

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

"PURE RELIGION"

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" — James 1:27

"Religion" is not a bad word; not an inferior word; not a word to be held in disdain by those possessed of the faith of Christ. Often have I heard it said, "I don't want religion, I want Christ." I believe I understand the intent of that statement, and must confess that I am somewhat in sympathy with it. Nevertheless, it does not present a proper picture for believers. "Religion" is spoken of in the Scriptures—spoken of favorably. While it is not the predominate term used to express the embracement of truth, it is an acceptable one.

The word "religion," as we are given to understand it, denotes the external aspect of the faith in distinction to the inward, or heart, aspect. Theologically, it might be termed the liturgical, ritualistic, or ceremonial part of the faith. Under the Law, ritual and liturgy consisted of ceremonial observances which did not necessarily include a heartfelt affection. As it is written; ". . . the service . . . which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances . . ." (Heb. 9:9-10); ie., those external observances did not call for or involve the activity of the heart, nor the cleansing of the conscience. Often their hands were busy, but their conscience remained defiled (Heb. 10:1-2), their mouths uttered good words, but their hearts remained "far" from the Lord (Isa. 29:13). Concerning this manner of serving the Lord, the Apostle Paul, speaking of his past life, said that he had his "conversation in the Jew's religion" (Gal. 1:13), and that he even "profited in the Jew's religion" (Gal. 1:14). In this case he spoke of the rigorous activity of the body; the zealous effort to seek to establish one's own righteousness by meticulously obeying the carnal (or external) ordinances." James, in using this word, means to convey to us that *the external aspects of religion under Christ far transcend those under the Law of Moses.* In summary, he has said this; "The services which God loves are not mere ceremonial observances, but habits of purity and charity." Both the visitation of the widows in their affliction, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world proceed from the heart—they simply are not ceremonial in nature! These are things that are truly "constrained" by the love of Christ (II Cor. 5:14). *Rights and ceremonies are neither moral nor spiritual—but the visitation of the "fatherless and widows in their affliction" is moral, and keeping oneself "unspotted from the world" is spiritual!*

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The Word of Truth

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The true ritual, so to speak, consists of personal purity from this present evil world! The truly religious man is one that has been washed altogether from his sins in the blood of Jesus Christ, having been constituted a king and a priest unto God (Rev. 1:5); he then labors fervently, sincerely, and whole-heartedly to keep himself from fresh defilement. He is to carefully guard against the contaminations of the world—its pursuits, ambitions, counsels, and its more profane pleasures. However, he is not to become a hermit in this matter, nor to gravitate to asceticism like the monks of old. He is rather to demonstrate by his godly charity that he can truly be unworldly while living in the world; that he can be pure in the midst of contamination, wholesome in an evil environment! The “fatherless and widows” in a period of “affliction” afford believers an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the true worth of “pure religion”! Here they obtain neither reward nor fame, but rather find themselves spending and being spent for the sake of the Lord (II Cor. 12:15). To “visit” does not refer to a social call, but to “look upon, care for, exercise oversight . . . to visit with help” (from the Greek *episkeptomai*). But, we need not rely upon the Greek language, the very first meaning of the word “visit” in the English is “To go or come to see in order to comfort or help” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary). The meaning of the verse, then, is this; when orphans and widows (for example) are reduced to a state of helplessness, you are to be their benefactors; you are to care for them, succour them, meet their needs; see to it that they are not left comfortless! Thus is the injunction fulfilled; “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). Paul selects these two categories of people, because they best epitomize earthly deprivation and destitution; fatherless in that the child is left to himself having been deprived of parental care; widows, because they have been left alone without their provider. Because not all fatherless and widows, however, stand in need, it is added “in their affliction”. We ought to remember that when our Lord was here He “went about doing good . . .” (Acts 10:38). Such injunctions as, “Love thy

neighbor as **thyself**” (Matt. 19:19); “As ye would that men do to **you**, do ye also to them likewise” (Lk. 6:31); “Honor **all men**” (I Pet. 2:17), etc., are briefly comprehended in this graphic description of “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father”: “Visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction”! We are to be their hands when they have none; their provision when they are destitute; their eyes when they see not. We are to realize that “inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

But there is a second part to this matter; “**keep himself unspotted from the world**”! This is actually equivalent to the first and “greatest commandment”: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of the heart, with all of thy soul, and with all of thy strength” (Mark 12:30). This is a summary of the first table of the Law—the commandments that pertained to our immediate association with the Father which is in heaven. Pure religion, then, is briefly comprehended in two divisions; manward and Godward! Manward; i.e., visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. Godward: keeping ourselves unspotted from the world! To keep ourselves unspotted from the world is to “use the world as not abusing it” (I Cor. 7:31). This speaks of being in the world, but not of the world. It means that our garments are not to be “spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23). The attitudes, concepts, and philosophies of this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4) are not absorbed into our hearts and minds. To be “unspotted” is to be divorced from the world order; to be “separate from sinners”, even as was our Lord (Heb. 7:26). While we are “in the presence” of our “enemies”, we eat at the “table” that is prepared for us of our God (Psa. 23:5). It is to “abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (I Pet. 2:11). This grand part of “pure religion” of which we speak is the result of “crucifying the flesh, together with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). It is the fruitage of “mortifying our members that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:5). It is not the result of mere abstinence, but of abstinence from sin and partakement of the “Divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). It is stimulated by an encounter with the Living God that has resulted in a true love for righteousness and an eschewment for iniquity. Those that are “sober and vigilant” resisting the Devil, their adversary that “walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8), are those that “keep themselves unspotted from the world.”

The picture you obtain here is that of a pilgrim journeying through a strange land; a land that is marked by mire, pits, sloughs, and a generally mucky and murky landscape. But this pilgrim keeps on the “highway”, plodding on so as to avoid the mud and the mire; seeking out the rock, waiting for the parting of the waters, being led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In short, he does not “lean to his own understanding” (Pro. 3:5-6). Instead, he “trusts in the Lord with all of his heart”, and staying his mind upon the Lord, finds “perfect peace” to be his portion (Isa. 26:3). This pilgrim often has his feet washed, as it were, by the Lord of glory

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PROVOKING THE LORD

"Harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation. . ." —Psalms 95:8; Heb. 3:8, 25

It is essential that our conception of the Living God be moulded by faith and by the revelation of the Word of God. We do well to abstain from any philosophy of God—however pleasant it may appear to the ear—that presents Him as so thoroughly possessed of love that He cannot be provoked to anger. It is true that one of the attributes of love is that it is not "EASILY provoked", but not that it is not provoked at all (I Cor. 13:5). Further, it would appear to me that were the masses of religious people that claim association with the living God to come into a more comprehensive and willing understanding of the real nature of the Lord, they would tremble at the very thought of their actions provoking Him to anger. God loves us in the Son, but He also abhors sin, and cannot "look" upon evil. Because of this, when evil fills our lives and our hearts grow hard, God is provoked in spite of our purported sonship and religious affiliation:

We do have a history of the people of God that graphically demonstrates that God can be, and has been, indeed "provoked"! "After that our fathers had PROVOKED the God of heaven unto wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon. . ." (Ezra 5:12); "Yet they tempted and PROVOKED the Most High God. . ." (Psa. 78:56); "Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies; but PROVOKED Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea" (Psa. 106:7); "Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them" (Psa. 106:29); "Many times did He deliver them, but they PROVOKED Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity" (Psa. 106:43); ". . . your fathers PROVOKED Me to wrath. . ." (Zech. 8:14); "Remember, and forget not, how thou PROVOKEST the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness. . ." (Duet. 9:7); "A people that PROVOKETH Me continually to face . . ." (Isa. 65:3); ". . . because they made their groves, PROVOKING the Lord to anger" (I Kgs. 14:15); ". . . Baasha . . . PROVOKED Him to anger with the work of his hands. . ." (I Kgs. 16:7); ". . . PROVOKING the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities" (I Kgs. 16:13); "And they sinned yet more against Him by PROVOKING the Most High in the wilderness" (Psa. 78:17). It is abundantly clear, is it not, that our Heavenly Father can and has been PROVOKED TO ANGER. Indeed, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God (Heb. 10:31)!"

But let us observe precisely what DID provoke the Lord to anger. What was the nature of the provocation? Israel provoked the Lord by not letting the land lay idle during the Sabbath years, and thus were delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (Lev. 26:34; II Chron. 36:21). I suppose that this was something that could have been conveniently explained by the agriculturists of the day. But notwithstanding all explanations, excuses, and reasonings, the very fact that they did not let the land lay idle as God commanded provoked Him to anger, and it cost Israel sev-

enty hard years of captivity in Babylon. It was during this time that they "hanged their harps on the willow trees", finding that they could not "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land (Psa. 137:4). They (Israel) also provoked the Lord by not "keeping His testimonies"; they rather "turned back from them" and walked deceitfully. God tendered to them, according to His loving kindness, His testimonies; and rather than treasuring them and obeying them, they turned aside from them, thereby provoking Him to anger of the fiercest sort. They also provoked the Lord in the wilderness by challenging; "Can God furnish us a table in the wilderness" (Psa. 78:18). They murmured about not having water, about having bitter water, about having to eat "light bread", about not being able to eat meat, about Moses being their leader, etc. They provoked the Lord at the Red Sea by questioning the wisdom of the very deliverance they had experienced from Egypt. They saw no way of deliverance through their limited eyesight, and with their restricted understanding comprehended no way out—therefore did they murmur, and provoke the Lord to anger. They refused to obey the Lord, and provoked Him (Ex. 23:21). They worshipped other gods, served other masters, built groves and images, forgot their Maker, created vain things with their own hands, and did that which was not pleasing in His sight.

In other words, they lived willfully in a state where their natures contradicted the nature of God Almighty; they permitted their hearts to remain at variance with the Mind of the Lord. They chose their own will, their own devices, the works of their own hands, over the revealed will of God—and it provoked Him to anger. But His anger was not kindled fully until He had sent them prophets "to bring them again to the Lord" (II Chron. 24:19), and yet they "would not give them ear". He bore long with them, though their hearts were wretched, and finally His wrath broke out upon them. Can we, indeed, learn from these things?

There Are Lessons To Be Learned

You do not have to commit great transgressions (by men's standards) to provoke the Lord to anger! Israel provoked Him by murmuring, by discontent, by questioning, by doubting, by spiritual laziness! Disobedience and discontent are two sisters from hell that have often brought the wrath of God down upon men's heads! What, for instance, of those slothful souls that refuse to assemble with those of like precious faith (Heb. 10:25). Is that not a small commandment—one that every believer may most heartily obey? And are there not some that balk at this commandment, choosing rather the enjoyments of this world? And do they think for one moment that they are NOT provoking the Lord to anger? If Israel of old kept not the Sabbath for the land, and thereby provoked the Lord to anger, what of that first day of the week in which we break bread, and exhort and provoke one another to good works? What of those that refuse obstinately to "honor the Lord with the firstfruits of all their increase" (Prov. 3:9); that rob God by not

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GOD—THE CREATOR

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful CREATOR."

—I Peter 4:19

There is such a thing as being "persecuted for righteousness sake" (Matt. 5:10)! In fact, "All that shall live godly in Christ Jesus SHALL suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12)—that is one of the cardinal principles of the Kingdom of God! The godly, of course, all through the ages have "chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). They have, like their Savior, "endured the contradiction of sinners" (Heb. 12:3), and having considered Him, they have not become "wearied" nor "fainted in their mind". They have, because of the grand vision of the Lord and Savior which has been imparted to their hearts, gone forth "unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). Even though they have suffered for righteousness sake, yet they have been "happy" and have not been "afraid of their (the ungodly) terror", neither, indeed, have been "troubled" (I Pet. 3:14). Because the "world knoweth" them not, therefore it hates them (I Jno. 3:1, 13). But what of the attitude and response of believers to this persecution and opposition from the world?

Firstly, they are to recognize that they are suffering "according to the will of God"! This is not a mere coincidence! It is not something that has happened by chance! It is, rather, by design. And, quite frankly, I had rather have it that way, because with God I shall not face a "temptation greater than I can bear, but "God is faithful Who will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that I may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13). I certainly would dread the thought of Satan, for instance, having charge of my suffering; or even of mortal men being given that responsibility. When I suffer, Praise God, the will of God is manifested to me! God has a desire in this matter of my suffering; it is His "goodpleasure" that I am to consider. I may not know the specifics of this present "distress"; I may not be able to diagnose it completely, or even partially (and in all probability, this will be the case); yet, I know that "God is faithful", and that His designs are gracious and good. Suffering is, in a manner of speaking, a gift from God: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29). We certainly ought not to despise such a gift, for we are assured that it will, together with all things, "work together for the good" (Rom. 8:28).

Secondly, sufferers are to commit the keeping of their souls to God. They are to relinquish the control of their beings and admit consciously and deliberately the ownership of the Lord. The Lord, as the "Good Shepherd" will properly care for and guide them; and to this they are to trust implicitly. However, HOW are they to commit the keeping of their souls to God? Is it a mere matter of resolution or resolve? Is it done within the heart? The Apostle is careful at this point to make

clear what he means! They are to commit the keeping of the souls to God in "WELL DOING"; i.e., they are to continue doing the very good for which they presently suffer. Like Daniel, when commanded not to pray, they are to continue to pray. Like the three Hebrew children, they are to refuse to bow to idols of this world, even though they know that they shall incur certain suffering by so doing!

The Apostles were commanded by their persecutors not to preach in the Name of Jesus, and yet they did anyway! Stephen was challenged not to preach publically, and yet he did, even laying down his life as a result! What of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and even Timothy who were imprisoned for the preaching of the Word? Might not they have avoided this suffering by abstaining from "well doing"? To be sure, they might have avoided the suffering that is instigated by men—but what of the chastening of the Lord? Would not His "arrows" have stuck fast in them had they refused this matter of "well doing"?

What about this "well doing"? Is it not true that there is a great deprecation of "well doing" by the religious world today? How often have you heard "doing" referred to disparagingly by "fundamentalists" and other sophists of religious fervor? But what saith the Scripture concerning this activity in which we actually commit the keeping of our souls to God? It is by "patient continuance in well doing" that we "seek for glory, honor, and immortality" (Rom. 2:7). And, are we not exhorted to "Be not weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9), knowing that "in due season we shall reap IF we faint not"! Is it not "well doing" that actually "puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Pet. 2:15). And, concerning suffering, it is asserted in Scripture that it is "BETTER that ye suffer for well doing. . ." (I Pet. 3:17). "Well doing" is what shall be rewarded in the "great and notable day of the Lord" when it shall be said, "WELL DONE thou good and faithful servant. . ." (Matt. 25:21). No matter what the consequences, may it be said of you as it was of our Master; "He hath done all things WELL" (Mark 7:37). "Well doing" is doing that is characterized by goodness, by excellent spiritual quality, by a pure heart. It is doing that is opposite of evil, that tends toward the glory of God and the benefit of His people.

Now observe; it is to a "faithful Creator" that we commit our souls in this "well doing"—and that appellation is of interest to me. "A Faithful Creator"—but what does the "Creator" have to do with keeping, and with personal commital? Indeed, the creativity of our God enters into this matter of keeping, and is essential to our preservation. Permit me to enlarge upon this most pleasant theme.

Our Lord's working in the capacity of THE Creator is a broad matter, and it touches very crucially upon our preservation and keeping—particularly during the time of suffering and opposition from the course of this present evil world. The Father actually makes our natural state: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf? or the seeing or the blind? have not I the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11). Because our suffering quite often draws our inabilities to our attention, this thought is of particular comfort

to us. God has MADE our natural abilities AND inabilities; therefore we can faithfully commit the keeping of our souls to Him, for we are deliberately, fearfully, and wonderfully made! The Lord also makes alive; "The Lord . . . maketh alive" (I Sam. 2:6). May I not, then, entrust the keeping of my soul to Him under the most adverse or the most pleasant of circumstances? He makes "poor and rich" (I Sam. 2:7), "makes sore and binds up" (II Sam. 22:33; Psa. 18:32), and even makes "the heart soft" (Job 23:16). He can "MAKE me to lie down in green pastures" (Psa. 23:2). All of these matters are CREATIVE! He "MAKES" alive, rich, etc.

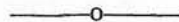
But let us view other aspects of His creative work. How wonderful are His works! He "MADE" the firmament (Gen. 1:7), the two great lights of the heavens, the sun and moon (Gen. 1:16; Psa. 136:79), and the "beasts of the earth" (Gen. 1:25-28). He made "EVERY tree to grow" (Gen. 2:9), as well as the entire heavens, earth, sea, and all that in them is! Our Father "MADE" the patriarch Joseph to "prosper" (Gen. 39:3, 23; 41:51; 45:8, 9), and "Israel" to dwell in the land (Lev. 23:42). He even "MADE" the ancient people "to wander" (Num. 32:13). He also "MADE Israel rejoice" (II Chron. 20:27), and "MADE them joyful" (Ezra 6:22; Neh. 12:43). He has made men "glad" (Psa. 92:4), "wiser" (Psa. 119:98), even making them to "serve Him" (Isa. 43:24). Can I not commit my soul to such a Creator as that? What wonderful and marvelous things He has made!

But that is not the end of the matter. Our Father is a marvelous Creator, and His creation bears upon our personal character and attainment in the Kingdom of God. He has, for instance "MADE" us the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 5:21). He has "MADE" us free (Gal. 5:1), and has "MADE" us ACCEPTED in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). In His marvelous grace and tender compassion, He has "MADE us to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6), even making us "meet (worthy) to be partaker of the inheritance" (Col. 1:12). We have, in truth, been "MADE righteous" (Rom. 5:19) by Him, even being "MADE free from sin" (Rom. 6:18, 22). What a wonderful work was wrought when God "MADE" our Saviour Christ Jesus to be unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30)—God "MADE" Him to be that unto us!

Have we not been "MADE to dring into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13), having been "MADE nigh" to the Father by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). And are we not being "MADE conformable to His death" even in our very sufferings (Phil. 3:10), thereby indicating that the grace and noble purpose of God is being effectually realized even under greivous circumstances (as men view circumstances)! Let us not forget that God has "MADE peace through His (Christ's) blood" (Col. 1:20). What of our hearts? Have they not been circumcised with the circumcision MADE without hands (Col. 2:11)? We are "MADE heirs" (Tit. 3:7), praise His Holy Name, being "MADE partakers of Christ" (Heb. 3:14). I may, furthermore, commit the keeping of my soul to the Faithful Creator because He is fully able (and willing) to "MAKE me stand" (Rom. 14:4). Our Father is able to "MAKE

all grace abound" toward us (II Cor. 9:8), even MAKING us to "increase in love toward one another" (I Thess, 3:12). Let us never forget that our Father can "MAKE us perfect in every good work to do His will" (Heb. 13:21).

See how large a concept is entertained in the word "Creator"! This is no small thing! Everything that we have from Him touches upon His CREATION! Everything we shall yet receive from Him has to do with CREATION! As Creator He can change the circumstances to match my strength, or He can change my strength to match the circumstances; or He can remove the circumstances and leave me, or remove me and leave the circumstances! Whatever He chooses to do, I am the benefactor as I trust in Him, and commit the keeping of my soul to Him in "WELL DOING"! He can "create a clean heart" (Psa. 51:10), "the fruit of the lips" (Psa. 57:19), or even "A joy" (Isa. 65:18). Do I feel destitute? He can create a bounty sufficient for my need, so that I may even abound unto every good work! He can create a way of escape, or a high tower of protection, or strength to chase a thousand! He can make me the head or the tail, the oppressed or the oppressor, the fallen or the risen! He can make a way in the wilderness, and cause waters to break out in the desert (Isa. 35:6). If I have, in fact, been "created unto good works" in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10), then may I not, without any reservation whatsoever, commit the keeping of my soul to Him in that very activity of good works? Will He not be glorified by the same? Why should I hesitate to do this, seeing that I was created unto such an end? Let none despise well doing, minimize it, or withdraw from it—for it is a means of commital to our Heavenly Father! From that commital He will create things that will cause you to wonder, the angels to rejoice, the cherubim and seraphim to marvel, and the gallery of witnesses about this course (Heb. 12:1) to stand in awe! You commit the keeping of your soul to God not by withdrawing from the conflict, but by entering into it more fully. **Hearty involvement in well doing may well bring the indignation and persecution of the world, but it also stirs the Divine Creativity of God—and for this we rejoice in hope!**



LORD'S SUPPER MEDITATION ON HEBREWS 1:3

By Richard Ebler

"Who . . . when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

This, of course, is referring to the great and wonderful work of the blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, when He died on the cross for our sins.

He did this great work by Himself alone, as the text indicates. The holy angels could not do this work for Him. Although they were sinless and could have been a spotless sacrifice from that viewpoint, yet the angels did not know what it was to bear the nature of Adam. Man had sinned and a Man must pay the penalty of sin. An angel could not die for mankind. It must be a perfect

Man. Therefore, Christ "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16).

The spirits of just men made perfect could not do this work. Although we read of them being in fellowship with God (Heb. 12:23), yet this is only by virtue of God's acceptance of them through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit did not die for our sins, because He had another work to do; namely the work of regeneration. This began at the day of Pentecost when the work of Christ was applied to the hearts of men in power.

The Father Himself could not even help the Son accomplish this great work at the crucial hour. There came a time when God Himself had to turn His back on His Son so that the Savior would cry out from the depths of His suffering soul those heart-rending words, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was surely the horrible sight of our sin that forced God to turn His back on His Son. Christ had to bear the full load and crushing weight of our sins in all of their awful consequences. He had to do this **alone**. He "by himself purged our sins."

We see then how that Jesus Christ Himself became the Savior and the Redeemer. Then He sat down at the right hand of God, denoting that His work was finished and His reign begun.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS EIGHT

The Holy Spirit is the Subject of much preaching these days—some good, and some not so good. It is, however, of great consolation that the Lord has spoken abundantly concerning this Divine Comforter, and that He has not left us ignorant in regards to His ministry among "the elect". While time forbids a detailed review of His multitudinous ministries, we may extract from a single chapter in the Scriptures a broad view of His work—a view which will, if received, provoke us to God-honoring thanksgiving. I am speaking of that venerable eighth chapter of Romans—a chapter that contains rich morsels of eternal truth that can build and nourish the saints of the Most High God. There are no dazzling truths here that appeal to the carnal mind; nothing to cause one to boast in the flesh! The words of this chapter are directed toward those that are fighting the good fight of faith, cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart, and running with patience the race that is set before them (I Tim. 6:12; Acts 11:23; Heb. 12:1-2). This chapter is not for dry-land sailors that do not launch out into the deep. Those that stand by the shore and attempt to straddle the line of demarcation between the flesh and the Spirit will not be tantalized by the truths of Romans eight! But, praise God, those that know something of what means to wrestle against principalities and powers (Eph. 6:11-12), and who have fought against and subdued their fleshly natures will find such things here as will encourage their hearts to hold on their way.

Some identify the Holy Spirit with unknown tongues, power for service, healing, feeling, etc.; and while we are not desirous at this point to deal with these things, it will suffice to say that they are incidental and inferior to the high proclamations with which we shall now concern our-

selves. At the very best they are but secondary—tributaries of thought and action that flow from much higher truths. It is my conviction that if the main river shall ever flow into the heart and mind of the earnest inquirer, the tributaries shall take care of themselves. The minor streams of truth are not the issue in our lives, but the major ones—Romans eight as one such major one.

The Spirit Directs Contrary to The Flesh

The antithesis of our flesh is NOT our spirit, but the Holy Spirit! The Word declares; "There is therefore **now** no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, **BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT**" (verse 1); "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, **BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT**" (verse 4); Here we see that our flesh leads away from God into condemnation—to follow our natural inclinations, our unregenerate natures, our "old man", leads to certain damnation—make no mistake about it. . . ." If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (verse 13). However, the Holy Spirit leads and directs men into comportment with the "eternal purpose" of God (Eph. 3:11). He leads men along that "strait" and "narrow" way that leads to life everlasting (Matt. 7:13-14) and on the "highway" of holiness of which the aged prophet spoke (Isa. 35:8ff). While men are concerned about accomplishing things notable in the eyes of fellow-mortals, **the Spirit is interested, so to speak, in men accomplishing the will and commandments of God**—and so He directs them. Those that walk "after the Spirit" possess **no** condemnation—it is an evidence of their regeneration, justification, and acceptance with God in the Beloved. By "walking" after the Spirit, the Apostle means a steady progression in the things of God; language that properly depicts a stranger and a pilgrim in this earth (I Pet. 2:11) journeying toward a "city that hath foundations, whose builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). **The saints could never find their way were it not for the Holy Spirit**. It is He that continues to "guide them into all truth" (John 16:13). Now it is to be observed that the Spirit does not merely guide us in paths that are divers from the flesh, but that are **CONTRARY** to the flesh! One cannot walk after the flesh and after the Spirit—it is an utter impossibility, for these are two distinctly different paths; one to God, one to hell! Blessed are those that walk after the Spirit, remaining sensitive to His guidance, not quenching Him (I Thess. 5:19) nor grieving Him (Eph. 4:30).

The Holy Spirit Generates Life

He is called "the Spirit of life" (verse 2). This life refers to a spiritual rapport with the Living God whereby one is enabled to hear the voice of the Lord, incline to the precepts of the Lord, be sensitive to the will of the Lord, and agree heartily with the Lord. Such a wonderful work is this that it is said; "The law of **the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (verse 2). This "law" to which he refers is that which finds one delighting in the law of God "after the inward man" (Rom. 7:21). It is that law which is evidenced by "I myself" serving the "law of God" with **my** mind (Rom. 7:25). That "law", or tendency toward God, was actually authored, and is maintained, by the Holy Spirit of God. It is this law which liberates us from the

law of sin and death, which also is contained within our members (Rom. 7:23), which evil law wars against the law of our mind. It liberates us by delivering us from an affection for sin, from an appetite for ungodliness. It is not easy to fall into sin when you hate it; when you "eschew evil" (I Pet. 3:11). The great mission of the follower of Christ is to follow the Spirit by setting his affection on things above, not on things on the earth! By so doing, the power of sin shall be minimized in the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ Jesus. Do you not desire for a greater degree of liberty from sin? Then you must follow the Spirit, give heed to His proptings, His leadings, His direction. While there will never come a time in the body when you shall be totally free from lusts, temptations, and the law of corruption within, the Spirit will aid you in being liberating from **bondage** to it. He will direct you into those paths where you keep "under" your body, buffeting it, and bringing it into subjection (II Cor. 12:7), refusing to give expression to the "superfluity of naughtiness" (Js. 1:21). Actually, then **true life frees from death!** When once the Holy Spirit of God generates life within the heart of an individual, he is at once free from the law of sin and death; he is no longer a "debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:12). **The great burden of men of God is to assist the followers of Christ in an understanding of this in order that they might exploit their freedom by bringing forth fruits of righteousness.**

The Spirit Has "Things" To Give Us

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the THINGS OF THE SPIRIT" (verse 5). These are "things" that "pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3). They are, of course, the "unseen" things toward which we "look" in preference to the "things that are seen" (II Cor. 4:18). They are "all Truth", and the Spirit guides us into them (I Jno. 16:13). These "things" have to do with a "city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). They are for those that are seeking "a country" that is truly "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:16). These "things" which the Spirit brings to us are located "above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1-3), and they are appropriately termed "all things" by the Lord (I Jno. 2:20); i.e., there is really no other valid knowledge but this; nothing else that may contribute toward the eternal welfare of men! **All other knowledge is subordinate knowledge, and is validated only as it flows out from, and is sanctified by, this higher knowledge of spiritual things.** The Holy Spirit brings before us God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, together with the wondrous truths of the Gospel and our great salvation. He gives us a proper sense of values, arranges and classifies valid knowledge in order that we may properly maintain our walk in the world. In other words, to give heed to these "things of the Spirit" will truly constitute us "strangers and pilgrims in the world" (I Pet. 2:11).

The Holy Spirit Validates Our Sonship

Our Heavenly Father is not so much interested in our profession as He is in our possession. The truth of the matter is this: "But ye are **not** in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of

God dwell in you. Now if any man have **not** the Spirit of Christ, he is **none** of His" (verse 9). To be a true son of God, we must be divorced from the "flesh", for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). While we are "in the body" (Heb. 13:3), we are not "in the flesh"; that is to say, we are not possessed by our bodies, but we possess them, "keeping under" them and "bringing them into subjection" (I Cor. 9:27). In this frail tabernacle of our body, we that are Christ's do "groan", thereby evidencing the presence of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 5:4.) **Our bodies actually constitute a "burden" upon our persons (II Cor. 5:4) because of its inability to conform to our intense desire to "walk as dear children" before the Lord (Eph. 5:1).** But right in the midst of this apparently frustrating experience, the Holy Spirit attests to our sonship by "bearing witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:16).

The Spirit Assist Us In Subduing the Flesh

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (verse 13). Our "members that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5ff) certainly do need subduing and mortifying! But we are to understand from these assertions of truth this work would certainly be an impossible one were it not for the direction of the Holy Spirit of God. He both illuminates our hearts and minds concerning the amazing depravity of our own Alamic natures, as well as the mighty sufficiency of God. How thankful I am that the Spirit does not merely bring our dispicable infirmities to our attention, and then leave us in the slough of despondency! But once he has illuminated our hearts, he points us to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world"! He grants to us an understanding that "he that is in you is **greater** than he that is in the world" (I Jno. 4:4). In ways that transcend human expression, he teaches us how to "put off the old man" and "put on the new man" (Eph. 4:20ff). If we are attentive to Him, He will show us how to "resist the Devil" effectually, and how to "deny ungodliness" while living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Js. 4:7; Tit. 2:12). To "mortify the deeds of the body" means to refuse them expression; to slay them in the lust-stage, obstinately rejecting their tug toward the earthly course. To truly follow His leading is to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Well, dear reader, are you being guided by the Spirit in the subjugation of your fleshly inclinations, or are to quenching and grieving His holy work (I Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30)?

In further amplification of this particular facet of the Spirit's work within us, it is said; "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us in groanings which cannot be uttered" (verse 26). Because we have dealt somewhat at length with this passage in a previous issue, it will suffice to say here that the Holy Spirit brings before the Father those things pertaining to our infirmities of which we are totally unaware—yea rather, concerning which we entertain absolutely no capacity to be aware!

Thus in ways unknown does the Holy Spirit assist us in the subjugation of our flesh! What a glory it will be to stand before the Throne of all grace in that great and notable day of the Lord and have opened to us the many facets of the Divine work in our behalf!

Conclusion

We may conclude several things upon the basis of these observations. **Firstly, that the Holy Spirit concerns Himself with serving God primarily, not us.** We do greatly error in seeking to view the Holy Spirit as One that merely assists us in our personal projects and desires. He helps us fulfill the will of God, remove from our lives those things that are not pleasing to God, and, in general, assists in conforming us to the image of God's Dear Son. **Secondly, our primary trouble—area is sin—that is where the burden of work must be performed.** Our chief difficulties are not sicknesses, man-to-man-expressions, or adverse circumstances. In short, our problems center in the fact that we possess a nature that is at variance with the Lord God Almighty—a nature that inhibits our progression to glory. Our spirits should be greatly lifted when we overcome sin, and they should be mightily cast down when we succumb to it! But mere circumstances, health, persecution, and infirmities in general should not cause our spirits to rise and fall like the billows of the sea! **Thirdly, the Holy Spirit's work centers about our sonship—our relationship to the Heavenly Father; not our relationship to men, angels, circumstances, etc.** He would perform no work within us at all were it not for our sonship. May we learn these things well!

Pure Religion

(From page 2)

(Jno. 13:10), being cleansed from the defilement that comes from walking in this strange land. But his garments remain unspotted; his thinking is not tainted by the world order. His concepts of eternal or earthly things are according to heavenly values, not earthly ones. His understanding of mankind, the Lord Jesus, God the Father, Satan the adversary, etc. have been moulded by the revelation of the Almighty. His affection has been "set on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-3). He has a proper sense of values—values that have been determined by God, revealed to his heart by the Holy Spirit, and written upon his very nature.

But this aspect of "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" is not merely being unspotted from the world, it is to "KEEP himself unspotted from the world" (Js. 1:27). To "KEEP"—that is a word depicting continuance,

faithfulness, perseverance; persistence! It is not a word of ease; not a picture of slothfulness, but of diligence. Here is something that involves running the race set before us, fighting the good fight of faith, wrestling against the principalities and powers, keeping under and buffeting our bodies, bringing them into subjection, and walking in the Spirit. It involves energy of heart and mind, as well as the involvement of all of our faculties.

Let all of the saints, then, devote themselves to the proper energy-outlets of the Divine Life: visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and keeping themselves unspotted from the world. By so doing, they shall be "acceptable to God, and approved of men" (Rom. 14:18).

Provoking The Lord

(From page 3)

bringing their tithes into the storehouse (Mal. 3:10ff), not laying by in store as they have prospered (I Cor. 6:1ff). Do you suppose for one moment that these things do NOT provoke the Lord to anger? In matters so elemental, so easy in comparison to some of the greater commissions we have received, does not this disobedience bring forth the indignation of the Lord? And what about those that have not learned that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Tim. 6:6)—those that "murmur" in flagrant disobedience to the commandment of the Lord (Phil. 2:14; I Cor. 10:10). Is not the Lord angry with us when we question His wisdom by complaining about our state? Ought we not rather to "learn" to be content in whatsoever state we find ourselves?

What of the greater matters which concern believers? Like "cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" (II Cor. 7:1); or "putting off the old man," together with "the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22-3). And, what of those that do not, in fact, "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22), and fail to "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:11). Are there not myriads of professing believers that have not really "set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-3), and who are not "seeking the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"? What of these people? Are they merely novices from whom little is to be expected, or are they disobedient children, walking according to the course of this world, and provoking the Lord to anger? What of those that have permitted their families to interfere with their spiritual life, not rather "hating" their father, mother, brother, sister, wife, houses, lands, and even their own life for Christ's sake (Luke 14:26). Is that not a deliberate act of disobedience, and will it not provoke the Lord to anger? Dear reader, let none deceive you concerning the nature of our God! Righteousness and righteous aspirations greatly delight Him, but disobedience and adhering to the old paths incense Him, and provoke Him to anger. Let every believer be wise in these matters and press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us be those that are described as "followers of God as dear children" (Eph. 5:1), thereby evoking our Lord's good pleasure and tender mercies.