

# The TRUE GOSPEL of CHRIST

versus

## *The False Gospel of Carnal Christianity*



L. R. SHELTON, JR. (1923-2003)

# The True Gospel of Christ

versus the

## False Gospel of Carnal Christianity

*Revised Edition*

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*The True Gospel of Christ versus The False Gospel of Carnal Christianity* was written in 1980 by L. R. Shelton, Jr., when the chapters were originally broadcast as radio messages. This edition is a major revision with the addition of theological footnotes. This book also is available in Spanish from Chapel Library.

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# THE FALSE GOSPEL OF CARNAL CHRISTIANITY

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”—Galatians 6:7*

## A False Gospel

There is rampant in this age a *false gospel of carnal Christianity*, which has deceived many souls. The vast majority of Christendom today have not bowed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These are on sinking sand and are an easy prey to such a teaching that has permeated our land and our pulpits. So our purpose is to bring out the *true gospel* and the *false*, showing clearly the warnings from God’s Word that we should not sow to the flesh, but rather to the Spirit. May you have an open heart and an open Bible, as we pray that God will deal with us all by His Spirit.

We are warned concerning this false gospel of carnal Christianity in Galatians 6:7-8:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

This to me is a most solemn warning to all of our hearts, and especially in this day of “free-believism” and carnal Christianity, which is preached on such a large scale. You see, the vast majority of Christendom today is deceived<sup>1</sup> as to the state of their never-dying souls before God. What is happening is *justification in Christ is preached alone, at the expense of holy living*; and the hearers of this one-sided gospel are left in the dark as to God’s requirement of *the necessity of a holy life*. God’s grace has been turned into lasciviousness;<sup>2</sup> the attitude of most has been: “A little sin won’t hurt—I’m just a ‘carnal Christian’ you know, and besides, doesn’t *grace* cover it all?”

## Holiness Required by God

My prayer is that God would so work by His Spirit as to make blind eyes to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that there would be a mourning over it, for this is our only hope. Oh, how our hearts should cry to the Lord for the truth of His Word, which appeals not to our fleshly desires or to our fleshly emotions, but to that which cuts off our flesh and lays us bare

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<sup>1</sup> **free-believism...vast majority of Christendom...deceived** – Justification is indeed free and through believing alone. “Free-believism” describes the false doctrine that one may be a true Christian without receiving from God a spiritual renovation resulting in real, though imperfect, holiness in this life (Heb 12:14). By Christendom the author means those who profess to be Christian. His contention is that most of them are not truly Christians. Though Jesus did not say “most” He did say “many” shall call him Lord and find themselves rejected. Ponder carefully Matthew 7:21-23.

<sup>2</sup> **lasciviousness** – unbridled lust (Jude 1:4).

before God in confession and repentance! We should cry to Him to so work in our hearts by His Spirit that holiness of thought, word, and action would characterize our hearts and lives.

This false teaching of carnal Christianity has so permeated our churches that no one ever questions his interest in Christ, no matter how he lives. People are told that if they have “believed,” that is all that is necessary, and therefore all is well with their souls. But the Holy Word of God declares no such teaching, but in fact declares just the opposite!<sup>3</sup> For we read in Hebrews 12:14, “Follow peace with all men, *and holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Yes, holiness must characterize our lives, “for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto *holiness*” (1Th 4:7). “He hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy* and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:4). Again, He “hath saved us, and called us with an *holy* calling” (2Ti 1:9). This is the same One Who says to be

“obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so *be ye holy* in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:14-16).

Our warning text from Galatians 6:7-10 declares the same thing. God would have us to understand and not to be deceived about this false teaching; no matter what false preachers and teachers say about it, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” My friend, if you sow to your flesh, you shall of your flesh reap corruption! I do not care how many professions you have made or whose church you may belong to; you cannot mock God! He is no respecter of persons. Each and every one who sows to his flesh shall of his flesh reap corruption.

## Repentance Is Given

A man who continually sows to his flesh has never been saved; he has never been born again. Why? because under Holy Spirit conviction we are given the grace to repent—and in repentance we learn to hate sin, to abhor it, to loathe ourselves, and to flee by faith to Christ for *deliverance from sin*. We know that sin has not been eradicated, for it is still the plague of our hearts; but sin is no longer the practice and rule of our lives. It cannot be, for the soul whom God saves has had *a new nature* and *a new heart* put within; he now desires holy things and walks in the way of righteousness. He knows in himself that this is true, because the Holy Spirit has worked in him the things found in God’s Word.<sup>4</sup> He reads in Ezekiel 36:26 about the new heart that God has given him; and in 2 Peter 1:4 about the new nature he has been given. He finds in 1 John 3:9 that he has been *born of God*, and that he who is born of God does not make sin the practice and rule of his life.

Why? because God’s seed remains in him, and he cannot make sin the practice and rule of his life anymore. He hears the Word say, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1Jo 2:15). Having been taught by the work of the Holy Spirit that he is a lost, hell-deserving sinner, having laid at the feet of God in repentance, having looked by faith to Christ as his Lord and Savior, hav-

<sup>3</sup> **believed...all that is necessary...no such teaching** – To be clear, justification certainly is by faith alone (Rom 4:5). Those saved by grace alone through faith alone are called God’s workmanship, created for good works which God prepared for them to walk in (Eph 2:8-10). This is called sanctification (1Th 4:3). It is the neglect of sanctification that our author is addressing.

<sup>4</sup> See 1 John 1:5-2:6; Romans 7:14-25.

ing seen that his sin put Christ to death, then he wants no part of the world.<sup>5</sup> The love of God has been shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit's work in him.

He learns well that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh [the desire to indulge]...is not of the Father," so he hates it and cries out against it because it put Christ to death.<sup>6</sup> Again, he learns, "all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes [the desire to possess]<sup>7</sup>...is not of the Father," so he hates it and cries out against it because it put Christ to death. He learns that "the pride of life [the desire to attract to oneself]<sup>8</sup>...is not of the Father, but is of the world"—the Satanic world system of *sin*—so he hates it and cries out against it because it put Christ to death on the cross. He also learns that "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (vv. 16-17), so he desires by grace to do the will of God, which is to walk in "righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24).

## A New Nature

Therefore, since God gives every sinner whom He saves a new heart and a new nature, and puts His Holy Spirit within him to guide him into all truth, that saved sinner now searches the Word of God—not to find things that will justify him in his sins, but to find that Word which warns him against sin and tells him how to flee to Christ from sin. He reads Romans 8:6: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"; so he begins to cry to the indwelling Holy Spirit to deliver him daily from a fleshly, carnal mind, and to give him that spiritual mind of life and peace in Christ. No, he is not seeing how close he can walk to the world and sin, but how he can walk close to God in Christ by His Spirit. He is not searching the Word of God to find out the sins of others recorded there so he might use them as a means of justifying his walking in sin, but he reads these things as warnings to him not to walk where others have walked and failed.

You see, the man or woman, boy or girl, whom God saves, and unto whom He gives eternal life in Christ, hears these words from Colossians 3:2-5:

"Set your affections on things above, *not* on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify [put to death, reckon as dead] therefore your members which are upon the earth."

How then could any soul justify living a life to the flesh? No, for because of what Christ has done for him and because Christ's life is now his life, this saved soul now desires to put to death the things of the flesh, that he might sow to the Spirit and walk after the Spirit. Beloved, this is the way God deals with our souls—I know firsthand: I know what the difference is between carnal Christianity and the life which is lived by faith in and upon the living God by the

<sup>5</sup> **having seen that his sin put Christ to death, then he wants no part of the world** – Seeing that Christ suffered for sin is certainly sufficient ground to hate sin. However, this is not the only proper reason. The Psalmist hated sin because of the love he had of God's commandments (Psa 119:127-128).

<sup>6</sup> **his sin put Christ to death** – It is important to recognize that ultimately it was not our sins or the world that put Christ to death, it was God Himself. Our sins were laid upon Christ by God; He was bruised by the LORD; His soul was made an offering for sin by the Most High; Christ Himself poured out His soul unto death (Isa 53:6, 10, 12).

<sup>7</sup> **lust of the eyes** – in this context, the sinful desire for what is seen (Mat 5:28).

<sup>8</sup> **pride of life** – also may be understood as empty boasting of life or resources by which life is sustained (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*).

Holy Spirit, for I have lived them both. The only difference between me and the carnal Christian is the *grace* of God, and I praise Him for it!<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, when the saved soul hears God's Word, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry"; and "put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another"—now he *desires* to mortify them. And why? because he has "put off the old man with his deeds" and "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"<sup>10</sup> (Col 3:5, 8-10). So his desire is for Christ and His life, to walk in a way pleasing to God and not after sin, because he has been born of the Spirit of God and has a new heart.

In Colossians 3:6, the Holy Spirit gives us another reason for walking in the Spirit and not after the flesh. He says we are not to walk in these sins, "for which things' sake the *wrath of God cometh* on the children of disobedience." Yes, those who walk in such a way of disobedience to God's revealed will, shall find themselves under His curse and wrath.

### A Holy Life Follows Salvation

My friend, I would not have you deceived! A *holy life*, a sowing to the Spirit, must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, or it is not God's salvation; for Christ came to save His people *from* their sins, and not *in* their sins (Mat 1:21).<sup>11</sup> A *holy life*, a sowing to the Spirit, must follow the salvation that God gives us in Christ—or God's purpose in saving us would be defeated, and this cannot be. Did we not read that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world "that we should be *holy* and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:4). We cannot thwart the purpose of God toward His people. Listen again to this definite and positive statement: "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but *unto holiness*" (1Th 4:7). Yes, a *holy* life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, or God's will would be turned aside, and this cannot be—"For this is the will of God, even your *sanctification*" (4:3). Sanctification is your being set apart from sin by the progressive work of God's Spirit in your heart and life.

Again, a *holy life*, a sowing to the Spirit, must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, or the grace of God would not reign in the believer's life—and this cannot be, for we read in Titus 2:11-12:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

I want you to pay particular attention to these verses, and pray that the Holy Spirit will write them upon your heart. When the grace of God that brings salvation appears to all, it teaches

<sup>9</sup> **this is the way God deals with our souls—I know firsthand** – The reader is cautioned against judging what is true or false by the experience of others. Only in forming our judgments in accord with Scripture shall we be safe (Isa 8:19-20; Joh 17:17).

<sup>10</sup> **he desires to mortify them...because he has "put off the old man with his deeds"** – This passage gives a *reason* to put sin to death rather than explicitly explaining our desire to do so.

<sup>11</sup> **Christ came to save His people from their sins, and not in their sins** – Certainly without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14), yet there is a sense in which we are saved in our sins, that is, in a state of ungodliness (Rom 4:5). The author's point is that God does not *leave* His own in such a state, but conforms them to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; Eph 2:8-10).

them the same thing. And what does God's grace teach us?—that we will be self-denying ones. In what way?—saying *no* to the world and denying ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts, because we hate sin, self, Satan and the world of ungodliness. “All” learn this lesson, not just some of God's children. “All” of them are taught by the Holy Spirit to hate sin and deny self. If this self-denial and hatred of sin is absent from the life, then God's salvation is absent (Joh 16:7-11; Isa 54:13).

But this Scripture does not end only in giving us the negative; the Holy Spirit shows the grace of God in salvation, and will teach us something positive as well—how to live *soberly*, *righteously*, and *godly*. Where? in heaven? *No*, but in this present evil world: right at home, on the job, or wherever we walk! For by His grace and blood He has delivered us from “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4).

Remember this: the same Holy Spirit teaches all of God's children the same lessons. What are they? He trains us to reject and renounce all ungodliness and worldly, passionate desires; and He also trains us to live sober, temperate, self-controlled lives in an upright, devout manner (Ti 2:12). In other words, He teaches us to live spiritually whole lives controlled by Him, here in this present evil world.

### **The False Gospel – no power over sin**

What a far cry this is from the present-day gospel that is preached—

- a gospel that gives no new heart or new nature,
- a gospel that does not break the power of sin, but allows one to live on in it,
- a gospel that gives only an insurance policy against hell, and knows nothing about holiness of thought and action,
- a gospel that will let you indulge the flesh, and puts no restraint upon your passion, pride, and evil heart!

This is not a gospel, but a *false* thing! It is false because it says that all one has to do is say “yes” to a message about Christ and agree with some basic facts about Jesus; and after he “believes,” he is saved and saved for ever, no matter if he does not have a new heart and no matter what he does.<sup>12</sup>

Did you know that often an average individual tells you that he made a profession when he was 6, 8, 12, or 15 years of age; but he drifted off into sin, and after 10 years or so he came back and rededicated his life, and now gives himself to religious service? It is from this group that the majority of our missionaries, teachers, and preachers come, and they know nothing of heart-felt repentance or standing before God as a guilty, lost sinner! If you are in this group, I tell you in love, you have mistaken the call to *salvation*—to come to Christ as a guilty, needy, lost sinner—as the call to *service*; and therefore you have become two-fold more the child of

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<sup>12</sup> **some facts about Jesus** – True faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ Who actually lived in history; His life is accurately recorded in Scripture. All who believe in this historical Jesus will be saved (Joh 20:30-31). Such faith is an understanding and belief of the truth about Christ as He is set forth in the gospel (1Jo 5:1). Such faith always produces good works. But faith is not works (Gal 2:16). When good works are absent the supposed “faith” is not genuine. It is said to be “dead” (Jam 2:17-18). It may be dead because it is not faith in the gospel of Christ, but merely a belief about God or some other truths (Jam 2:19). It may be dead because it is an understanding of the gospel without belief in its truth. It is this “dead faith” that we should beware of.



hell than you were before, unless the Holy Spirit by His Word and grace gives you a heart to see your desperate need of Christ. You see, you have mistaken the call to a broken heart and a contrite spirit, to repentance and faith—the call to break with sin and to walk in holiness of life in conversion—as a call *to the ministry*! I know this does happen, for I have heard so many testimonies given along this line. It even happened to me! I mistook the call to salvation as the call to the ministry, and only by the grace of God was I awakened to see that I had missed true repentance and faith, and was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, let me proclaim today that I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for that gospel is the *power of God* unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom 1:16). This salvation is the deliverance from the power of sin, which I have experienced by the grace of God in Christ; and beloved, I praise the Lord that Romans 6:18 is true: “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness,” servants of Him Who has delivered us from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2)!

C. H. Spurgeon has said it so well:

“Each creature brings forth after its own kind: the old nature being radically evil continues to produce and to send forth swarms of sins; it is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be, and therefore its thoughts and acts are those of rebellion and hatred toward God. On the other hand, the new nature ‘cannot sin because it is born of God’; it must have its fruit unto holiness, for it is holiness itself. Out of a dove’s nest we expect only doves to fly. The heavenly life breeds birds of paradise, such as holy thoughts, desires, and acts; and it cannot bring forth such unclean birds as lust, envy, and malice. The life of God infused in regeneration is as pure as the Lord by Whom it was begotten, and can never be otherwise. Blessed is the man who has this heavenly principle within, for it must appear in his life and cause him to abound in holiness, to the glory of God.”

Reader, have you this divine seed within you, or do you remain under the dominion of a corrupt nature? This question deserves a present and thoughtful reply.

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<sup>13</sup> The author is speaking in general terms as he often does in this work. Nevertheless, he puts his finger on a very real danger. The reader is urged to be patient, listen for the author’s main point, judge it by Scripture, and take heed to that which is true.

## DEATH TO SELF AND SIN

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”—Galatians 6:7-8*

### A “Friendly Pal”?

*Beware* of that false gospel which allows a man to stay in his sins and sow to his flesh, and yet gives him a hope for heaven. *Beware* of that false gospel that sells you an insurance policy against the flames of hell and yet gives no power over sin. *Beware* of that false gospel which lets you go on in your same way of fleshly living and makes no demands for the death of your fleshly nature. *Beware* of that false gospel that gives you religion without life, profession without possession. *Beware* of that false gospel that leads you to believe that there are two roads to heaven, and not the one and only road that is described by our Lord in Matthew 7:13-14 as “the narrow way.” You see, this false gospel makes a second way, and it is the road of carnal Christianity—“a way that seemeth right unto a man [because it is an easy road], but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pro 16:25). It appeals to the flesh, but it is a way that leads to hell!

Again, *beware* of the false gospel that is preached today, which makes no demands upon you, but shows you the easy way unto salvation, which is but the shortest way to hell! This false gospel is not opposed to your flesh, rather it is a “friendly pal”; and, if understood rightly, it is the source of oceans of good, clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets you live without interference; it never changes your life; it still lets you live in your own pleasure, only now instead of singing cabaret songs and drinking hard liquor, you take delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies. The accent is *still on enjoyment*, though the fun is now on a higher plane, morally if not intellectually.

This false gospel encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic appeal. It seeks not to slay the sinner before he receives the new life in Christ, but tells him to receive new life before the old life is slain. So it tries only to redirect the sinner. It directs him into a jolly way of living, which saves his self-respect. This false gospel says to the self-assertive: “Come and assert yourself for Christ.” To the egotist, it says: “Come and do your boasting in the Lord,” and to the thrill seeker: “Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship.” It tries to pour new wine into old wineskins, and it will not work! The old must be torn down before the new can be built.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **The accent is still on enjoyment...it tries only to redirect the sinner.** – The Christian life is a life of joy (Joh 15:11; Rom 15:13; Gal 5:22) and some things listed in preceding paragraphs are not sinful in themselves. The point is that conversion brings the believer under the Lordship of Christ. Not simply is sin forsaken, but lawful things are *yielded* to God. Inordinate use of lawful things may take one to hell. In Christ’s parable of the soils, it is said the lust (or desire) “of other things” chokes the word to unfruitfulness (Mar

## The Meaning of the Cross

This false gospel of carnal Christianity misses completely the whole meaning of the cross, which meaning is *death*. But the gospel of the grace of God in Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, demands the death, burial, and resurrection of you, the sinner, in Christ. It sets forth the cross of Christ as the abrupt, violent end of all that you are by nature, and raises you to a new life in Christ—with the shackles of sin broken. It brings to an end your pride and ambition, and leaves you at the feet of a holy God crying for mercy.

The true gospel of God tells you that you will take up the cross of Christ and say goodbye to your friends and the world, for you are not coming back the same person. It tells you that you are not going to have your life redirected, but you are going to the place of death. As Hebrews 13:13 puts it, “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,” for there we die to the world. As the Lord Jesus Himself says in Luke 14:27, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” We must die to the world and all of its pleasures and allurements: by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14).

Did you know that the two ingredients that make up the table salt we use every day, when taken by themselves, are a deadly poison and will kill you? But put together, they become a blessing in the form of salt—which purifies, gives taste, preserves, and is used in so many different ways. It is the same with the true gospel, the gospel of the grace of God! We can preach Christ and His blood for the forgiveness of sins, in such a way that will deceive sinners, if we do not tell them that the death of Christ means death to us and our ways, and death to sin! If we do not put *all* of the ingredients into the message we preach, the partial message we preach then becomes *deadly poison* to the soul, damning instead of saving!

## No Compromise with Sin

This doctrine or false gospel of carnal Christianity (which is no gospel!) has swept Christendom today, and there is not that ingredient of *repentance* which causes us to hate sin, showing that the power of sin must be broken, and that God by His Spirit in true salvation not only justifies but also sanctifies us. You see, justification and sanctification are two sides of the same coin;<sup>2</sup> and when God justifies us before Himself in Christ by His blood, He also sanctifies us—that is, sets us apart for His holy use—and causes us to walk in His ways.

So the true gospel of Christ makes *no compromise with sin*. It demands coming clean and coming clear with God or perishing. It says, “Down sinner, down at the feet of the holy and sovereign God in repentance; down at the feet of Christ in faith, looking only to *Him* for salvation.” All sin must be forsaken; all sin must be renounced; all sin must be repented of; all sin must be hated. You must die to the world, and the world to you. You must forsake your sin and then go on to forsake yourself, or you will never know Christ in true salvation. The gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus will not let you cover, defend or excuse any sin, for when the convincing power of God’s Holy Spirit works in your heart, you are going to die to sin and

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4:19)—*other* things, not exclusively *sinful* things. Even family, friends, and work can become idols. The grace of God brings us to yield all these to Jesus (Mat 10:37; Luk 14:26, 33).

<sup>2</sup> Justification and sanctification are the two sides of the same coin. Though not the same things, they are always found together.

self; and then Christ, by His mighty power—the power of the gospel—will raise you to a new life. This will be His life in you, and you will be a new creature in Christ.

Therefore, do not seek *to make terms* with God, for you deserve to be cast into hell. However, for Christ's sake, God can and will have mercy upon you if you come to Him as a hell-deserving sinner, renouncing your sins and turning to God from them in true, heart-felt repentance. This is your only hope of salvation in Christ, to come unto Him with the rope around your neck, giving Him the other end and telling Him to slay you<sup>3</sup> or to save you for Christ's sake. Come to Him with bowed head just as you are, as a lost sinner, for He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10).

The true gospel of Christ not only makes no compromise with sin, but there is also no place in the true gospel for a second compromise: *a middle ground* between the broad way and the narrow way. None! For when you come to Christ to set you free from the penalty of sin in hell by His cross work (and this is *justification*), you of a necessity also come to Him to set you free from the power and dominion of sin in this life (and this is *sanctification*). The very nature of the faith, which embraces a whole Christ, demands that justification not be separated from sanctification. For Christ Himself—His very Person—is our salvation and hope of glory, and you cannot divide the Person of Christ. No man can call Jesus *Lord* but by the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:3), and you cannot know Him as Savior without knowing Him as Lord—the One Who breaks the power of sin and sets you free. As John 8:36 tells us: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”—*free from sin!* In God's salvation we die to sin and its reigning power (Rom 6:2).

## **We Have Died to Sin**

What a subtle trick Satan has pulled on the vast majority of Christendom today!—so subtle that many are deceived and cannot see that they are deceived, thinking that it is possible to be saved without the *power* of sin being broken (its reigning power), believing that they can live a life in the flesh and sow to the flesh. They think all is well with their never-dying souls because they have made a decision and are living the best they can!

But listen to Romans 5:19-21:

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

Hear what the Holy Spirit is telling us: “As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign *through righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the point: when God saves us, He breaks the reigning power of sin, and now *grace reigns!* How? *through righteousness*, and not *apart* from righteousness; so by the grace of God we can walk in righteousness and true holiness.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> **telling Him to slay you** – In some places, the author inadvertently may make the way in which we come to God appear complex. Paul tells us in wonderful simplicity: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:30-31). Such faith necessarily includes repentance, which is a change of mind. It manifests itself in good works (Jam 2:18), for it is impossible that someone who really believes the gospel should habitually live as if he does not (1Jo 2:4).

<sup>4</sup> **“For as...so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”** – The words “be made righteous” in this passage refer not to the believer's personal holiness but rather to the righteous standing he enjoys solely due to the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to him in justification. The context of this passage

This false gospel of carnal Christianity has so permeated our churches today that *no one questions his interest in Christ*, because he is told that the believer can still live in the flesh, sow to the flesh, and have hope of heaven when he dies. But this is a lie out of hell, for as we have shown you, God's Word teaches differently. From the verses we have read in Romans 5, we see that when the Law enters in—convicting us of the awfulness, guiltiness, and offensiveness of sin before God—then we find sin abounding and reigning in our hearts and lives, and cry out unto God for mercy. When God saves us in Christ, giving us His new nature and sending His Spirit to dwell in us, then His grace abounds and reigns in the heart and life of His redeemed child.

Romans 6 opens with the question, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” And the answer comes back in verse 2, “God forbid”—By no means, of course not! Heaven forbid, perish the thought, for—“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” If we have been delivered from the penalty and power of sin, shall we live any longer in it? No! For we have *died* to sin.

Before going further, let us define the word “dead,” for “dead, died, and death” are used 14 times here in Romans 6. And what does it mean? Physical death is spoken of in the Scriptures as the separation of the individual from his physical body, while spiritual death is spoken of as separation of the individual from the life of God in salvation.<sup>5</sup> So the Holy Spirit is here telling us that we have died to sin once for all—we have been *separated from sin* as the reigning monarch of our lives—and that now the principle of grace reigns, and reigns as monarch. Therefore we walk in newness of life (v 4) with the power of sin broken, never again to come under its reigning power. Why? because the *power of grace does much more abound*; therefore this is the true gospel—the gospel of the grace of God in Christ.

“Well,” he asks, “since this principle of grace reigns, shall we then sin that grace may abound?” And again the answer is “God forbid!” For being what we are—justified, blood-washed and cleansed sinners—can we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? The answer is *no*, because as Titus 2:11-12 tells us, the *grace* of God, which now reigns, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

### The Fine Line of Demarcation

Although we can see clearly here in these verses of Romans 5:20-21 and 6:1-2 that the true Christian, the true child of God, has died both to the guilt of sin and its penalty, and the power of sin and its reign in the human heart, yet it is on this fine line of demarcation that Christendom is divided today. For this is where the subtle work of Satan has come in with this carnal Christian teaching that says: “The moment a man makes a profession of faith in Christ, he is saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, but that the power of sin has not been broken, so of a necessity he will still live in sin and sin will still reign in his life.” Again I must raise my voice

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compares the imputation of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness to their posterity. This suggests that the righteousness associated with the reign of grace, mentioned in verse 21, is also the righteousness of Christ and not the obedience of the believer. This is important to note because our author uses this passage to describe the obedience of the believer. In contrast, William Hendricksen considered the righteousness spoken of here to be “Not a righteousness provided by man, but a righteousness imputed by God. It was through this righteousness that grace triumphed over sin. [Rom] 1:17; 3:21-24; 5:17.” (*New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Baker Book House, 1980; 185).

<sup>5</sup> **death** – Ecc 12:7 and Eph 2:1-10, 4:17-18.

in protest, and proclaim what God's Word teaches—that in salvation *both* the penalty of sin and the reign (or power) of sin is broken. Yes, a believer still has sin in the flesh, but it no longer rules or reigns over him as a master. If indeed he is a true child of God, he will say, "I have died to the reign of sin; sin no longer has dominion over me, for now the principle of *grace* and not sin reigns in my heart and life." So again we see that this is what the power of the true gospel of Christ does for us: *it delivers us and sets us free in Christ*.

Please hear this. We are either under the reign of sin in Adam, therefore *lost*, or we are under the reign of grace in Christ, therefore saved and *safe*. There can be no middle ground of carnal Christianity! If the Holy Spirit, by His almighty power, has not brought us from under the reign of sin and its power, its realm of dominion, then we are lost and lost forever.<sup>6</sup> But this is only negative; something else must be done. The same Holy Spirit must also bring us under the reign of grace, and this He does in salvation: for we know its power, its force, its might, and its dynamic influence upon our lives as it reigns in our hearts and lives through righteousness. I must warn you, my dear friend, *be not deceived!* If you sow to your flesh, you shall of your flesh reap corruption and eternal damnation; but if you sow to the Spirit, you shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting in Christ by His grace (Gal 6:6-8). Oh, be not *deceived!*

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<sup>6</sup> **lost forever** – unless they come to Christ (Joh 8:24).

# FREE FROM SIN'S PENALTY AND POWER

## PART 1

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”—Galatians 6:7-8*

### Into the Kingdom of Grace

The bent of a man’s life must be in the Spirit of God or he is not saved. If he sows to his flesh, he shall of his flesh reap corruption. We read in Romans 8:5, “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;” and in verse 6, “To be carnally [or fleshly] minded is *death*”—which is spiritual death (the second death in hell)<sup>1</sup> according to Romans 6:23 and 8:6. “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:8). So if the bent of a man’s life is after the flesh, then he is not of God. He pleases not God, but only himself. On the other hand, if the bent of a man’s life is after the Spirit, then he minds the things of the Spirit, and “to be spiritually minded is life and peace” in Christ (Rom 8:6).

The Word of God plainly declares in so many places that when God saves a sinner in Christ, giving him a new heart and nature, He takes him *entirely out* of the realm of sin (the rule, reign, and kingdom of sin), and brings him *into* the kingdom of grace. He puts the redeemed and saved sinner under the reign of grace. To prove this, let’s go to the law and the testimony of God’s Word: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). Here we find the apostle Paul telling these Colossian believers that they, who once belonged to the power and the kingdom of darkness (of the devil and of hell), have been translated (or transferred) from that kingdom and put into the kingdom of Christ under the reign of His *grace*. So they no longer are under the power or dominion of the kingdom of sin and darkness, but they are now under the power and dominion of the kingdom of light, heaven, and grace—which has freely been given to them by the sovereign God in Christ.

Again, writing to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul says about Christians: “Our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven” (Phi 3:20). He does not say that our citizenship *is going* to be there, but that it *is in heaven now*. We are a colony of heaven living in this world, but our citizenship has already taken place by the grace of God in salvation, worked in us by the Holy Spirit. And we find this same truth in Ephesians 2:19—believers are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” In other

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<sup>1</sup> **second death in hell** – “death” describes the present state of those that are carnally minded (Rom 8:6; Eph 2:1, 5); “second death” describes the punishment to be inflicted upon those dying in such a condition (Rev 21:8).

words, there has been a complete change in our position. We have changed our kingdoms once and forever, so we are no longer in the territory of sin. And because we are no longer under the governing power of sin, sin no longer controls our destiny.

Before becoming a child of God by the new birth, we were united to Adam. Because we belonged to Adam and his fallen race, all the consequences of his sin and actions have come upon us. But if we are saved, we are no longer in Adam; we are now *in Christ*. There are only two possibilities for every person alive today: you are either in Adam or in Christ. This is the whole message of Romans 5:18-21; listen as we go into it: “As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation [the reign of sin in Adam] even so by the righteousness of one the *free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life [the reign of grace in Christ]. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners [the reign of sin in Adam], so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous [the reign of grace in Christ].” And in verse 17, “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one [the reign of sin in Adam]; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness *shall reign in life* by one, Jesus Christ [the reign of grace in Christ].”

### **Free from the Power of Sin**

This is the key point: The gospel of the grace of God sets the poor captive sinner free! He is free from the power, as well as the penalty of sin, because he is now in Christ and His kingdom. You see, the true gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). The word “power” comes from the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get our word “dynamite.” Yes, this dynamite of the true gospel sets us free from sin to walk in newness of life in Christ. When we stand before God as poor, helpless, lost sinners, hearing our doom read from the courts of heaven—“The soul that sinneth, it shall *die*” (Eze 18:20)—and we bow to this judgment, knowing and acknowledging that we are hell-deserving sinners, then when we hear the preaching of the gospel—the good news of deliverance through the blood of Christ—and it comes home to our soul by the Holy Spirit, we desire and cry after this free gift of God in Christ. By faith we see in Christ and His gospel a full salvation of deliverance from sin and all its power, and we are made to trust and praise Him for such deliverance, which is for time and eternity.

What good is a gospel if it is not good news of *deliverance* in Christ? or if it does not set us free from that which holds, binds, and reigns over us, damning our souls to hell? The true gospel sets men free from the tyranny of sin and breaks its power. It does not say, “Come on down the aisle, give me your hand and try me for a day, a week, or a month, and see how you’re going to make out, then if you cannot hold out, you can always go back and be a ‘carnal Christian’”—*No!* that is not the offer of the true gospel! The command of the gospel is this: Come to God as a repenting, believing sinner, lay down your arms of rebellion against Him; then when you come (by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you), with a hatred for sin and a desire after the Lord Jesus Christ—desiring to know Him in His fullness, to know His power and deliverance, and to bow to His Kingship—my friend, this is *grace*. And in this grace, God gives you a salvation that will not let you go back to Satan’s kingdom. God’s salvation will not let you go back under the reign of sin anymore; for you see, this gospel and this grace holds, keeps, and delivers you for *time* and for *eternity*, giving you grace and power by the indwelling Holy Spirit to be a conquering one, an overcoming one in the Lord Jesus Christ.



## The Reign of Grace

Now by the same gospel that delivers us from the reign of sin, assuring us from the Word of God that our sins are forgiven, we are transferred to and put under the *reign of grace* and all that that means in terms of power. For the reign of grace is a very powerful reign; it is guaranteed to produce certain results. Consider the following questions: Did not the reign of sin produce certain results? Did it not cause death to pass upon us? Did it not cause us to sin, and make us hate, swear, blaspheme, murder, lie, cheat, steal, covet, envy, and bear false witness against our neighbor?—to do that which would bring down the wrath of God upon us? Did it not make us drown our convictions and turn straight to hell? Sure it did, because it *reigned* over us! It was powerful, a monarch on the throne of the heart, and we had to obey. So in the same way, *grace* will reign over every child of God—“where sin abounded, *grace did much more abound*” (Rom 5:20). Yes, if the power and dominion of sin guarantees certain results, the reign and rule of grace guarantees more certain results! And these results are that my full and final salvation is absolutely certain. It guarantees that all the dynamite and tremendous power of the reign of grace is upon me and working in me, and will bring me home at last in the presence of God, to a state of absolute perfection in glorification.

This then, being the purpose of the gospel—to break the reigning power of sin and to en-throne the reigning power of grace—shall we be “carnal” Christians and the flesh remain in the saddle?<sup>2</sup> No! The whole object of the grace of God given to us in the gospel is to *destroy* sin, with all its works and all that belongs to it (which will be completed in the morning of the resurrection!). For Romans 6:14 tells us, “Sin *shall not* have dominion over you.” Why? because *grace* is infinitely more powerful. Where sin abounds, *grace* does much more abound; this is the gospel the Bible declares! This is the gospel of the grace of God in Christ that breaks the power of sin, sets us free, and reigns in us, so we can walk in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness. Any other gospel is not the true gospel, but a perverted gospel! Therefore, if you are living in sin, hiding under a false profession, making excuses for sin, and if sin’s power was not broken when you say you believed, then I say to you, based upon the authority of God’s Word, you are *lost* and know nothing of the *power* of the true gospel of Christ!

## Impossible to Continue in Sin

This brings us to Romans 6:2: “How shall we, that are *dead* to sin, *live* any longer therein?” We cannot. Why? because that word “live” means “to continue and abide.” We see from this that in view of our position (under the reign of grace), it is impossible that we should continue to live a life of sin! See 1 John 3:9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” This profound statement means that whosoever is born of God does not go on in a life of sin; he does not practice it habitually. He cannot go on under the reign of sin because *His* seed remaineth in him—that is, the new life of grace in Christ. John is not saying that a man born of God can never commit an individual act of sin, for if this were the meaning of the verse, there would be none in heaven, or any Christian on earth today. No, he is saying that such a person cannot go on abiding in the realm of sin. Notice the word “cannot”—it is *impossible*. Our Lord said concerning this: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, *whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*. And the servant *abideth not* in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.”

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<sup>2</sup> **in the saddle** – in charge; in control; as a rider in control of a horse.

So, put together all of these verses, and you will see clearly that it is impossible for a Christian to live in sin, because such a man is under the power and in the realm of this mighty force called *grace*. Because the saved soul is under the influence and the power of Christ, he cannot continue where he was before; *grace* makes it impossible.

Now, this is not to say that the Bible teaches sinless perfection, or that our sin nature can be eradicated in this life. For God's people still have sin in the flesh, according to Romans 8:10. What God's Word is saying is that as sin reigned unto death before God saved us, now grace reigns through righteousness; and greater is the Holy Spirit Who is in us to cause grace to abound in us than he who is without (that is, Satan) to cause sin to abound in us. The Lord further says in John 8: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (v 36)—that's an *absolute freedom* where the Son is concerned, for He came to give us life, and that life to be more abundant in Himself.

This is the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, of which Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for *it is the power of God unto salvation* to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). And this gospel not only makes salvation possible, but it gives all that is needful for keeping us from here to eternity! So unto us who are saved by the true gospel and grace of Christ, Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"; for praise our gracious God, we now can and will walk after the Spirit, by His *grace*!

## FREE FROM SIN'S PENALTY AND POWER PART 2

<sup>1</sup> *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? <sup>3</sup> Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: <sup>6</sup> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”—Romans 6:1-6*

### **Romans 6:1-4**

The entire sixth chapter of Romans is against the false gospel of carnal Christianity. Having previously considered the question in verse 1, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”—verse 2 tells us *No*, that we who are saved have died to sin and live no longer in it, because in His salvation the Son has made us free from sin and its reigning power. In verse 3, we read that in salvation we were baptized by the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ—that is, we were put into Christ—and therefore were baptized (or put) into His death. You see, all that Christ our Lord as our Substitute did in His death, has become ours, for we were in Him at the cross. When we were saved by His grace, all of the benefits that came out of His obedience unto death became ours. This is what God does for every soul whom He saves.

In verse 4, we read that since this has happened, we were buried by baptism into His death (or put into His death), that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the power of the Father, even so we have been raised up with Him to walk in newness of life. Therefore sin no longer has dominion over us because we died to sin, even as Christ died to our sin which He bore in His own body on the tree (vv. 9-10).

These truths from Romans can only be understood by the revealing power of God’s Spirit. But what a wealth of spiritual truth we have here, if God be pleased to reveal them unto our hearts by His Spirit. What gold of His grace has been poured out upon us! You see, what the Holy Spirit is telling us is this: *we have been made one in Christ*. As Christ died under our sins, so we have died to these same sins; and they no longer have dominion over us, the reigning power of sin having been broken.

### **Romans 6:5**

In verse 5 we have again the plain statement of the believer’s union with Christ in the words, “planted together.” What the Holy Spirit is telling us here (which to me drives another nail in the coffin of the false gospel of carnal Christianity) is this: Since we have been planted

together in Christ's death, we are planted together *in His resurrection*. Oh, that we would take our Bibles and read what God has done for and given to us in Christ in salvation! There we will find that all the benefits that we have received from being identified with Him in death, are made *sure* to us by the power of His resurrection; and this leaves us no loopholes in the positive salvation that is given to us in Christ Jesus the Lord!

But there is yet another great truth brought out in this 5<sup>th</sup> verse: Being planted together, then we *shall* bring forth our fruit unto holiness (v 22), for we are united to Christ in that vital union of *oneness*. If you would compare this with John 15:5, where our Lord said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," you can see this same truth of identification with Christ in that vital union of *oneness*; and if we are united to Him in oneness, then, as He is now in heaven, so are we upon this earth as we walk as pilgrims and strangers on the road toward glory. Therefore as a good tree, we shall bring forth good fruit, according to Matthew 7:18. Read this verse carefully, and we find that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." Why? because it is identified with Christ, the smitten One, in death to sin and resurrection to (or newness of) life that brings forth fruit unto holiness.

Please notice the word "cannot" in Matthew 7:18. The good tree, which represents the born-again child of God (one who is accepted in Christ and joined to Him in the oneness of faith in salvation), *cannot* bring forth evil fruit! Why? because the good fruit of the Holy Spirit is brought forth by the life of Christ in us! My fellow believer, this speaks of our *position in Christ*. Yes, these Scriptures are blessed to me, for they tell me that since I have been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, then I will also, by virtue of His life in me, now be enabled to walk in newness of life with the power of sin broken, bringing forth fruit unto holiness, as God by His Spirit changes me from glory to glory into the likeness of Christ!

## Romans 6:6

We come now to verse 6 of this sixth chapter of Romans, which reads: "*Knowing this*, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." We will look first at the expression, "Knowing this"—and this to me drives another nail into the coffin of the false gospel of carnal Christianity. How? by the teaching of the Holy Spirit when one is under conviction. He is saying here that this is something which we should all know, that is, all of us who claim to be saved. This is something with which we should be familiar, something concerning which we should have an absolute certainty; therefore the Holy Spirit says, "knowing this."

One may ask, "What should we know?" This: that we died to sin in the death of Christ, and have been raised in His resurrection power to walk in newness of life; therefore we have become new creatures in Christ. Do you know this? Do you always live in the light of this knowledge? Is this something of which you are absolutely certain? You should be, if you are saved, because this is an essential, vital part of our salvation. Now we have the power to *put off* the former behavior of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to *put on* the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:22-24). Yes, because the power of sin is broken, we can obey these commands to no longer serve sin. Perfectly? oh, I wish it were so! This is what the child of God longs for, because he despises sin. But in salvation we learn from God's Word and accept by faith that this is our position in Christ—He has freed us from the reign and power of sin!

## The Holy Spirit Teaches Us

Why then does the majority of Christendom *not know* this deliverance from the power and penalty of sin? Why are they walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit? Why is every excuse given for the old flesh and the false gospel of carnal Christianity? The answer is because they have missed Holy Spirit conviction; for if they had ever been under Holy Spirit conviction, they would have known the bondage of sin and, therefore, deliverance from it. They would have been taught by the Holy Spirit in conviction the things that are so humbling to the flesh.

And what are these things that He teaches which are so humbling to the flesh?

1) That you and I are destitute of any righteousness or good works that the Lord will accept (Isa 64:6).

2) That in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing (Rom 7:18).

3) That you and I are by nature vile, wretched sinners before God (Job 40:4; Rev 3:17).

4) That you and I are destitute of any spiritual wisdom (Rom 3:11), therefore full of vanity and pride (Psa 39:5).

5) That we are destitute of any spiritual strength (Rom 5:6), therefore unable to do anything good of or from ourselves (Joh 15:5).

6) That you and I are destitute of freedom (Isa 61:1), therefore sold under sin (Rom 7:14).

Further, we are taught that we are the bondslaves of our lusts (Ti 3:3), walking after the counsel of the devil, who takes us captive at his will (2Ti 2:26), because we are by nature of our father, the devil (Joh 8:44). This is what God shows us under conviction,<sup>1</sup> and with this knowledge we are humbled before God in repentance.

Under the convicting power of His Word, the Holy Spirit lets the light of the *glorious gospel of God* shine into our hearts, giving the glory of Christ Jesus to us, and thereby turning us from darkness to light—taking us completely out of the kingdom of darkness and putting us into Christ and His kingdom. This is our position in Christ by virtue of His cross-work in us, and this we experience by faith as the Holy Spirit teaches us from His Word. It is then that we understand by faith those blessed words spoken by our Lord in John 8:36, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Having been in bondage to sin (yes, its bondslave!), now in salvation in Christ we are shown by the Holy Spirit through His Word, and accept by faith, that we have been delivered (freed) *by the gospel*, which is the power of God unto salvation.

How is this effected in us and how do we understand this? It is by the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to work repentance in us, so that we stand guilty before God, with a hatred for the sins that we have committed against God. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit through the gospel that we believe unto life and know that God, in His mercy and grace, has pardoned our sins, putting them away under His precious blood. God has given us a new heart and nature, thereby enabling us to now walk in a way of righteousness and true holiness.

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<sup>1</sup> **This is what God shows us under conviction** – The author lists some very important truths; however, Scripture does not require that an explicit knowledge of *all* these things *necessarily* accompanies true conviction—consider the case of the thief on the cross (Luk 23:40-43). We have no biblical evidence that all the things listed were plain to him. Yet, because he truly was brought to Christ, it appears that his conviction was genuine.

## What Is the Gospel?

Now, what is the gospel? The gospel is the *good news* that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1Co 15:3-4). Therefore, based upon this gospel, which is Christ Himself and all His work, God can be just in delivering a poor sinner who comes to Him in repentance and faith. God counts all that Christ did as if he, the sinner, had performed it—it is because of Christ's work and by the power of the Holy Spirit that this deliverance takes place.

Out of free sovereign grace, the sinner is delivered, *first*, from the *condemnation of sin, the penalty of the Law, and the wrath of God*, in justification. In Isaiah 42:7, Christ was sent “to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” Again, Christ speaking in Luke 4:18-19 says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Again, in Romans 8:1 we read, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Then *second*, by the power of the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, in salvation there is deliverance from the *power of Satan*. This gracious truth is brought out in Colossians 1:13 in these words: God “hath delivered us *from the power of darkness*, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” In Hebrews 2:14, we read that Satan, who had the power of death, has been destroyed for the believer, and that the child of God will never again come under Satan's power (1Jo 5:18).

*Third*, in salvation by the power of the gospel, the sinner is delivered from the *power of sin*. Listen again to Romans 6:14, 18: “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace...Being then *made free from sin*, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Yes, our living God has once for all delivered us from the slave market of sin by the shedding of His own precious blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Yes, redemption is by blood and by power. Christ paid the price by His shed blood, and the Holy Spirit makes deliverance actual to our experience by His power. This is what the gospel does for us! Therefore, we are never again exposed for sale, because we have become children of God, heirs of the Father, joint-heirs with Christ, and our bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is shouting grounds for praise unto our God!

And *fourth*, the gospel by its power gives us a *new heart and a new nature*, so we can now serve God and walk in a way we never walked before—in a way of righteousness! He causes us to keep His Word! Oh, glorious thought! All of God's people have been saved and are safe forever, because of the keeping power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells us!

Do you know anything of this gracious gospel in Christ that sets us free from the power and reign of sin? Or are you deceived by this false gospel of carnal Christianity that comes by easy-believism<sup>2</sup> and does not deliver from the power nor the reign of sin, and is therefore damning to your soul? Away with such a false gospel! Bring in the true gospel of the *grace* of God that comes with its power to break sin in our hearts and lives, and causes us to walk in newness of life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> **easy-believism** – see “free-believism”, chapter 1.

## WHY MUST A CHRISTIAN BE DEAD TO SIN?

*“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Romans 5:21*

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom 6:2). We have seen that the entire sixth chapter of Romans sets forth the glorious truth of the believer’s death to sin—and therefore freedom from its rule, its tyranny, its reign, and its entire domain. I believe the key that gives us this understanding is found in Romans 5:21: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord.” We are entirely set free from sin and its power in the Lord Jesus Christ, into whose death we were baptized.

Listen as we again stress this great eternal truth: A Christian is one who is in Christ. Because he is in Christ, he has died with Him, he has been buried with Him, he has risen with Him, he is alive unto God in Him; and because of this identification with Christ, the repenting, believing sinner has been freed from sin—he has *died* to it.

### How Have We Died to Sin?

Now the question is asked, “*In what sense* has the believer in Christ *died to sin*, thereby being freed from it?” The Scriptures are plain that we are not dead to sin’s *influence*, for we are told that sin influences us because we still have sin in the flesh (Rom 7:15, 19; 8:10). And we are not yet dead to the *presence* of sin (Rom 7:21), nor will we be till we get our new bodies in the resurrection. Nor are we freed from the *effects* of sin in this life, because Romans 7:24 and Psalm 51:2 tell us that sin still affects us: it is still the plague of our hearts. Our Lord has taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins” (Luk 11:4). He has given us 1 John 1:9 as our confession box<sup>1</sup> and the throne of grace to come to, whereby we find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16).

In what sense then are we *dead* to sin? The Scriptures are clear that we are dead to sin *as a master who rules over us*; for Christ is our Lord, and where sin once reigned unto death, grace now reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21). We are dead to sin *in regard to its guilt*; sin cannot condemn us, for we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, washed by faith in His blood; and we stand before God completely justified from all sin. Our sins have been imputed to Christ (Rom 4:8). “There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1); “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifi-

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<sup>1</sup> **confession box** – box used by Roman Catholic priests when hearing confession from a congregant. The box was used to conceal one’s identity. The author is pointing to 1Jo 1:9 as the biblical instruction on confession of sin to replace such superstition.

eth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33-34). Again, we are dead to sin *as a course of life*, for we no longer walk according to the course of this world as we did before when we walked in darkness (Eph 2:2), but we are now light and walk as children of light (Eph 5:8). Sin is not looked upon as a friend, but as an enemy, so now the child of God desires to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh.

Now, I have *not* told you that I believe the Bible teaches sinless perfection or the eradication of the old nature in the believer; nowhere have I said that the believer can live above sin in this life, for this is not what the Word of God teaches. But let me repeat again: 1) We are dead to sin as our master, for Christ is our Master and grace reigns in the heart. 2) We are dead to the guilt of sin, for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. 3) We are dead to sin as the course of our life, for we no longer walk in darkness but in the light of the Lord. 4) We are dead to sin because it is no longer our friend, but our enemy; and we, by the grace of God, flee from it.

This is something that God does for every soul He saves! We must never lose sight of this, for herein lies our hope, our peace, our assurance, yes, our very salvation, which has been so freely given us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please, do not grow weary of me repeating these gracious truths, for I do it for your good. First, to you who are truly saved, that you may know what you have in Christ and rejoice in Him; and then to you who are deceived by this false gospel of carnal Christianity, that you may, by the grace of God, recover yourselves out of the snare of the devil (2Ti 2:25-26).

### **“I in Them, and Thou in Me”**

Can one be a true Christian, justified, yet not free from sin? Are we to wait for this freedom in some future experience? Can we excuse ourselves, as some, by saying: “Well, it’s not me; but it’s my old flesh that sins.” Are we allowed to accept Jesus as Savior now, while refusing to bow to Him as Lord till a later date? This cannot be! Such a teaching cannot be because of our *union with Christ*—in all that He is, has done, and is doing for us. Children of God have become identified with Christ, united to Him in an *unchanging and unbroken union*. Our blessed Lord is vitally interested in this union, for we read in His High Priestly prayer,

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they *all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also *may be one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me...that they *may be one, even as we are one*: I in them, and thou in me, that they *may be made perfect in one*” (Joh 17:20-23).

So we see that our Lord prayed for this union with His people, which He purchased for them at the cross; and that this prayer has been answered, for in salvation we become *one* in Christ, and are thus enabled to hold out to the end in that persevering grace and faith freely given to us!

Again, the Scriptures declare that *this union is of God our Father*: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who *of God* is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). Yes, the Father purposed and planned it from eternity, the Son prayed for it and purchased it upon the cross; and 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 declares that the Holy Spirit has made it effective in the heart and life of each one of God’s children:



“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For *by one Spirit* are we all baptized into *one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into *one Spirit*.”

We have it in plain words: we who are saved have been baptized into (or put into) one body, and that body is Christ. So we see then that we are united to Christ, Who is “the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:22-23).

In Romans 7:4, this union of the believer with Christ is spoken of as a *marriage union*: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be *married* to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” How precious: married to Christ, given to Him in the spiritual bonds of matrimony, never to be divorced or separated, because we have been joined together in that inseparable union of love! Having been joined to Christ in that holy union of spiritual love, having pledged myself to Him for time and eternity, making Him my choice forever, leaving all other lovers to cleave only unto Him as long as I live—how could I think of, much less practice, spiritual adultery? He has won my heart with His dying love; He has won my heart with the power of His resurrection; He has won my heart by all of His love gifts to my soul. Yes, He keeps me by His continued High Priestly work within the veil and by His indwelling Spirit. I have His promise that He is coming to receive me unto Himself, that where He is, there I will be also throughout eternity!

In light of all this, I ask: Could I ever leave Him, or will He ever leave me, so as to be again under the rule of sin? Never! He has pledged Himself to get me home at last, without spot or blemish, and to present me blameless before the heavenly Father (Jude 24), Who Himself chose me to be the bride of His Son forever. And this to me is shouting ground, because I have His Word for it; that having redeemed my never-dying soul from the pit of hell, snatching me from the captivity of Satan, He shall hold me to Himself forever and ever and will not let me go! How? by both His constraining love and His constraining power, which has fenced me in.

## Examples

This all holds true in the physical life. If one loves his wife, then there’s no need for another. If all others have been forsaken for her, then there is satisfaction and contentment, and that until death doth part. Now just as true love holds the husband and wife together, and they are true to each other, so in spiritual realities true love to Christ holds us true to Him in that marriage vow taken in salvation.

“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers *God will judge*” (Heb 13:4). If that is true in the physical, rest assured it is true in the spiritual also. And James 4:4: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is *enmity* with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the *enemy* of God.” Yes, God will judge the spiritual adulterers and adulteresses who claim to be married to Christ and

yet prostitute their love in the lust of sin. What God is saying here is that you are not saved if you live in sin!<sup>2</sup> You are His enemy and abide under His wrath!

Our *union with Christ* is brought out in these verses: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” (1Co 6:15). “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). In 1 Corinthians 6:15 the question is asked, “Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?” And the answer follows: “God forbid”—perish the thought! Why? because we have been bought with a price.<sup>3</sup> We are not our own but belong to another, even to Jesus Christ Himself, our Head and Husband.

In 1 Corinthians 6:17, we find written that the child of God has *oneness of spirit* with Christ; therefore he will not make sin the rule and practice of his life. In Romans 8:35 we find written that the child of God has the *love of Christ*; therefore he will not make sin the practice and rule of his life. Or, as 2 Corinthians 5:14 declares, “The love of Christ *constrains* us”—it holds us. In Colossians 3:4, it is written that the child of God has the very *life of Christ* in him; therefore he will not make sin the practice and rule of his life. And finally, Colossians 2:10, “Ye are *complete* in him”! The child of God is *complete* in Christ, and needs none other and nothing else to make him joyous, happy, content, and satisfied, while he waits for his Lover from heaven; therefore, he will not make sin the practice and rule of his life.

Yes, the Bible is full of reasons why the true child of God will not make sin the rule and practice of his life: he is dead in Christ, therefore dead to the life of sin. He is married to Christ, therefore bound in the law of love and matrimony. He is in Christ; therefore, he has the mind of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the love of Christ, yes, the very life of Christ dwelling in him by the Holy Spirit!

### **Personal Application**

Glory, hallelujah, and praise unto our risen Lord for such a gospel, such a redemption, such a deliverance—a gospel that sets us free in Christ Jesus to walk in the light! He has set us in heavenly places in Himself that we might have fellowship with our triune God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph 2). Yes, this true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus lets us live in heaven while we are yet on the earth!

Do you know anything about this gospel that sets free from the law of sin and death? Have you ever experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart to convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come (Joh 16:8)? Have your sins been set in order before your face, showing you your guilty condition before God? Has God the Holy Spirit ever brought before you your true condition—that you are deceived, that your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9)? Can you remember Holy Spirit conviction, how you were brought down at the feet of God in true repentance, with a hatred for sin and a longing after holiness and righteousness, a longing to be freed from the penalty and power of sin and the wrath of God? And can you remember hearing the gospel of the *grace* of God, that good news of salvation and deliverance in Christ. Have you closed in with Him by faith, given by the Holy Spirit to trust Him with your never-dying soul for time and eternity?

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<sup>2</sup> **not saved if you live in sin** – This is not to say that the believer is lost when he slips into sin and then repents of it. The author is emphasizing a sinful lifestyle, a habit of sinning without repentance. If this is the case, then the Scriptures indicate the person has never been saved to begin with (1 John).

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:16-20.

## THE FALSE GOSPEL: NO CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR OR OPINIONS

2. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4. *Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5*

### Dead Faith

The new gospel that has come in today, allows a man to go on leading the same old Christless and godless life, while he professes to be a Christian. In spite of the sinful life he is living, in spite of the wicked state of his heart, he retains a certain shell or outward form of religion. He may still go to church, may still say his prayers, may still read his Bible, may still attend communion, may still teach his Sunday School class, may still preach in his pulpit—but there is no real, vital reality about it at all, because *Christ* is not there.<sup>1</sup> There has been *no vital change* worked in his heart by the Holy Spirit!

This false gospel denies the power of the *grace* of God to break the power of sin in the sinner’s life in salvation, and also to keep the redeemed soul walking in a pathway of righteousness and true holiness. So, not knowing this power, the professing carnal Christian gives himself over to the lust of the flesh under the guise of “liberty,” and goes on producing the *same old fruits of the flesh* that he did before he made a decision or profession. His profession of being a Christian is nothing but a thin veneer, a thin clothing of Christianity; there is not vital, life-giving power that sets the sinner free to follow Christ in a life of self-denial and holiness.

“Faith without works is *dead*” (Jam 2:26). Our Lord told the church at Sardis: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art *dead*” (Rev 3:1). Yes, the carnal Christian is still spiritually dead, and even though his preacher will surely preach him into heaven<sup>2</sup> when he dies, he will surely be in hell! These are those described in 2 Timothy 3:5, “Having a *form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” And they that teach this false gospel know nothing about the power of our Almighty God to save, to break the pow-

<sup>1</sup> See 1 John 5:12 and 2 Corinthians 13:5.

<sup>2</sup> **preach him into heaven** – preach as if he were a true Christian and went to heaven at his death—even though he was not and did not!

er of sin, and to set the captive soul free to walk in newness of life in Christ, which is a life of holiness. That's why their converts bring forth the fruits listed in the preceding verses of 2 Timothy 3:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.  
 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,  
disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,  
 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers  
 of those that are good,  
Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;  
 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2  
*Timothy 3:1-5*

### **Fruit of the True Gospel**

First, by way of contrast, we see the *fruit* that the true gospel produces in the heart of God's child, when we behold the likeness of Christ. The power of the gospel works in the life of the repenting, believing sinner, setting him free from the power and tyranny of sin, and producing in him the reign of righteousness, so the saved soul can then walk in newness of life by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yes, God's child is changed into the likeness of Christ as the Holy Spirit produces the changed life of holiness, separating the saved soul from a life of sin and setting him apart for the holy use of God. All of this is done by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is called progressive sanctification (Heb 13:21).

And now the fruit of the Spirit is produced in the saved soul, described in Galatians 5:22-23 as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Also, by His divine power, there are given to every child of God “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:4). And we are each one kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation till we are taken home to be with our blessed Lord forever and ever (1Pe 1:5).

By His gospel, all we need for time and eternity is given us in Christ. Faith lays hold on the unbroken Word of God and daily overcomes sin, Satan, and the world—“Nay, in all these things we are *more than conquerors* through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). These are the fruits produced by the true gospel in the heart of God's children!

### **Their Behavior Is All Wrong**

Now let us consider the fruits of those who have been deceived by the false gospel of carnal Christianity as they are described in 2 Timothy 3. *First*, we will see that their *behavior* is all wrong; *second*, that their *opinion* is all wrong; and *third*, that their *affection* is all wrong. In verse 1 we are told, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” Then verses 2-4 give a description of the fruitage of this false gospel of carnal Christianity. How do we know this? Because in verse 5 comes the astounding words that all of those spoken of in the preceding verses have “*a form of godliness*,” but that they *deny the power* thereof; and we are instructed, “from such turn away.”

Yes, it seems strange to speak of such a thing as piety or godliness in connection with the sort of persons described in these verses, but we find indeed that the Holy Spirit has been

speaking of those who have their names upon some church roll.<sup>3</sup> They have a “form of godliness,” but they are pagans masquerading as Christians! So we see that their *behavior is all wrong*.

The Word says they are “*blasphemers*,” that is, abusive and foul mouthed in their speech and conversation.<sup>4</sup> Is this not a true description of these days in which we live? Do we not hear loose language abound in so many places among those who claim to be saved? Yes, everywhere we turn today there is lying, swearing, and filthy language spoken even by so-called Christians! This fact reveals the true state of many hearts, for “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34)! In salvation, the Holy Spirit cleanses your heart, thus delivering you from being a foul-mouthed individual.

Next they are described as “*disobedient to parents*.”<sup>5</sup> We have never lived in a day when such a sin is so widespread. Yes, this is evident world-wide. Children and young people have no regard for the fifth commandment, which reads: “Honour thy father and thy mother”; or its counterpart in Ephesians 6:1-3, which reads,

“Children, *obey* your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Yet even though they stand out in rebellion against their parents, children and young people who have made a decision for Christ are told that they are saved, just because they have made a *decision*. Let me warn you right here: no such child or young person is saved, but is indeed lost; because when God saves a soul, He breaks the *power of sin* and the *spirit of rebellion* in that heart and life! And God does not save children any different than He saves the middle-aged and the elderly—it must be by the power of His Holy Spirit. They must be awakened to their lost condition, because Christ came to seek that which was *lost*. So I must warn you and tell you the truth in love: Every child and young person whom God has ever saved has been given the spirit of obedience.

Then we see in our text that these converts of the false gospel of carnal Christianity are “*unthankful*.” This age is characterized by unthankfulness; and that among those who claim to be saved. The majority of so-called Christians today are oblivious of any fondness of God or man, and take everything for granted. They have no use for God while things go well, but only use Him as someone to blame when things go wrong. This is a sin that marks our day.

And why is it among so-called Christians? because they have denied the power of God in salvation to break the power of sin. They have preached and heard a gospel that allows them to sin; but they have not heard the gracious gospel of Christ, which teaches deliverance from the bondage of sin and death.

Thanksgiving is a fruit of the Spirit, and surely should be exercised daily and hourly by the people of God; we have so much to be thankful for! Our lives are filled with one deliverance after another, and one providential leading after another, which should give rise to prayers of thanksgiving to our living God! We are commanded, “In everything give thanks: for this is the

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<sup>3</sup> **have their names on some church roll** – Perhaps not literally; however, this would be consistent with a mere form or semblance of piety.

<sup>4</sup> **blasphemers** – speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful, railing, abusive (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>5</sup> **disobedient to parents** – This passage should not be limited to children, for in verse 2 it speaks of “men.”

will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1Th 5:18). “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb 13:15). So, unthankfulness is a fruit of the flesh which characterizes the carnal man.

Another word given here describing the fruit of those adhering to this false doctrine of carnal Christianity is the word “*unholy*,” which means *irreverent*.<sup>6</sup> Surely this is one of the most prevailing features of these last days: irreverence for the Bible, Christ, God, and all that is holy. These are all made the butt of many jokes, and some so-called Christians laugh the heartiest of them all. Why? because they have no sense of sin and no love for God, His Christ, and His Word; all they have is a “form of godliness.” They have flatly denied the power of God in His gospel to save, keep, and deliver from sin. But if there is one word that characterizes a child of God, it is the word “saint”—a holy one, a person who is being made in the image and likeness of Christ. This is the reason God saves us—to make us holy, saintly, like Christ (Eph 1:4; Rom 8:29; 2Co 3:17-18).

Another word used to describe the fruit of these carnal Christians is “*trucebreakers*.”<sup>7</sup> This word means *relentless*—those who are driven to gain their end, becoming utterly careless of their word or pledge. They will press on *their* way, no matter what it costs, saying that the end justifies the means. Where do you go today to find a man whose word is his bond?

If you are married, how have you treated those vows that you took at the marriage altar? Have you been a trucebreaker, breaking your marriage vows by being unfaithful to your husband or your wife? The sin of adultery is rampant today, and this is the breaking of the marriage vows. If you are guilty of this sin, you are marked before God as a trucebreaker!

The next expression used to describe the fruit of these carnal Christians is “*false accusers*.”<sup>8</sup> This means backbiting, unkindness, gossiping, never attempting to find out whether the thing be true or false. Or it could be expressed as scandal-mongering—starting a scandal on someone so as to benefit your own end. But, my friend, be sure your sin will find you out! God hates a gossip, declaring He will punish those that stir up strife among the brethren (Pro 6:18-19; Phi 2:3). Yet those who teach this false gospel of carnal Christianity say that it is just your flesh doing this: “So don’t be alarmed about it—did you not make a decision?” They say: “Surely you are saved, and all will be well by and by. Sure you might miss some millennial or eternal reward, but that does not really matter, does it?” But God says of such a gospel, and of such a people: “*from such turn away.*”

Again, we see from 2 Timothy 3:3 that these false professors are “*incontinent*,” which means *without self-control*. So anything goes—liquor, wine, beer, sex, or pleasure—“If I want to do it, let me do it; I’m saved and under grace.” Or they say about anger, “Just let me get it off my chest; let me blow my top, or spit out venom; let me tell them off, it’s OK, I have liberty.” Yes, liberty to go to hell!

The liberty that God gives in the true gospel is a liberty to *walk in holiness*; and the opposite fruit of these incontinent carnal Christians is the fruit of the Spirit called “temperance.” This is self-control, and walking in meekness and kindness.

<sup>6</sup> **unholy** – impious, wicked (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>7</sup> **trucebreakers** – without a treaty or covenant; that cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant, implacable (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>8</sup> **false accusers** – prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely; a calumniator, false accuser, slanderer (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

Further, these deluded souls are described as “**fierce**.” This means *savage*, especially in the tongue, inflicting wounds that break hearts, blast hopes, and ruin lives. But how can any soul claim to be saved, who lashes out against his mother, sister, or pastor with vengeance because they’ve crossed his path, indulging in the fierceness of his tongue? If this is your heart and tongue, you are not saved! You have been deceived by the false gospel of carnal Christianity! You know nothing of Christ and His love, because this love has never been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. You need to be born again; you need a new heart and a new nature.

When God saves you, He breaks the power of sin in your life. He gives you a new heart to love Him and your neighbors. He gives you His divine nature so you may worship Him in Spirit and in truth. He gives you the mind of Christ, so you will follow after righteousness and true holiness. He gives you His Spirit to indwell you, to fill and to overflow you, and to work God’s glorious and gracious salvation in you by His mighty power!

When God saves you, you have new desires, new hopes, new ambitions, yes, a new life. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17). For as Titus 3:3-4 tells us,

“We...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared,”

we left the old life and now walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus!<sup>9</sup> Now by His grace we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Why? because He has redeemed us by His wondrous love, by His blood and power; He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, setting us free to follow Christ in the liberty of the gospel of grace. Now we have a new song, and praise unto our God, Who has taken us from the miry clay of sin, giving us a hatred for sin, self, the world, and Satan, and has set us upon the Rock, Christ Jesus!

Be not deceived by the god of this world into believing that you can have heaven when you yet stay chained to your sins and your hateful way! Your only hope, you who are caught in this false gospel, is to honestly face your true condition and lay down your arms of rebellion in repentance, turning to Christ by faith, and pleading with Him for mercy for your never-dying soul, based upon His redemptive work for you.

Another of these fruits of carnal Christianity in 2 Timothy 3 is “**traitors**.” This means that the unsaved religious professor is really treacherous, undependable, and has no real conviction of the truth; therefore he denies the truth of saving grace. This word describes those who have no sense of loyalty to Christ, to His cause, His true gospel, or to His church (His true people). Their loyalty is only to themselves, to “number one.”

The next expression is the word “**heady**,” which means headstrong, reckless—taking the “bit in one’s teeth” or taking the “reins in his hands.” Here again we see the result of the false gospel of carnal Christianity that says a person like this is saved! He takes the bits in his teeth and becomes entirely heedless of what is right, or of the rights of others or the consequences of what he does. His way at any cost is what matters. And how many heady, headstrong indi-

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<sup>9</sup> **we left the old life and now walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus!** – The Scripture continues with these words: “...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:4).

viduals there are today in religion, who never take God into an account of their lives! Their wills have never been broken and they have never taken the blame for their condition before God; therefore they know nothing about Christ and His salvation.

What a distressing picture 2 Timothy 3 shows, as it reveals the fruitage that is so wide spread today, which is caused by this false gospel of carnal Christianity promulgated from so many pulpits! They say: “Just as long as you have made a decision, just so long as you have walked the aisle and gave the preacher your hand, or have joined the church—or even if you have held up your hand to be prayed for or said the sinner’s prayer—now all is well and you are sure of heaven, no matter what kind of life you live along the way.” And the power of sin is not broken, so you give vent to the old nature because you can’t help yourself! Oh what false foundations poor souls stand upon, not knowing that Christ has never been laid in their hearts as the chief cornerstone, and the power of God has never worked in their hearts.

### **Their Opinions Are All Wrong**

*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

*Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

*Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.—2 Timothy 3:2-4*

The ten words and expressions considered so far (in verses 2-4) are not all that are given there to describe the unsaved carnal Christian. There are more, and we would describe them as: *their opinions are all wrong*. Yes, since their behavior is all wrong, then their opinions are also wrong.

First, their opinion of *themselves*. 2 Timothy 3:2 says, they are “**boasters**”<sup>10</sup>—boasting of what they do and what they are. The word describes them as being conceited, swell-headed, self-applauding, self-flattering, and vainglorious. All of this the world loves and applauds, but it is just the opposite of the Christ-like spirit, which is humble, contrite, self-emptying, and which looks upon others as being better than oneself.

Then they have wrong opinions because they are “**proud**.”<sup>11</sup> The word *haughty* is fitting here, for it describes those who look upon others who are humble as beneath their consideration, even beneath their notice. Let us remember that the Holy Spirit is not describing the world here, but those who have embraced Christianity and say they are saved, but who by word and deed deny the power of the true gospel to save them. What an awful state to be in! These poor, deceived souls are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7), that they are helpless, lost, guilty sinners before God. They are ever reading books, tracts, and pamphlets about the Christian or “Spirit-filled life”; and they are ever reading about how to overcome depression, worry and anger, and how to get along with people; but nothing

<sup>10</sup> **boasters** – empty pretenders (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>11</sup> **proud** – showing one’s self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent; with an overweening estimate of one’s means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, *haughty* (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).



ever works in their lives because they have never come to the knowledge of the truth that God *resists* the proud and gives grace to the humble (1Pe 5:5). They do not know that they stand guilty before God as helpless, hell-deserving sinners.

They are forever going here and there, searching out this truth, looking into that group, trying such and such a method, hearing this or that preacher, and learning all that is new in prophecy, but are never able to come to the knowledge that all their trouble stems from a heart and will that is hard, unbroken, and stubborn! They are building their house upon sinking sand and know nothing about Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, being laid in their hearts. These have never been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit; they have never been born again into the family of God. Oh what an awful thing, my friend, to have it said of you that you are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”!

Next, their opinions are all wrong because they are described as “**high-minded**.”<sup>12</sup> They are eaten up with self-esteem, bloated with self-importance. Their lives, like the Pharisee in Luke 18, are “I, I, I, I, I”! Yes, five times in two verses<sup>13</sup> the Pharisee declared the high opinion he had of himself. His whole life was centered around *self* and not around Christ. Just so are the lives of those who are deceived by the false gospel of carnal Christianity. Their lives are self-centered and not Christ-centered. Everything they do or say is calculated to bring attention to *self*.

Then the opinion of these deceived souls about others is expressed as: “**despisers of those that are good**.”<sup>14</sup> They are against, even despise, those who live godly in Christ Jesus, who take seriously and desire to put into practice the things spoken of in Philippians 4:8, “Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Yes, it is strange but true: those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And from whom?—from *religious professors* who have never been saved, but have only a form of godliness. Do you know why? because the life of a godly man or woman condemns the ungodly; the mere sight of them becomes a rebuke to their ungodliness. Sinfulness cannot abide such saintliness. This hatred of the good is born within them, and can only be removed by the new birth.

### Personal Application

But those who are born of God are just the opposite, for one of the marks of the true child of God is *love*, love for the brethren. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). Again, “Beloved, let us love one another: *for love is of God*; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1Jo 4:7).

Have you been given a new heart whereby you are enabled to love God and your neighbor? Or are you caught up in this false gospel of carnal Christianity that allows you to go on producing these fruits of the flesh in the name of religion? Surely the Holy Spirit has given us a mirror from 2 Timothy 3 in which to look. My prayer for you who are deceived by this false

<sup>12</sup> **high-minded** – to raise a smoke, to wrap in a mist; to make proud, puff up with pride, render insolent; be puffed up; to blind with pride or conceit, to render foolish or stupid; beclouded, besotted (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>13</sup> See Luke 18:11-12.

<sup>14</sup> **despisers of those that are good** – opposed to goodness and good men (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

gospel, has been that as you look, you will see your picture, and by the grace of God will hear God's Word, "*from such turn away;*" and that *you will turn* to God in repentance.

If you see yourself to have been deceived, ask God to illuminate your understanding so you will know yourself to be a guilty sinner before Him. Then, as He illuminates your heart with the light of the *glorious gospel of Christ*, you will be humiliated before God as you see yourself as God has seen you all the while. Then all boastings will be gone, and you will begin to cry that God will clothe you in the righteousness of Christ. Also, as the Holy Spirit works in you to show you your heart in *illumination*, and to bring you to *humiliation* before Him, He will give you a *detestation* for yourself and sin. Not only will He give you a hatred for sin, but a longing to be freed from its power and tyranny. And then, praise His name, by His power He will bring in *transformation*, as the heart turns by faith to embrace the blessed Lord Jesus Christ in all of His work of redemption. Yes, by the power of the blood of Christ your life will then be transformed, and will show it in true repentance.

*Repentance is to leave The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve, By doing so no more.*<sup>15</sup>

May the Holy Spirit work God's gracious and glorious salvation in you by His almighty power, giving you new desires, new hopes, new ambitions, and a new life! (2Co 5:17).

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<sup>15</sup> **repentance** – change of mind. The fruit of repentance is when this change of mind manifests itself in action, such as leaving sin (Mat 3:8; Act 26:20). The Greek word means "to change one's mind," not "to be sorrowful" as some have thought. A. T. Robertson (Baptist Greek scholar): "The trouble is that the English word *repent* means "to be sorry again" from the Latin *repenitet* (impersonal). John did not call on the people to be sorry, but to change (think afterwards) their mental attitudes."

## THE FALSE GOSPEL: NO CHANGE IN AFFECTIONS “WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION”

2. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4. *Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5*

### Introduction

Truly these are dark and perilous days in which we live, when voices from every quarter are heard saying, “Follow me, for I have the truth.” But surely we should heed the Scripture, which warns us: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1Jo 4:1). Therefore, based upon this Scripture of warning and others, I have been warning of the false gospel of carnal Christianity, which has swept the world and our nation more than any other today.

Why is this so? because it is a false “gospel” that allures the flesh; a false doctrine that has a form of godliness, but denies the power to deliver from the tyranny and power of sin. For it takes the Word of God and makes it teach that all a man has to do to be saved for heaven and made safe from hell, is to make a decision for Christ—give a mental assent to a few selected Scriptures—and just as long as a man or woman, young person, or child has “believed,” it doesn’t really make any difference how they live, even if it be in open rebellion against God!<sup>1</sup> We have been waging war with God’s Word against this false gospel of carnal Christianity, showing the fruitage of the vast majority of Christendom today—the professors or converts of this false “gospel,” whose conduct belies the genuineness of their profession.

Reading now from 2 Timothy 3 in the Amplified Bible:

“But understand this, that in the last days there will set in perilous times of great stress and trouble—hard to deal with and hard to bear. For people will be lovers of self

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<sup>1</sup> **give mental assent to a few selected Scriptures** – This may be misleading. Salvation is *promised* to those giving mental assent to Scripture. The gospel is preached by declaring Scripture (Act 17 2-4). Life is promised to those that believe such a declaration (Joh 2:31). To believe is to *think* something is *true* (which is mental assent). All who so believe demonstrate their faith by a life of holiness (Jam 2:18; Heb 12:14; 1Jo 1:5-2:29). The Scriptures declare that those claiming fellowship with God who live in sin (as a pattern) are liars (1Jo 1:6-7). By “a few selected Scriptures” the author means a truncated selection of Bible verses that do not present certain *essential* features of the gospel. Such a message is not the biblical gospel. Thus, it may be believed and the person remain unconverted and continue in sin (Jam 2:19).

and [utterly] self-centered; lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate (greedy) desire for wealth; proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffers), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane. [They will be] without natural (human) affection, callous and inhuman, relentless-admitting of no truce or appeasement. [They will be] slanderers, false accusers, trouble makers; intemperate and loose in morals and conduct; uncontrolled and fierce; haters of good. [They will be] treacherous (betrayers), rash (and) inflated with self-conceit. [They will be] lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God. For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it—their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession. Avoid [all] such people—turn away from them. For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate silly and weak-natured and spiritually dwarfed women, loaded down with [the burden of their] sins, [and easily] swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses. [These weak women will listen to anybody who will teach them]; they are for ever inquiring and getting information, but are never able to arrive at a recognition and knowledge of the truth” (vv. 1-7).

What a picture the Holy Spirit has painted here of the fruits of this false gospel of carnal Christianity! May our eyes be open to see the depths of this deception. We have shown how these false converts’ *behavior* is all wrong, described under the words and expressions: “blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, traitors, and heady.” Then we have seen how their *opinion* of themselves and others is all wrong, described under the following words and expressions: “boasters, proud, high-minded, and despisers of those that are good.”

### **Their Affection Is All Wrong**

Thus it logically follows that *their affection is all wrong*, as these words and four expressions describe: “without natural affection” (2Ti 3:3), “lovers of their own selves, covetous” (v 2), and “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (v 4). Remember, the apostle is speaking of those who profess to be saved—not the out-and-out worldlings who have never made a profession of religion, but those who have been deceived by the false gospel of carnal Christianity, who have a *form* of godliness.<sup>2</sup>

The first of these last four expressions is “*without natural affection*.” What an expression! What a description of our present day “Christian” society! Without natural affection means that they are callous and have no respect, love or obedience to one another or to the Lord. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters—all living under strained relationships, have no communications, not caring for or loving each other!

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<sup>2</sup> From 2 Timothy 3:5 – The Greek word here translated *godliness*, “is usually used in the [Pastoral Epistles—1Ti, 2Ti, Ti] of the true religion, i.e., Christianity (so 1Ti 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 6, 11; Ti 1:1; of what the false teachers regard as a means of gain in 1Ti 6:5). The second half of this statement, which says that these people have denied ‘its...power,’ shows that [godliness]...(the antecedent of [power]...) is used of Christianity. Thus Paul is saying that many, among whom are the false teachers, are professing to be Christians and engaging in a form of Christianity without knowing its reality”—George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Eerdmans & Paternoster, 1992; 432.

How has all of this come to pass? *Sin* is the tap root of our home problems today. What sin? The sin of disobedience! God's order in the home has been destroyed; God's Word in the home has been destroyed; God's name in the home has been destroyed; and God's worship in the home has been destroyed. Therefore, all *natural affection* has been lost and men have become lovers of their own selves.

## Husbands and Wives

God's Word declares that His order for the home is Christ, the Head of the man; the husband, the head of the wife; and the parents, the head of the children (1Co 11:3; Eph 6). When that order is destroyed, then the home is destroyed; and the fruit of all this is "*without natural affection.*" Let us face it and face it squarely: Our trouble today lies in the government of our homes, and not in the government of our land! There is chaos and confusion because men have not taken their place in the home, obedient to their Head, Jesus Christ. They know nothing about being the head of wife and children, or of ruling them in love and by example. Many claim to be saved, and yet have not bowed to the Lordship of Christ as rightful Head! Therefore, the line of least resistance is taken in their homes.

Also, many homes are in a state of confusion today because the whole home revolves around wives who have never submitted to the lordship of their husbands. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph 5:22). "Ye wives, *be in subjection* to your own husbands...even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1Pe 3:1, 6). "Women's Lib"<sup>3</sup> is not biblical; it is of this false gospel of carnal Christianity, which allows women to preach and to usurp authority over the men. Certainly God's Word is not against the woman, but He has graciously and lovingly laid down the order for the woman in the home. And only as she bows to the authority of God's Word in obedience will there be peace, harmony, love, and affection.

## Children

And we see the children today are also in rebellion against God's Word. They have risen up to take the command in the home, in the school, in the college and university. There is not *natural affection* for the parents, nor for the Word of God, which says: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph 6:1). Yes, this is right because it is God's way, God's order. What a sad picture we see today of children growing up in the home and church, with no sense of sin, no sense of responsibility—living, coming, and going as they please—and yet being told they are saved because they have made a profession of faith! I make no apology for saying: if a child or young person is saved, then he will be obedient to his parents. In salvation, God breaks our wills, breaks our hearts, and gives us a hatred for rebellion and a love of obedience. God's Word is very plain: *obedience* is one of the truest marks of a saved soul.

## Personal Application

What is our hope in all of this confusion that the preaching and practicing of the false gospel of carnal Christianity has taught us? Listen and I will tell you: Fathers, go on your knees before God and confess that you have rebelled against His authority and His Christ. Confess

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<sup>3</sup> **Women's Lib** – common expression for "women's liberation" from being treated unequally with men. The Bible establishes women as of spiritually equal value with men in God's eyes, but marks out different roles for each in the government of church and family.

that you have taken the role of least resistance with your family; confess that you have neglected God's Word and His worship in the home. Call upon the name of our living God in Christ's name, asking for mercy. Tell God that you deserve hell, but ask for His mercy in Christ. Cry unto Him for faith to trust Him in sincerity and reality, and for Him to work His work of grace in your heart. Then start your family worship. Read the Scriptures with your family, praying for and with them. Take your place in the home as its head, looking to Christ by His Spirit to work in you and your family all that is needed for salvation and your walk here upon this earth. Do not give your affection and time to anything else!

Mothers and wives, go to your knees with your husbands; confess to God that you have lived in rebellion against Him and His Word, His authority, and your place in the home. Cry unto Him for the grace to take your place in the home as an obedient wife, recognizing your husband as your head, and submitting yourself unto him as unto the Lord. Ask God to give you a broken heart and a contrite spirit, by His Spirit, so you will be enabled to take your place in the home. Come to Christ for repentance and faith; trust Him with all your heart, and look to Him to work out each and every problem in your life and home.

Then to you, dear children and young people, I will say that the only place of true happiness is found at the feet of Christ in obedience to Him and to His authority over you, which is your parents—your father and mother.

Our blessed Lord loves to hear precious souls crying unto Him for mercy and laying down their arms of rebellion against Him in repentance. Remember, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels when a poor sinner comes to God in repentance (Luk 15:10). It is Christ Himself Who is rejoicing, for He is seeing of the travail of His soul and is surely satisfied. You see, He desires to save you; He waits to be gracious to repenting sinners. He delights to give new hearts and new lives, for this is the very reason He came down to earth's depths, suffered, bled, died, and arose from the grave—so poor sinners like you and me may be reconciled to the thrice Holy God. But He will only receive you as a repenting sinner, and this grace of repentance He will Himself give you (Act 5:31).

The Lord Jesus Christ waits to be gracious to you; He will receive repenting, believing sinners, just as you are, and will make you and your homes over! When He gives you a new life and a new home, you will no longer be without natural affection, but love will flow from your heart. You will then begin to live in peace, love, hope, and joy, and in the blessings of your eternal God, Who loved you and gave Himself for you in Christ.

## THE FALSE GOSPEL: NO CHANGE IN AFFECTIONS “LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES”

2. “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
4. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5

The *affections* of the carnal professors of Christianity are all wrong. The Bible teaches that they are “lovers of their own selves, covetous...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2Ti 3:2, 4). Now, where a man’s heart is, there his affection will be also (Mat 6:21); and where a man’s heart is not broken from the love of *self*, then his life is filled with all the other sins that we have described previously. God hates selfishness; He delivers us from it as we are given new life in Christ Jesus. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17).

### **A Life of Self-Denial**

We want to focus now on this second aspect of wrong affections, that men are naturally “lovers of their own selves.” The Word of God calls us to a life of *self-denial*, where our affections must be set “on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). Therefore, as our Lord was so much against selfishness, He warned His followers in the Gospels many times about being *lovers of self*. We are to *forsake* our own way and our self-esteem (love of self). Now, as we go into these Scriptures, I will let you decide if a man whose life is controlled by this sin could possibly be a child of God. Or is he not rather a deceived soul—deceived by this false gospel of carnal Christianity?

In Luke 14:26 our Lord gives us these startling words: “If any man come to me, and *hate not* his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, *yea, and his own life also*, he cannot be my disciple.” Yes, that is startling, but these are the words of the eternal Son of God, and He cannot lie. In other words, He is saying, “In comparison for His love for Me, to follow Me in this present evil world, then it is as if a man hated his father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and his own life also.”

But this is not the only place where our Lord speaks along this line! Matthew 16:24-25, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” If I seek to save my life by not practicing self-denial in the Christian faith, then I am going

to lose it all! Really, I have saved nothing, but have lost it *all*. But if I will lose my life for Christ's sake, and will cease to be a lover of my own self more than a lover of God, then I will keep my life unto life eternal. Then again in John 12:25, "*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*" If you go on pampering your life, never becoming a self-denying one—doing what *you* think is best to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1Jo 2:16)—then you will lose that life that you have sought to save and love; but "*he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*"

Our Lord says here, in these Scriptures and in many others, that there is no place in His kingdom for "lovers of their own selves"—for His kingdom is made up of those who love *Him* supremely and *deny themselves*. Again, he that loves his life better than Christ shall lose it; but he that hates his life in this world, preferring the favor of God and an interest in Christ before his own life, shall keep it unto life eternal.

### **The Error in Love of Self**

We see in these Scriptures the total consequence of an inordinate love of life and an inordinate love of self. You see, many a man hugs himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life or passions as to indulge his appetite and make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom 13:14), shall thereby shorten his days and lose the life he is so fond of; he shall not inherit an infinitely better life, which is the one with Christ in glory after this death. He that is so much in love with the life of this body and the ornaments and delights of it, that for the fear of exposing it he would deny Christ, shall lose it; that is, he shall lose a *real* happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this world.

This is what is so deadly wrong with this false gospel of carnal Christianity that produced this fruit of "lovers of self" or selfishness. It preaches that we are living in an enlightened age, and that we are to love ourselves, money and pleasure, for "did not Christ come to give life, and that more abundantly? Are we not the 'King's kids,' and should not the King's kids have the best in life?" Yes, our Lord did say He came to give life and that more abundantly (Joh 10:10), but remember, He came to give spiritual life to His people, which is *life more abundant*—not a life *of* abundance of material things that promotes the love of self, money, and pleasure, to the damnation of our souls! If this is the inclination of your heart, my friend, your affections are all wrong because of *sin*!

I know the argument of the carnal professor, who desires to stay in his sins and desires to make the best of both worlds. Matthew 22:39 says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." And people take this and ask selfishly, "But doesn't God tell us to love our neighbor as ourselves? And how can one love another unless he knows how to love himself?" Or, "For you know that unless a person learns to love himself properly, he will never learn to love his neighbor." Don't be fooled by all of this carnal reasoning, even though it sounds very plausible; the Scriptures do not teach this!

Our Lord's command to love others as you love yourself merely *assumes* that you love yourself greatly, and that is the standard He applies to loving others. He is saying to take care of the needs of others as you take care of your own needs; and to look after someone else's hurts the way you look after your own self when you are hurt! The reason men and women use



this carnal reasoning, and twist the words of our blessed Lord in Matthew 22:34-40 to teach something He did not say, is not that they may love their neighbor more, but that they may indulge in the things and pleasures of this life more. Face it fairly and squarely, get down to the root of it, and you will find that this is the motive. In this way one can indulge his fleshly appetites—his fleshly desires to embrace another woman who is not his wife, or another man who is not her husband; to forsake the responsibility of family, children, and home, and live in a world in which *they* are the king or the queen! And they excuse themselves by saying, “Oh, but I must find myself; I must find my roots. I must have self-esteem, and I must...” Yes, they think they must have all of this, and they will go to hell with it, too!

But the sad part about all this is that they still believe they are saved! They still put on a form of godliness, while yet they live only for self!<sup>1</sup>

### Paul’s Example

Here is a scriptural example of a soul who lost his life for Christ and really saved it. It is illustrated in the life of Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the Christian, the child of God, the missionary. He said in effect, “I had plenty of self-love and self-esteem, and confidence in the flesh, but what things were gain to me (this self-love, self-esteem and fleshly confidence), those I counted *loss* for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things (my self-love, my self-esteem, and my self-confidence in the flesh) and do count them but dung (refuse) that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:4-9, paraphrased).

Then again in Romans 7:9, the apostle said, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died”—to my self-love, self-esteem, and self-confidence. I saw myself to be nothing but a hell-worthy sinner, abiding under the just wrath of God. And, my friend, the apostle carried this estimation of himself all through his life until he died. For even after his salvation he spoke of himself in this way: “I am the *least* of the apostles” (1Co 15:9); “Unto me, who am *less than the least* of all saints, is this grace given” (Eph 3:8); he styled himself the *chief* of sinners (1Ti 1:15); and finally said, “I be *nothing*” (2Co 12:11). There’s no self-love here, no self-esteem or self-confidence, but here is one who had learned the lesson of the first beatitude very well: “Blessed are the *poor in spirit*: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” I am nothing; I have nothing; I know nothing; and I can do nothing of myself—that’s how the apostle came to see himself as he grew in the grace of God. So we see the truth of John 12:25 illustrated in Paul who was once Saul of Tarsus: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” Are you a lover of *self* more than a lover of God?

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<sup>1</sup> “**love thy neighbor as thyself...**” – Since this commandment affirms the *rightness* of bestowing upon our neighbor the *same* love we have toward ourselves, we learn that there is a love of self that is legitimate. Men seek good for themselves. Because of sin, they misconstrue evil for “good” and wrongly seek it. We are to seek what God declares in His Word to be good, both for ourselves and others. This includes salvation (Act 2:40) and godliness (Heb 12:14). The good that God has for His people *far* exceeds the temporary pleasures of sin (Mat 19:27-29).

**Personal Application**

Are you high in your self-esteem, self-love, and self-confidence? If so, then *self* is your idol, and no idolater can enter the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9); we are to flee idolatry (1Co 10:14). Further, true children of God “worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and *have no confidence in the flesh*” (Phi 3:3). “Lovers of self more than lovers of God” is the fruit of this false gospel of carnal Christianity. Christ says that he who does not deny himself and follow Him cannot be His disciple (Luk 14:26-33). The true gospel of the grace of God says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3), and the man who is poor in spirit knows he is nothing. He has nothing, knows nothing, and can do nothing apart from the grace of God; therefore he does not love his life, but rather hates his life in this world that he may keep it, by the grace of God, unto the life to come!

## THE FALSE GOSPEL: NO CHANGE IN AFFECTIONS “COVETOUS”

2. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4. *Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5*

### Introduction

Let us look at another of the fruits that spring from this tree of the false gospel of carnal Christianity. Staying with the truth that their *affection* is all wrong, we consider now the word “covetous,” or lovers of money. This is a carnal fruit of which God’s Word gives us many warnings, by commandments and examples. Listen to 1 Timothy 6:9-10: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. *For the love of money is the root of all evil*: which while some coveted after,<sup>1</sup> they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

In spite of these words of warning that a man who loves money (whose heart is eaten up with covetousness) has erred from the faith, the false gospel of carnal Christianity tells its converts that this *love of money* and what it will buy is *natural*. They say they are still babes, or carnal Christians, and everything will be all right by and by because they have made a profession; so they are saved, and saved forever.

This, in spite of our Lord’s warning in Luke 12:15: “Take heed, and *beware of covetousness*: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”; in spite of Ephesians 5:5 telling us that a covetous man is an idolater, which breaks the second and tenth commandments; in spite of 1 Corinthians 6:10, which says that a covetous man shall not inherit the kingdom of God. In spite of all these warnings against covetousness and the love of money, this false gospel continues to tell its converts that they are the “King’s kids” and that the King’s kids can have everything!

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<sup>1</sup> **coveted after** – to stretch one’s self out [to the limit] in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

## The Damning Effects

But let us further consider *the damning effect* of the fruit of this false doctrine of carnal Christianity! The Greek word for greed (or covetousness) is very descriptive: it means to thirst for more, always thirsting *more*, and *still more*! It is as if a man, in order to quench his thirst, takes a drink of salt water, which happens to be the only water available. This makes him even more thirsty, so he drinks again and again, until his thirst actually kills him. And so it is with the sin of covetousness or greed. It is the uncontrolled yearning to have, to have more, more, and still more, until covetousness kills the soul of man as he abides under the curse of God forever. As Proverbs 27:20 tells us, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” What a sin! Oh my friend, it’s a *deep-seated sin* in the soul: “The eyes of man are *never satisfied*.” Covetousness damns a soul to hell!

This fruit—covetousness, the love of money—is *deceitful*. Our Lord warns us with a parable in Luke 12:16-21 about a rich man who was eaten up with this sin.

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, *thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up *treasure for himself*, and is not rich toward God.”

This covers it all! Covetousness makes a man treasure up for himself upon earth things for which he has no need, and lay up no treasure in heaven toward God. Covetousness *deceives a man about his values*. He places emphasis on *things* and misses the blessings of living for Christ and for others. And when this sin is found in a professing Christian, it is a blight upon Christianity. Surely one is deceived who lives in this fatal sin of covetousness, hiding under the false gospel of carnal Christianity, saying, “All is well with my soul because I have made a profession of faith.”

Covetousness is a damning sin because *it hinders the Word of God coming into the soul!* Through covetousness a man sees only his wants, rather than the needs of his soul, so it blinds the eyes of his understanding and closes his ears to hearing God’s claims upon his life in the true gospel. Through self-interests, his ears are closed to the precepts and commandments of the Word of God, which God has given for the good of mankind and for His own glory. Instead of really seeking first “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat 6:33), he runs greedily after the world, grasping and loving the things of the world. Blinded by his sinful nature because the power of sin has not been broken in his life, he heeds not the warnings of God’s Word, which are given to protect and help him. So under a pretense of religion, he actually refuses the greatest good (God) and chooses the greatest evil (sin) at his own peril. As he blindly pursues his own depraved desires, he says in his soul: “I’m saved, but I must have *my way*: I’ll have that woman or that man if I have to break up their marriage to get them. I’ll have my pleasure and my drink, my money, my home, my job, my good times in life and my way, no matter what the consequences!” This is the essence of evil, and the heart of every man or woman outside of Christ, even though they are told that they are carnal Christians and will go to heaven by and by because of a profession of faith!

Covetousness *blinds the soul into believing a lie*, into thinking he is doing the will of God, but that he has the right to do with himself as he pleases! So in his deception he is actually telling the Lord not to get in *his* way! But my friend, if God never comes in mercy to your soul and you die in this condition, you are in a terrible fix. Hell from beneath will move to meet you at your coming, no matter what you profess to believe! Oh, that God would open the hearts of every one of you who have been deceived, that you may see and cry unto God to break the power of covetousness in your heart and life! Cry unto God to come to your rescue, and to apply His precious blood by the power of His Spirit to cleanse your soul from this sin. Only God can deliver you.

### The Rich Man in Luke 12

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.”—*Luke 12:15-22*

Consider again the parable of the farmer in Luke 12—what was wrong with this farmer? Was it the fact that he was successful? Of course not! Nowhere does Scripture condemn success or riches as such. God never rejected Abraham, Job, or Joseph of Arimathaea for being rich and successful. What was wrong then with this rich man? Had he acquired his wealth by dishonest means? There is nothing in this parable that points in that direction. On the contrary, we are given the impression that the man had become rich because of God's blessing on the labor of his hands, causing the soil to be so fruitful that it produced bountiful crops.

These verses clearly indicate what was wrong. The rich man shows that he did not know *himself*. He failed to realize that his body was mortal and would not live on for many years. He was deceived by the deceitfulness of riches, of which our Lord warns us in Matthew 13:22: “The care of this world, and the *deceitfulness of riches*, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

Also, he did not take into account the fact that the ample goods in which he rejoiced could not satisfy his soul. He had nothing for his soul, and this is where the deceitfulness of the sin of covetousness lies. It seeks after pleasure and enjoyment of the physical body, while the soul is given nothing to feed upon. We read in Isaiah 44:20 about this covetous man: “*He feedeth*

*on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

If you have provided only for the body, the mind, for your family, and for all your physical needs, you are in a terrible fix. You are deceived as to the true state of your soul, for it is the *soul* that lives on after death; the body goes back to mother earth where worms will eat it while awaiting the day of resurrection. Either you are going to be raised to resurrection of life, to enjoy eternal life with Christ forever, or you will be raised to everlasting damnation and contempt (Joh 5:29), to be cast out from the presence of God and to pay for your sins in hell forever! And "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat 16:26). Your little religious profession and carnal Christian gospel are not going to hold you then, for James 1:26 tells us, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, *but deceiveth his own heart*, this man's religion is vain."

Covetousness, then, is actually *the worship of self*, which is the embodiment of all evil. Because *self* is upon the throne of the heart, everything of this life becomes servant to the gratification of all fleshly and selfish desires. Selfishness is essentially *my* right to my own *self* and all that I touch for *my* pleasure and for *my* glory: me, my, and mine. That's covetousness! It says in essence, "I'm concerned only for myself, so I will get what I want no matter how I get it or who I hurt, and no matter how I lie or how many lives I wreck; I'm going to do just what I want to do!" You may think you will cover it with the cloak of religion, but that is the heart of rebellion against God; and if that spirit is not broken, you are going to wind up in hell without hope and without God! Young person, you may boast yourself in your youthful age, and trust in the uncertainty of the future; but know this, that God has neither promised you nor owes you a tomorrow! He could say to you this very day what he said to the rich man: "Thou fool, *this* night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?" You cannot take anything with you, for "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1Ti 6:7); six feet of earth<sup>2</sup> makes us all just alike!

Blinded by his covetousness, this rich man (which our Lord calls a fool) was *not rich toward God*; and so he indeed fell into "temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts." And because of his sinful love of money, which while he coveted after, he "erred from the faith" and pierced himself through with many sorrows (1Ti 6:9-10). See how he was using the time for self, which the Lord had given him to prepare for eternity. What an awful thing it is for a man not to be rich toward God! This is the worst poverty a man can have, for if you are not storing up treasures in heaven, you are *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath* (Rom 2:5)! If you are not in Christ and are not sending treasures ahead to the next world by His grace, you will receive the wages of sin, which is eternal death (Rom 6:23)! Yes, your soul is poor indeed if you know nothing about the riches of God's grace as it is offered freely in the true gospel of Christ, and the power of His grace as it reigns over sin in the soul!

## **Choking!**

You may profess to be saved, and come to the house of God, but you cannot hear the Word of God as it is preached, because sermons die in covetous hearts! This is why covetousness is such a damning sin—it hinders the Word of God from taking hold in your heart. How? You

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<sup>2</sup> **six feet of earth** – depth below ground at which dead bodies are commonly buried.

are there physically, but your soul is taken up with the world and its pleasures, and you are thinking about how to make more money—you do not want to hear of a life of self-denial, so your soul is robbed of the blessing! You go on, pining and working, and looking forward to nothing but the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life. You have no time for the Word of God! You have no time to meditate upon the goodness, grace, and mercy of God, Who has given you *time* to repent. You are content with a few tears or with a few verses of Scripture; you are content to give a few dollars and to lose your soul, because you are not willing to break before God and become a self-denying one.

It is said of the thorny ground hearers in the parable of the sower (Mat 13:22; Luk 8:14) that the seed received among thorns is lost because the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of the riches and pleasures of this life *choke the Word*, making the hearer unfruitful. Yes, and this covetous heart makes a man fit only for hell! Therefore, no matter what his profession may be, we know that covetousness keeps a man from praying, believing, and studying the Word of God, for a covetous man cannot live by faith. He trusts in “things” rather than the living God, Who gives us richly all things to enjoy (1Ti 6:17).

### **Personal Application**

If God has shown you that this is your heart, why don't you fall down before Him in repentance, crying unto Him for mercy against this sin, which closes the heart against God, against your fellow man, and against providing for your never-dying soul! Cry out against this false gospel that has deceived you into believing all is well with your soul because you made a profession, and yet allowed you to continue in this sin because somebody told you that you were safe—though you were just a “carnal Christian.”

Oh, may God work! May He have mercy; may He come down in power and in much assurance, and deal with your soul as only He can! May He work mightily and effectually in giving you a heart of grace—a heart to cry out after Him as never before, “Lord, break the power of sin in my life!” I would not let Him go; I would keep crying after Him! Daily I would cry, “Oh Lord, don't leave me to myself! Continue to break the power of sin, giving me victory over it as You promised in Romans 6:14!” So bring *every* sin to Him and cry out against it, that He might cleanse it by His blood and deliver you by His power—giving that grace which is needful that you may close in with Him by faith, casting your never-dying soul upon Him. Then you will find the Lord Jesus Christ to be your all in all in the true gospel!

## THE FALSE GOSPEL: NO CHANGE IN AFFECTIONS “LOVERS OF PLEASURES”

2. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4. *Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5*

Another fruit of carnal Christianity which comes under the heading of *wrong affections* is “*Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2Ti 3:4). What a sad commentary upon the poor, deceived, so-called “carnal Christian,” to believe that he can be saved, that he can be a child of God, an heir of heaven, and yet love pleasures more than he loves God! “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21); and if your treasure is this world and its pleasures, then your heart is not right with God, and fruit will not be brought forth unto perfection! When the seed, the Word of God, is sown among thorns, it is choked with cares, riches, and *pleasures* of this life, and cannot bring forth fruit unto life or unto perfection (Luk 8:14).

### Sensual Pleasures

Now what kind of pleasures are these that men are said to be lovers of, more than the lovers of God? These are *sensual* pleasures and *vain* amusements;<sup>1</sup> this is clearly brought out in *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*,<sup>2</sup> and in the *Amplified Translation* of the Bible. This being so, we need to define the word “sensual” and see how it is used in the Word of God.

The word *sensual*<sup>3</sup> means “fleshly, carnal, self-indulgent, worldly, lewd, sexual, promiscuous in sin, gluttonous, epicurean, lustful, immoral, and unrestrained lust”; in other words,

<sup>1</sup> Amplified Bible, Old Testament © 1965, 1987 by the Zondervan Corporation; New Testament © 1958, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Scripture quotations used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> **lovers of pleasure** – *Vine’s Dictionary*: “loving pleasure”; *Strong’s Concordance* (word 5369): “fond of pleasure, i.e., voluptuous.”

<sup>3</sup> **sensual** – The word translated “sensual” in the AV (Jam 3:5; Jude 1:19) is also translated “natural” (1Co 2:14; 15:44, 46). According to Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Second Edition), the word means “pertaining to the soul or life, in our [literature] always denoting the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to it, in contrast to the supernatural world...”



everything that appeals to the fallen nature of man that would satisfy his depraved heart. This is said to be the fruit of the carnal Christian gospel—lovers of sensual pleasure more than lovers of God—for these very people who practice this love of sensual pleasure, and who love the flesh and the things of the flesh more than God, are told that they are saved because of a profession of faith they made. But again, verse 5 warns us, “from such turn away,” lest we be drawn into the same deception with them!

If you live in and love sensual pleasures more than you love God, no matter what you profess, you are dead, spiritually dead, while you live, and therefore you are an enemy of God and a stranger to grace and the holy ways of the Lord. For without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

### **James 4:1-4**

One of the strongest portions of Scripture against you is found in James 4:1-4, where you are called “adulterers and adulteresses” and *enemies* of the living God, the Holy God, Who hates sin. Listen to God’s Word, each verse first in the King James translation, and then repeated from the Amplified Version.

Verse 1: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”

“What leads you to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?”

Verse 2: “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.”

“You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask.”

Verse 3: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

“[Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is, [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures.”

Verse 4: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

“You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world] and breaking your marriage vow to God! Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.”

## Hard Questions

Now let us see if we are lovers of sensual pleasures more than lovers of God (spiritual adulterers and adulteresses), or if we are indeed children of God, by asking the following questions. Do we love to watch and feed upon the majority of programs that are shown on television that appeal only to the sensual, fleshly nature? Do we feed upon the magazines, newspapers, and books that appeal to our sensual, fleshly nature? Do we secretly desire to do these things, even though we would not openly do them? Has sin become such a commonplace thing that we can indulge in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and go on saying: “All is well with my soul,” while we actually remain enemies of God and strangers to the way of grace?

Do we love God and His righteousness and holiness, or do our hearts rebel against the *narrow way* of self-denial and a life of separation from the world? Do we secretly despise the way of grace, the way of repentance, the way of bowing to the authority of God’s Word and to the Lordship of Christ? Do we follow after our own will and do our own thing, without prayer and waiting upon God for His leadership? Do we love the sexual, lewd, lustful, self-indulgent way of the world; or do we indeed love God and His holiness, and seek to please Him in a life of separation from the world? Let us face these questions, and ask our hearts where we stand before God.

### “Love Not the World”

“Love not the world, neither the *things* that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is *not* in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1Jo 2:15-17).

What is the “world” spoken of here? It is the reign or kingdom of the carnal mind, the mind of the ungodly system that is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom 8:7). Wherever that mind prevails, there is the world; it is the “ungodliness and worldly lusts” of Titus 2:12. It is fallen human nature acting out itself under the influences of the devil, the god of this ungodly world. Its spirit is hostile to godliness, because it is dominated by carnal ambition, pride, self-pleasing, and sensuous desires and interests. The principles that govern this world, the powers that operate it, the end that it seeks, all are earthly, sensual, devilish, and not of God and holiness. The opinions of the world are false, its aims are selfish, its pleasures are sinful, its politics are corrupt, its honors are nothing but bubbles and do not last. And since the world is the sphere of rebellion against God, His people are commanded not to love it. They are not to esteem it as their portion or treasure. They are forbidden to set their *affections* upon it (Col 3:2).

To love the world and its sensual pleasures is to give it the first place in our hearts, to idolize it, to make everything else subordinate to the acquisition and enjoyment of it, and to despise whatever comes into competition with it. It is to make its vanities the chief objects of our pursuits, to share its friendships, to court its smiles, to conform to its ways, and to find our happiness in what it yields to us in its pleasures. When the world is loved, it possesses and governs the soul, overcoming conscience, the principles of holiness, and the Word of God. Its influence is subtle, powerful, and perilous, and leads to damnation and hell!

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” One may renounce the world systems that Satan governs as a whole, and yet *the heart* secretly still clings to some of its parts. No, it is not sufficient that I just renounce the world, but I should detach my *affections* from everything that seeks to claim them. I am not to value any object of the world if it hinders the performance of my duties to God, if it dulls my relish for His Word, or chills the spirit of praise and prayer. I am to prefer nothing to spiritual things. I must not delight in anything that would cause me to lessen my esteem of Christ and heavenly things, for I am to love Him supremely; my affections must be set on things above. I *may use* many of the things that are in the world, but I must not *abuse* them (1Co 7:29-31). I must not put my trust in them; I must not place my happiness in them. In other words, I am to love nothing above God, equal to God, nor apart from God.

### **Personal Application**

Are you living after the *flesh* and bearing the fruit of the false gospel of carnal Christianity; or are you living after the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit, which is Christlikeness?

“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. For to be carnally minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is *life* and peace...Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [the death of the unrighteous, the ungodly]: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”—live eternally with Christ in glory! (Rom 8:5-6, 12-13).

## THE DECEPTION OF CARNAL CHRISTIANITY

*“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:  
from such turn away.”—2 Timothy 3:2-5*

My heart is heavy because of the spiritual darkness of our day and the unconcern for holiness and righteous living that is so manifested among so-called Christians. As I face this sad spiritual condition, my soul cries unto our living God, “O Lord, rend the heavens and come down; in wrath remember mercy, pour out Thy Spirit of grace and supplication upon us, for we need Thy redeeming grace in this hour!”

Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on earth as there are today. Never was there such a small percentage of true believers. Not since before the days of the great reformation has Christendom been so crowded with those who have a form of godliness, but who are strangers to its transforming power. I seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within and without the churches, who verily believe that all is well with their soul, when in fact the wrath of God abideth on them.

### “A Form of Godliness”

Surely the Scriptures we have been using from 2 Timothy 3 apply to the condition we find today in Christendom, as verse 5 expresses: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Surely there is more light today upon the Word of God than there has ever been, for Bible study groups are springing up everywhere; but there is less life in Christ than ever before. There are more professions today than there have ever been, but less sanctification of life. Seemingly everybody seems to be “born again”; but where are the fruits of the new birth? There is more fasting, praying, and preaching than ever, but where is the practice and the power of true religion in Christ? As Isaac said to Abraham, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb?” (Gen 22:7). Where is the Christ-like life?—those to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is precious and a living reality?

There are many works and many duties; but where is the life, the power, and the truth? Surely the voice is Jacob’s voice—everybody is “saying it right”—but the hands are the hands of Esau, for the man has never been made a new creature in Christ Jesus (Gen 27). The problem today is that the vast majority of Christendom has missed *Holy Spirit conviction*; and therefore men are ignorant of their sinful condition before God and His holy requirements. For only the Holy Spirit of God can give a man a new heart and nature, and give him power to turn to God from his idols. Without Holy Spirit conviction, there is no new birth; and if you miss the new birth, you miss conversion; and if you miss conversion, you miss repentance; and if you miss repentance, you miss saving faith; and if you miss saving faith, you miss Christ!

## Reasons for the Deception

The reason why this false gospel of carnal Christianity has been so widespread and so widely received is because *it makes no demands upon you*. It gives only a “form of godliness,” a covering, which allows its converts to indulge in any of the sins enumerated in 2 Timothy 3:2-4, and yet claim they are saved and on the road to heaven. And we know that the Holy Spirit is here describing these so-called “Christians” and not the world, because of verse 5, where He says, “*Having a form of godliness.*”

Why are so many deceived today concerning God’s way of salvation? Men are deceived because they do not know that *regeneration is imperative*. “Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). Yes, people are using the term “born again” today, but they know not what it means. They believe it is something that man does—a decision he makes, a commitment or rededication. But the new birth is something that *God* does. It is wholly and completely of God’s power and of God’s grace! In regeneration the sinner lies passive; it is in conversion that he is active to repent and believe, and to turn to God from his sins. It is because a person has been born again by the Holy Spirit of God that he repents and believes in conversion. This is the evidence of his regeneration. He is not born again because he repents and believes; but he repents and believes because he has been born again by the Spirit of God. It is God’s work, not man’s (Eph 2:5-10; Joh 6:44, 65; Rom 8:7-9)!

Why are so many today deceived as to God’s way of salvation? They know not that *there must be a new creation*, a miracle of grace worked in the soul to make fallen man a new creature, that it may be said of him, “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17). The new Jerusalem in heaven is for new creatures. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, not for those with only a form of godliness, but for those who have a *new heart* and a *new nature*, those who have been changed by the power of the gospel of the grace of God in Christ.

Men are deceived because they are ignorant of the fact that *God must communicate to the heart a principle of holiness* before there can be any holy affection, holy motions, or holy fruits. And certainly, without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). But by nature man does not possess one grain of holiness! This must be worked in the soul by the regenerating power of God’s Spirit. And this is why you must experience His convicting work—to convince you that you have no goodness or righteousness that God will accept. Yes, He shows you that all you can bring to Him is *sin*, for that is all that you are! As he tells us in Isaiah 1:5-6,

“The *whole* head is sick, and the *whole* heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

So ignorant are the vast majority today of God’s way of salvation, and so blinded by their love of sin, they do not take time to hear God’s Word, which says *there must be a denying of self* before anyone can become a follower of Christ (Mat 16:24). This is setting aside all of our wisdom, righteousness, strength, desires, will, and interests (Rom 5:6; Isa 64:6). Yes, by the Holy Spirit’s operation in us, we must be cut off from all that which is of the flesh and see ourselves before God as a *lost* sinner. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10). Have you ever been lost, spiritually lost before God, not knowing the way out of your ruined, spiritual condition, where God, for Christ’s sake, must save you or you would be eternally lost? Has Christ ever found *you*, the *lost* sinner? If not, this is the reason

you have missed Christ, and why He is not precious and real to you. It is because you have never known your lost, ruined condition before God. Christ saves only lost sinners; He died only for lost sinners!<sup>1</sup>

Men are deceived by this false gospel of carnal Christianity because *they have never known that there must be a renunciation of the world* before anyone can be a follower of Christ. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1Jo 2:15). There also must be a crucifixion of the world to us, and us to the world, or we shall never enter into the blessings of the atonement purchased by Christ on the cross (see Gal 6:14).

Also, men are deceived because they have never known that to walk with Christ in that living, loving, and lasting union, there must be a plucking out of right eyes and cutting off of right hands, a *mortifying<sup>2</sup> of the flesh* with its affections and lusts that we die daily (Mat 5:29-30).

Those deceived by this false gospel know not that *there must be a taking up of the cross* if any man will come after Christ; and this will cost him ungodly companions, the scorn of professors, and many a tear and groan (Luk 14:27). They know not that the Christian life is a *fierce wrestling* and a continual fight (Eph 6:12); it is a *race* that has to be run with patience (Heb 12:1). There is no discharge from the army of Christ (2Ti 2:3-4). They know not that God requires *truth in the inward parts*, which shows itself in a life of self-denial. If the professed Christians of today really knew all these things, they would not be so confident of heaven, when in actuality they are total strangers to the requirements of the kingdom of heaven. They would rather embrace a gospel that makes no *demands* upon them, and walk on the broad way that leads to hell, deceived by the false gospel of carnal Christianity.

### **The True Gospel Demands Repentance**

The true gospel of the grace of God demands *repentance*, the laying down of your arms of rebellion before God.<sup>3</sup> Here is where you learn to take *the blame* for your sins and lost condition. You can't blame your mother, your wife, your husband, your sister, your children, your environment, or even your own helplessness, but *you* take the blame, and plead guilty before Him. You confess in specifics and not in generalities: “God, oh my God, I stole those goods; I took your name in vain; I lied; I cheated; I hate my mother; I hate my sister; I am the adulterer, the adulteress; I am to blame for my unbelief and for my evil nature.” You see? Sin is confessed, the heart is laid bare before God, and you take the blame before Him because *you are to blame*. Yes, you come like David did in Psalm 51:4, crying to God, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”

“For behold this selfsame thing, that ye *sorrowed* after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what

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<sup>1</sup> **never known your lost condition** – Certainly everyone, including every Christian, has a deficient knowledge of his personal sinfulness (Jer 17:9). If one has come to Christ according to the gospel and is walking in holiness, he need not torture his mind that his initial understanding of his lost condition was imperfect. The promise of life is made to those that believe in Christ (Joh 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47).

<sup>2</sup> **mortifying** – subduing; putting to death; killing.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote on repentance at the end of chapter 6.

fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2Co 7:11).

The repentance that is *godly* and works *godly sorrow* in you because of your sin against God is described in 2 Corinthians 7:11.<sup>4</sup> It is that repentance which produces carefulness, clearing, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and revenge. Godly sorrow for sin produces the fruit of repentance in the following way<sup>5</sup> as the Holy Spirit works in you, showing to you your sin before God.

First, there is *carefulness*<sup>6</sup> wrought in you—carefulness to confess every sin<sup>7</sup> and lay bare your heart before God.

And then there is a *clearing* of yourself<sup>8</sup> before God—a coming clean with God, confessing all, hiding nothing, and taking the blame for all your sins.

Then the word *indignation*<sup>9</sup> is used—indignation against sin, a hatred for it, a crying out against it, and a fleeing from it.

Then we see the word *fear*<sup>10</sup>—fear of sin, fear of sinning, and fear of adding iniquity to iniquity.

Then there is *vehement desire*<sup>11</sup>—the desire to be through with sin and to know Christ. In other words, you want Christ and His salvation more than you want anything else in the world.

There is *zeal*<sup>12</sup>—zeal in fighting against sin and fleeing from it. And then there is the word *revenge*<sup>13</sup>—carefulness to acknowledge the righteousness and justice of God in sending you to hell as your just desert for sin.

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<sup>4</sup> **repentance...described in 2 Corinthians 7:11** – rather than providing a definition of repentance, this passage describes the fruit of repentance (Mat 3:8; Act 26:20).

<sup>5</sup> Some of the material that follows falls more into the category of application than definition. Let the reader come to an understanding of the terms by examining the definitions of Greek words and examples of usage provided. (Note: the same Greek word may be rendered using different English words in different passages).

<sup>6</sup> **carefulness** – haste; with haste; earnestness, diligence (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in Mar 6:25; Luk 1:39; Rom 12:8, 11; 2Co 7:11-12; 2Co 8:7-8, 16; Heb 6:11; 2Pe 1:5; Jude 1:3.

<sup>7</sup> **confess every sin** – confession of *every* sin is impossible. Some sins we commit we are unaware of (Lev 4:13-14; Psa 19:12). We should confess sins we are aware of and thank God that our forgiveness rests on Christ, not our confession (1Jo 1:9-2:2).

<sup>8</sup> **clearing of yourselves** – verbal defense, speech in defense (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in Act 22:1; 25:16; 1Co 9:3; 2Co 7:11; Phi 1:7, 17; 2Ti 4:16; 1Pe 3:15.

<sup>9</sup> **indignation** – Used in 2Co 7:11.

<sup>10</sup> **fear** – fear, dread, terror; reverence, respect (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in Mat 14:26; 28:4, 8; Mar 4:41; Luk 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; 21:26; Joh 7:13; 19:38; 20:19; Act 2:43; 5:5, 11; 9:31; 19:17; Rom 3:18; 8:15; 13:3, 7; 1Co 2:3; 2Co 5:11.

<sup>11</sup> **vehement desire** – longing (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in 2Co 7:7, 11.

<sup>12</sup> **zeal** – excitement of mind, ardor, fervor of spirit; zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending; zeal in behalf of, for; the fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal; an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in Joh 2:17; Act 5:17; 13:45; Rom 10:2; 13:13; 1Co 3:3; 2Co 7:7, 11; 9:2; 11:2; 12:20; Gal 5:20; Phi 3:6; Col 4:13; Heb 10:27; Jam 3:14, 16.

<sup>13</sup> **revenge** – a revenging; vengeance, punishment (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Used in Luk 18:7-8; 21:22; Act 7:24; Rom 12:19; 2Co 7:11; 2Th 1:8; Heb 10:30; 1Pe 2:14.

**Personal Application**

Do you realize that God must take vengeance against your sins? Have you ever confessed to Him that if you receive your just deserts, it would be punishment in hell? In other words, you want God to be just in whatever He does with you. When you come there, taking the blame before God, you can reckon that God *will* have mercy upon you for Christ's sake, for this is true repentance—that which God both requires and provides.

Now we have seen some of the reasons so many are deceived today by this false gospel of carnal Christianity. Because they do not know God's way of grace and salvation, they are strangers to the power of the true gospel, strangers to the power of the blood of Christ, and strangers to the reality, beauty, and glory of this risen Christ. There is no vital, living union between their souls and the Lord Jesus Christ.



## THE FATAL RESULTS OF CARNAL CHRISTIANITY

*“These also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”—2 Timothy 3:8*

We come now to 2 Timothy 3:5-9, which show *the fatal results of this false gospel*. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also *resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith*. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.”

### **False Teachers**

Let us look first at the expression in verse 6: “For of this sort are they.” This “they” are those preachers, teachers, evangelists, personal soul winners, and counselors, who have heard and lived under the power of this false gospel of carnal Christianity, and who have a form of godliness, but deny the power of God in salvation to break sin’s captive hold upon them. They are “blind leaders of the blind” (Mat 23:12-14), who preach and teach error and false doctrine, bringing in damnable heresies, thereby leading captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. Having embraced this false gospel themselves, they now proceed to teach, preach, and feed it to others, making them twofold more the children of hell than themselves (Mat 23:15). They not only proclaim this false doctrine and error from the pulpit, but they have great success getting into homes; they worm their way in there, to lead away after them the women, called here “silly women”<sup>1</sup> (spiritually-dwarfed women). These women are ever willing to learn, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth about themselves, or the holy and sin-hating God.

We have also a description of these in 2 Peter 2—

“There shall be *false teachers* among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways<sup>2</sup> [their immoral ways and lascivious doings]; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [God’s name brought in disrepute, maligned and defamed]. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words [cunning false arguments] make merchandise of you [that is, they will exploit you for their lustful use]...having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous

<sup>1</sup> **silly women** – little women (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

<sup>2</sup> **pernicious ways** – a destroying; waste; a perishing, ruin; destruction which results in the loss of eternal life, eternal misery, perdition (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

practices; cursed children; which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray...while they *promise them liberty*, they themselves are the *servants of corruption*: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (vv1-3, 14, 15, 19).

From these verses, again we see that these men who have embraced this false gospel of easy believism<sup>3</sup> and carnal Christianity, are now the proclaimers of it. These have set themselves against the grace of God, the love of God, and the holiness of God, by leading captive silly women laden with sins. They lead them astray with their many lusts, their immoral practices, into a way of life that leads to destruction! They teach them a way that makes no demands upon their sins, but leads them into sin by saying, “Once saved, always saved. The blood covers it all; it makes no difference how you live.”

### **Liberty?**

They promise you *liberty*, yet you have not renounced sin, “brought forth fruit for repentance,” or desired a life of holiness. Neither have you seen the death grip that sin has upon you. They desire to bring you under their control, so you will follow their pernicious ways, their immorality and unbridled lust. And as Satan seduced the woman Eve and then her husband, Adam (1Ti 2:14), so Satan (through these false preachers and teachers) seduces the women of our day, and not only the women, but *all* who follow the pernicious ways of his ministers (2Co 11:3, 13-15).

For many years I have observed and counseled men and women, and watched the lives of some missionaries, preachers, teachers and church members. More than anything else, I have been grieved to see that the prevalent sin among them is this sin of unbridled lust, adultery and fornication, free “love” and petting, all done under the guise of “liberty” in Christ! They excuse themselves by saying: “We are under grace and not under law, you know. Sin is not the concern, for my sins are all put to the account of Christ. This was all taken care of when I *got saved*. I don’t have to confess sin any more, for 1 John 1:9 is not for the believer, but it is for the sinner. So sin doesn’t bother me!” Yes, while they promise *you* liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.

More and more as men and women, young people, boys and girls are brought into the church on mere *lip-profession* with no vital knowledge of sin or repentance, then this sin of lust will run rampant. And these false prophets and teachers will resist the truth, and hold the truth in unrighteousness and ungodliness. No wonder Paul says they are men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith! These men are hostile to the truth, utterly corrupted in their minds, and are counterfeits so far as faith is concerned.

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their *mind and conscience is defiled*. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being *abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Ti 1:15-16).

This is a sad, sad picture painted upon the pages of Holy Writ concerning men and women who hold the truth in unrighteousness, palming themselves off as Christians, while they live in the secret or even open sins of adultery, fornication, and uncleanness. And the fatal part about

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote on “free-believism” at the beginning of chapter 1.

all of this is that men twist the Scriptures to suit their own sinful ways and their corrupt minds, so they can go on sinning while yet they think they are safe for heaven!

### Real Life Illustrations

There was a man who pastored a church where soon it became known that he was a practicing homosexual. His elders had him admit this, and then asked for his resignation. Then he asked them a few questions: “Gentlemen, don’t we believe that if one has the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues, then he is a saved man?” They said, “Yes.” “All right; did you see me get the baptism and speak in tongues?” They again answered, “Yes.” “All right,” he said, “if I have spoken in tongues and have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then I am saved; so if God accepts me in my lifestyle, why can’t you?” They all looked down; and he stayed on as pastor! These men and this pastor went directly against the Holy Scriptures, for the practice of homosexuality is an abomination unto the Lord (Deu 23:17-18)! God does not save a man *in* his sins, but *from* his sins,<sup>4</sup> giving him a hatred for them. If he yet loves them and stays in them, rest assured that he is *deceived*!

Again, I knew of a pastor who said God told him to leave his wife and children and take up with another woman in his congregation, so he would have more time to preach and wouldn’t be cumbered with a large family. But God told him nothing of the kind! He just twisted the Scriptures for his own use. I tell you what God’s Word does say: “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: *but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*” (Heb 13:4). And in 1 Corinthians 6:18 God tells us: “Flee fornication.” He gives no man the license to take advantage of a woman who is laden with the guilt of sin and led away with divers lusts, saying to her, “God doesn’t mind for us to give over to our natural feelings for each other, for surely it would not be lust, but love. Are we not one in the family of God? Why then can’t we be one in our natural feelings for each other?” God will bring into judgment those who take advantage of the sacred office of the ministry, to use it as a cloak under which to give in to their lusts!

### Personal Applications

Again I say, we must *beware* of this religion that puts the emphasis on emotions, for if emotions are not directed to God and His glory, they will always lead to the satisfaction of the fleshly nature. We are aroused in our emotions when we start hugging and kissing, passing it off that “we are members of one family, the family of God, so it is surely all right for us to do this.” This leads to nothing but sensuality, the indulging in sensual pleasure and lust. I have seen the results of this with my own eyes, and it is not a pretty sight; how much more does God hate it! If I had the time, I could give you many more illustrations from my own observation, for I have come in contact with many; but this will suffice.

I must cry unto the living God to hold me and keep me by His Holy Spirit, and not let me fall into this same pit, for I am a man subject to like passions as any man. Daily I hear the words, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness” (2Ti 2:22). “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [behavior], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Ti 4:12). “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatso-

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<sup>4</sup> **God does not save a man *in* his sins** – He does not save a man that he might continue in habitual sins. But God *does* justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5); and those He justifies, He causes to walk in His commands (1Jo 1:5 - 2:29).

ever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phi 4:8).

This word was meant for every man who claims to be an ambassador for Christ, that he would give heed to how he conducts himself in that sacred office. But not only the man; it also was meant for every woman who is seeking the knowledge of the truth of God and of herself, that she would be careful to *try the spirits*, so she will not be carried away with every wind of doctrine. In fact, this word was meant to try all our hearts, that we would keep ourselves unspotted from the world (Jam 1:27) and do all things for the glory of God—and to see if we be in Christ and have embraced His gospel, or if we have been deceived by this false gospel, which is another gospel and leads to hell.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This chapter is available from CHAPEL LIBRARY as a tract.

## TWO TYPES OF CHRISTIANS?

*“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”—1 Corinthians 3:1*

The sole basis of this false teaching of carnal Christianity is the belief that there are two types of Christians in the world today—carnal and spiritual. A misuse of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 is one of the major factors. We will consider these verses of Scripture in the light of Romans 8:5-9, which set forth the fact that they which walk in the flesh as the course of their life cannot please God (v 8), and are therefore spiritually dead.

### The “Carnal Christian” in 1 Corinthians 3

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1Co 3:1-4).

Now first of all, we need to look at these verses as they are set in the context of this entire book of 1 Corinthians. This letter was written to correct many errors that had sprung up in the church at Corinth; these errors and sins can be found in 1:11; 5:1; 7:1; 8:1; 11:18; 12:1; and 15:12. The apostle Paul deals with them thoroughly, calling for repentance and searching of heart: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2Co 13:5). And after giving them the history of Israel in the wilderness, he warns: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12).

Let us consider the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 3. In the last seven verses of chapter 2, the apostle by the Spirit shows that no man can know the things of God except the Holy Spirit teach him, which He does by comparing spiritual things with spiritual from the Word of God, thereby saving us by the grace of God and giving us the mind of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Notice also in these verses, that Paul calls them “brethren,” and tells them that he could not speak to them

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<sup>1</sup> **comparing spiritual things with spiritual** – “Comparing’...does not suit well here. So it is best to follow the original meaning ‘to combine’...the idea most naturally would be, ‘combining spiritual ideas...with spiritual words’...This again makes good sense in harmony with the first part of verse 13”—A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Broadman Press, 1931; 88-89.

“The only correct interpretation is to take [the Greek word translated as ‘comparing’] in its original import [that is, ‘combining’] and [the Greek word translated ‘spiritual things’] as Neuter...carrying the meaning: uniting the spiritual matters which are the subject of our discourse...with words and forms that are taught of the Spirit”—Christian Friedrich Kling, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Charles Scribner & Co., 1868; 61; from *Lange’s Commentary on Holy Scripture*.

as mature, full-grown Christians, but as babes in Christ, who were being fed on milk and not meat. Being babes, they desired the sincere milk of the Word (1Pe 2:2), whereby they were alive unto God and spiritual. But as they were caught in this error of glorying in men (either Paul, Apollos, or Peter; 1:12; 3:4, 21-22), they were showing their fleshly nature. He certainly desired to show them their error and bring them to repentance—so that they would grow into mature, full-grown Christians, and no longer grieve the Holy Spirit Who indwelt them (6:19).

Here again we must remind ourselves of the truth that these Corinthian Christians could not make sin the practice and rule of their lives; for if they did, they would show that they were never the children of God, but lost and not knowing Christ (1Jo 3:9-10). He is speaking to spiritual men in this passage, but rebuking them for walking in this error of glorying in men. How do we know this? Again, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, as the apostle tells us in verses 9-16 of chapter 2.

### **An Example**

This is why those who teach and preach this false gospel of carnal Christianity completely miss the truth of God's Word, because they will not and do not compare spiritual things with spiritual. They build a false doctrine upon a few verses of Scripture, ignoring the greater light found elsewhere in the Bible. I know what I am talking about, for I have heard it with my own ears.

Recently, as I was returning from a preaching engagement, I heard a radio preacher take 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 and preach this false carnal Christian doctrine as I had never heard it preached before. In essence this is what he said: "Don't let anyone deceive you about these verses, for they certainly teach that there are two types of Christians: one who is spiritual, and one who is carnal and walks after the flesh." He said, "Indeed, the carnal Christians are the plague of the church; they make God weep because they will not walk in the Spirit, but they are still Christians and will go to heaven when they die because they have made a profession of faith."

And he went on to describe these carnal Christians as ones who did not pray, who did not read their Bibles, who partook of the sensual pleasures of the world, who very seldom went to church, who very seldom gave a penny to the work of the Lord, and who were immersed in the world and could not be distinguished from the world! He said the sad part about it was that God was helpless to make them spiritual Christians, because He did not want to cross their free will; that even though they had not bowed to Christ as Lord of their lives, yet He was obligated to take them to heaven when they died because they had "trusted" Him as their Savior!

As I rode along in my car hearing this false gospel being preached; I wept, because this false prophet was sealing precious souls in their sins, promising them heaven when they in fact were on the road to hell. It was blasphemy, because this kind of so-called salvation brings no glory to God, but rather obligates God to save rebels while they stay in their sins and refuse to bow to His authority as Lord of all.

I began to pray to the Lord to give me strength to cry out against this false doctrine till I die, and set forth God's true way of salvation that calls for complete surrender of all the keys to all the rooms of our hearts, and a bowing to Jesus Christ as Lord of our life, to break the power of sin.

## Carnal versus Spiritual in Romans 8

This radio pastor totally ignored the greater light given us in other parts of God's Word. *Romans 8:5-9*: "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. For to be carnally minded [fleshly minded] is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal [fleshly] mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 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."

Now the first thing that can be said about these verses is they do not teach that the apostle is drawing a line between fleshly (carnal) Christians and spiritual Christians. No! He is drawing the line of demarcation between the unregenerate and the regenerate, the wicked and the righteous, the unsaved and the saved, the children of the devil and the children of God!

Many are taught that these verses do teach there are fleshly or carnal Christians, who walk habitually "after the flesh," and spiritual Christians, who walk habitually "after the Spirit." No, such teaching is error according to *Romans 8:3-4*, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh"—for what reason? "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." And who is the "us"?—those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You see, the righteousness of the Law will be fulfilled in the children of God, for this was the reason Christ died and rose again. And I ask again, in whom is this righteousness fulfilled?—only those who are born again by the Spirit of God and are in the Spirit, walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh!<sup>2</sup>

Again, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," in *Romans 8:5*. What does the word "flesh" mean here? The word "flesh" means fallen human nature, human nature as it is before the Spirit of God begins His work in a person. It is man left to himself—born, developing, and growing in life in this world outside the activity of God upon him. He is habitually dominated by the nature with which he was born. This fleshly, or carnal man, is said here to "mind the things of the flesh." He does not think of them occasionally, but these are the things he minds and thinks of habitually, and the trend or bent of his thinking is toward earthly things. Why? because they please him most of all. These are the things that give him the greatest satisfaction, and therefore are the things that he seeks after wholeheartedly. So a man who minds the things of the flesh is a man who knows not God and His Christ,

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<sup>2</sup> **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us** – "This verse expresses the design of God in sending his Son, and in condemning sin in the flesh. He did thus condemn it...*in order that* the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled. The meaning of this passage, therefore, is determined by the view taken of v. 3. If that verse means that God, by sending His Son, destroyed sin in us, then of course this verse must mean, 'He destroyed sin, in order that we should fulfill the Law'; *i.e.*, that we should be holy. But if v. 3 is understood of the sacrificial death of Christ, and of the condemnation of sin in Him as the substitute of sinners, then this verse must be understood of justification, and not of sanctification. He condemned sin, in order that the demands of the Law might be satisfied. This is the view of the passage given even by the majority of the early Fathers, and by almost all evangelical interpreters, including the Reformers...That this is the true meaning of the passage appears...from the connection and the course of the argument...It is consistent with the strict and natural meaning of the words...On the other hand, the second clause of the verse [that is, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."] is specially pertinent...Holiness is the fruit and evidence of reconciliation with God." Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975; 254-255.

whose understanding is darkened, and who is alienated from the life of God. But the trend and bent of the lives of the children of God is after righteousness and holy living, by the grace of God.

Now, *Romans 8:6*, “For to be carnally minded [or fleshly minded] is death.” What is the apostle telling us here?—that the man who minds fleshly or earthly things, as described in verse 5, is in a state of spiritual death. He is not a carnal Christian, going to heaven when he dies because he made a profession of faith and joined a church. No! He is dead in trespasses and sins, and is on his way to hell, to abide under the just wrath of God forever, unless sovereign grace lays hold of him and makes him a spiritual man. Yes, he is alive physically, but spiritually he is a dead man. He is completely dead to God, so God is not in all his thoughts; he lives as if there were no God. Spiritual death is to be outside the life of God! Therefore, he is in a living death; he is merely existing. That is why he minds the things of the flesh, those worldly things which God hates, and is governed and controlled by his fallen nature. He is shut out from the life of God; and if he dies in that condition, he will to all eternity be shut out from the life of God. Nothing more terrible can be contemplated. That is the meaning of spiritual death.

Notice now what *verse 6* says about the spiritual man: He is “spiritually minded” and has eternal “life and peace.” He is alive unto God. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (*Joh 17:3*). Now *verse 7*: “Because the carnal [fleshly] mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This explains why the mind of the flesh is death: If a man is at enmity against God, that is, in active rebellion against God, he is obviously outside the life of God. This means he is dead spiritually.

I see in these verses positive proof that the apostle is not comparing and contrasting two types of Christians, but rather is comparing and contrasting the non-Christian and the Christian, the child of the wicked one, unsaved and lost, and the child of God, who is saved and kept in Christ. You see, a man cannot be at enmity against God and be a Christian at the same time! No, there is no such thing as a “carnal” Christian, for all Christians are spiritual men, who have been born of the Spirit, given a new heart and the very nature of God. Thus we see why we cannot build a doctrine like carnal Christianity upon such a passage of Scripture as *1 Corinthians 3:1-4*. God has given greater light in *Romans 8:5-9*, showing that no such doctrine exists!



## THE SPIRITUAL MAN IN ROMANS 8

5. *“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.*
6. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*
7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*
8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*
9. *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.”—Romans 8:5-9*

The spiritual man, or true Christian, is vividly contrasted in Romans 8:5-9 with the carnal or fleshly man. This carnal man minds the things of the flesh (v 5), is in a state of spiritual death (v 6), and is in a state of enmity (active rebellion) against God. Such a person is *not* subject to the Law of God, neither indeed *can* be (v 7); and further, he *cannot* please God (v 8). Therefore he is repugnant to God and abides under His just wrath—unless sovereign grace enters and changes him into a new creature in Christ.

### “To Be Spiritually Minded Is Life”

Now, in verse 9, the apostle makes a statement that no man can get around or argue against, nor can it be made to mean anything else than what it says—*“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”* Why? because if indeed a man has been born again, regenerated by the Spirit of God, then he is a spiritual man. God has done something for him and in him—he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The course or bent of his life is changed! For now he has the very life of God dwelling in him!

God tells us in Ezekiel 36:26-27, “A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will *put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes*, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” Yes, this is something that God does for us and not we ourselves. This is a work that will cause us to desire to walk in the Spirit and seek after godliness, righteousness, and true holiness. It is a work of *grace* from start to finish, and gives God the glory; verse 27 is emphatic: “and ye *shall* keep my judgments, and do them.” We *will* mind the things of the Spirit, by the grace of God.

“To be spiritually minded is *life*” (Rom 8:6). This statement is the key to the whole Christian life, and is the reason why the true Christian no longer walks after “the course of this world” (Eph 2:2), but after the Spirit. Our Lord said, “I give unto them *eternal life*” (Joh 10:28; 17:2-3); and “I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly”

(Joh 10:10). Yes, this life is the very life of God dwelling in the children of God. Therefore, having the life of God in them, certain things are said about them that are not said of the unregenerate, the unsaved—no matter how religious they may be, or how many professions, rededications, and experiences they have had. Let us see some of these things in Romans 8 about God's children.

## Romans 8

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

Verse 1 teaches that the spiritual man is no longer under condemnation, because he has passed from death unto *life*; for Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidences of the broken Law that always hung over his head. The Savior took these and nailed them to His cross (Col 2:14), and thereby removed the guilt and penalty of all the sins of all His people before a holy God. Then He cleansed them by faith in His precious blood, and provided for them a spotless robe of righteousness, wherein they stand before God perfect in His Son.

2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Verse 2 says that the law of the Spirit of *life* in Christ hath made the spiritual man free from the law of sin and death, so he has now been made free from the consequences of sin, which is eternal death. He has become a servant to God, whose fruit is now unto holiness and whose end is everlasting life (Rom 6:22).

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

4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Verse 4 teaches that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in this spiritual man because he is *in* Christ, and now able to walk after the Spirit. Like David, he delights himself in the Law of God (God's Word), and his bent of life is to please God and walk in His commandments, bringing forth fruit unto holiness.

5. 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 tells us that he is a man who minds the things of the Spirit. His mind is *set* on the things of God; they delight him most. So he seeks after them in the Word of God, in the fellowship of the saints, in public worship with the people of God, and in his private life of communion with God.

6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Verse 6 shows that he is a man who possesses the very spiritual life of God, and who is at peace with God because of his union with Christ and his present state of justification. He is no longer in a state of spiritual death, hating God; but he delights in God, and cries that the Holy Spirit will work in him "the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19) in progressive sanctification in this life. He desires that his faith might be increased so he may please God in all things, for he knows that the just shall live by faith and not by sight (Rom 1:17).

12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13. 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.

Verses 12-13 show that he is *not* a debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if he lives after the flesh, the life of God is not in him and he will die. But because the life of God is in him, he desires by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body (to put to death the deeds of the fleshly nature), so he will *live* unto God.

14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Verses 14-17 teach that since he is now a child of God, the greatest evidence he has to his soul that this is true is that he acknowledges to be led by the Spirit: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Such a person has received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, “Abba Father.” He knows that God is his Father; this is real to him, for the Holy Spirit bears witness with his spirit that this is so. Therefore, he is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. He knows the inward working of the Holy Spirit whereby he has received the firstfruits of his inheritance, so he groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body (v 23).<sup>1</sup>

24. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Verses 24-25 show that he knows by experience that he lives in hope—in the hope and joyful expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will give him his new body and take him to be with Him where He is forever, in a place of rest and holiness where there will be no more sin.

28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Verse 28 sets forth the truth: “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The Holy Spirit also teaches the believer that God foreknew him in eternity, that he was included in God’s plan of predestination to be

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding assurance of salvation: “This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and struggle with many difficulties before he be partaker of it [Isa 50:10; Psa 88; Psa 77:1-12], yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of means, attain thereunto [1Jo 4:13; Heb 6:11-12]: and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance [Rom 5:1, 2, 5, 14:17]; so far is it from inclining men to looseness [Rom 6:1-2; Ti 2:11-12, 14].”—*London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 8.3; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

conformed to the image of God's dear Son. And having predestinated him, God also calls him by His Spirit and justifies him in Christ, and will at the last day glorify him in his blessed Savior forever (vv. 29-30).

Also, he knows that Satan, the world, the flesh, and even he himself, can lay nothing to his account before God, because it is the triune God Himself Who justified him and counted him righteous in Christ. And being one of God's elect, no charge will ever be brought against him in heaven. Again, he knows that Christ will not condemn him, because He died for him, arose for him, and is at the right hand of God as his Representative, where He ever lives to make intercession for him till He gets him to glory (vv. 33-34). Then, to seal the whole transaction of love and grace in Christ for his soul, the spiritual man learns from verses 35-39 that there is *absolutely nothing* that can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord!

### **The Spiritual Man**

Now, it is because of all this, which the triune God has worked in his soul by the Holy Spirit, and which was provided for him in the blood and righteousness of Christ, that he is a spiritual man—a man indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore minds the things of the Spirit. He desires to walk in this pathway of righteousness and true holiness; he hates any other way, and desires to show forth the praises of Him Who called him out of darkness into the marvelous light of His unchanging grace. This is the bent and trend of his life, and he can say with the apostle Paul,

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

But the contrast in Romans 8 is with the man who still minds the things of the flesh, who walks after the flesh, and calls himself a carnal Christian. He knows nothing of these things that make the children of God spiritual, because they can only be spiritually discerned by those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, who have been saved by *grace*, and by faith have entered into that living union with Christ. The question is: Do you and I walk after the flesh, or after the Spirit? *There is no middle ground* of carnal Christianity, “for to be carnally minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is *life* and peace” (Rom 8:6).

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My last word and prayer is that God by His Spirit will awaken each one of you who are deceived by this fatal error of “carnal Christianity” before it is too late, that He will deliver you from the wrath to come, that you may be justified by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ—not by the faith that is alone, but by the faith that bears the fruit of good works. For in James 2:17, “Faith, if it hath not works, is *dead*, being alone.” This is what I have set before you continuously. The gospel of “carnal Christianity” is a false gospel that does *not* lead to works of righteousness and holiness; and the Scriptures speak plainly: “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

