

Psm. 11:3

Baptists For Liberty

Prov. 29:2

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Galations 5:1

NEWS LETTER

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A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

– Proverbs 13:2

This proverb relies on the general principle of sowing and reaping. In this case, words are the seed sown and either good or violence is reaped. The first phrase deals with wise words and their return of good (Proverbs 12:14; 18:20). The word for transgressors means traitors. It indicates acting deceitfully. Such men use their words deceitfully to fulfill their plans (Proverbs 1:11-13). Their love and pursuit of violence through their speech brings it back on their own heads eventually (Proverbs 1:31).

- Bro. Jeff Short

Godliness In Christian Life

by Bro. Wm. Doyal Thomas

(Text: Titus 2:11-15).

The Grace Of God Teaches Us To Live Godly I do not want to write negatively, for the learned of this so-called modern era insist that only the positives are to be articulated. And being human, I want to be found pleasing and acceptable to all those with whom I am placed in contact.

Doesn't everyone want to be found in harmony with the ways of men and with the teaching of men? Surely you will let me be as other men. Surely you will understand my longing to be accepted, and that my writings will be acclaimed and lauded. Surely you will understand.

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"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

~ Thessalonians 2:7&8

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Divine Gentleness Acknowledged

by C. H. Spurgeon

“Your gentleness has made me great.” Psalm 18:35. THERE are several interpretations of this text. A moment will suffice to give them to you. The word is capable of being translated, “Your goodness has made me great.” David saw much of benevolence in God’s action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. “Your providence” is another reading which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is providence in embryo; providence is goodness fully developed. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, “Your help,” which is but another word for providence. Providence is the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Some learned annotators tell us that the text means, “Your humility has made me great.” “Your condescension” may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which we have already mentioned, as well as that of humility.

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Sermon

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. II Timothy 4:2



Compassionate Believers

by Bro. Timothy Works

John 4:1-29

Notice verses 16-18 "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."

How would you describe this woman? If you knew a woman near by who had been discovered five times (or five live in boyfriends) and was currently living with a man she was not married to; what would YOU call her?

In polite words we could call her "not for for polite society." Not a role model.

Yet Jesus came to where she was and talked TO HER not 'down to her' and shared the gospel with her vs 22, and she was saved and instrumental in sharing the gospel with many in her town. vs 28-29, 39-42.

Who would this woman be today? Religious, mixed religions, truth & error.

Jesus sets forth an example for us here that shows us that even though we are to be holy people, a separate people, we are also to be a compassionate people. (evangelistic to every creature)

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." - Mark 16:15

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." - Acts 1:8

If we shut ourselves off from people we become legalistic, self-righteous, "holier than thou" in our attitude even though we profess that salvation is of grace not of works. Do you see what I mean?

We believe rightly that salvation is totally of grace, not by works of righteousness that we have done. Ephesians 2:8-9 & Romans 3:20, 28. What had happened to Israel? They were to be witnesses to the world of the true God; but they became worldly and God punished them- then in reaction they became isolated from the world- they were God's chosen people and they looked down on others. "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:" Luke 18:9, "I thank thee that I am not as others are..." they despised others, had a holier than thou attitude.

On one hand we are to be a separate people:

II Corinthians 6:14-18 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

John 17:11, 16 "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." & "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

But, I Corinthians 5:9-10 "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."

At the same time we must come along side sinners, in such a way not to partake of their sin, but to show compassion and to share the gospel. Let like the Pharisees we develop an "attitude" that we are "holier than" others or "too good" to have any dealings with "certain people" who are so far beneath our social/moral level in society. This will lead to coldness, deadness in the church, a legalistic attitude. None of which edifies us as God's people. Nor sends the proper message about the "grace, love & mercy" of God to lost people.

Notice what Paul said: I Corinthians 9:19-22 "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (Spoke their language, observed their customs, dressed as they did, ate what they ate.) This he did while remaining faithful to the holiness of God (not without law to God, but under the law to Christ)

Oh that Christ would kindle in our hearts a love and compassion for lost souls that would compel us to go seeking them out and sharing the gospel with them, that we would pray for them (not some short prayer) but pray for specific people by name (get to know them) That we would desire above all things their salvation! Paul, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Romans 10:1 We have not been given a ministry of condemnation. John 3:17-18 “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” But Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost; and he has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:17-21 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

He, Christ, was made to be sin for us (who knew no sin) God laid upon his son Jesus all our sins and iniquities. Jesus became sin, our sin bearer for us, in our stead. As such he received the wrath and punishment of God for our sins and died upon the cross.

This is “good news” to every sinner! This is the good news or “gospel” Christ died for our sins according to the scripture (in accordance to the law, satisfying its requirements) was buried (carried my sins away)

And rose again the 3rd day according to the scripture (fulfilling all the prophecies and types of the Levitical system) The work is finished, complete, nothing for us to do or add to it. All you need do is believe it, receive it! The Samaritan woman did!

And thou shalt be saved.

Your sins are forgiven.

You have eternal life.

And shall never perish, come into judgment or condemnation.

We beseech you, in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God!



Biblical Economics

And let us not be weary
in well doing: for in due
season we shall reap, if
we faint not.

Gal. 6:9



with Bro. Blaine Conzatti

Toward a Trinitarian Understanding of the Free Market

The concept of the Trinity is foundational to the Christian life. This fundamental doctrine teaches that there are not three gods but one God in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Each person of the Godhead is equally, eternally, and fully God. There is unity among the three persons of the Godhead; they are “equal in every divine perfection” yet “execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.”

All human relationships reflect the Trinity. Because God created us in His image, we are relational beings. We were created to live in community. Although some types of social relationships are more intimate and lasting than others, all relationships are interpersonal and require at least some cooperation and interdependence. Furthermore, just as there are different roles among the persons of the Trinity, there are also roles within every social relationship.

Theologians often point to God’s design for the family as one example of this phenomenon. Familial relationships are characterized by interdependence, cooperation, and mutual service. The husband is called to lovingly exercise headship over the family, following the pattern of Christ and the church. Conversely, the wife joyfully submits herself to her husband’s proper exercise of authority, and children submit to their parents. Thus, the biblical pattern for family exemplifies the interdependence and interpersonal cooperation of the Trinity.

This Trinitarian pattern also applies to our relationships in the marketplace. Consider the relationship between employer and employee. Employers are called to lovingly and righteously exercise authority over their employees, and their employees are called to submit joyfully, so long as the employer isn’t directing the employee to engage in unholy or illegal behavior. In doing this, the employer and the employee glorify God by imitating the Father’s proper exercise of authority and the Son’s joyful submission as well as through acting righteously toward each other.

Even economic exchange between strangers reflects the Trinity and glorifies God. "Society under the market economy means a state of affairs in which everybody serves his fellow citizen and is served by them in return," wrote the famed economist Ludwig von Mises.

This axiom is obvious to those who have studied the market economy. The businessman serves his customers by producing the goods and services they desire, and the customers compensate the businessman for those goods. The employee serves his employer by providing his labor, and the employer returns the favor by remunerating the employee for his work.

Through its division and specialization of labor, the market drives every person to rely on everyone else to supply his needs. No one person is self-sufficient. By fostering interdependence and interpersonal cooperation, the relational nature of economic exchange reflects the relational nature of the Trinity. Accordingly, the free market bears the mark of its Creator.

The nineteenth-century Christian philosopher and economist Frederic Bastiat affirmed this truth:

"We should be compelled to contemplate the Divine plan that governs society... And see how, by means of social [economic] laws, and because men exchange among themselves their labors and their products, a harmonious tie attaches the different classes of society one to the other! It is therefore certain that the final result of the efforts of each class is the common good of all."

Adam Smith, renowned by historians as the father of modern economics, famously wrote that market participants "are led by an invisible hand... without intending it, without knowing it," to "advance the interest of society." Even when they are merely seeking their own benefit, market participants are led by the mechanisms of profit and loss to use their productive energies to meet the needs of others. Christians recognize that this invisible hand must be God, who uses the laws of economics that He created to guide market participants into the service of others.

In the free market, this mutual service through economic exchange is voluntary. No party is forced to supply the needs of the other. Instead, profit and loss direct individuals into the service of their fellow men. Assuming the absence of force and fraud, the people and companies who earn the greatest profit are those who best serve the needs of their customers. Christianity understands this and therefore affirms that profit is morally good.

In Matthew 25:35-36, Jesus commands His disciples to attend to the needs of others. Can it not be said that this is accomplished through the mechanisms of the market, at least in part? Do food workers not feed the hungry? Do pipe workers not help supply water to the thirsty? Do retail workers not help to clothe the naked? Do doctors and nurses not attend to needs of the sick?

This explains why the Christian Reformers believed that all work is sacred and provides an opportunity to glorify God. All work, even the most mundane, is a high calling. God uses our work and economic exchange to provide for ourselves and others. Through the process of voluntary market exchange, we glorify God by reflecting the Trinity's interdependence and interpersonal cooperation in our own lives.



Real Change: The Real Need!

by Bro. Donnie Burford

The difference between Reformation and Transformation!
Though Social engineering may reform and change a mans actions, only through Spiritual Regeneration can a mans heart be changed. You may be able to make a man not hurt others, but you can never make him not hate them!

Only God can change a mans heart and that by giving him a new nature,

One that will not only change his actions, but also the thoughts and intents of his heart!

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."

Mark 7:21-23; "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

John 3:7; "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Ephesians 2:1-5; "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"

Devotion: John 10:11

by Bro. Jeff Short

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ~ [John 10:11](#)

The sheep have known no better time than when the Good Shepherd was revealed. For years God's people had been led astray. Their religious leaders were nothing more than hirelings. They cared not for the sheep. They did not do the things they did out of a motive of love and compassion. They loved the applause of men and sought it at every turn. **"Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts"** ([Lu 20:46](#)). They held to the traditions of men and **"made the commandment of God of none effect."** Their teaching was not for the glory of God and the edification of the people. They rather hoped to bring men into compliance with their own whims and narrow standards.

They were also hypocrites. Jesus spoke of them plainly saying, **"They say and do not."** They claimed to be the interpreters of the Law of God, but were themselves not subject to the Law. The sheep were not in real safety under the leadership of the hirelings. They would flee at the first sign of trouble. They certainly were not willing to **"spend and be spent"** in service. But, all hope is not lost. The Good Shepherd has come. Jesus declares, **"I am the good shepherd."** The Good Shepherd tends, leads, feeds, and cares for the sheep. He is moved with love and compassion and is tender toward them. He will not flee. He will never forsake. In fact, He gave His life for the sheep.

More than once in John chapter 10, Christ states that He lays His life down. In verses 17 and 18 He says, **"I lay down my life.... no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."** He was certainly no hired shepherd. He did it all willingly and lovingly. He was not coerced. He obligated Himself. So, He willingly laid His life down. Let us consider how that Jesus laid down His life in two ways.

Firstly, He laid down His life in a selfless act of service. Paul states of Christ, **"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"** (Ph 2:7). He laid down His life in self-denial. He did not have His own agenda. He was not seeking the praise of men. He did not go about trying to make Himself more comfortable, rich, powerful, honored, or famous. We read in [Matthew 4:23](#), **"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."** And again in [Acts 10:38](#), **"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."** He made it clear that He did not come to earth to do His own will. He came **"to seek and to save that which was lost."** He humbled Himself and became a servant. He laid down His life. He laid it aside and did not serve Himself.

Secondly, He laid down His life as a sacrifice. His obedience had no bounds. He was **"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** He gave it all. He kept nothing back. The hymn writer wrote,

I gave my life for thee, My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be, And quickened
from the dead;
I suffered much for thee, More than thy tongue can
tell,
Of bitterest agony, To rescue thee from hell;

He was slain, but it was from the foundation of the world. He was not overtaken and forced. He willingly laid down His life. He made no objection while He was lifted up from the earth. Praise God, what a Shepherd! This story is amazing and it makes us wonder,

Love sent my Savior to die in my stead,
Meekly to Calvary's cross He was led,
Nails pierced His hands and His feet for my sin,
He suffered sore my salvation to win,
O how He agonized there in my place,
Nothing withholding my sin to efface,
Why should He love me so? (Adapted JFS)

He died in order to pay for the sins of the sheep and gain for them eternal life. What wondrous love is this? Praise God for the Good Shepherd that loves the sheep and was willing to suffer for them.



Godliness In Christian Life

by Bro. Wm. Doyal Thomas
(Written for & first published in *The Baptist Herald* - December, 1991)

"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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke thee." (Titus 2:11-15).

(continued from front page)

I dare say that each of you who read these pages will be able to empathize with me as I struggle with this issue. You will have a warm pity for my problem, and you will share with me this great desire to say the right things so that none will be offended at my writings.

Taking into consideration all these human desires, and warm, glowing feelings toward others, will you now consider what I must write? Will you recognize that when all is said and done, I must one day stand before my Lord and give an account of my stewardship? I must. And so must you.

It is sad to report, yet most vividly and painfully true, that among the ranks of professing sovereign grace believers there is an awful and growing movement toward antinomianism. The dawning of each new day seems to reveal others who have stumbled into this snare during the darkness. And we are not immune. There is a great danger before us, and we must move back from the precipice, the rocky cliff, before we are led to take that step over the edge.

The only source of strength that will enable us to avoid this great error is the precious and sweet Holy Spirit, who is given to be our guide, our teacher. For He, said Jesus, "... **will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.**" (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit will speak in total harmony with the Father and with the Son to provide needed and necessary help for the born again, so that they may be in safety as they journey through the present maze of darkness that poses as light. He will speak in harmony with the Bible, God's revealed will and word concerning Himself. And we are safe, when we adhere to the work and walk in accordance with its teaching.

And what does the Bible teach us as touching the subject of Christian living? Does the Bible teach that because the blood of Christ has been shed so as to provide a covering for the sins of men, that men whose sins are thus covered are then free to live as the depravity of their flesh would dictate? Does the precious word that expresses the mind of a Holy God teach that? Does the word of God teach that there is no sin except a doctrinal sin?

Antinomianism declares that the Bible teaches these things. Antinomianism also delights in spreading abroad such poison, as they seek to cover up their own meanness and filthiness with such a spider's web of deceit. And as those who expound such doctrinal folly do so, they assume a superior attitude and present quite a show of having risen several positions above others who are still holding to the outdated position of holy living.

I declare at this time that I am not one of those who imagines that lawlessness is acceptable with God. And that is the exact position that antinomians have taken. They are the lawless ones. And that means, they are outlaws. I am not an antinomian, and I freely declare that the Bible teaches God's people to live in accordance with His word, and not contrary to His word.

What was it that Paul wrote to Titus? Here's what he said, after writing in the first ten verses of the second chapter of God's having dealt, in grace, with all classes, sorts, and distinctions of men. Here's what he said: "**For the grace of God that bringeth**

salvation hath appeared to all men, (that is, men of all distinctions (WDT)) **Teaching us that,** (us that grace brought salvation to (WDT)) **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.**" Can language be plainer than that? Can words be found that will shed light upon this precise teaching? Can man then wrest the plain teachings of the Scriptures into some other meaning? Is precept upon precept? Is light to be turned into darkness at the whim of misguided and misdirected man?

These words teach us that we are to seek and to strive to put off the old man and his deeds. The old man being the carnal, fleshly man. The nature cannot be eradicated, nor can it be shed as a snake would shed its skin periodically. We readily admit that the old man cannot be put away, nor can he be subdued so that his influence is no longer a factor. That is, man cannot change his nature.

We also readily admit that when a snake comes out of that old layer of skin, which it then leaves behind, it is still a snake and its nature has not changed at all. It will still bite you. That is its nature, and it will continue to act in accordance with its nature.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that snakes are ever dealt with in grace so as to give them a new nature. But God's elect among men are so dealt with. They are, at regeneration, which is an act of God, totally outside of themselves, given a new nature. Not a making over of that which is fallen, but a new nature.

And in this new man dwells the Spirit of God. And this new man now is to be contending with the old man. Constantly, the new man is to follow the leadership of the Spirit so as to minimize the effects of the old man's strivings and lustful desires. The new man is renewed daily for his ever present warfare with the old man.

The antinomian contends that the old man is to be ignored in his lustful and sinful deeds, for they say, it really doesn't matter at all what the old man does. Does God's word teach that, or do misguided men teach that?

Let me call your attention now to two additional texts of Scripture. Consider them in the light of what they teach. Meditate upon them and be assured that God's word does not contradict itself nor does He speak in one place that which contravenes what He had said in another place.

"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgement with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job 14:1-4).

The nature of man is inherited from his progenitors. Man that is born of sinful stock comes into existence as those who brought him forth. Sinful parents produce sinful children. And who denies

this truth? And who can change this truth? But are parents authorized to neglect to seek to teach, lead, and subdue their children?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." (Jermiah 13:23). Again we remind you that the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor can the leopard change his spots. The nature of both is fixed. They are what they are.

To some degree, the leopard can be subdued and partially domesticated. It remains a leopard however, and when left to itself will always revert to its nature, and will act accordingly.

With the Ethiopian however, there cannot be a true parallel drawn. It is true that the color of the Ethiopian's skin will remain the same, and outwardly, he will exhibit the same physical appearance. But if God be pleased to work a work of grace in him, thus creating a new man, then the nature of that new man will be as the nature of Him who begat him into this new life.

The old nature of Adam will remain however, and the warfare will begin and will not end until the new man is one day delivered from this body of death. **(Romans 7:24).**

But does this mean that the converted, born again Ethiopian is authorized to disregard the teaching of the Spirit and ignore his old man and all its evil deeds? In no wise is this what is taught.

Again I remind you, and I remind myself, lest I also let the truth slip away, that the apostle Paul under the Holy Spirit's leadership and control has written definite instructions to Titus. His objective in writing was to teach and then tutor younger Titus in matters pertaining to the true pastoral work that God assigns to His preachers; that is, in this case, how Titus was to live or conduct himself. Then, how Titus was to teach other believers how they were to live and conduct themselves. Did Paul teach Titus to become an antinomian?

Titus, your duty and your grand and God-honoring privilege is to teach old men, young men, old women, young women, masters (employers) and servants (employees) how they are to live and conduct themselves in the positional standings they enjoy before God and before men.

Titus, it was God's grace in action that saved men of all these distinctions, as is here specified. And this grace of God that brought salvation to these many and varied folks also taught them to live correctly before God and before men. God's grace did not teach them, nor does God's grace now teach men to live as outlaws; as unrestrained and carnally motivated men. The propensity is for men to live ungodly, but God did not teach them so to live. Is God the author of man's sin, either original or contemporary?

What did Paul teach Titus? **"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;" (Titus 2:11,12).

What does Paul mean when he writes these words to Titus? Does he mean that Titus and others are free to live ungodly, and unrighteously simply because the curse of the law has been put away by the death of Jesus Christ? Does he mean that? I hold your feet to the fire now, those of you who insist that the word of God allows you to live without regard to God's holy law. Does Paul teach that? Does he? If you affirm that Paul taught that, then you are dishonest in your exegesis of the Scriptures. The Scriptures do not teach that. Why do you?

We are taught, as Titus was taught, to **"deny ungodliness and worldly lusts"**. We are taught to **"... put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."** (Ephesians. 4:22-24).

We are taught, **"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also waked sometime, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind., meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."** (Colossians 3:5-17).

There are numerous other passages of Holy Writ that could be cited to add weighty testimony to what has been presented here. But would it make these passages that we have called your attention to any more truthful than they are already? Would a different outcome be realized? No to both these questions is my answer. The truth would not become more truthful, and surely a different conclusion could not be drawn. Truth is truth, and it is

eternally so. And truth, when taught, can only give one outcome. Truth is not variable, nor is it flexible. Convenient shades of gray cannot be discerned from within the stipulations set forth in truth.

Thus we conclude, Paul taught Titus that he was to deny ungodliness; that he was to deny worldly lusts; that he was to live soberly; that he was to live righteously; that he was to live godly. And now get this. All this denying of things evil, and all this living unto good was to be done in this present world.

These instructions were not to be held in contempt, nor were they to be held in abeyance for the present and then to be actuated at some future time beyond this present world. These instructions were not to be the believer's activities only in the glory world to come, but were to be his duty now. **The Grace Of God Teaches Us To Look For The Blessed Hope** What is the believer's hope? Rather, Who is the believer's hope? Is it that the believer is taught to be self-reliant, and look to himself for present and future good? Not so. Not so. The believer is assured again and again that it is the "... **glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ**; ..." who is our hope -The Blessed Hope.

Since this anticipation is taught to Titus in these same texts, then it is most obvious that Paul connects the present living by the believer to his living in hope. And his living in hope is an assured living, knowing that He who is our Hope will come as He has promised.

Thus we can correctly conclude that while the believer is learning to live in hope in this present world, he is to live anticipatively. And what is the believer to anticipate as he lives soberly, righteously, and godly? Is he to live seeking to identify and to defend against the soon coming anti-christ? Who could live joyously if the anti-christ were he that is to be looked for? And are there any blessings in hope while one looks for this arch deceiver?

Look to the Scriptures, dear reader. Look to the Scriptures. We are told that while we live in a God honoring Christian manner, we are "**Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.**" (Titus 2:13). We are not looking for the anti-christ; the non-christ. We are looking for Christ; the Christ of God.

It was to the disciples of Jesus Christ that the two messengers from God spoke in instruction, in promise, and in assurance on the day that Jesus was taken up from them at the conclusion of His first advent. "... **Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.**" (Acts 1:11).

As we meditate and study concerning this one verse of scripture, we can clearly see that the disciples received heaven sent instruction about the coming again of "... **this same Jesus ...**". We can clearly see that the disciples were given a promise that "... **this same Jesus ...**" would one day come again, just as He went away.

We can clearly see that the disciples received great assurance that "... **this same Jesus ...**" who is their Lord, will, without fail, care for them in all their needs. What more is taught here? What more is needed?

As much as has been said concerning the life that a Christian is to live, is there still doubt or unbelief? Yes, in the face of what has been presented, there are those who do not understand what we affirm. And I am not dismayed at that reality. I could wish that were not so. I could wish that all my brethren had been enabled to see this great truth; but I know that they do not, because they have not been enabled.

And I hope that none who read these words will imagine that I elevate myself above them, or that I hold ill feeling toward them. It is not so. I do not seek glory for myself, nor dishonor for those who may disagree. I seek rather the glory of God in my life, and in the life of every child of God, whether they agree or disagree with me.

But did Paul teach godly living, or didn't he? That is a legitimate question. It ought to be honestly and squarely faced and then answered. Did he, or didn't he teach God's people to live godly lives in this present world?

Here is a clear demand made. This matter is either black or white. There are no convenient and comfortable shades of gray in which this issue can be shrouded. I must face it. You must face it. God either requires correct and godly living, or He doesn't. Are you ready to declare that He doesn't?

Did Paul teach godly living? Is he the only one who did? What about this: "**Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.**" (James 1:19-25).

Is it not evident that James also taught that believers were to live in a manner that would evidence a new birth? Does he not insist that faith that is alive will produce sufficient fruit to show the realities of faith? Does James say, "**Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.**" (James 2:17,18).

It is my feeling that some brethren have been careless in their study and application of the Scriptures when faced with such

declarations as this text presents. And this is perhaps an understandable position that they have taken, when viewed casually. However, we are not permitted to view the Scriptures casually, nor carelessly. We must study and rightly divide them.

No writer was led by the Holy Spirit to make casual or passing statements when they were penning the revealed mind and will of God. Rather, they were required to speak and to write as the Spirit of God moved them, and not to put themselves into the picture. **"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Peter 1:21).**

The apostle Peter was here making it crystal clear that what he wrote, and what others wrote, both men of old time, and his contemporaries, were mere instruments used of God to put forth His word. He is in this context exalting the Scriptures as having been sent from God to magnify His own Name, Person, and work, and that the Scriptures were not just the writing of mortal man.

Listen to Peter as he writes: **"Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation." (II Peter 1:15-20).**

Thus we conclude, no verse of Scripture can be isolated from its context to declare the mind of God. God is not variable, neither is He of uncertain mind. He says what He will, and what He says is always, invariably, unerrantly in total and complete harmony with whatever else He has said on that subject. There is complete agreement of the Scriptures with themselves, and they do not contradict themselves at all.

James has declared that when God gives faith, He also leads that given faith to produce works that declare that faith. He says that any claimed faith that produces no corresponding works is not a living faith at all, but rather is a dead, empty, vain faith, which is no faith at all.

Throughout his writings James teaches God's people to work the righteous works of faith. He does not teach, nor does he imply that acceptable works can be produced apart from God given faith which is the energy that brings forth the works. He does not write to lost sinners to implore them to work in order that they may produce, or conjure up faith. Instead, he teaches believing, converted sinners to work because of their given faith. He teaches

saved sinners to live their lives in a God honoring manner.

It seems to me that in many cases, men of sovereign grace persuasion are so intent upon declaring the sovereignty of God as they view it that they have imbibed the antinomian heresy, which, in their minds relieves man of responsibility. It seems that the tendency to flee away from responsibility becomes their natural course of conduct. Thus, we see this display of antinomianism as it festers and putrefies until it breaks out into a full-grown contagion, declaring, "No sin but a doctrinal sin".

Is it possible that we have developed such a fear of being labeled arminian, that we have fallen off the bridge on the other side of the road? Have we become as the one eyed mule who would not come near the side of the bridge, but rather shied away from our perceived arminian danger and have plunged into the abyss of antinomianism on the other side?

By this writing, I go on record as to my position, and these words will become a legacy that perhaps will remain after my departure from this present scene. But be that as it may, here is my position, stated clearly and concisely. Do not misinterpret nor misunderstand me.

I hate the doctrine of arminianism, for it brings great dishonor to my saviour, Jesus Christ and to the inestimable value of His precious and perfect blood. It belittles the atonement, and negates the grace of God. It is the most awful and disgusting claim of man, who is evil and steeped in sin. It is a shame.

And God has declared that He hates every evil way of man. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." (Psalms 5:4,5). "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Psalms 45:7).

Now what could be more wicked, and thus more hated by God than the deeds and declarations of men when they put forth their own works in the place of the blood of Christ? What could be more hated by a Righteous, holy, and perfect God than the doctrine that teaches men that the blood of Christ is insufficient, and must therefore be augmented by the deeds of sinners.

And that is exactly and precisely what the arminian heresy declares. This God dishonoring doctrine brings the works of men to an equal position with the blood of Christ. Here's what the heresy declares: "God has done His part. He has done all that He can do. Now, you must do your part."

If you will study this position carefully and honestly, you will come to the same conclusion. You cannot come to any other conclusion if you really hear what arminians are saying. They say that God cannot violate the will of man, as if the will of man were superior to the will of God. They say that God is trying to save

every man, but that some men will not let God have His way with them.

Arminianism, in all its hideousness, seeks to de-throne God and elevate man. Arminianism is the grand doctrine of Satan as he has palmed it off to fallen, depraved and sinful man as if it were man's own production. But in reality, the doctrine of arminianism originated in the deceitful heart of Lucifer and was the main thrust that Satan used in his beguiling of Eve. Listen to Satan as he says, "... **Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**" (Gen. 3:4,5).

Dear reader, this declaration by Satan to Eve is the recorded beginning of arminianism and of humanism. This diabolical scheme of Satan to inflict his venomous doctrine into the bloodstream of man was calculated to cause man to de-value the word and work of God, and to over-value the word and work of man. And this is the definition of arminianism and of humanism, when reduced to their simplest terms.

Arminianism has since grown to immense proportions in the deranged mind of depraved man, and now seems to those who are infected with its toxins to be the only sensible position to assume. It seems so right to the darkened mind of man. It seems to be the only position that one can take, and anything else is offensive to man.

And the same can be said of humanism, for this delusion has sprung from the same source as fathered arminianism. These two are indeed twins of evil and shame, and have not only a common source, but share a common goal; and that is to topple God so that man can ascend to the throne and become his own god.

Humanism is the doctrine of vast hordes of mankind, worldwide, and takes its disciples from among many religious groups, all of whom can find comfort with each other on this point. After all, any doctrine that magnifies man becomes acceptable to other men, for they see no evil in it and desire to walk in their imagined place of common ground and common understanding.

Probably one of the most active and most dangerous of these many arminian and humanistic cults in the world today poses under the banner of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints". (I only use upper case letters to designate them, so that you will readily recognize them as they lie couched in their cloaks of covetousness. WDT)

This cult of Satan espouses a doctrine that says, "You can be as gods". They even go so far as to declare that Jesus Christ was at one time just mere mortal, who, through his life of good works and compassionate deeds, became what he claims to be. What is lacking now to make this doctrine to be stark and utter blasphemy? And I say, Nothing! It is blasphemy to deny the Deity of Jesus Christ; and this crowd does so, and takes great pride in doing so.

They teach their deluded followers into believing that they too can be "as gods". They are known as the cult of the "god makers" by those who have previously been caught up in their movement, but who have been miraculously delivered out of their snare. These escaped former disciples have exposed this heresy for what it is, and men everywhere need to be alerted and warned as to this impending evil that lurks everywhere, worldwide.

But is it a new discovery, or even a new doctrine, that came through the deranged mind of Joseph Smith and his co-conspirators? No. There is nothing new here. Satan said the same thing to Eve that Joe Smith said and that his followers are saying today, worldwide, with very great human success and acceptance. And here is that message: "You can be as gods"!

"You can be as gods." Doesn't that held out promise lure men, women, boys and girls into the subtle snare of Satan? Oh, dear reader, it does lure millions of unsuspecting folks to believe this lie of Satan, and we must all be alerted to the danger so as to warn those around us. We must recognize this evil and faithfully declare our hatred for it as we do all such evils. And we are to hate what God hates, and that hatred must be in accordance with God's word on the matter.

Not only am I opposed to arminianism and humanism, but I equally deplore antinomianism. This evil must also be exposed in its subtle forms and in its blatant forms. Both reek of the same God dishonoring heresy, and the danger they pose is real. We must oppose this heresy!

Arminianism finds much fruit bearing fields among the unsaved and the unlearned new children of God. It isn't limited to these groups however, but finds more fertile ground in which to cultivate its tares, thorns and thistles. And arminianism does its work on a most prolific scale and scope.

Now, one would not expect to find open advocacy of "no sin but a doctrinal sin" among arminians. However, there is some of this among that group, and none are immune from this infection.

But the very essence of the antinomians' stand can be seen to be rooted in this "no sin but a doctrinal sin" enigma. It is the position of these heretics that because the blood of Jesus Christ has been shed in the behalf of the elect of God, they have been made free of the demands of the righteous law of God.

Therefore, they proclaim, they are completely free of any demand for righteous living. They mistakenly imagine that freedom that is claimed by the blood of christ has rendered them free to live as their flesh pleases. They do not understand what true freedom is, however. They think they know, and belittle and ridicule all those who disagree with their misappropriation of the teachings of God's word.

True freedom does not consist in man being made free in order to

do what his sinful flesh would lead him to do. Rather, true freedom consists of believers having, by God's grace, been freed from the bondage of Satan, sin, and self that now enables them to do what God would have them do.

Antinomian pronounced freedom is not freedom at all, in the sense that the Scriptures present freedom. It is only a delusion that antinomians experience in their self proclaimed "free from the law". When they boast themselves that "the law cannot touch me", they are saying, "I can do as I please".

Has God said that the flesh can live as it pleases with immunity from judgment? For the unregenerate sinner, whose sins were not brought unto judgment when Jesus Christ was judged as the Surety of His people, his continued lawlessness will yet earn the judgment of God. And lawlessness is exactly the state of life for every unregenerate sinner. And here is the outcome: **"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24).**

For the born again person who has been duped into believing and practicing the theory that the flesh is free to do as it will, there is the chastening hand of God to be faced. And this Hand is sure and chastening is certain. **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:6,7).**

Now does God's word teach godly living for the Christian, or doesn't it? Can man escape the teaching of the word, live as he pleases, and then appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and not suffer loss? Can he, at that time and place, plead ignorance of the word and expect to find his imagined extenuating circumstance to suffice the earned loss? Can man successfully plead, "But, Lord, I did not know"?

"Why didn't you know?", could be the reply of our dear Lord. "Why didn't you know? I told you. I sent the Holy Spirit to lead you, but you gave no heed. I sent men unto you to preach and teach, and ye would not."

I am not imagining things. Jesus clearly taught men to follow His teaching. And He did not teach lawlessness. On the contrary, He taught godly living, as is exemplified in John chapter 8, that we just referred to. When the sinner woman, having been taken in adultery, was brought before Him and accused, He said to her, after her accusers were in turn convicted of their own guilt and had moved away, **"Go, and sin no more." (John 8:11).**

Does this sound like the antinomian heretic who loudly boasts that "there is no sin but a doctrinal sin"? Does it? Answer now. Does Jesus tell this woman that it is acceptable for her to continue in her sinful ways? Does He?

Why doesn't He? If it is all right for her to do so, why doesn't He grant her that freedom, for surely her flesh would enjoy the

on-going gratification of itself in its lustful desires. The flesh is flesh and does indeed relish the notion of this so-called freedom that the antinomian boasts of. And besides, is the sin of adultery a doctrinal sin, of which sort we must avoid, but all other sins are acceptable?

God help us to be delivered from ourselves as our flesh would attempt to justify itself in sinful continuance. May we see this truth: **"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1,2).** And this truth: **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." (I Thessalonians 2:12).** And this truth also: **"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." (I Thessalonians 4:1).**

And now, please consider this. **"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (II Peter 3:10-18).**



Add to Godliness: Brotherly Kindness

by Bro. M.J. Seymoure sr.

(from his devotional book "Cultivating Christian Faith" used
with permission)

I

It is written: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." (Col. 3:12-14)

The Apostle Paul encouraged the brethren, as the elect, holy and beloved of God, to cloth themselves in the virtuous garments that are characteristic of the divine nature. These include putting on "bowels of mercies," or in other words, to have one's affections saddened because of the misfortunes and calamities of the brethren. The elect are to be clothed with kindness, not faultfinding bitterness. They are to be adorned with meekness; that is, not to be full of self, rather to be tender of spirit and gentle towards one's brother or sister in Christ. It includes being longsuffering, or enduring with patience the weaknesses of the brethren. It means forbearing, or holding up one another during the rough times. It stands ready to forgive as graciously as forgiveness was received from the Lord Jesus Christ. These are all garments of extreme importance; yet, there is one more virtuous garment of even greater importance – love. It is this love that is the binding element of the complete wardrobe of the elect. It makes the elect completely clothed in his fellowshiping with the holy brethren.

Insight questions:

1. What are the five characteristics of the divine nature with which the elect of God are to be clothed?
2. What two duties are discharged toward the brethren when one is clothed with these five characteristics?
3. What does it mean to have bowels of mercies?
4. What does it mean to have kindness?
5. What does it mean to have humbleness of mind?
6. What does it mean to have meekness?
7. What does it mean to have longsuffering?
8. What does it mean to forbear one another?
9. With what kind of forgiveness are we to forgive others?
10. What is the binding element to the complete wardrobe of the elect?

Historical Marker

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. Psalm 119:99-101



Divine Gentleness Acknowledged

A sermon delivered Sunday morning, April 1, 1866,
by C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle,
Newington.

(Continued from front page)

It is God's making Himself little, which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, bends His eyes yet lower and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings; for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "Your discipline"—Your fatherly correction—"has made me great," while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "Your word has increased me." Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. I trust we all feel that this sentiment is echoed in our hearts, and we also confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at His feet, and cry, "Your gentleness has made me great."

We intend, this morning, to keep to the Authorized Version: "Your gentleness has made me great." And, in handling the text we shall have three points; first, the text suggests historical illustrations from the life of David; secondly, it awakens personal gratitude; and thirdly, it declares gracious privilege—we are made great.

I. The life of David is exceedingly full of illustrations of the truth of God which he here uttered—"Your gentleness has made me great." We will briefly review it up to the time of his becoming king.

David, as the youngest of the family, contrary to the general rule, appears to have been despised by his parents so that when Samuel came to keep the feast, they sent for all their sons except David who was left in the fields keeping the sheep. I should suppose,

judging from the conduct of his brothers to him in the valley of Elah, that they held him in very small esteem. Probably their habits were very different from his; they could not enter into the holier ways of the shepherd songster, nor could he enjoy their ruder and less seemly exercises. He was the despised one of the family, a reproach unto his mother's children; nevertheless the Lord had chosen him in preference to all the rest, for the gentleness of God delighted in David the shepherd boy. What a balm must that divine love have been to David's wounded spirit! How often, sitting alone with his flocks, must he have sung to his harp, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up"! The gracious gentleness of his God to him must have encouraged his broken spirit when he felt the roughness of his father and the scorn of his brothers. His early life was peculiarly a season of hallowed rest and consecrated enjoyment of the gentleness of the Lord.

His first entrance upon public life was greatly marked by the sternness of those who should have discerned his worth and treated him with love. His father sent him to the army, not as a soldier, though never was there a more valiant man than this youngest son of Jesse, but he was employed as a mere burden-bearer. "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand." He was a mere porter and messenger to his more honored brothers. When he began to inquire concerning the giant—"Who is this that defies the armies of the living God?" his brothers asked in a most snarling and contemptuous way, "With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness, because of the pride and naughtiness of your heart to see the battle?" Very different was the gentle communing of his heavenly Father. When in the inner chamber of his spirit his heart talked with God, he received no contemptuous epithets from the Most High. It is true he had all the outward marks of youth, and consequent unfitness for the fight; but the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, and that bold heart was chosen to meet the Philistine. David was a man after God's own heart, and God's gentle communing with him strengthened him and made him so great that he dared to say, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The harshness of his brothers might have cowed him, but the gentleness of God encouraged him. He might have quailed before their irony and sarcasm, but the tender promise of God was the still water of which he drank and the green pasture in which he rested.

Now David comes to court, but he is no sooner among the courtiers than Saul hates him. "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands" was a song most unmusical to Saul's jealous ears. "Saul eyed David," and in later days, when David played upon the harp, the evil spirit came upon Saul, and he hurled his javelin at the young harpist, hoping to pin him to the wall. But mark the gentleness of God—while Saul hated him the people loved him—for all Judah and all Israel loved David because

he went in and out before them, and better still, the God who tried him with Saul comforted him with Jonathan. I like to think of those generous consolations which Jonathan rendered to the man whom his father so grievously maltreated. Those quiet evening walks, those tender interchanges of affection when the love of Jonathan, which surpassed the love of woman, made glad the tender heart of David, must have helped to make David greatly glad. He must have felt at times as if he would leave Saul's court, and fly from the service of his country; but then Jonathan was the tie to keep him in his proper place, the gentle silken bond which bound him to the horns of God's altar. It was God's gentleness in raising up Jonathan as his companion which kept David in the place where greatness was possible for him, and enabled him to still live in those courts of which he was soon himself to be the master. There was gentleness even about the character of his wife Michal. The father would destroy, but the daughter saves her husband's life.

When David at last fled from Saul he fled to Nob, to the priests. I think that was great gentleness on the part of God which permitted David to take the show bread and the consecrated sword. I never hear David rebuked for that bold deed; our Savior mentions it without a single word of censure; according to the strict letter of the law it appears to be perfectly unjustifiable—but the gentleness of God saw the need of His servant, and inclined the heart of all the priests towards David, so that they gave him bread, and gave him what was equally necessary under his difficulty—the sword of Goliath. When David fled into the wilderness, we cannot read the story of him among the caves of Adullam and the goat tracks of Engedi with any feelings of pity, for his joys ran high in his banishment. I can understand him sighing for the house of God, and declaring that he "dwelt in a dry and thirsty land where no water was," but, on the other hand, one might almost envy David there in his solitary fastnesses, for his God was his companion, and the blessings of the Most High were showered upon him. There was gentleness towards him even in those wild places, so that the gypsy life of David was rendered very happy; and the wanderer banished from his native land was not banished from his God, but felt the presence of the Most High in the midst of his solitude. "Your gentleness has made me great."

There are two points in David's history where I think the gentleness of God eminently worked with him. One particularly is connected with Nabal. That churl sent a very insulting message to David—"There are many servants, nowadays, who break away from their masters." I must not say that David was a Welshman, but he possessed much of the hot blood of our brothers, and was warm in temperament. David had a hot heart within him, quick for love and quick for anger too, and in an instant his soul was on fire with resentment—"God do so to me, and more also," he said, "if I leave anything of him before the morning light." Away he goes with his band to slay Nabal. Now, what is to prevent him? Nabal cannot resist him; but here comes a wise and amiable woman—no one more susceptible to kindly female influence than David—here comes the wise Abigail with her laden asses, bearing presents. How wisely she puts it; how her lovely face, and

streaming eyes, and bended knees, all aid her while she adds—"This shall be no grief unto you, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that you have shed blood causeless, or that my lord has avenged himself." It was a blessed interposition of divine grace which sent Abigail just then! David would certainly have taken terrible vengeance, and have stained his character with vindictive blood-shedding if it had not been for the gentleness of God which found so good a wife in so bad a house, and prompted her to interpose. Take another case. It must have been gentle influence from on high which kept David back, when as he walked at night over the field where Saul and his host all slept, he penetrated within the trenches and through the armed men, and came to the place where the king lay with his men at arms all round him, every man asleep. There was the water at the king's head, and his spear stuck in the ground; and Abishai, one of those fierce-minded sons of Zeruah who are always ready for a blow, said to David, "Let me smite him; I will smite him but this once," but David holds up his hand, and declares that he will not be guilty of the blood of the Lord's Anointed. There must have been a marvelously gentle influence over David just then to have kept back his hand! I will not say that nine out of ten warriors would have done it, and have been justified in so doing, according to martial law, but I will say that there is scarcely a case to be found in history where a man would have spared his cruel, inveterate, and malicious foe—engaged in open and relentless warfare with him—when such an opportunity had been put into his hands. David had never been so great if divine gentleness had not restrained the blow!

Running on in the history of David we find that he was not always wise. How like a fool he looked when he scabbled on the wall and spat upon his beard, and played the madman before the king of the Philistines! Ah, David, what a miserable spectacle! Though fit to be a companion of angels, he acted as if he had been only fit to herd with lunatics; but God delivered him, and after he had been delivered, you remember he wrote that beautiful Psalm in which he says, "Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord," and so on—a most beautiful expression of gratitude to God, and an earnest desire to teach others in God's way. Even when His people play the fool, God does not cast them away. When we are such that God Himself might be ashamed of us and say, "Take him away! Have I need of a madman to play the fool before Me?" yet even then our God, who knows that we are but dust, has pity upon us and delivers us out of the mischief into which our folly has thrust us. Possibly in David's life there is not one moment in which his anguish was more acute than when he returned to Ziklag. He had been marching with Achish to invade his own native land. He was in a very awkward position, he could not fight against his own countrymen, and yet having taken refuge with the Philistines he was bound to go with them to war; in that dilemma the Lord interposed for him; the Philistines' chieftains became jealous and distrustful of him, and through their influence the king of the Philistines dismissed him. However, when he went back to Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt, he found it burned to the ground, the wives of his comrades and all their goods had been carried away; not a vestige left of their happy

home, children and family all gone; it is said that the men of war "lifted up their voice and wept." It takes a great deal to make a soldier sit down and weep; but in their anguish they went further and spoke of stoning David. What did David do? He "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He turned himself to the kindness and gentleness of the Most High, and took comfort in his God. Surely the gentleness of God must then have shone out in contrast with the bitterness and ferocity of the men with whom he was associated. What could David do? It was not his fault that Ziklag had been burned. How could he prevent the robbers from plundering? He turned to his God when he was thus falsely accused, and comfort flowed in like a mighty stream; and not many hours afterwards he overtook the spoilers and came back joyfully victorious.

I think I have proven my point and need not delay you longer that wherever any roughness from man had to be borne by David, there was always some gentleness on the part of God shown at the same time to sustain his spirit. When it seemed as if he must be quite crushed and overcome, and all hands were against him and none to help him, then it was that a consolation gently given by the right hand of the Most High made David to play the man again, so that he triumphed over all his adversaries. Thus much for historical illustration!

II. Now, we will turn to your own history, for the text EXCITES PERSONAL GRATITUDE.

Have you that little book with you? I suppose you do not all keep one, but still your memory will serve you as a diary—do not print it, we have too many autobiographies already; but if you do not print it for other people, keep it for yourselves. May I ask you to turn to an early page in it? Do you remember when your heart was broken with a sense of sin? A truly broken heart is anguish, indeed; when your righteousness becomes filthy rags, and your hope changes into despair; the anger of God pursues you; is before you, you could see no way of escape? I shall not go over the dark details, but you remember well when you were in that condition. Do you also recollect the gentleness of the Savior? That was a very tender promise which first came to you like oil poured into your wounds. That was a very tender hand, a very cheering influence of the Holy Spirit which lulled the tempest into calm, and hushed the thunder into the whisper of love. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Some of us can never forget the rapture all divine when He showed us His hands and His feet, and said to us, "I have suffered all this for you; weep no more, your sins were laid on Me." There was peculiar gentleness about that first action of God the Holy Spirit. He has never, perhaps, seemed quite so gentle with us since, for we have never been as weak as we were then. We were shorn lambs, and He tempered the wind to us. Our wounds were very raw and bleeding, and He touched us very softly, knowing that he who would heal a sick soul must have downy fingers with which to touch it. Gentleness indeed was on His part which said to us, "Live!" when He saw us wallowing in our blood. Since then, dear friends, what tokens of gentleness you and I have had! How many times He has checked our imprudence! When we first began our spiritual life,

we meant to drive the Church before us, and to drag the world behind us—our own idea was that there never would be such an earnest Christian as we would be. We looked with pity upon the coldness of many professors, and we resolved in our own souls that we would far outdo them all. And what excitements we got into, and what things we said, and what strange things we did! There was much to be envied about our first spiritual life, but there was much to be pitied in it too. Oh, what fools we were, and we thought ourselves so wise. What blockheads we made of ourselves every now and then and all the while wondered that everybody else did not do the same. But by what gentle means the Lord curbed us! He did not do as some of our friends did, who put enough wet blankets on us to extinguish our zeal; He let the zeal burn, but He gently checked the imprudence of it. We did not know how weak we were; He let us fall and cut our knees, and learn by experience our utter inability to go it alone. When a schoolmaster has a very dull boy, he would gladly teach him some useful knowledge, but after 20 times teaching he does not know it; and the master says, “What shall I do with this child? How shall I ever make anything but a dunce of him?” Yet he tries again; and so our God might well have said of us. Yet, how seldom has He used the rod after all; He has been obliged to take to it sometimes, but oh, how seldom comparatively; He has dealt so gently with us, teaching us with much pain and care. When a man has taken to gardening who does not understand it, if he takes his knife in the pruning season, at what a rate he goes to work! His cutting here and there will do 10 times more harm than good, but the gardener who is well skilled is gentle with the knife; and truly, dear friends, our great Husbandman has been very gentle with the knife with all His trees. Some of you have lost a husband or a child, and you have come from wealth to poverty. Yes, He has used the knife, or else He would not be not wise; but He has still spared you some comforts, or else He would not be not kind. At any rate He has spared you Himself, and He is more than all to your languishing spirit. Thus in the way in which He has dealt with your imprudence, and sins, the Lord has had a world of gentleness with you.

In looking over our diary, we may say that God has dealt very gently with us in accepting our first endeavors. When you began to preach, my dear friend, the first time, if the Lord had really let you know what a mess you made of it, you would never have tried again; and the first time you were asked to pray in public, if you could have heard the opinion of some of those who heard you, you would not have felt very happy; but very happily for you, you never did hear those opinions, and you have been able to keep on till now you pray with much acceptance and profit to your Christian brothers and sisters. Our beginnings are very much like our children’s beginning. Many a young apprentice spoils a great deal more than he earns, and yet his master knows that he cannot learn without spoiling something, and so he bears with him. And our God has let us spoil a great deal of work that we may one day be skilled workers. Through Jesus He accepts our prayers and our efforts; and though we are very blundering

servants, He has not discharged us, but He still keeps us in His service, and blesses us in it, and in His mercy He gives us to see the work of His hands prospering.

That same divine gentleness also displays itself in caring for us in our sorrowful circumstances, and particularly in our inward fears. There are distresses to which God’s people are subject with which their fellow Christians can have but little sympathy. There are some Christians whom I have tried at times to comfort, but their fears have been so silly that I have felt more inclined to laugh at them than to console them. There are many of God’s saints who are the victims of foolish fears, but the fears are none the less painful and vexatious because of their folly. Now our God is so tender and gentle that He even condescends to deal with our silly fears. Take such a one as this—“I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.” Now it really is foolish of us to think that God will leave us or forsake us, and yet He condescends to meet that foolish and even wicked unbelief of ours, and gives a promise to meet it! To suppose that He can forget is the height of absurdity, and yet He is pleased to meet that absurd fear of ours by saying, “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” Even the absurdity of our sorrow does not move the anger of God, but in His great gentleness He enters into the childish troubles of His children lets them tell out their troubles and sorrows, and “as a father pities,” not a man of his own size, but “his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him.” You have seen a father bring himself down to his child. Two or three children have been at play; some of them have been cross and unkind to the little one, a child of three or four years of age, and father talks as if he were a child of three years of age himself; and though the trouble when it is stated is so very little, such a very insignificant trouble that a man would be ashamed to mention it, yet father enters into it altogether. That is what the Psalmist means—“Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him.” His gentleness shows itself in His being afflicted in our afflictions and entering into our sorrows, and putting Himself side by side with us in the battle of spiritual life. I trust I may not weary you while I remind you of all this. I shall not if all the while you continue blessing and praising God for what you have tasted and handled of these good things.

How much patience and gentleness God has had with us in suiting His truths to our understandings and experiences! “I have many things to say unto you,” says Jesus, “but you cannot bear them now.” It is so with us—I suppose we did not learn the doctrine of election during the first week of our spiritual life. Higher and more sublime truths of God are left for later experience, and belong rather to advanced saints than to the babes in grace. If the babe in Christ knew so much about the filthiness of his own heart as the advanced man of God, he might not be able to bear up under the grief occasioned by such knowledge. Inward discoveries come by degrees, and as we see the light of the cross we see the darkness of sin; as we are assured of our salvation in Christ, we discover our utter and entire ruin by the Fall of Adam. It is His gentleness which makes the all-wise One stoop down to our ignorance and teach us by slow degrees.

What gentleness our God has shown to us in the timing and the tuning of our trials! We are such poor weaklings at times, that if we were tempted much we would not be able to bear it. The timing of heavy trial is of very great importance. If I had lost my friend a year ago what would I have done? But just now it is a great sorrow, yet it has its alleviation. Had I been tempted as I now am but last week, I would have yielded; but now I have received strength from on high, and I can pass with safety through the fire. Have you not often felt that either when you have had an opportunity to sin you have not felt the temptation, or else when you have been tempted you have not found the opportunity? When you have been weak you have not experienced the trial, or when you have borne the trial you have not been weak.

I will not say more, except I beg your hearts to praise God. I pray you wake up your souls to bless Him. How much we lose by not blessing God more! Oh that I could praise Him! If I might choose my vocation on earth, I think I would choose above all things to write hymns and psalms, such as the Lord's people might sing when they praise Him; and my highest wish would be to be one of heaven's poets, to write psalms for the spirits before the throne, and compose celestial sonnets for the blood-bought ones who praise Him day and night. Oh to praise the Lord! Oh to bless Him, and to magnify Him—to spend and to be spent in the praise and glory of my God! Wake up, you slumbering ones! Arouse yourselves, you who are dull and dead of heart! Wake up, my glory; wake up psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early while I remember that His loving-kindness has made me great.

III. Our third duty is to DECLARE OUR GRACIOUS PRIVILEGE.

“Great,” says one, “why, the text applies to David, it does not apply to us.” Ah, but we have a body of great people here this morning. I do not suppose you will see their names in the Times tomorrow, but for all that we are honored with great company this morning. I will be bold enough to say that I question whether the House of Commons, and the House of Lords, and Windsor Castle thrown in together, hold more great folks than this Tabernacle does this morning. Great people! Yes, really great people! The true aristocracy! Let us describe them. There is a greatness of birth which God gives to His children. “It is no mean thing,” said David, “to be a king's son-in-law,” but to be a king's son, to have the blue blood in your veins; you do not think much of it because you have not got it, but you suppose those who have it think it the most wonderful of all privileges? To be descended from that thievish crew who came over to England at the Norman Conquest is thought to be a high honor; but how much more is it to be descended from the King of kings! The blood imperial of heaven is in the veins of every regenerated man and woman. No matter though your garb is coarse, and your home is the abode of poverty, you are a prince of the blood royal the moment that you are born-again and made a child of God, and adopted into the family of the Most High. These are the princes of the living God; these are they who shall be crowned with immortal honor in the day of the Lord's appearing. Though here they may live unknown and despised, yet angelic eyes detect them, and the whole world shall

see them. “When He shall appear they shall appear with Him in glory.”

Men court much the greatness which comes by election. There are presidents of republics who become great by the national vote; it is no mean greatness to be dignified with imperial rank, not by the accident of birth, but by the well-earned respect of honest men. This is something that men may covet. Well, we have this very greatness put upon us by the election of God. Everyone who believes in Christ Jesus was chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. What are the votes of men, what the applause of the many after all? The choice of God is to be desired most, because He has set His love upon me my soul shall sing and rejoice. Election makes all the objects of it great. Now, as you think of your birth and your election in Christ Jesus, you can say, “Your gentleness has made me great.”

There is a kind of greatness in the world to which most people pay quite enough respect, namely, the greatness of wealth. A man is very much thought of in proportion to the contents of his iron safe. After all, people do not respect men so much nowadays as they do iron safes. The iron safe is the god of thousands. However, saints can stand on an equality with any men—City men, or whatever they may be.

Every believer in Jesus Christ can sing —
*“This world is mine and worlds to come,
Earth is my lodge and heaven my home;
All things are ours, the gifts of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood.”*

Poor rich men have to take care of these things for us, but they belong to us. The sons of the alien are our plowmen and our vinedressers; they are serfs of God's providence, slaves in the kingdom in which we are sons. He who on bended knee can lift his streaming eye to heaven and say, “My Father!” is rich to all the intents of bliss, rich enough for earth; and when all the treasures of earth shall be melted, when the rust shall have corrupted, and the thief shall have broken through, and the moth shall have eaten up all the world's treasures—then shall the wealth of the truly great shine forth forever more.

Some men are great on account of their victories. How they crowd the streets when a Caesar or a Napoleon returns in triumph from the slaughter of his fellow creatures! Lo, I triumphed! Sound the trumpets! Beat the drums! Hang out the garlands! Gather, you crowds! Here comes the red-handed man, crimson with the blood of his fellows! What glory is this? Bah! It smells of the butcher's shambles. The glory of a child of God is the glory which Christ has given him of having slain his sins, of having trampled underfoot his corruptions, the glory of having fought with devils and overcome them, having wrestled with principalities and powers, and laid them in the dust. This is true glory! And what glory shall that be which awaits every true believer when up the everlasting hills he shall ascend to be welcomed where his Master

sits, welcomed with the same words of congratulation, "Well done!"

There are great men, too, about the world, who are great in influence. The entire world is governed by the backstairs. There are persons who sit behind the throne and pull the strings. People always touch their hats to men of influence. They may want a situation in the Customs for their first son; they may require an introduction into the Admiralty for the third boy. But what shall I say of every believer? Beloved, his influence is unbounded! I wish you would use your influence for me. When you are speaking with the King of kings, since He has promised you that whatever you shall ask He will give it to you, speak for me! I think I have some claim on some of you. When it is well with you, think of me. When you are in the King's courts, you who are the King's and have an audience with Him, who sit at His table and lean your heads upon His bosom, pray for His poor servant who has many cares, and many labors, and longs to see the King's face always. Beloved, the influence which the saints have with the King of kings is marvelous. They can touch the sinews of the omnipotent arm, and it will do for them whatever their hearts desire. If you did but know it, the poorest saint, though bedridden, is more to be honored for the influence which she may have with the King of kings, than the greatest peers of the realm for the influence which they may have in the courts of royalty.

But I must not tarry, else I was about to say that we have a greatness of history. There are some men who have a peculiar greatness on account of their history. Everyone wants to see them. If they go into a crowd everyone whispers, "That is he." What do you say of a child of God? There is more to be seen in him than in any other person. Shall I tell you his history? What would you think of a man who has been dead and buried, and is alive again, and is the same man and yet not the same? Himself but yet a new man in Christ Jesus? A man who has been born twice? Such is every believer. He has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is dead with Christ and is risen with Him; and even now he does not live upon earth, but is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why, he is the greatest curiosity in the world. A Christian is a wonder to angels, a wonder to devils, a wonder to himself; and if men were wise he would be a wonder to them!

Great men, again, there are because of their great discoveries. We admire the men who penetrated into the center of Africa and found out the source of the ancient river. Believers also have made discoveries in the vast desert of their own nature, and have found out the source of the eternal love of God. They can sing with Kent

*"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace,
Up to their fountain, God;
And in His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."*

It is better than finding out the source of 50 Niles, to find my name inscribed upon the heart of God, and to find myself chosen and dear to God. Truly then, though we are little and despised, we can say without any exaggeration, "Your gentleness has made me great."

Two things and I have done. The first is to Christian people. As you go your way, you who have believed, do not go out of this place with your heads hanging down, and do not behave like dispirited people. You are great! I want you to live like great folks. Live up to your spiritual incomes, you will spend a great deal if you do. Live happily, live joyfully, live holily, live triumphantly; live as those who are to live in heaven. Do not live like the pauper sons of earth, who with their gold and their silver are yet naked, and poor, and miserable; but live like the sons of God who are clothed in the scarlet and fine linen of the righteousness of Christ, and fare sumptuously every day. The next time you are met by some would-be great man who wants to domineer over your faith, look him respectfully but firmly in the face, and tell him that consciences and hearts were made for God alone. The next time the world attempts to win you by its bribes, tell the world it does not know what you are worth, or else it would not attempt to bribe you. Every man has his price, but your price is too great for the world to give. Tell the world that you can look it in the face, and are not afraid to dare it to do its worst or its best, for you are one of the blood royal of heaven.

I hate, above all things, Christians getting into the way of being honest with themselves. Mind you, the Puritans were not proud, they were humble men, but at the same time they knew that a man of God has something in him, and they would not lay their necks beneath the feet of tyrants. When kings began to devour the saints, they quoted the old psalm about "binding kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron," and soon the Ironsides were to the front in the day of war for the Lord, and for the faith, and for the covenant. We need no carnal weapons now. We have learned better than they. We care little about politics. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with themselves about that; but when it comes to truth and righteousness, for God and for His cause, shall we put our finger on our lips and speak with bated breath? Never, as the Lord our God is our helper! Brothers and sisters get a little touch of the old Lutheran spirit; it is needed nowadays. This England of ours is going to the Pope as fast as it can, and all sorts of heresies are springing up, and the most of men are soft animals, without the appearance of a backbone in them. I pray that you Christian people may get a thoroughly sound backbone of high spiritual principle, and may feel that you cannot give up the smallest atom of the truth of God, but must stand fast for it and by it, come what may. These are the men the edge of whose sword the fiend has felt of old, and he still trembles at the thought of them.

This advice of mine would be very dangerous if I did not couple it with the whole of the text. Remember where all true moral greatness must come from—it must come from God alone, and from His gentleness. Who are you to use these big words?

Nothing, a swollen mass of emptiness, except as God's love dwells with you, but oh, brothers and sisters, the tenderness of God, while it makes us lie in the very dust before Him, yet lifts us up in the presence of our fellows. The love and gentleness of God makes us feel that we are less than nothing, less than the least of all His mercies; but oh, it makes us feel that we cannot sin, that we cannot yield to our fellow men in matters of conscience, that we must stand up for Him who has done so much for us. May you realize in your lives and in your hearts the meaning of my text, "Your gentleness has made me great!"

Portion of Scripture read before the sermon—Psalm 18.
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.



To Hold a Baby Bird

by Bro. Jeff Short

John Feinstein published his 1996 book on professional golf under the title: *A Good Walk Spoiled*. The phrase probably wasn't original with him, but it is a great description of the game played in otherwise idyllic settings. I've personally experienced the spoiling of a good walk, particularly in my younger days. I continually sought advice on how to improve and get strokes off my game, but to give you the rest of the story, I will just say I'm not a professional golfer today, nor any sort of golfer, really, since I never play.

Golf is much like a lot of things in that you have to start somewhere. It's unavoidable. Assuming you have the clubs, tees, and enough balls to Johnny Appleseed the woods and lakes of the course, the game of golf begins with the grip. Before you can address the ball or begin a swing, you have to hold the club in some fashion and gripping it like a Louisville Slugger isn't going to do. The first grip I learned was the Vardon grip, though I later changed to the interlocking grip, which I think was made famous by Jack Nicklaus. I don't think the change made a lot of difference for me, but I felt like I had done something.



The grip has two parts—the arrangement of the fingers and the pressure. I often heard the analogy that one should grip the club like they were holding a baby bird—firm enough so that the bird could not escape your hand, but not so firm that you crush the bird. This finer point of the grip is lost on most amateurs who white-knuckle the club like they are trying to wring the neck of a disagreeable chicken. While the amateur's grip may be beneficial for Sunday dinner at the farm, it's no good for splitting a fairway or finding greens in regulation.

The golf game begins with the grip. Aside from the tense muscles and coiling of the torso to unleash a monster drive down the middle, there must be gentleness to hold the baby bird and not kill it. You need enough pressure to hold the club but not all the pressure you can muster. To play golf, you must strike the ball. In order to strike the ball, you have to grip the club. In order to grip the club for striking accuracy, you have to use the right amount of gentleness in your grip pressure. So my philosophy all comes out to this: golf begins with gentleness.

I realize the readers of this newsletter did not come here for tips on keeping their ball in the short grass. My point is that most amateurs see the game as one of brute strength. They think most of the drive off the tee and how much distance they can get. While a towering drive on a par 5 can give you hopes of an eagle, golf is much more about finesse and delicacy. Accuracy is more important than length. Being farther in the woods is undesirable. This is probably why most amateurs don't make much progress.

I once played in a foursome with a gentleman in his seventies. I outhit him all day. I consistently drove farther, though he was in the fairway and I was in the rough or trees. He would land on the green while I was over it. He two-putted most of the time and I easily doubled his effort. At the end of the round, his stroke count was also in the seventies and I had made a century. Had we been playing cricket, I would have been bucked up making a century, but it is an open-face shame in golf. It's the sort of thing that causes many to put down the clubs and take up gardening or bird watching. Obviously, he understood the touch of gentleness the game requires and I nearly came out of my shoes every time I swung.

The Theme of Gentleness

Gentleness is the theme of this edition and this article's design is to see something of how that theme works out in the life of a church. A church, of course, is a body of baptized, believing disciples who have been organized and joined together for the purpose of doing Jesus's work on the earth until the end of this age. A church is made up of some number of people holding common membership and assembling together in a location for worship, instruction, and business.

Anyone who has been a part of two or more people trying to work together understands that such an arrangement has challenges. Different levels of maturity, skill, understanding, temperament, schedule, expectation, patience, sensitivity, and personal

preference give opportunities for all sorts of problems. Unfortunately, many pastors and church members deal with the problems that pop up like an exuberant twelve-year-old boy playing Whack-A-Mole at the arcade. Mallet firmly in the hand, they bounce back and forth waiting for the next talpid head with beady eyes to pop-up. Then they whack it.

In the life of the church, our grip should begin with gentleness. Though there are times when we must use sharpness and severity, we should overall be characterized by gentleness, or meekness. This is a theme in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth we call, Second Corinthians. In the general exhortation in the opening of the letter, Paul calls the church members to gentleness by reminding them of God's comfort to us in tribulation, and having received comfort of God, Paul writes we are "able to comfort them which are in any trouble" (2 Corinthians 1:4). The necessary inference is that they should comfort those among them who are in any trouble.

Before Paul was deep in the letter, he pressed this application on the Corinthians in a specific case. A "punishment" was imposed on a "man" by the "many" (2 Corinthians 2:6). The word for punishment, *epitimia*, means a penalty. This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. It was in common use, a word referring to a legal penalty imposed for some infraction against the city/state. It was a punishment for an infringement by one of his own rights of citizenship. The word used for many, *pleionon*, means the more part, or the greater number. It was used as we would say, majority. It is clear Paul was talking about a man who had been a member of the church who had discipline enacted on him by the church. Some suppose this was the man from 1 Corinthians 5, but that is not certain.

Paul said the punishment was "sufficient," which meant the discipline had accomplished the purpose of bringing the man to repentance. Paul urged gentleness toward him so they would not increase his sorrow by their severity (2 Corinthians 2:7). He wrote they should "forgive ... comfort ... confirm ... love toward him" (2 Corinthians 2:7-8). This is consistent with how he instructed the church at Galatia that they were to restore a repentant one "in a spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1).

Paul's Gentle Example

Paul particularly taught ministers were to be marked by gentleness (2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 3:2). He also modeled gentleness in his ministry (1 Thessalonians 2:7). He likewise taught and modeled it to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 6:3-6, 10-11; 7:9). Paul was deliberate in his gentleness. It was his preferred manner (2 Corinthians 13:10). He could be severe when he believed he needed to be (2 Corinthians 13:2).

Paul was criticized in Corinth because of his gentleness. As is often the case, it was mistaken for weakness and he was put down because of it (2 Corinthians 10:1, 9-10). Paul could be so bold as to be gentle because he had confidence in the work of the Spirit in the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:15; 2:3; 7:16; 8:22; 10:2). He

could speak to them the word of God in humility and meekness and have patience for the Spirit's work. He set an example all ministers and church members should follow because we have confidence in the Spirit (Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:32).

Hold That Bird

Birds innumerable have met their end in the hands of many church members. Honest questions can be met with immediately hostile answers. The weak can be pushed down rather than helped. Like the Corinthians, we can be in danger of overloading sorrow on a repentant one. Sure, severity is needed at times, but remember it takes wisdom to use severity well. We should also remember that the true wisdom that comes from above is "pure ... peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18). May we manifest good "works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). Don't kill the bird. Start with gentleness. Be guided by wisdom.



Are You Different?

by Bro. Troy McGahan



II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." In this book of the Bible we find Paul addressing the Church at Corinth. Now Paul had written one letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit rebuking the Church for various sins; adultery, division in the church over personality issues, partaking in the Lord's supper unworthily, incest, divorce, disorder of proper roles of men and women in the church and home and the abuse of Spiritual gifts to just name a few. In II Corinthians Paul writes the Church and tells them how glad he was to hear of their

repentance and how they are now on the right track. This brings us to Chapter five and verse seventeen.

In this verse we find that Paul is telling us that when we have a personal encounter with Christ things are different and there is to be a change in our actions and attitudes. This flies directly in the face of modern day religion. People have been told for years that when you're saved, Christ is a fire escape for your soul but, nothing different should be expected of you. Does that sound like what Paul is saying here? Remember Paul said if any man (person) is in Christ (saved) he is a new creature (new creation); old things are passed away (this indicates the decisive change that has been brought about); behold (look) all things are become new (not the same). In other words WE ARE DIFFERENT!!!!!!

Paul knew from experience that when you have been Born from above (John 3:3-8), that when the Spirit of God has convicted you of sin, righteousness and Judgment to come (John 16:8-11). When you have turned from sin and self and have turned to God trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ that he died on the cross for your sins, was buried and rose again the third day (I Corinthians 15:1-3) you will be different. Think about Paul's experience, here was a man that had religion. He was a Pharisee and part of the Sanhedrin. He hated Christianity and thought he was doing God a service by consenting to the death of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1), and by persecuting men and women who loved the Lord (Acts 8:3). Then we find in Acts chapter nine verses three through eight Paul had an encounter with Christ that day on the road to Damascus. That day God did a marvelous work in his heart and he was never the same again. We can see other examples as well in the New Testament. What about Mark Chapter five when Christ comes into contact with a demon possessed man that lived in the tombs, who cut himself with rocks, screamed night and day, and was running around with no clothes on? When he came face to face with Christ, there was a drastic change in his life. When the people from town heard what happened they came to see for themselves and they found the man who was once possessed sitting, clothed and in his right mind. Notice the change, something happened to this man.

Before we continue stop for a second. Now if you profess to be saved I want you to think back to when you professed Christ. Are you different from what you were before you professed to be saved? Do you still talk the same? Are you still a drunkard, whoremonger, or harlot? Are you faithful to a sound NT Church like the one Christ started while here on Earth? Each and every person that has ever made a profession of faith ought to consider what I am asking today. Our eternal destiny is too important to casually throw these thoughts aside. Jesus tells us that there will be many when they stand before God that will tell him what wonderful things they did in his name. Some I am sure will sound like this, "I gave hundreds of thousands to the building fund." Others will proclaim all they did for the Lord from cleaning toilets to teaching Sunday school and the answer given to them will be the one found in Matthew 7:20-24. Christ in his reply tells them "I NEVER knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Notice Christ did not say I knew you for a while but not now. He said I never knew you. There will be many whose names are on the Church rolls but, their names will not be in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Why all the confusion on this matter of being different? I believe there are many reasons why this is so. However, I will be very brief. First, many of the so called preachers themselves are products of this kind of religion. What has happened in their life does not harmonize with the Scriptures. So instead of looking at themselves and considering that something does not add up they ignore the plain teaching of God's Word. They are religious, but they do not know Christ and have not been washed in His blood. Second, churches take money to operate especially if you want the pie in the sky facilities and the big salaries. You need all the nickels you can get and people will not give when they don't like the preaching. Third, since you need money to have the facilities and salary you need to have noses. You got to have people filling those pews and dropping those nickels in the offering plate. So instead of preaching the truth without compromise you just compromise the truth and water it down just enough where it will be palatable for the carnal church member to digest. You tell the Church as long as they show up on Sunday and give their tithe and offering all is okay and that they are the most wonderful people in the world in spite of the open lifestyle of sin they are living in.

So this brings us back to the question.....ARE YOU DIFFERENT? If you are PRAISE GOD!!!! You're not different because of what you have done it is because of what Christ has done on your behalf. Ephesians 2:8-10 "For by Grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." If you're answer is in the negative then consider this. You need Christ!!!! Don't trust your religion. Look to Jesus Christ and live. If you know you are a sinner, turn from your sin and self and turn to Christ, trusting him and him alone for the salvation of your soul.

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"And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Psalm 119:45

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