *"see the house,"* much less to press their way into it. The difficulties defeat them easily unless they really look at what God has for them.

This thought is illustrated in *A True Story in Allegory*:

At that moment, seeing the depths of iniquity to which his relatives were bringing him, Mr. Hypocrisy found himself, as it were, standing alone upon a pinnacle of decision, such as comes to one at very critical times during life and in a burst of disgust, he exclaimed, "I feel like clearing you all out, and calling in the faithful ones and Mr. Sincerity to help. You are bringing me to ruin."

Would that he had acted upon this impulse! But he was not really set in his heart to come clean with God, and this impulse to get right soon passed away with a little help from his ungodly friends.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Mt. 11:12 This is not physical violence; it is spiritual violence. The formerly-blind man exercised it when he said, "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." Jn. 9:30-33 The result of this spiritual violence with those who had no heart to follow God's way? They cast him out. But

above. Do you imagine that you will be accepted into heaven with less than leaving all? Will not you also have to come to the point where the Kingdom of Heaven suffers holy violence from you so that you can enter in? You will not lay hold on eternal life without a struggle. You will not drift into a real possession of salvation. You will not wake up one morning and realize with surprise that you are spiritually-minded and devout. It isn't going to happen like that. "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Lk. 11:9-10

If you lived in Ezekiel's time, you would have to do the same to get a hold of the vision of God's work that was offered to you. Listen to the nature of Daniel's prayer: "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee." Dan. 9:8 Daniel was a young man when Jerusalem was taken, and he very likely had not had much, if any, of the attitude that was in the kings, princes, and fathers; but as a nation, of which he was a member, he made confession. It is as if to say, "Lord, Your ways are perfect, but we, as a nation, have forsaken Your ways. Please help us to get back. Please restore us to Your plan."

There are many people in different churches who need to pray the prayer of Daniel. As a whole, the group is fallen. The ministers are not in God's hand. They operate vastly more from human

reasoning and people-pleasing and pacifying than from the dealings of the Holy Ghost. As a result, the work of God is not done. They simply are not like the house that Jesus built. They are something else. This needs to be confessed. It needs to be acknowledged. It calls for repentance. It calls for a humbling. Some of this fruit of being ashamed will lead us to repent and feel remorse for the mistakes made before our time and by others. It has produced a lamentable result. Grief and mourning are

appropriate. "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Jas. 4:9 Face the situation head-on, fairly and squarely, then look long and carefully at Zion. "And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel." Eze. 40:4

One brother, who followed this counsel in a church where he was raised, where his parents were life-long missionaries, said, "There has got to be more to it than this." Then he did more than say these words. He left with his wife and children, and began to search. He went from one high hill to another, and at times, it seemed that it might have been safer and better to have stayed where he started from, but God looked down on his quest and brought him to Zion. He found what Jesus had made and he abides there content.

It is the burden of this publication to "show the house to the house." We need to forsake all the works of men, however virtuous and commendable they may appear, and go back to the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (Dan. 2:34,44-45). We need to feel the shame that comes when we study the deviation between the best works of men and the work of God. Until we consign our works to the flames, cease from our own labors, and begin to work the works of God.

"Are you of the holy remnant
Gathered to the king of peace?
Have you found a full atonement
And abundance of his grace?
Yes, my soul has come to Zion
On the high and holy way,
And I've seen the darkness flying,
Driven by the light of day.

"Have you heard a voice from heaven,
Calling in a solemn tone,
'Come, My people, from confusion;
This is not your native home?'
Yes I heard, and to my vision,
Zion's glory brightly shone.
Then I rose and fled the ruin,
Taking not a Babel stone."

We need to forsake all the works of men, however virtuous and commendable they may appear, and go back to the stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

he got the Kingdom of Heaven. He took it by force. He lost something with his parents, with his synagogue. If fact, he lost everything but the most important—Jesus. So did Paul. "Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung." Phil. 3:8 "They forsook all, and followed him." Lk. 5:11 When Christian fled the City of Destruction, he put his fingers in his ears and ran for his life.

This is just as necessary and compelling for you as it was for those mentioned



THE Unprecedented IN Temptation

KATHRYN HELM *The Lure of Divine Love* CHAPTER 80

We all need, at times, the uplift of another's faith.

I am waiting by the river,
And my heart hath waited long
Just to hear the joyful summons
And the angels' welcome song.
Oh, I long to be with Jesus
In the mansions of the blest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary be at rest.

For some years this was my heart song. Like many another, I had expected much from the sources of the earthly; and must learn the lesson, that will come to all, that "earth disappoints full measure"; and what I had called being homesick for heaven was more a desire to escape it all. For I had yet to learn that with responsive joy I could sing

"I'm satisfied with Jesus here,
He's everything to me,
His dying love has won my heart."

I did not know that

"There is an abiding place in Jesus
Where the warring sounds of earth cannot annoy.
A rest from every care, in the secret place of prayer,
Where the storms of life cannot our peace destroy."

It is quite generally accepted that when one is homesick for heaven, it denotes deep spirituality, or at least a preparedness for that holy place; and it is a premonition of the soon home-going. But in looking back with clarified vision, I can see that my longing for heaven was largely a faint-hearted cowardliness, the lack of reconciliation to the circumstance of living in this fallen world, and the lack of courage to accept them as preparatory discipline for usefulness in this life, or the life across the great divide. They are just as a college course is to our youth; and like many a student considering a heavy "course," I had yet to win my heart's consent to life's hard school, and longed to escape. I wanted the benefit, but the "course" looked too heavy.

A blessedly-saved girl once said, "I want an experience just like Sister — has." Someone asked the question, "Would you go through what Sister — has gone through to get the experience?" *Experience*, so Webster tells us, is "the knowledge gained by trial and repeated trial."

To a sister, recently I said, "To long for the Lord to take one to heaven because of suffering or seeming uselessness, is not the highest incentive; really, when you think about it; it is utterly unworthy of a child of God. It discloses cowardice and lack of confidence in the wisdom of our Heavenly Father, and I strongly question if one departing with such a self-centered desire in preeminence would see the gates of pearl swing open wide."

With the dawning of this truth, I saw things differently, and I read in my Bible, "*Consider him who endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*"^{Heb. 12:3} And the Lord spoke to me as I sang about my work:

"If in thy path some thorns are found,
Oh, think who bore them on His brow.
If grief thy sorrowing heart hath found,
It touched a holier than thou.
Oh, wait; meekly wait, and murmur not,
Oh, wait; oh, wait, and murmur not."

I began to understand, and settled down to "*endure as seeing him who is invisible.*"^{Heb. 11:27} And in answer to my definite, earnest petition, the Lord took the murmur all out of my spirit; and in its place there was reconciliation, a submissive adjustment, a peaceful content to endure and wait and suffer till his appointed time (Heb. 9:27).

About that time, the following verses (surely sent of God) found full response, for they express the attitude of confiding trust the heart should hold:

"What if a wondrous hand from the blue yonder,
Held out a scroll
On which my life was writ, and I with wonder
Beheld unroll
To a long century's end its mystic clue,
What should I do?"

"What could I do, O blessed Guide and Master!
Other than this—
Still go on as now, not slower, faster,
Nor fear to miss
The road, although so very long it be,
Which led to Thee?"

"But step by step, feeling Thee close beside me,
Although unseen;
Through thorns, through flowers, whether the tempest hide Thee,
Or heavens serene—
Assured Thy faithfulness cannot betray,
Thy love decay."

Beautiful songs of our Zion, replete with Gospel Truth, how they have comforted our hearts! How often have they been to us the voice of God! "*Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*"^{Eph. 5:19} is one of God's commands that is a thousand leagues from being "*grievous*" (1 Jn. 5:3). I have literally sung my way through life (Col. 3:16).

And now my heart was ever singing,
His blessed will, His wisdom's ways;
'Twas heav'n's own music sweetly ringing
Through pain-drawn nights and weary days.

When one has not been fully reconciled to his lot in life, with it will come leanness of soul.

This was a real epoch in my life, and after that I began to take on courage, and apprehend something of the value of living on the earth, and God's far-reaching designs of added years, not only for this present world with its manifold possibilities in the upbuilding of His Kingdom, but also for the world to come. I began at last to appreciate life; although in my case, at this time, it must be, through faith in God and a knowledge of His will, wrested from the grave day after day (Jer. 45:5). And thus I have lived on in His glad service, realizing that time, after all, is only an infinitely small part of Eternity, a valuable preparatory "course" demonstrable in our everyday living, which will qualify us for the activities in those higher branches of learning. And those who hold learning in high esteem will greatly rejoice in the fact that we will always be undergraduates with "Our Father."

In one of those frequent sick spells, when for weeks it seemed soul and body could scarcely hold together, there was a most bewildering temptation adroitly presented, such as I had never before encountered. Satan was "*transformed into an angel of light*,"^{2 Cor. 11:14} yea, worse—he even impersonated the Lord, and so hid behind reasonings of possibilities that I knew were there, that I did not detect him. The adversary is a most skillful reasoner (2 Cor. 10:3-5) and nothing but a constantly increasing knowledge of God, His character, and His ways of working, through the study of "*what is written*," can enable us to cast down his imaginations, or reasonings (as it is in the margin). For he would ever have us think of ourselves as if we "walked after the flesh"; or in other words, as if we were depending altogether upon the natural, and forget that the power of the supernatural is operating in our behalf. And though we walk in the flesh (still live in these bodies), we do not depend upon the natural so much as upon Him who created these natural bodies and can rebuild them according to His will (with our cooperation). No, "*we do not war after the flesh: [but] the weapons of our warfare are... mighty through God.*"^{2 Cor. 10:3-4} Even colossal strongholds collapse before Him.

The temptation was to the effect that this unusual sick spell was the home call. (And I knew that might be, but I had not so understood it from the Lord, and was looking to Him for recovery.) And he argued that, because I had such a time to consent to live on and suffer, succeeding finally, and had won a heart-willingness to do so, at the present time, just like a swinging pendulum, I had swung out altogether too far the other way, and now, when His appointed time had come, I was unwilling to die. (And this also could be true. We have observed it on many other lines, and I was so shocked that, instead of going to the Lord at once in humble inquiry, I was half stunned with distress and amazement.) And, continued the accuser, what I had been calling the fight of faith, expecting the Lord to give me "*my life as a prey*"^{Jer. 39:18} taken from the jaws of death to glorify Him in my body, because it was His will, was not that at all. It was in open dissent to the will of God, a voluntary choosing of my own. And, concluding his condemnatory argument with a thrust of his sharpest lancet that pierced

the very vitals of my being, he said that since the Lord had so graciously worked in me to will and to do, so that I could live on in triumphant suffering, I had become so absorbingly attached to the little bit of work He had condescendingly given me to do for Him that I was unwilling to lay it down and depart to be with Christ, whom I had professed to love with my whole heart. And the indisputable evidence that I loved His work far more than I loved Him, was this obstinate clinging to life, when He was lovingly calling me to Himself.

All this was quite conclusive reasoning as to a possibility, although I had not been conscious of any such dishonoring reflection upon my Lord, or willful, perverted self-assertion; yet I knew enough about the subtleness of Satanic maneuvering to realize, that in my human frailty I could have unconsciously merged into such an attitude, when I would not have deliberately chosen to do so for anything in the world.

It is the unprecedented in temptation that mystifies and perplexes us. And to know that someone else has had a parallel experience is an encouragement to keep on going through our "sulphur bath" and come out on the Christ side, among the overcomers.

Remember, the overcomers "*eat of the hidden manna*"^{Rev. 2:17} here and now, and have the "*white stone*" with the "*new name*" (or nature), the white raiment of holiness (19:8), and have full access by faith to the "much more" that God has included with the gift of the morning star (2:28; 22:16; Rom. 8:32); and with all this, the future promise of a seat hard by the Throne (Rev. 3:21-22).

We all need, at times, the uplift of another's faith.

"*Thou hast left thy first love.*"^{2:4} These words full of pathos, strikingly disclose that God's estimations differ vastly from men's (Is. 55:8-9).

To rob Him of my first love, to allow anything to hold the first place in my affections, to supplant my Lord by even joyful service for Him (as I had seen others do) seemed so dishonoring to my Lord that this was the one thing that I had determined never to be guilty of. (I have seen parents heartbroken over such depreciating exchanges.) And to appreciate the beneficent bestowments of our Lord, or even His benedictions, above Himself, would surely give to that great loving Heart the pangs of unrequited love. And for me to refuse the love-call to His side would be undeniable proof of all the rest. And I suffered, being tempted, as possibly you may be suffering on some line as you read these words.

I was like a ship floundering at sea without compass or rudder, with the North Star obscured by a heavy storm. I knew all this could be true. For to unintentionally allow that traitor from remote ages to introduce gently or artfully, to work something into favor, or obtain access by flattery or stealth, until we leave our first love, is a grave danger constantly facing us all on one line or another. This is one temptation that is very apparent, "*common to man*,"^{1 Cor. 10:13} and it requires prayer and watchfulness to escape that insinuating, insidious, pernicious power in operation.

*Yes, it is an extremely dangerous thing to beat our wings
against the protecting bars of the cage of our environments.*

One of the most subtle, devastating devices which the enemy could have designed is to transpose this marvelous, strength-giving Divine love by stealthily introducing that sweet but impotent affection of the human heart.

When one has not been fully reconciled to his lot in life, for instance, and has not been careful to live in triumphant ascendancy above it continuously, but drops down and yields to the natural longing occasionally for release from hardship, and craves, like the children of Israel (Num. 11:1-6), some of the comforts, if not the luxuries, of this life, and does not seek that heart-content with such things as he has (Heb. 13:5), but persists in some self-choosing, he may secure his desire, but with it will come leanness of soul (Ps. 106:14-15). It always shocks me to hear from the lips of a saint a remark denoting drawing back from hardship, for I sense their danger.

I read somewhere, something like this:

Is the wilderness of this life a loathed and soul-wearing pilgrimage, or a grand training ground for God?

Do you say, "Oh, for some work which will satisfy the finer appetites and subtler sympathies of my soul! But this wholly expends my higher faculties; it makes life a waste, and the future a blank."

Or do you say, "God, my God, has placed me here, because He knows what Eternity means, and what I am to do there; and because of the grandeur of my future, He is not ashamed to make the scene of present discipline so poor and bare. Be my one work here to make the commonplaces and low levels as full of His presence as the Holy of Holies, where His glory dwells."

Yes, it is an extremely dangerous thing to beat our wings against the protecting bars of the cage of our environments (1 Cor. 7:20-23). It is only in the attitude of restful content, that faith in the wisdom of God brings, that "*he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*" ^{Eph. 1:11}

One dear woman, to whom the Savior was a glorious reality and His love her satisfying portion all through her earlier years, and as she was raising her family, even when she must be the breadwinner during the long-declining health of her husband, preceding his triumphant departure, later in life married a man of comfortable means, who lavished every kindness upon her, crowned her queen, and he was her willing servant. A great change for her, and she accepted it with a new, lively joy of advantage gained, with the undiscerned exultation of that devastating self-complacency.

The man had accumulated means, but he was not the strong Christian that she had been for many years, and he saw little beyond his comforts and conflicts and shrinking from them, was weak. He sought out a woman upon whom he could lean, and gave to her the place that he should have given his Lord. She should have taken her stand against it, differentiated, and said to him:

"I cannot consent to be your goddess, for it is written, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'^{Ex. 20:3} But I am free and happy to consent to be your beloved companion." (For he was hardly conscious of a wrong attitude; his loneliness and other conflicts had blinded him.)

But with her experience in the things of God, it could not be

said that she was blind to this, at first. But if she had been, the checks of the Spirit and faithful warnings of friends would have discovered to her the danger the man was in.

You know all real Christians pray for everyone that touches their life (or they should). And she saw how weak the man was, always talking of the loss of his wife and his loneliness. She knew how hard it had been for her to get to the place where she could rejoice in sorrow, and she had learned by blessed experience how truly Jesus can take the place of loved ones, and she carried a burden on her heart for the man. And, as you have proved, as you pray for a soul, Divine love will flow through your heart till you love them up to your capacity as Jesus loves them. It is not so much you loving them; no, but God who so loved (Jn. 3:16), loving them through you.

One of the most subtle, devastating devices which the enemy could have designed, and in which, I am sure, is his highest delight, is to transpose this marvelous, strength-giving Divine love by stealthily introducing that sweet but impotent affection of the human heart. There is a marked similitude between the two, though one is strong and the other ineffective. When this insinuation takes place, one does not readily differentiate. Yet we cannot excuse them, for God is faithful; they could tell the difference if they really wanted to, and it may prove serious indeed if they do not. We may pity them and pray for them, but God does not excuse them, and we dare not call them blameless.

I might mention just one case by way of illustration: A woman of much prayer carried a burden for an evangelist and his work far and near for a year or more. This was all right so far. And then this God-given burden of prayer and love for souls that he might reach, began to be transposed, nonperceptibly at first, with human love for the man himself. And then the most astounding stratagem was used, perverting the Scriptures and exalting the mercy of God above the clearly written Word, as to specially granted privileges and so on, until they were both drawn down into that almost irresistible whirlpool of inordinate affections.

Sooner or later, as a natural sequence, vengeance will follow such inventions of men (Ps. 106:39), referred to here as "idolatrous acts, or attitudes, and new ways of making one's self more wise or happy than God has made him"; for this does not exalt God (Ps. 99:9).

It may become a serious thing to leave our First Love; and it surely will, unless there is an arresting of spiritual decline.

But to go back to the history of my friend, as she has told it to me bit by bit in the years I have lived by her.

It may have been God's plan for her—marriage (we know marriage and companionship in the Lord is God's ideal)—if she had only been careful to keep God first, and in humility of spirit made it all an offering to Him. But—well, she had grown weary in life's battle. She admired this man; he had means; there would be no

longer the pinch of poverty, and considering what all this would mean to her, she accepted his homage without careful discrimination, silencing many a gentle admonition from the Lord, hiding it from some of her most spiritual friends, and became quite self-satisfied. You know it is very pleasing to the natural to be set upon a pedestal, to be petted and loved. Human companionship is very sweet. It is sad to think how many will barter companionship with Jesus for passing human love that has so often soon died out.

But not so did another child of God. Sister A——, with sterling self-denial, refused all this, although proffered again and again, that she might pursue her calling unhindered. Rather late in life, she accepted the companionship of a noble Christian man who, like herself, would keep God first. He became her able assistant in evangelistic work. Happy indeed were they as they continued to “*seek... first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,*”^{Mt. 6:33} and exalt His name together.

We all need, at times, the uplift of another's faith.

But again going back to my neighbor: The earthly side of this woman's life had been one long battle with the hardship of poverty, and years of lonely widowhood (yet overbalanced a thousandfold with the love of Jesus), and she looked upon this kind companionship and release from poverty and loneliness as her just deserts and special blessing from the Lord—just as it might be with any one of us, without exceptions, unless we were very watchful. She allowed, I am sorry to say, the bestowment of the companionship and kind care of a husband with means to take the first place in her heart, that Jesus had held so long, without realizing it.

Still there was no reason why she should not have realized it. There is no excuse that will stand at the judgment. God is faithful to forewarn, to acquaint us of danger if we will keep a listening ear and an obedient heart. And she could have easily discerned her danger if she had only paused to consider this one fact, that spontaneous thought revolved far more around herself in connection with husband and home, than around the Bridegroom of her soul and the purchase of His blood; which for years had been her supreme delight. She did what she had no thought of doing. She left her first love. To have spoken to her of it then, ever so kindly, would have raised a storm of combativeness. Only the Lord can deal with such a situation at that juncture.

But with all this earthly blessing, there was felt a lack. That heart echo that she used to sing with such rapid rapture, “Precious, gentle, holy Jesus, Blessed Bridegroom of my heart,” did not find that full response it once did. “*The love of [her] espousals*”^{Jer. 2:2} had grown cold. A shadow had come between.

The deep underlying unrest that would come to the surface occasionally was hushed into silence with the thought that this marriage was a blessing from the Lord, legitimate, Scriptural, and according to nature. This was all true, yet the shadow remained. She could not reason it away. Long weeks of sickness and automobile accidents came, and in her extremity she would once and again turn to her Lord who was still waiting to be gracious. But some compromise, because of the husband, would soon obscure the clear shining of His face. Finally the hand of death was laid upon the husband, whom she had suffered to rob her Lord, and for whom she had left her first love.

There are not a few such cases among the pilgrims; and we have some very definite petitions, that we would remember daily before the Throne, for individuals who, we have reason to fear, are nearing that dangerous “ecliptic,” that line where the appreciation of legitimate, earthly good will eclipse the Sun of Righteousness, who has so wondrously risen upon their lives. A partial eclipse is bewildering. But it could become a total eclipse, as it has in other lives, and that is so dark. Judas betrayed his Lord by allowing the desire for added means to supply their necessities to lead him to betray Jesus (but with no thought of what would follow); and when it was settled in his mind to do so, it is written of him, “*He then [went out] and it was night.*”^{Jn. 13:30}

He had extinguished the light, so the candlestick was removed; and according to the record, indeed “*it was night!*” ➤

Napping in the Lord

When I was a young man, naps never worked well for me—I would feel tired and groggy after a nap for quite a while. But now as I am approaching fifty, I have discovered that a nap after lunch is something to look forward to.

I have some little peculiarities in my napping that God has been teaching me some things about. I lie on my back, and start telling my various muscle-groups to relax, and I consciously relax them as much as I am able. After a little while, I notice that I can “sink” down a little more in relaxation, and I breathe a bit slower, and then, when I'm really relaxed, my jaw relaxes in some odd way that I began to make a little *pah!* sound. I'm conscious of this sort of snore, but too relaxed generally to be distracted by it. I count it a “sign,” if you will, of my successful relaxation. But the proof comes when I'm finished napping, and try a *streeeeeeetch* of all my muscles, and it feels so good! I am now ready to face the remainder of the day with new energy.

I was reflecting on this, and asking the Lord to show me what I could learn spiritually from this, and He began to talk to me about “spiritual napping.” When I take my burdens to the Lord in prayer, He wants me to so successfully let them go that I become spiritually “relaxed” enough to make some peculiar little spiritual “noise” of relaxation (I don't know that I can come up with a description of that at this point), but then the real proof comes when it is time to “stretch,” so-to-speak. One night it was taking me a while to get my cares in the Lord's hands, but I asked Him to help me release them all to Him and really relax spiritually (1 Pet. 5:7). I don't remember when I went to sleep or if I could recall a little spiritual “snoring,” so-to-speak, but I do remember waking up with a profound sense of gratitude to the Lord for all His goodness to me. I was ready to tackle a new day with renewed spiritual energies!

I recommend to you, at any age, spiritual “napping,” and please pray for me that I get better at it myself!

—a brother in the Lord ➤

The Veil of Sense Made Transparent by Prayer C. E. Orr—Odors from Golden Vials

It is prayer that brings us face to face with God. It is by the prayer of faith that we close our eyes on things that are seen and look away to things unseen. The veil of sense, like a veil, hangs over us, dimming our vision to eternal things; but prayer causes the mist to become transparent, so that the eyes of faith can pierce through and see many beauties in the perfections of God.

The Apostle John, being in the Spirit, saw many things that the veil of sense hides from the eyes of those who are not in the Spirit. If we ever understand fully the mysteries of the book of Revelation, we must, I suppose, get into the spirit their author was in and to the same degree. The book of Revelation can never be fully understood by reading what others have said, but by prayer in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus when He prayed. His praying at the time of His baptism is mentioned by only one of the Gospel writers, Luke, who says, "*It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.*" Lk. 3:21-22 If you would have the heavens open, you must pray. If you would have the Holy Spirit rest upon you, live much in prayer. Again, Luke is the only New Testament writer that speaks of Jesus praying at the time of His transfiguration. Perhaps Luke saw more clearly the virtue and power of prayer. He says, "*He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*" Lk. 9:28 Matthew and Mark, who tell of Jesus' going up with these three disciples into the mountain, say nothing of His going there to pray. But it was to pray. "*And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.*" Lk. 9:29 There is a changing, transforming power in prayer.

O Christ, so lovely, pure, and fair,
So beautiful in holiness,
If we but live with Thee in prayer,
Thy beauty will be seen on us,

Thy beauty like the rosy morn,
Purity like the crystal sea.
O God, if we but live in prayer,
We come to be as pure as Thee.

When Moses went up into the mountain, a cloud covered it, hiding the glory of the Lord for six days; but on the seventh the cloud became transparent, and then Moses talked to God for thirty-three days (Ex. 24:15-18). It is in prayer that we get visions of God.

Trials are good in that they drive us to the Lord in earnest prayer. In Isaiah 28:29 the last clause reads thus in the German: "*For trials and temptations alone teach to give heed to the word.*" It is trials that cause us to cling to the promises. Trials serve a very important part in keeping the sanctified nature clearly refined. The veil of sense is inclined to thicken, and were it not for the trials God in His tender love permits to come upon us, we should soon not be able to see beyond our own selves. Ofttimes God would have us see more of His love, tenderness, and beauty, and come nearer Him. The only way whereby He can get us to do these things is to let some trial come upon us.

When Absalom was conspiring to dethrone his father, David, the ambitious son asked Joab, captain of the king's army, to come and confer. At first Joab refused, but Absalom devised a plan whereby he could get the old warrior to meet him. Joab's barley field being near Absalom's, the conspirator sent his servants to set fire to Joab's barley and thus drew Joab out to him (2 Sam. 14:29-31). In like manner, the Lord must sometimes do something in order to get us to come nearer Him. He must set our barley field on fire, so to speak. Our affections may be taking hold on some earthly thing, so that for our safety God must set this on fire. We may be growing a little ambitious along some line and building hopes on a foundation other than God Himself. He must in some way rid us of those hopes and ambitions, and oftentimes there is no better way than a conflagration. The eye may become attracted by something of the world. That object grows as a thick mist between us and God, so that we can no longer see Him. Seeing our danger, the Lord in His faithfulness to us sets fire to that object, and by the light of that fire we can see our way back to God.

Strive to avoid the thickening of the veil of sense around you. When the mist has cleared away, climb up aloft and you can see the smile

ing face of Jesus. Today this veil of sense may be very thin to you, almost as thin as it was to Stephen when he was being stoned to death; but this transparency of our individual self has been brought about through much suffering and prayer. It has cost you something, but it is all the dearer because it has. Many a night, your heart has wept before the Lord. Sometimes you have wrestled till the dawning of the day. There may be a vacant chair at your fireside. She who so long shared your joys and sorrows, who by her gentle words and cheering smile helped you over many a rough and trying place in life, has gone away never to return. Maybe with bleeding heart you sit beside an empty crib. These things help to part the veil of the temple of human self, and you, looking through, see that little cherub of yours and your loving, faithful wife walking the gold-paved streets of the celestial city, strolling amid the blooming flowers of an eternal Eden, or sitting peacefully in the shadow of the Tree of Life. God designs every earthly loss to prove a heavenly gain to you. If you will draw near to Him in prayer, He will tell you why those things are or bid you wait a little longer with the promise that you shall know someday and understand why. Not a single spot in our life is so barren but that if it be watered by prayer, it will produce some tender blade or blooming flower. Pray on and let thy vision pass beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal.

Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for.

That is well—

That is light grieving! lighter none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.

Tears! What are tears?

The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps; and before the oracle
Of high-fanned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks.

Thank God for grace,

Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs, look up;
those tears will run

Soon in long rivers down the lifted face
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.



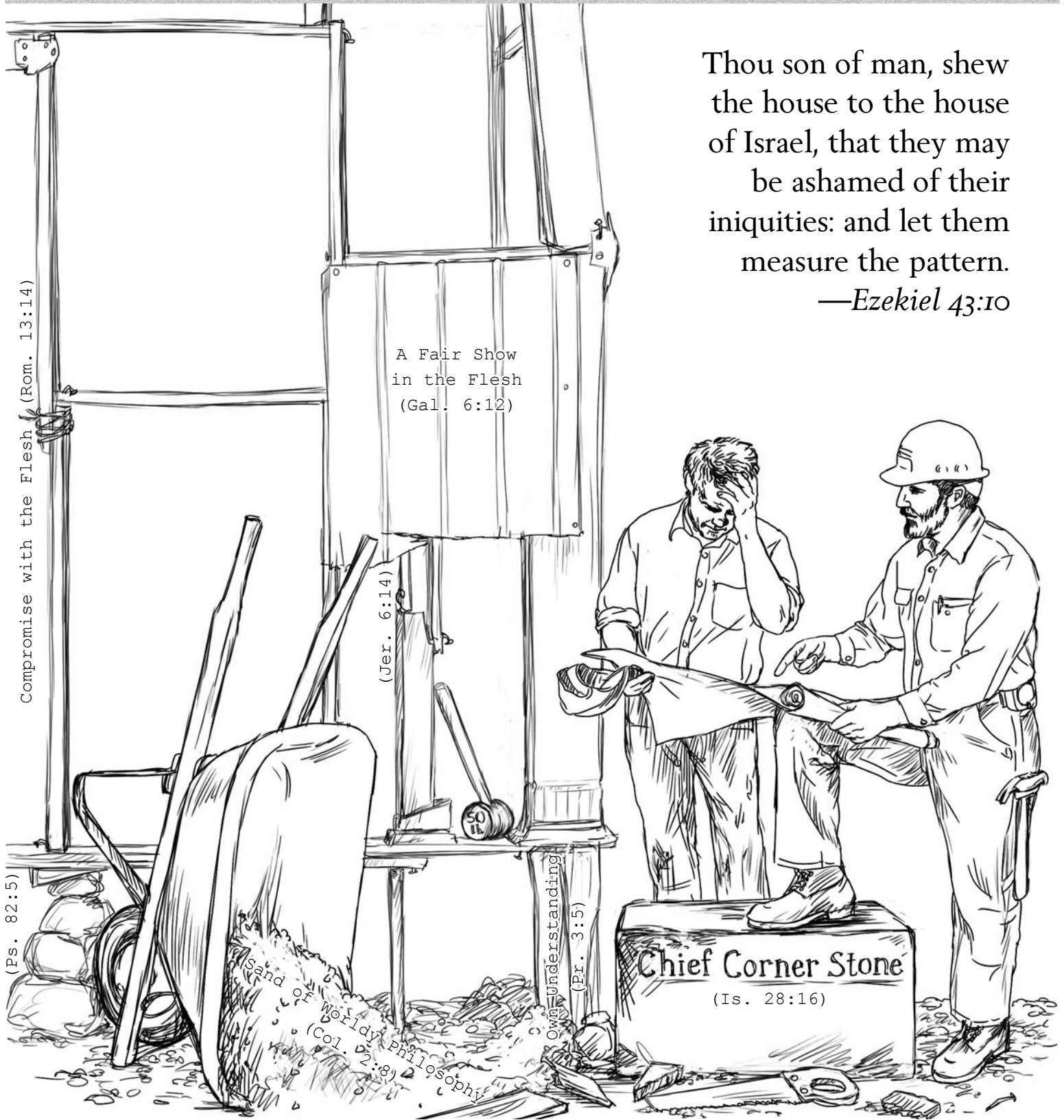
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Thou son of man, shew
the house to the house
of Israel, that they may
be ashamed of their
iniquities: and let them
measure the pattern.
—Ezekiel 43:10

A Fair Show
in the Flesh
(Gal. 6:12)

Chief Corner Stone

(Is. 28:16)

Compromise with the Flesh (Rom. 13:14)

(Jer. 6:14)

(Ps. 82:5)

Sand of Worldly Philosophy
(Col. 2:8)

Own Understanding
(Pr. 3:5)