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Spiritual Warfare

F. B. Hole

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:1-5)

Meekness is not weakness, neither is gentleness that pliable softness that can be twisted in any direction. Meekness and self-assertiveness stand in contrast to each other: so do gentleness and harshness. Meekness is a matter of *character*—the Lord Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly *in heart*"—and so it comes first. Gentleness is more a question of one's *manner*. He who is meek in character will be gentle in manner. He who is self-assertive in character will be harsh in manner. Supreme meekness and supreme gentleness were found in Christ; and yet no one was bolder than He, when it was a question of maintaining the right or opposing the evil. In a very large measure the Apostle was following His steps, and hence boldness as well as meekness and gentleness were found in him.

True to this character, Paul beseeches the Corinthians rather than issuing peremptory commands to them. There were some however who thought of him as though he were a man who walked according to the flesh. This led him to give us the important statement

that follows as to the character of both his walk and warfare. Verse 2 Corinthians 10:3 is instructive, inasmuch as both senses in which the *word flesh* is used are brought together in it. We walk *in* the flesh; that is, in the bodies of flesh which we have derived from Adam. But we do not war *after* the flesh; that is, according to the Adamic nature which is connected with our bodies.

In so saying Paul of course referred to himself and his co-workers, and also he stated what normally should be true of every Christian. But is it true of us? Do we recognize the true character of the flesh—that is, of the Adamic nature—and treat it as a condemned thing? It is normal for Christians to walk "after the Spirit" (Romans 9:4), but that is not mentioned here, only inferred.

The point here is not exactly our walk, but rather our warfare. Is the believer then called to warfare? He is: and to warfare of a very aggressive sort. His weapons however like the warfare are not fleshly but spiritual.

Every servant of Christ gets involved in warfare. All evangelistic labor has that character, for the Gospel is preached that it may overthrow human pride and bring men to the feet of Christ. All the teaching imparted within the assembly has to overthrow merely human thoughts. And, evil teaching having invaded the Christian profession, there must of necessity be contention for the faith, which partakes of the character of warfare. All warfare however tests us, for it is very easy to slip into the use of purely natural and fleshly weapons. The practiced political speaker, who wants to swing men round to his point of view, has many weapons in his armory—argument, ridicule, graphic exaggeration, and the like. But he contends merely with other human beings, and upon equal terms.

Our warfare is upon another plane altogether. With us there are "strongholds" to be overthrown. Who holds these strongholds? The great adversary himself. He it is who has entrenched himself in human hearts, so that they are filled with "imagination" or "reasonings," so that they exalt themselves on high against the knowledge of God, and are filled with lawlessness. All these lofty thoughts have to be brought low into captivity to Christ, so that lawlessness is exchanged for obedience to Him. What weapons are sufficient to produce that result?

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Merely human weapons must be perfectly futile. Fleshly weapons can no more subdue flesh than Satan can cast out Satan. Spiritual weapons alone can prevail; and they must be used in a way that is according to God, if they are to be effectual.

What spiritual weapons are at our disposal? In this passage the Apostle does not pause to specify, though the succeeding verses seem to show that he was specially thinking of those powers of discipline which were vested in him as an Apostle, powers peculiar to himself. There are however, spiritual weapons which all may use: those for instance, which were mentioned by the Apostles in Jerusalem when they said, "*We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word*" (Acts 6:4). Every saint can pray, and every saint can in some way speak forth the Word.

The Apostles recognized the extreme value of both these weapons, and refused to allow anything, however good in itself, to divert them from wielding them. Again and again have servants of God found themselves face to face with some human fortress of pride and unbelief like unto Jericho. And yet when encircled by prayers of faith a moment has come when the Word of God has been sounded out as from a ram's horn, and the walls of unbelief have crashed, the stronghold has been overthrown. The Lord Himself indicated another spiritual weapon when He spoke of a certain kind of demon which only could be cast out by prayer and fasting. Fasting is a weapon but very little used in these days.

Would to God that we all were alive to these things! Take for instance the preaching of the Gospel. Do we recognize that the work involves conflict of this order? If we did we should simply flock to the prayer meetings for the Gospel—that is, if we have any heart for the glory of Christ, any love for the perishing souls of men. As things are, a tiny group of two or three, or perhaps half a dozen, usually turn up for the prayer meeting, and the majority of those who attend the preaching do so in the spirit of those who have come to hear a nice address, which they expect to "enjoy," as if the enjoyment of saints were the chief end of the Gospel service. If once we caught the spirit that breathes in the verses before us, our prayer meetings, our Gospel meetings, and many other meetings, would speedily be transformed.

Holy living, involves daily dying.

James 1:18-27 Effect of the Word

Joel Portman

James, having traced sin from its origin in our lusts to its results in our sinful deeds that ultimately result in death, now turns to consider the opposite, which is the Word of Truth that has its origin in the Father of lights (v. 17). His work isn't caused by our sinful lusts but rather by His own perfect will that moved toward us in mercy and grace to provide a New Birth that is from above (John 3:3, 5) even as are all His gifts. If lust conceived results in sin's birth, the opposite is the Father "conceiving" in His will so that spiritual life will be brought forth in believers. The first source of all blessing is an unchangeable and unchanging God whose gracious desire is to enjoy those who He has purposed to be conformed to His will and who occupy a central place in His mind. He is the One who has given us spiritual life that conforms to His and it has been produced as a result of the "Word of truth" working in us through the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:5). It is the Word of Truth (likely primarily referring to the gospel, but also embracing all doctrines that are also linked with it) that has done this. Peter expresses a similar thought in 1 Peter 1:23, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*" It is the power of God's Word working in our souls that brought about the entire change that has resulted from the New Birth. As a "kind of firstfruits", we are an example of what will one day be accomplished universally. The firstfruits of the harvest in Israel were presented to God as an anticipation of the entire harvest that was yet in the field (Leviticus 23:10).

Result of the Word

Even though that spiritual nature has been begotten in us and we have been given a kind of life that conforms to His, we quickly learn that we yet have an evil propensity to sin. James doesn't mention the kinds of sins that many might have included; he lists those that are often tolerated and justified in our lives. They are the sins that give evidence of the flesh that yet indwells us, making us self-centered and reluctant to hear and respond to God's Word as we should. We need to be "swift to hear" at all times, but especially when God's Word is being read (no Bible copies existed in James' day like we have now). Many are swift to speak but slow to hear, thus they argue against the Word of truth and fail to apply it to themselves in the manner that James describes in vs. 22-24. If we are more interest-

ed in hearing (and reading) God's Word and slow to speak, the result will be that the wrathful expressions of self and the flesh will be expressed less. James uses a word for "wrath" that describes an expression of indignation that (as W. E. Vine has said) "suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind... less sudden... but more lasting in its nature". Wrath may be correct in some cases, but in reality very infrequently is it so. If we honestly consider those times when we are angry, we would likely have to recognize that the cause is that our egos have been offended, or because something personal has caused resentment and anger. We are right to be angry at those things that God is angry about, but anger should never characterize a believer nor should it reside in our hearts (Ephesians 4:26). V. 20 expresses one good test of wrath, and that is whether or not it accomplishes God's righteousness.

These verses express our personal exercise that is essential in order to truly receive the Word of God. Once again we see a similar pattern between what James writes and what Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:1. There we read, "*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*". There are conditions of life that prevail in this world system that must be dealt with decisively and with repentance if we are to allow the implanted Word of God to have its place. What James is saying is that we must discard, as old clothes, those marks of dirtiness and defilement that were a part of our lives before salvation in order to receive the full impact of this ingrafted word. Being "ingrafted" indicates that it is a divine work that follows "His own will" in the previous verse and the result is that it becomes part of us.

We notice that whether with Peter or James, the manner in which they express this indicates an action that is decisive and imperative, not something that is optional. This could be illustrated by the actions needed when seed is planted. The ground must be cleared first to remove all growth that has naturally been produced before the planted seed can have a chance to grow. Plowing must precede planting. What is naturally characteristic of our lives prior to salvation must be dealt with so that the Agent that will produce new characteristics can be effective. An attitude of humility readily applies the truth of God's Word to one's own life to effectively deal with what is natural so that what is spiritual can be introduced, with the result that it actively works to the salvation of our souls, or also the preservation of our lives for God. This aspect

of salvation is not our eternal salvation, though that would be involved as its reality is proven. Rather it refers to the results that will be seen in the life of one who is so exercised. Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15, that the holy scriptures that he had known from childhood would make him wise and result in preserving his life and testimony in the midst of a world of scoffers and seducers. It has begotten us (v. 18) and now it preserves us and sanctifies our lives to live for God.

Application of the Word

James illustrates the manner in which some use God's Word by writing about anyone who looks at their face in a mirror, perhaps sees something that needs adjusting or cleansing, but does nothing about it. Many use the Bible thus; they can read it daily and memorize it, but their lives don't correspond to its truth in any way. Somehow it fails to change them. The Pharisees were like this. They thought they were righteous but that was because they failed to allow God's Word to speak to their condition within and without. There is no profit in that practice, only added responsibility, since to know truth without applying it will only result in one's ruin. The glasses (mirrors) of those days were imperfect, since they were only made of brass, copper, or even of gold, so they didn't give a clear image like the silvered glass that we use today. Even so, what they revealed of a person's appearance was enough to indicate if something needed correction. In the same way, even if one doesn't understand all the word of God, certainly what is so plainly written has the ability to enable any person to address personal sin, wrongs, and failures.

It is interesting that he emphasizes being "doers" rather than simply "hearers". "Doers" means more than simply doing the word; it means that this becomes the character of our lives. It's more than just the action; it's what the person really is, a "doer". This means an inward change has taken place that results in consistent actions of the life. Anything less is to be a self-deceiver, a word meaning a condition that cheats oneself through misjudgment. Who is the loser when this is the case? Only the person who fails to properly apply God's Word to every aspect of their life. We never gain, nor can we ever gain, when we become casual in our usage of God's Word. Loss always results, both in this life and in eternity.

The emphasis of this section isn't the intensity of the gaze but rather the difference between continuing and forgetting. If we look into it, no matter how

carefully, it has no value unless we continue to do so, since continuation in it will produce the change we need. We may carefully read a portion of Scripture but then quickly forget it. If it isn't allowed to continue to speak to our hearts, then we fail to gain the benefit that we need. The value is in continuing to gaze into that "perfect law of liberty" so that it shapes our lives and molds us into the desired likeness to the Lord Jesus. It is a law of liberty since it isn't a bondage as the Mosaic law became; rather it is one that actually gives freedom from bondage to sin and its power. It is the entirety of God's Word through which a child of God is enabled to live a life that is not obligated to sin but rather enabled by the Spirit's power to live for God. Paul speaks of being freed from the "*law of sin and death*" in Romans 8:2, and it is the Spirit of God who has effected this in our lives. So that the blessing lies in the doing, in that action that proves the reality of its effect in us.

True Religion

Now we learn that the true test of anything claiming to be religious is its effect on our speech. We will note that James has much to say about the tongue, because if it is truly under spiritual control it indicates that the entire body is controlled (3:1-12). The tongue is the direct avenue into the heart, so that what one says and how they talk reveals what is within. Our Lord said that "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*" (Luke 6:45).

But James goes beyond the tongue to describe what true religion is. In this case, "religion" means the outward practice of those things that are reckoned as being works toward God. There are many false forms of religion, and Paul, when unsaved, was a very religious man when he was doing those things that he thought were pleasing to God (Acts 22:3, 23:1, Philipians 3:6). He did all those evil things with a clear conscience, thinking that he was honoring God by doing so. But it was false and evil in God's sight, and those deeds were done against Christ Himself (Acts 9:4). James says that true religious deeds that we do "before God" consist of a pure life on one hand and a merciful life on the other. These two characteristics would fulfill the two parts of the law: living a life to please God and showing love to one's neighbor summarize the law (Luke 10:27, Matthew 22, 37-39).

Ancient Landmarks: Giving

Larry Steers

James isn't denigrating religion in this passage, but he is criticizing those like the Pharisees who practiced a religion before men (John 12:43, Matthew 5:20, 23:13-30) to be seen of them and to receive their praise. James promotes a form of religion that is "before God" and is personal and practical. He emphasizes that this is religion that is "pure and undefiled", not the kind of religion occupied with ceremonial practices that they thought would cover defiled and corrupt lives devoted to selfish interests. This was the accepted form of religious practices among the Pharisees, but it was abhorrent to God.

He presents two forms of religion that exemplified the religion that pleases God. These two aspects express one's exercise to demonstrate the mercy of God toward those in need and to maintain an unspotted life. To "visit" those in need (and the fatherless and widows had genuine needs in that day) is to seek to help them, to assist and show concern for them in practical ways. It is in the tense that indicates that this would be the practice of one's life, not an occasional "good deed". True religion makes a person aware that we are surrounded by opportunities to "*do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*", (Galatians 6:10). Insensitivity to the needs of others shows a lack of the love of God in us (1 John 3:16-17). Widows were very dependent on others, especially then but even now. Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 5:4-5 that we are to care for widows, especially those who are of our families. In all of these activities, we must seek to maintain ourselves morally pure and without contamination that might result.

(Continued)

In Numbers, we read that Israel was told to put out the inhabitants of the land, but in Judges 1:28, we find they did not put them out but "put them under". Is this not the great trouble us? Instead of driving out the enemies we put them under, and in a short time they get power and drive us out, as in 1:34.

The issue of the collection could have been one of the questions the Corinthians had asked Paul for council on (see 7:1). This gathering was "for the saints", here specifically for suffering believers at Jerusalem. They were passing through a period of persecution. Before his conversion, Paul was an initiator of the suffering of these saints. At Damascus, those who heard the new convert preach "*were amazed and said: Is this not he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent that he might bring them bound unto unto the chief priest?*" (Acts 9:21).

Now the persecuted lay heavily upon the soul of the persecutor. He lamented "*And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women*". (Acts 22:4). The grace of God changed the persecutors life.

The suffering saints of Jerusalem represented a great need. The Gentile Corinthians are exhorted to minister to the desperate conditions of their Jewish brethren. Interesting that only in Jerusalem those who believed "*were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own*". (Acts 4:32). They recognized the truth succulently expressed by David "*of thine own have we given Thee*" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Another landmark, characterizing assembly testimony from the earliest days is the collection of funds and the use of these funds. The primary purpose of this practice of giving was for the saints. This "liberality" (1 Corinthians 16:3) was for the poor saints of Jerusalem.

Note our exercise of giving, meeting the needs of the Lord's work, with six questions.

1. Who Should Give?

The scriptures give a very clear answer "*every one of you*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Newberry expresses it as "each one of you". Stated very simply scripture means what it says and says clearly what it means. Giving is an act of worship rising from a heart thankful for what God has given (2 Corinthians 9:15). Some have suggested that because the husband and wife are one, when the husband gives his wife gives through him. In the marriage relationship scripture clearly teaches "*they are no more twain but one flesh*" (Matthew 19:5). However in other spheres there are distinct differences. For example if the husband is excommunicated ,

the wife continues in assembly fellowship. A married sister is a silent worshiper even though her husband may never audibly worship. The silent worship of the wife may have a profound affect on a gathering of the assembly. In the act of assembly giving the wife should have her own exercise before the Lord.

Our brethren who are commended to full time labors for the Lord are often away from home. Their wives, with exercise before the Lord, contribute to the gathering at the breaking of bread.

There is a limitation implied in the words “of you”. Only those who are in the fellowship contribute to the collection. Those who are full time servants receive only from assemblies which gather in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. John applies this teaching to those who have gone forth *“taking nothing from the Gentiles”* (3 John 7).

2. Why Should we Give?

What each believer whole heartedly gives is an act of worship (Hebrews 13:16). Relative to what is given on the first day of the week it has been suggested “The bread and the cup expresses so wonderfully what Christ has done for me, but when one contributes to the gathering it represents in such a small way my response what a small sacrifice I can give for Him.

What is given is a measure of devotion to Christ. The apostle further instructs the Corinthians *“Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly: or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). (Note that the word for “man” in this verse is “hekastos” meaning “everyone”). In so doing we are laying *“up for yourselves treasurers in heaven”* (Matthew 6:20).

Giving is to support the Lord’s work. With the words so familiar to us, Paul describes this as *“an odour of a sweet smell a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God”* (Philippians 4:18). (Note that Paul refers to that which was intended for the Jerusalem believers as fellowship). Fellowship has the significant meaning of “partnership”. When a believer or an assembly has fellowship with one of the Lord’s servants the importance of the gift soars far beyond the monetary value of the gift. They become a partner with the servant in the work he is doing for the Lord. He will not receive all the recompense for his labors. Those who have supported him will share with him at the bema.

3. What Should we Give?

Persons

First and of vital importance *“we present our bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1). The body stands for every aspect of the person. It is similarly stated of the Macedonians that they *“first gave their own selves to the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Praise

As already indicated brethren should never think less of the silent worship of sisters. Sisters must gather to worship. In one assembly near the writer, three elderly widows arrived on the Lord’s Day morning early. The brother at the door indicated he observed their lips moving silently, speaking to God. He has seen them reading the words of a hymn. When the first hymn was given out, they often never turned the pages of their hymn book. How very precious to observe such clear leading of the Holy Spirit.

The scriptures contemplate no silent brother. A young brother may stand for the first time, may stumble through a few words with less flowery language and touch every believer in the gathering.

Possessions

All that we have has come from the bountiful had of our gracious God. The beautiful words of 1 Chronicles 29 would be worth hours of meditation. As David blesses the Lord before all the congregation, he reminds those surrounding him and us *“Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might: and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all”* (1 Chronicles 29:12. With all the material gathered for the construction of the temple we hear David quote the words *“of thine own have we given thee”* (verse 14). With these words possessing the heart the believer could never say “This is mine”.

4 When Should we Give?

The instructions of the apostle to the Corinthians is clear *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”* (1 Corinthians 16:2). As partners in the assembly fellowship there comes a responsibility to support financially the assembly. That includes legitimate expenses for the maintenance of the Gospel Hall and need of all the exercises of the assembly.

A believer may have a personal exercise to encourage the Lord's servants or to help meet another need brought to their attention.

5. How Should we Give?

Sacrificially

In Luke 21:1-4 the Lord observed the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. He continued to watch as a widow approached. She was poor and had only two mites to contribute. Our Lord evaluated the gifts of both the rich men and the poor widow, not by what they gave but by what was left. The two mites meant more than what the rich men cast in *"For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had"* (v. 4).

Note again the sacrificial giving of the Macedonians while experiencing *"a great trial of affliction out of the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality"* (2 Corinthians 8:2).

When the construction of the Tabernacle was about to begin there was a great need for material to be used for this great work. It is on record *"the people bring more than enough for the service of the work"* (Exodus 36) *"The people were restrained from bringing"*. (V. 6), and *"For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much"* (v. 7).

Have we not read at times a report that when the last nail was driven into a new Gospel Hall all was paid for. So often our exercise and dependence on our God is very limited. His resources will never be exhausted.

Scripturally

Jacob, fleeing from Esau, vowed a vow, promising to give the tenth of all that God gave him (Genesis 28:22). While the tenth is of importance in the Old Testament, the principle of the New Testament is *"as God hath prospered him"* (1 Corinthians 16:2). God prospers some greatly and they give far more than the tenth. As young believers we were taught to lay aside the Lord's portion every pay day and invest it in the Lord's work. It becomes grievous to hear assembly believers enthusiastically report on denominational work they are supporting with no exercise to provide for an assembly commended laborer involved in a pioneer work for God.

Secretly

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth" (Matthew 6:13).

In our day systems have evolved assigning believers a number against which their offerings are recorded. The purpose is to get an income tax deduction which may then be given to support the Lord's work. Governments have allowed the use of these methods. They have been designed to protect the secrecy of the offerer and what they have given. One trusts that these are and remain totally secret. Each believer must be satisfied that what they give is known only by them and the Lord.

Perhaps it would be in order to add a note here. No one in the Lord's work nor any assembly with a building project would ask for financial aid. The writer of these lines has been in the Lord's work full time for 41 years. There have been tough times but never has a need been made known to any but God. There should be full and absolute confidence that the resources of our God have never been exhausted.

6. Handling Assembly Funds

This could be an article on its own but there are two issues we briefly mention with a burden for our brethren.

Note 1 Corinthians 16:3 *"whomsoever"* along with *"them"* and Verse 4 *"they shall go with me"*. Two brethren should count the assembly offering and two brethren should sign assembly checks. I can already hear the response, "we trust and have confidence in the brother who has this responsibility. But all that is required from a carnal believer is a false accusation and a good testimony can be ruined.

I long ago decided for myself that I would rather know the truth than be happy in ignorance. If I cannot have both truth and happiness, give me truth. We'll have a long time to be happy in heaven.

Fruit of the Spirit

Robert Surgenor

In my 89 years along life's interesting road, I have learned a few things here and there, not only through books, but also by observation. If you were to take me out to an apple, peach, and pear orchard in the winter

and ask me to define each tree, I would be at a loss. Of course the orchard owner would have no problem, but I'm not a horticulturist.

However, take me to the same orchard in the summer, and as far as telling what kind of trees they were, I would be as smart as the orchard owner. Why? Well now, the answer is simple. Looking at a tree loaded with apples, I would tell you it was an apple tree, of course. I would define the pear and the peach trees the same way. The fruit on the tree tells me two things. First, it tells me that it is alive. One doesn't have to be intelligent to know that a dead tree cannot produce fruit. Secondly, its fruit tells me what kind of species it is. If it has apples, it certainly is not a peach tree, and if it produces pears, it certainly is not an apple tree. This deduction reminds me of the words of the Lord, "*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matthew 7:20). He was speaking about false prophets producing evil fruit, while good trees produced good fruit.

Just as a fruit tree produces fruit, in like manner people also produce fruit. Solomon was a great observer of men. He wrote; "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). The desires of a person's life, their ambitions, goals, and desires, are manifested by the way they live. In other words, the fruit they produce is the product of how they think.

Good Trees – Corrupt Trees

Going back to Matthew 7, the Lord speaks of good trees, and corrupt trees. These trees represent two classes of people, those who are saved, and those who are not saved. What a saved person produces is good fruit, and what an unsaved person produces is evil fruit. The word "good" means, "excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its ends." It also carries the thought of that which is "genuine, approved, and precious." Thus a godly Christian's way of life, the way he conducts himself and the things he delights in, is to God excellent, precious, and approved.

On the other hand, when the Lord speaks of a "corrupt tree," He is picturing the unsaved. The word "corrupt," means, "rotten, putrefied, corrupted by one and no longer fit for use, worn out, worthless." This appraisal is seen in Psalm 14:3 "*They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" The word "filthy," means, "to be corrupt." The exact appraisal is seen in Psalm 53:3, thus God emphasizes this truth by repetition.

It is very evident by these appraisals that the unsaved person is totally unable to produce any good thing for God. God says of them, "*They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). Thus the divine verdict sounds forth, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). The verdict stands; no achievement, no merit on the part of any unsaved person can change the fact that they are "filthy" (corrupt) in God's sight.

The Natural Man

The unsaved man, often termed "the natural man," resists God's analysis, and considers himself worthy of heaven. He esteems himself as good as anybody else, and in many cases he considers himself better than others. Instead of condemning himself, he esteems himself, like the religious Pharisee in Luke's Gospel 18:11. Notice his prayer in the temple; "*God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*" His own heart had deceived him into thinking he was virtuous, while in reality God's estimation of him was that he was vile.

Not only this, God says; "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:1). He rejects the Bible, and its gospel truths, simply because they are foolishness unto him, they are absolutely tasteless. He has never been saved and indwelt with the Holy Spirit, thus he does not have the spiritual capacity to understand the Bible. That is why the Bible is not adored and constantly read by the unsaved. The Bible condemns their ways, thus they reject its teachings.

The Saved Man

The saved man is the opposite. Listen to the Psalmist; "*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day*" (Psalm 119:97). "*I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*" (Job 23:12). "*I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold*" (Psalm 119:127).

The Lady & The Bible

I remember on a flight from Dallas to Cleveland, as the plane was preparing to take flight, I heard behind me some very familiar words being spoken. Turning around, I saw a lady in the next seat reading the Bible

to her grandson. I said to her, "That's a good book you are reading." Looking up at me, she gently said, "It's the only Book." More than likely that dear old lady was a true Christian. This certainly is not the trait of the natural man. He will read all sorts of man-produced literature, but he is not interested in reading God's Word - the Holy Bible. Let's put it this way: If I gave you \$5.00 for every person you saw reading the Bible in a public place, such as a doctor's office, or a book store, park bench, library, or any place, and you in turn would give me \$1.00 for every person you saw reading man-produced literature, I will guarantee you this, that I would end up with far more money than you.

God's Description of the Unsaved

Notice how God describes the unsaved in 2 Timothy 3:2-5. They are *"lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."* Let us consider just a few of these accusations.

(1) *"Lovers of their own selves."* Every activity is for their own benefit. They are self-centered, with a "me first" attitude." The Christian on the other hand is exhorted to; *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"* (Philippians 2:4).

(2) *"Covetousness."* They are seldom ever satisfied, even though they possess all that is needed to sustain a comfortable life. They grasp for more, even at the expense of others. The credit card is a great promoter for this. They don't have the cash to pay for the wanted item, but they grab it using the credit card anyway.

(3) *"Boasters."* The natural man loves to be noticed. He seeks to elevate himself in the eyes of others, boasting of himself. In our modern day of technology "Facebook" facilitates the boasting man. He broadcasts over the Internet how wonderful he is, seeking to draw attention to himself. His belongings, children, house, and his accomplishments are all paraded for his friends to behold. "Look at me!" Let's be honest, a humble man thinks little of himself and consequently says little about himself. In fact, he follows the Biblical exhortation; *"in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves"* (Philippians 2:3). God says; *"But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor (humble, lowly) and of a contrite (smitten)*

spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). This characteristic is seen in godly Christians. Notice, I emphasize "GODLY Christians, not carnal believers.

(4) *"Proud"*. The proud exalt themselves and look down on others. In their ignorance they thank God for what they are, but if they were thinking realistically they would be crying to God for mercy because of what they really are - just vile sinners on the way to hell!

(5) *"Disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection."* Our educational system today has programmed the minds of youth to challenge their parents. Humanism in our schools has produced self-esteem in the hearts of little ones, thus today we have children disobedient to parents. Not only this, they are unthankful. They feel that all they have received from their parents is due to them. Anything given to them, they hardly ever say, "Thanks." They are "unholy in their attitude toward their parents." God says; *"Honour thy father and thy mother."* This is no longer taught. "Natural affection," is also translated "family love."

(6) *"Incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good."* "Incontinent," means, "no self-control." That's the motto of today, "Do your own thing and enjoy it." They call evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). When these people cannot have their own evil way, they become like savage beasts, rioting, protesting, and damaging property in the process. They are fierce. Not only this, they utterly despise people who live a moral decent life in opposition to their life style.

(7) *"Lovers of pleasure more (rather) than lovers of God."* Lord's Day mornings, Christians are driving to a building to remember the Lord, while all others are on their way to places of worldly amusement and pleasure. Stadiums, theaters, amusement parks are packed with pleasure loving people, while buildings erected to accommodate worshipping Christians are virtually empty. These, my friend, are the works, the products of the natural man. God is not in all his thoughts. He walks in the ways of his depraved heart, and in the sight of his blinded eyes, not realizing that for all these things, God will surely bring him into judgment. (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

God describes these people as dead. Notice; *"And you hath He quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins; ... Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)"* (Ephesians 2:1,5).

Unsaved people are alive physically, or they wouldn't be walking around on the earth, but they are dead spiritually. That is, they are useless for God.

They are helpless to better their position before God, they are dead. Only God can remedy their position, and give them divine life. That life can only be imparted through God the Spirit's divine working, which involves placing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His precious blood for the remission of sins. God's salvation is a gift. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8).

God speaks of ungodly men as *"trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."* (Jude 12).

Wintertime in the Orchard

Let's now go back to the orchard in the winter. Some trees may be dead, but I wouldn't know it. However, when the time comes for the trees to bring forth leaves, buds, and then fruit, I would have no trouble telling what trees were dead and what trees had life. It is absolutely impossible for a dead tree to produce fruit.

In the same sense, it is impossible for a spiritually dead sinner to produce spiritual fruit, namely, *"the fruit of the Spirit."* The natural man is absolutely powerless to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life, simply because he has never been born again (John 3:3); he has never been made a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); he has never had the Spirit of God enter his body as a permanent resident, to help and empower him to live a godly Christian life. *"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"* (Romans 8:9). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit takes place immediately upon one placing faith in Christ. Notice; *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"* (Ephesians 1:13).

Immediately upon believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, these idolaters in Ephesus were indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and this is true of all that place their trust in the Savior. Peter, being inspired by God writes; *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). How could a mortal human being ever obtain the ability to walk like the Lord Jesus Christ? You have just read the answer.

The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, that the natural man has no power to accomplish.

The Works of the Flesh

In Galatians chapter 5, we see two kinds of activities. One by the unsaved in verses 19–21, and the other by the saved, in verses 22–25. *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."*

In speaking of the natural man's fallen and corrupt nature (the flesh), the Spirit employs the word "works." These works are the product of the fallen nature that resides in every human being, due to Adam's sin in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2). *"Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* (Romans 5:12). Listed are seventeen things that he produces in his activities, but there are many more, and all of them are negative to the will of God, and quite the opposite to the fruit of the Spirit.

These activities are termed "works" for they are not hidden but well known. They are manifested for all to see. The sordid list can be divided into four groups.

- (1) The first four - sins of impurity.
- (2) The fifth and sixth - sins connected with idolatry.
- (3) The next eight - sins of temper.
- (4) The last two - sins which have to do with drunkenness and its accompaniments.

The word "witchcraft" is the word from which the English word, "pharmacy" is derived, which basically in the Greek language originally meant "a drug," or, more generally, "the use of drugs." It came to denote "witchcraft," probably because witches made use of drugs. In the passage we are considering it denotes witchcraft, sorcery, or any kind of magic art.

(Continued)

God made us for eternity; and His aim in all He does is to bring us happily to it. Hence the necessity of pain, sickness, and crosses to break the strong chain which binds us to the world, and to force us to take part in His grand design.