

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—Jno. 8:32.

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"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

## SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

### THE WICKED — GOD'S MINISTERS

"... deliver my soul from the wicked, WHICH IS THY SWORD: from men WHICH ARE THY HAND, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly THOU FILLEST with THY HID TREASURE . . ." Psalms 17:13-14.

*There is nothing quite so refreshing as simply believing the Bible.* While this is not always an easy task, when once the Grace of God is dispatched to the heart enabling faith, great joy is found (Romans 15:13). *The Word of God has the characteristics of God Himself*, for it is His own word. It is marked by great depth; as the Psalmist declared; "Thy thoughts are very deep" (Psa. 92:5). It is also convicting and acts as a hammer to break in pieces the stubbornness of the heart, and as a fire to consume the vain pride of man. As it is written; "Is not Thy word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer which breaketh in pieces"? (Jer. 23:29). The Holy Spirit elsewhere refers to it as a "sword" that "is quick and powerful" (Heb. 4:12), and as the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), which is a heavenly weapon!

The passage set before us is not altogether common among churchmen; as a matter of undisputed fact, most of them have never heard of it, and were it not written in their Bibles, and subject to their gaze, they would openly oppose its declaration, for their hearts are set at enmity by nature against it! But there is great liberation when once your heart is enabled to embrace this truth. Your troubles are viewed as from God; the wicked are seen, from this high vantage point, as your *helpers* to glory, *assisting* in "working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). It means that rather than chaffing under the yoke of Christ we find it "easy" and the "burden light" (Matt. 11:28-29). It removes the bitterness of many a cup which we are called upon to drink, and makes us more willing to give God the praise and glory for all things. We must never forget that it is God with Whom we have to do, and I find that this text assists me in that sacred memory!

You will behold here some preliminary observations: (1. The Psalmist has no affinity with the wicked, even though they are being used of God. This teaches us that *those used of God are not necessarily approved by God* (II Tim. 2:15). (2. The wicked are God's sword; i.e., He uses them to minister His more distasteful chastisements and works of wrath. The saints are spared of these terrible ministrations, because the judgement will be according to our works. The wicked, therefore, shall receive their *just* dues when they are punished. (3. These are men of the world, i.e., men that are oriented to this world, who have a real union with it; whose appetites are geared for this life, and who have no relish for the "things of the Spirit of God." (4. Their portion is in this life, i.e., *the best that they will ever have is now*. The future is bleak and dim, because it shall be sure

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## The Word of Truth

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damnation and everlasting exclusion from the Face of the Lord and the glory of His power. What they have, they have **now**; they shall have nothing in the next life; **NOTHING!** (5. It is God that fills them with His own treasure, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof (Psa. 24:1). Thus does the Lord placate their seared consciences with those things which shall pass away. Happy they are who dwell in wickedness and unconsciously remain. His sword and hand while their bellies are full. It is truly said of them; "Woe unto you that are full **now!** for ye **shall** hunger" (Luke 6:25) As you view these things by faith, are you not caused to stand back in adoration of the wisdom and power of our God? **These things are written in order that our hearts might worship more and our mouths speak less.** His glory is so great, so transcendent; His workings are so inscrutable, that it behooves us to stand in silent adoration often!

The wicked are a source of vexation to the righteous. Iniquitous men are to the saints as briars and thorns" (Isa. 27:4). To be around them in even necessary or casual relationships leaves, as it were, the mark of Cain upon us. How often do we require cleansing because of contamination received due to ungodly company. **The world itself is like a slough filled with stagnation and parasitic growth.** The wicked are the inhabitants of this obnoxious slough. They live in its environ and thrive sumptuously there. Indeed, so affected are they by the filth of this world that they contaminate everything they touch - including the lives of the righteous. **None of the believers are fully aware of how their lives have been altered, their aspirations affected, and their convictions modified by contact with the wicked.** Our awareness of these things is only fragmentary in relation to their tremendous scope. Yet, even our partial knowledge of these influences awakens us from lethargic sleep when we see aright. It is during such spiritual consciousness that we cry with the "sweet Psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1); "... deliver my soul from the wicked" (Psa. 17:13). Is it not written: "The wicked plotteth against the righteous" (Psa. 37:12). "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11), and thus shall they "be turned into hell" (Psa. 9:17). Their very

paths are fraught with "thorns and snares" which are "in the way of the forward." Behold how those that would keep their soul must keep "far from them" (Prov. 22:5). But these things are exceedingly plain to those that "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25). I but mention them in order to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (II Pet 3:1) concerning the "enemies of the cross of Christ."

However, we must not permit the obnoxiousness of the wicked to cloud our judgement or adversely affect our knowledge. **They still perform a vital, albeit not pleasant, ministry.** The wicked are specifically identified as God's "sword" and "hand"; i.e., our Father uses them in the exercise of His counsels in all wisdom and prudence. He oft times uses them for disciplinary measures; thus are they called His "sword." Too, they are used in the setting up of circumstances necessary to the execution of His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11), and thus are they called His "hand." The fact that they are used of God, however, by no means indicates the acceptability of them before their Maker. Judas became God's "hand" in the execution of our redemption; but he was the "son of perdition" (John 17:12) and a "devil" (John 6:70). Further, the witness of the Lord was "it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus - they all were used of God, but this did not sanctify their despicable lives, or cause them to be "approved unto God" (II Tim. 2:15). Did not the Lord "raise up adversaries" unto Solomon, as it is written; "And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite" (I Kgs. 11:14); And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah . . ." (I Kgs. 11:23). Did this mean that Hadad and Rezon were approved unto God - God forbid. **They were His "sword" to render chastisement unto Solomon according to the word of the Lord;** "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (II Sam. 7:14). In like manner, "Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered to gether" against the Lord's Christ. **They were God's "sword" to accomplish our redemption by working "whatsoever His Hand had determined before to be done"** (Acts 4:27-28) Yet, they were guilty of sin, and the whole nation continues to suffer because of that grievous rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.

While it is comparatively simple to read these accounts in the Scriptures and see the truth of them to some degree, it is not always so easy to discern the same working of the Lord God in relation to us. How many times do we view our enemies as the "sword" or the "hand" of the Lord. When men curse us bitterly and drive the arrows of enmity into our hearts, can we say with David as he restrained his army captain from slaying Shemei who cursed him; "**The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David, Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?**" (II Sam. 16:9-10). Was David's a special case? No! **David's sight was special, but the circumstances were no different, in reality,**

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## WHEN JOY INHIBITS FAITH

“... they believed not for joy” Luke 24:41

It was a dismal night for the asthenic disciples. Their precious years with their Master had been interrupted swiftly and unawares. They sat discouraged and fearfully cognizant of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified on “the place of a skull” (Matt. 27:33), and that His body had been laid in a sealed tomb. All hopes had been dissipated; clouds of despair were flung across their bright horizons. Despondent and sensibly alone, they sat pondering these things. They saw the whole matter as men, as is indicated by the remarks of Cleopas and his companion; “But we **trusted** that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done” (Lk.24:21). Suddenly, right in their midst, the “Lord of glory” appears. Their hearts leap with excitement, their cloudy skies are cleared; their eyes glow with the brightness of jubilation. But it is written, “they believed not for joy.” Their rejoicing was from the reservoir of flesh, just like their sadness. They saw neither the implications of His death nor of His resurrection. **They were glad he was there, but they were ignorant of WHY He was there.** They saw Him as their earthly companion and friend, but not as “the Lord from heaven” (I Cor. 15:47) So full of joy were they, that they could not believe. Their faith could not break through the maze of carnal joy!

O, how often believers find themselves “in such a case” (Psa. 144:15). Circumstances come upon them like hordes of Palestinian locusts. They groan and sigh because of the fierce devastation which they work. Their spirits are jarred, their hopes seem shattered, and joy flees away like a wounded dove. Aye, we oft behold no real significance in these things; we fail to see the hand of the Lord in them. Weak vessels that we are - we sometimes feel that we have been forsaken. Then - a ray of hope; the circumstances are altered - “good” things come over our way! “We are blessed”, we shout with joy! Indeed, so joyful are we that like the disciples we “believe not for joy.” **Faith does not penetrate to behold the glory of the Lord.** The implications of our environ does not burst upon us. We forget to muse upon the trial that has been our portion - to find there instruction for the heart, warnings from the Lord, and cause for making “straight paths for our feet” (Heb. 12:13). **Faith must extract from life’s pathway information concerning God and man - and it will do that. However, when we permit carnal joy to inhibit faith, we continue to be ignorant of both God and man!**

Whatever we may feel concerning joy, we must not seek it so eagerly that we are found with a miserable substitute for real joy in the Lord. **When our circumstances are altered, the real spiritual joy must not be the result of beholding their alteration, but rather of recognizing that the Father loves us, and that He has not forsaken us.** Our joy, in short, is to be in the Lord. It is important to observe, furthermore, that if this is to be the case, we must receive our lots from the Lord, acknowledging Him IN all of our

## NOMENCLATURE

The word “nomenclature” signifies terminology used in a particular sphere of knowledge. In this case, I am speaking of religious nomenclature. It is important that the people of God learn to speak “in words that the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual with spiritual” (I Cor. 2:13). The segment of our Bibles which was called by Jesus and the Apostles “Moses and the prophets” (Luke 16:29; 24:27; Acts 28:23) is the source of most spiritual expression. It was there, using the Israelites, that the Lord developed a particular nomenclature through which He might converse with men. He, in inscrutable wisdom, attached peculiar significance to certain words and concepts, whereby He might communicate to His people the glories of redemption “which is in Christ Jesus with eternal life” ((II Tim. 2:10). Words like “atonement”, “redemption”, “sanctify”, “salvation”, “cleanse”, “clean”, “unclean”, “death”, “priest”, “high priest”, “weapons”, “deliver”, “transgression”, etc., were introduced with Divine emphasis. **It is imperative that believers, therefore, learn to express themselves in this language, so that the truth may be preserved in purity.**

Satan, in his usual cunningness, has devised a wily means of mitigating the truth, however. He has authored additional words to be freely coupled with Divine words - thus attempting a unity of spiritual words with carnal words. The results have been a whole host of theological dogmas and creeds - traditional inhibitions to faith that have driven a wedge between the spirit of man and the Living God. Here are some of the examples, which are far too numerous to enumerate here:

Human Word	Divine Word
LIMITED	Atonement
INFANT	Baptism
WATER	Baptism
SAVING	Grace
NEW TESTAMENT	Church
IRRESISTIBLE	Grace
BORN AGAIN	Believers
CARNAL	Christians
ANOTHER	Faith

While I do not mean to repudiate all attempts to express and expound truth, it is necessary to point out that **the words introduced by men’s sophistry often overshadow the concepts given by the Holy Spirit.** Such is the case with the examples above. Rather than the words that have been given and invested with meaning by the Lord becoming the basis for theological thinking, they are modified in some way by man’s wisdom, thus losing their real significance. I do not know that I am capable of relating exactly what the power of this has been, but it is worthy of an attempt. I am not meaning to imply that all of the above phrases are void of some element of truth - God forbid; but I am saying that **they are not sufficient to convey the mind of God; their basic ministry is to**

ways (Prov. 3:4-6). **If we cannot perceive the Lord in our calamities, we shall not behold Him in our more pleasant seasons.** If we walk by faith, we will also joy in faith.

convey thoughts used to erect theological fences - and this is wrong. We must continually be on guard against using the Scriptures as a means of fortifying the doctrines of men. **Scriptural words possess no power to sanctify improper concepts.** Were this truth to be registered upon the heart of every would-be theologian, I am sure the ministry would empty faster than it has ever been filled. **The Scriptures are so written as to contribute only to the glory of God.** If they must be used to establish a religious organization of some sort, you must add to them or take from them - and when this happens, the curse of God is as surely upon you as the heavens are above the earth (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18).

Satan first started this tactic with Eve. God said, "Thou shalt surely die"; Satan said, "Thou shalt NOT surely die" (Gen. 2:17; 3:4). The additional word completely altered Eve's thinking; it changed the whole course of her being. The Lord had uttered four simple words, albeit profound in their implication. Satan retained all four words that the Lord had uttered, and added 25% more; one little word. It was only three letters long, one syllable long, and not even a major word in the language; and yet, the whole creation was effected by it. Other contemporary alterations of the word of God by Satan are, "Baptism DOES NOT save you", as compared with God's assertion "baptism doth now also save us" (I Pet. 3:21); and "All men have faith", as compared to the Lord's declaration "All men have NOT faith" (II Thess. 3:2). You can see, therefore, that he is still very active in diverting men's minds from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

**When giving the "sense" (Neh 8:8) of any segment of the Word, supplemental language must never alter the meaning conveyed by the Spirit of God. No strange or unspiritual conceptions are to be introduced; no distractions from "the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16).** For this to be accomplished, the sole motive must be to deliver the word of the Lord; not the fortification of an institution, not the establishment of a sect, not the development of a theological thought or fence. The heart must be enraptured with the Living God, the mind saturated with a subjectivity to and delight in the law of God, and the conscience formed and developed by the thoughts of God. Any individual that is otherwise motivated, that possesses any overcoming drives for personal advancement, etc., must keep silence, and cease to expound the Word of God - his exposition will be affected by his motives, thus rendering it unfit for the ears of God's people.

Not everyone is adept in spotting such false prophets, and I would suppose that no one is perfect in this area. It therefore behooves every saint of God to give particular diligence to his own development in this area, for the **personal fortification of his own spirit with the truth of God will be the best means to spotting an intruder into these things.** Finally, see to it that you **shun any and all terminology that is like a cup too small to contain the great truth of God.** Use whole words, not partial ones; speak in terminology that conveys the full spectrum of truth, not a lop-sided and humanistic one.

The will of man has been the focal point of many a raging controversy in the religious world. It is interesting that such a matter would invoke such an alarming response among churchmen who are normally not too enthusiastic about offense and defense in spiritual matters. It is not, however, as though the Word of God has any ambiguity in it concerning man's will; there is an abundance of the mind of God revealed at this point, and it is good that we come into a knowledge of it. The point of controversy centers around the "free-will" of man. The word "free-will" signifies "unhindered or uncoerced choice; specif., the doctrine that human beings are not controlled in their choices by physical or divinely imposed necessity" (Webster). At this point, we at once are brought to grips with the root of the matter; i.e., that man is not under restrictive or compulsive control; that he cannot be moved against his nature within the recesses of his will; that while you may alter his conduct and demeanor, his will remains enslaved to his own heart; and that he does nothing in the matter of his will through influences brought to bear upon him from heaven or earth. Man, in this case, is the master of his own destiny; the ruler of his own future. He is thrust upon his own natural resources in the determining of eternal matters. The official theological position concerning free will states that man is a "free-moral agent", and that his salvation is determined by his choice; that his volition is the determining factor in his eternal destiny. Now, it is well to state at the very outset of this discourse, that we are speaking of "free-will" in respect to salvation; i.e., justification. The word "free-will" is used in Scripture in reference to offerings brought before the Lord; Lev. 22:21, 23; Num. 15:3; Duet. 16:10; 23:23; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 7:16; 8:28; Lev. 22:18; 23:38; Num. 29:39; Duet. 12:6, 17; II Chron. 31:14; Psa. 119:108. However, the word is NEVER used in reference to the procurement of salvation or the "justification of life" (Rom. 5:18).

The exponents of free-will have ignored some very basic principles of Scripture that deal total devastation to their position. **Man is by nature a slave, not free;** aptly pictured by the Holy Spirit as a "servant of sin" (Rom. 6:17). A bondsman to sin, he is at enmity with his Maker and riveted to the earth in his affections and ambitions. All our life time we were "subject to bondage through fear of death" (Heb. 2:15), and were "in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4:3). Like Israel in Egypt, so were we in sin; held in rigorous slavery in every aspect of our natures. **We could not free ourselves from those shackles, and therefore, were not free in any sense of the word.** Further, the unregenerated person is "alienated" from God "in his mind through wicked works" (Col. 1:21). Elsewhere it is referred to as being "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. 4:18). Now, it is inconceivable that such an one could be constituted "free" in the matter of the will. **The whole mind is at enmity with God by nature, and consequently rendered totally incapable of discerning His**

truth or choosing in favor of it. Again, those not born again are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13) and, as such, remain incapable of any sort of response to the "Prince of life." **How can the dead respond to the living except it be by Divine empowerment.** Where was the free-will of Lazarus when Jesus raised him from the dead (John 11)? Toward God, the natural man's will is dead, not free. Man's whole being must be MADE free - liberated - and this includes the area of the will. This is, Praise God, the function of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:36). He quickens man, bringing him alive through grace, in order that his reciprocity toward God might be genuine under the domination of God's "free Spirit" (Psa. 51:12). In this sense, it is God that "worketh in you" to "will" (Phil. 2:13).

To expect that a sinner, of his own volition, would turn to the Lord apart from the lofty influences of the Spirit wrought upon the heart, is to expect an enemy to favor the one against whom he is set; a servant of one to liberate himself in order to the service of another; a dead man to come alive. All of these are works of God, and may be brought about alone by His great power. **The whole man is impaired by the transgression of Adam, and it is only by the effectual work of Christ and the drawing of the Spirit of God that any part of him may be enlivened** (Rom. 3-5). Our Armenian friends (exponents of free-will) do not believe that man's entire person is subject to mortification outside of Christ - and that this mortification is inevitable. It is utterly false that there is any portion of man that by nature is responsive to God. He is dead - **wholly** dead; alienated - **wholly** alienated; a servant of sin - **wholly** a servant of sin; God Himself quickens us; "And (God) hath quickened you, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1-6). Observe the glorious truths that are set before us here. (1. That we were quickened (made alive) by God. (2. That we were in a state of death (unresponsiveness to God) in trespasses and sins. (3. That the path of our life lay in the course of this world - i.e., we were fully and happily oriented to that which shall pass away. (4. That our lives were expressly and minutely guided by Satan, the prince of the power of the air, whose power, indeed, transcended our own by nature. (5. That every one of us had our **whole** manner of life fulfilling the unlawful desires and wants of our flesh. (6. That our very nature summoned forth the wrath of God. (7. That in the very condition, God made the **first** move, quickening us in our dead state. (8. That this quickening was a

great exhibition of the grace of God. Where, now, does your free-will enter into that. Indeed; where is your will mentioned at all? Exponents of free-will deny the hold of death upon us apart from Christ. They deny the fact of grace and the richness of God's mercy.

Jesus "quickens whom **He wills**" (Jno. 5:21), so that salvation is not a matter of our wills, but of the Savior's will. Without spiritual power to activate the dry bones they remain lifeless and "very dry" within the open valley (Ezek. 37:1-14). It takes the breath of God to activate them, not a mere arbitrary choice on man's part. **Man's choice, apart from Divine power is ineffectual, because it is drawn toward earth, and expended alone on the implementation of his own earthly lusts and desires.** The will of man is properly effected only by the power of God. As it is written: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of **Thy power**" (Psa. 110:3).

The express statements of revelation confirm our faith at this point; "But to as many as received Him, to them **gave He the power** to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, **NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN**, but of God" (Jno. 1:12-13); "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, **it is not of him that willeth**, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:15-16). When we come to the subject of the will, therefore, the will of God becomes predominant! In salvation, it is His will that ultimately shall be executed to the fullest measure. Where, for instance, would Saul of Tarsus had ended were it not for the will of God? There on the road of Damascus, our great Lord **made him willing in the day of His power** (Acts 9). And was it not the same, dear reader, with you? Was it not the Lord that arrested your attention and changed your affections. Are not you that believe in Jesus also "**His** workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10). Is not the faith that constrained you will a gift from God (Phil. 1:29). Is it not with you as with all Gentiles; God was "found of them that sought Him not" (Isa. 65:1). What if we had been left to our own devices; if no Divine power had been exerted upon our calloused hearts and stubborn wills? O, let men speak of "free-will" and "free moral agency" as they desire, but we who have "tasted of the Lord" know how we came to this state. It was not our own doing. God saw us in our own blood, polluted, not supplied, and with no eye to pity us. It was He Who in Sovereign power said "**LIVE**" (Ezek. 16:1-6). It was at that time that our whole man was made to live; or, to put it another way, that we were freed from dominion to the earth and the prince of the world, Satan. **Until we were made alive by that grace, we were powerless to will anything but that which was evil in the eyes of God.**

The reason for man's natural will being diverse from the Lord's is this: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways,

and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). God's ways are of a different gender; so different, indeed, that man cannot possibly will to do them, receive or imbibe them, apart from Divine intervention. **When man fell "short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), his entire person was marred and disfigured. His appreciation for God was lost, and thus his will died toward God.**

Man's will is governed by his mind and heart. But, these have been corrupted by sin; they have been nailed to the earth. **Toward God death prevails by nature.** Whatever God sends, whether blessing or cursing, only drives natural man further from God. The benefits of God in creation only make the sinner more complacent and less apt to think of God, while the judgements of God only constrain him to blaspheme the more and doubt in his heart the reality of God. Why is this the case? Because man is corrupted; he "drinks iniquity like water" (Job 15:16). He is not God-oriented. His will, his heart, his mind, his affections - they all have the taint of sin upon them. **He has died - literally died toward God His Maker!** Too, think of the declaration of our Lord with these things in mind; "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Is this a statement that contributes to the doctrine of free-will? Did you ever - I say ever - hear an exponent of free-will give the sense of this text? Why is it ignored? Simply because it flies in the face of men's stupid doctrines. **It violates the premise that man comes to God via his free will!** Natural qualifications are irrelevant here; it makes no difference how much he knows, how he has been instructed, whether or not he is religious - all of this falls to the ground. Our Master speaks in solemn tones: "NO MAN can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him!" Now, what does that tell you of man's will? First, that **there is no desire to come to Christ within the natural man** - none at all. Second, even allowing that there was, it takes God to draw or incline him toward the Savior. In Christ, firstly, "there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2). **Jesus is not adapted to the natural mind, and hence there really is no appeal to the human will.** He is high and lofty in His Person, thus necessitating a Divine work to even draw man's attention to Him. Did not Jesus declare: "And I, if I be lifted up, will DRAW all men unto me" (Jno. 12:32). This revealed the very deadness of man's will. **Were man as capable as some declare, he would never have to be drawn or inclined unto the Lord!** But this is not the case, as is indicated by this word: "There is **none** that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). "We have **all** gone astray, WE HAVE TURNED EVERYONE TO HIS OWN WAY . . ." (Isa. 53:6), and because the Lord's Person does not blend with our own way, we entertain no interest in Him until constrained by the Spirit of God to behold Him in truth.

The effect of this holy drawing is, of course, that we become "willing in the day of His power". It is not as though the Lord bent our necks to behold His Son with reluctance. The marvel of sal-

*(Please turn to page 8)*

## COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS

By Richard Ebler

### Chapter Two (cont.)

(Vs. 19-24) "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

At this point in Paul's letter he tells the Philippians that he has immediately dispatched Epaphroditus to them (vs. 25-30) and hopes to do the same with Timothy (vs. 19-23) as soon as he finds out whether his own trial will eventuate in martyrdom or release from prison (v. 23). He hopes to send reinforcements to this beleaguered church so troubled by persecution (ch. 1:28), dissension (ch. 2:2; 4:2), and false teachers (ch. 3:2-7). News of approaching help would encourage them, and Paul's earnest care of the saints by letter should rebuke those of us who do not take advantage of modern communications toward the same end.

The carnal mind finds it difficult to understand how men like Timothy and Epaphroditus could be in a state of subjection to Paul, a prisoner at Rome. It certainly wasn't for money. But they knew that all men are prisoners of God, some consciously and some unconsciously. Furthermore they could see that Paul was a future prince of the eternal world to come, and they recognized his spiritual authority.

Paul focuses for a moment on Timothy, his "own son in the faith" (I Tim. 1:2). This young man had been nurtured up in the Hebrew scriptures by a godly mother and grandmother in spite of a divided home (II Tim. 1:5, 3:15; Acts 16:1-3). He was converted at Lystra by Paul (Acts 14:6, 7, 16:1) and became his companion on several of Paul's journeys. Paul hoped to send him to the Philippians, but he refers the whole matter to the will of God who may have providentially decreed otherwise. Thus he demonstrated the proper faith, humility, and reverence for God in this area (Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:15). Even the inspired apostle was not sure of God's will concerning his future.

Paul says that he will send Timothy in order that he might "be of good comfort." His own happiness was bound up in the spiritual welfare of his converts. Indeed, their loss would be his own for all eternity (I Cor. 3:15); therefore, he would not be at ease until he had learned that all was well with them. Thus Timothy's trip was for his own good as well as their's. Paul had no one else who would naturally care for their state and bring back an accurate appraisal of their spiritual condition.

True Christianity is primarily a matter of the state of heart, not of mere religious activity. Oh, that pride would not blind men to their true state! The heart must be purified by believing the gospel (Acts 15:9). A properly balanced feeding on God's Word is essential to spiritual health, combined with honesty and a humble, submissive will (Luke 8:15; John 7:17). A heart in happy har-

mony with God's Word will be in harmony with God Himself. A man's relationship to God can be objectively measured by his attitude toward the Bible and the amount of free time he spends in it. To promote this is to promote "the things which are Jesus Christ's." This sort of "state-work" had become a natural thing to Timothy, so that for him to be natural was to be spiritual. A noble trait to aspire for!

"When Paul says 'all seek their own' he does not speak of those who had openly abandoned the pursuit of godliness, but of those very persons whom he reckoned brethren, even those whom he admitted to his own circle. These persons, he nevertheless says, were so warm in pursuing their own interests that they were cold in the work of the Lord. . . . It may seem at first sight as if it were no great fault to seek one's own; but how insufferable it is in the servants of Christ appears from the fact that it renders those whom it possesses utterly useless. For it is impossible that he who is devoted to self, should spend himself for the Church. . . . One or the other of these two dispositions shall rule our hearts. Whether, overlooking ourselves we are devoted to Christ and His work, or, intent in our own gain we serve Him perfunctorily. . . . If however, Paul reproveth so severely those who were influenced by a greater concern for themselves than for the Church, what judgment may they expect who are completely given up to their own affairs and care nothing for the edification of the Church?

"It must be conceded that one may seek his own interests so long as he is not prevented from seeking the kingdom of Christ. But in that case they will not be said to seek their own interests; for a man's life is estimated according to its chief aim." Again, when he says "all" he does not imply that there were no exceptions, for there were others also, like Epaphroditus, but he ascribes to all what was generally prevalent.

Why would others shrink from this journey? Because to go from Rome to Philippi would have taken several months of risky travel. There might be storms at sea, pirates, persecuting along the way, delays in port, long marches, weariness, the absence of loved ones, and perhaps short provisions. But God's people as the salt of the earth, are sprinkled among many nations as a preservative, and therefore traveling preachers dot the scenes of church history.

It would not be easy for Paul to send Timothy away. He would miss his rich fellowship which was rare even back in what we think of as the Golden Age of the Church. But he knew that Timothy had proven himself in the eyes of the Philippians by laboring alongside Paul when he was among them as a spiritually kindred submissive son. This was a task impossible for a flesh-loving person to perform. Paul's high praise of Timothy shows his humility and wisdom in putting honor on other ministers for the good of the cause of Christ in order to bolster their labors, for those who preach the Word deserve the highest respect and authority. At the same time Paul does not excuse himself from a visit, knowing that a face to face ministry on his part would have a unique advantage that could not be duplicated.

## PUNGENT POINTS

There is a definite advantage to being weak and helpless - this is precisely the condition that God specializes in relieving. He gives "power to the faint" and "renews the strength" of those that **have no strength**. Therefore, we truly may "glory in our infirmities."

It is impossible for God to lie. When we fail to claim, however, one of His promises, or begin to live as though we are in disagreement with what He has declared, we intimate that He can lie and the results as found in our conscience are the same as if God was a liar. However, the REAL facts are not altered by these experiences. God's character is still the same, and in the last day, all those views and characters that are opposite to His own will be proclaimed lies and liars. It behooves us, therefore, to find our hearts in agreement with the Lord while we are here, that we may live with Him there.

If it were remotely possible for man to do a single thing himself about his relationship to God, without the grace of God, I should be led to believe that in time he would be able to do it all. Such a supposition is preposterous, however, for we that are in Christ Jesus are aware that "it is God that worketh in you, **both** to will and to do of His own good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

There is no way to pacify the Devil. The "old man" through whom he works, must be "reckoned dead." If permitted to have some room in your life, Satan will, in due time, have it all!

Remove the personal aspect of our association with Christ Jesus, and you have torn away the vitalizing factor of the Christian religion; naught but deadness and dryness remains.

I find that as I draw close to the Lord, a gulf forms between myself and former associates. I have not tried to bring this gulf, but it is there. I accept this as concrete evidence of the failure of these hearts and mine to fuse together into oneness in the Lord. On the other hand, I find a most wonderful experience rising to dominancy as I draw near unto my Savior. New and lovelier acquaintances and fellowships are springing into existence; rooted firmly in the love of God. Both of these reactions were not sought for or asked for! They were not altogether produced by associations with, or lack of association with, these people. Yet, it is as real as though I had mustered all of my personal resources and those of heaven toward their accomplishment.

It appears to me that people that must be pleaded with to make an appearance at the weekly assembly are lacking some very necessary spiritual vitality which a casual fellowship with the brethren will by no means cure. The problem lies deeper within the recesses of the heart, and it is there that the change must take place. Regulatory life will not cure it - only "newness of life" will do that!

In the Lord, you can "have your cake and eat it too." Our sustenance stays with us, and nour-

ishes us, while at the same time the blessed reality and tantilization of it is not at all lost. **There is simply too much "cake" in the economy of grace to diminish.** You may eat to your full of the goodness of God, and, behold, there will be more come to your vision than ever before. **Actually, God's truth and grace are more evident to you when you are full than when you are empty.** So do not draw back and suppose that you can exhaust this "angels food." Eat to your full, and behold, the inexhaustible supply yet remains!

Someone asks: "How can you believe in predestination and election and not in infant damnation?" 'Tis a foolish question, indeed, which reveals the carnal minds of those who ask it. Nevertheless, I shall give an answer. Simply because the Scriptures teach predestination; they teach election; but they do not teach infant damnation. Some may say that such a doctrine will inevitably lead to believing in infant damnation. Will you instruct the Lord in this matter? Did the Lord say that infants would be damned? Is there the faintest picture of such a doctrine given by the apostles and prophets? God forbid! Surely your own foolish prattlings show and illustrate how utterly you fall short of the Divine mind. Will you dare to intrude where God has not invited? Because some minds have dared to insert their own wisdom into God's revelation does not mean that their insertions are to be received, or that they are true. Let no man presume what the Lord meant in His word, or carry his own concepts of the implications of doctrines as synonymous with the doctrines themselves. This is pouring the water of life into sectarian moulds - but it shall overflow them all, for it cannot be contained by man's restrictive thinking! If we are going to assume anything, let it be that the Lord is true, and every man a liar. Away with this driving tendency of man to reject what does not contribute to his own preconceived dogmas.

"We've been commissioned not to preach sociology but salvation, not reform but redemption; not culture but conversion; not progress but pardon; not the new social order but the new birth; not a resuscitation but resurrection; not a new organization but a new creation; not civilization but Christ. We are ambassadors, not diplomats." - Contributed by Sister Marjorie Creme, California.

True love does not even take into consideration the opposition, however formidable it may appear to be. When our Lord was arrested in Gethsemane's Garden, Peter took his sword and single handed began a defense of the Savior. His concern for the Master was oblivious of the overwhelming odds against him. Acting from impulse

he endangered his own life on the behalf of his Lord. Certainly we see here a small expression of love. In the Lord, however, when once the Holy Spirit had come upon him, Peter's boldness and tenacity of warfare waxed even stronger in the face of the enemy. His love, truly channeled, and undergirded by faith, constrained him to ignore the strength of the enemy and fight the battles of the Lord. O, how much such a love is needed today!

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## Free-Will

*(From page 6)*

vation is that the Lord makes our hearts and wills tender; He so works upon them as to bend them in His direction. The will now, in Christ Jesus, is liberated, so that we may "will to do His will", and thus "know of the doctrine" (Jno. 7:17). Very wonderfully our individuality is retained, and yet all of the glory for our inclination to the Savior is given to God who drew us. Let none draw back from the truth concerning man's natural will, supposing that there is no room in the Kingdom for willingness - God forbid! Willingness is a very vital part of faith - but that willingness does not come from the pit of nature, but from the well of eternal life. Let us give God the glory for our salvation, not our depraved natures! And you that are freed from nature, give God the glory for that!

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## The Wicked - God's Ministers

*(From page 2)*

**than those that surround you. The vision of believers needs to be clear enough that they can see aright in relation to the situations in which they find themselves.** We do not wrestle against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12), and it does not behoove us to fight as though we do! All things are to be received as from a loving Father's Hand; one Who is "working all things together for our good" (Rom. 8:28). **Eternal purposes are being served by anything and everything that befalls you; whether seemingly good or bad!** Therefore are we admonished; "In EVERYTHING give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18).

To recognize the hand of the Lord in our lives, therefore, includes the perception of His use of the wicked toward us. From time to time it may become necessary to awaken us from our spiritual sleep with the malicious activity of the wicked. It is not meritorious or commendable that such action is summoned forth by the Father. However, the cup of gall is somewhat mitigated by the sweetness of this knowledge. Therefore, I commend to you this truth, trusting that you shall seek the faith to be more becoming of a child of the King in your responses to evil and wicked men. Can we not say to every wicked abuser of our spirits: "Friend, wherefore comest thou", as did Jesus to Judas (Matt. 22:12)? If it so be that they are sent from God (and they are), then they shall ultimately do us good! God, give us the faith to see these things as they are!—that Thou art the King overall the earth, and that all things are of Thee. Amen!