



Website: www.midnightcry.org

Midnight Cry Messenger

Volume LVI: Number 3

JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2011

*A Quarterly Publication of
Midnight Cry Ministries, Southern Pines, North Carolina*

Contents

Editor's Letter	2
What Does Deception Look Like?	
Part 7	4
<i>by Phil Enlow</i>	
One Man Pastor12
<i>by C. Parker Thomas</i>	
Law and Grace: Answer to a Letter.25
<i>by Phil Enlow</i>	
ONENESS: How Important?36
<i>Francis Frangipane</i>	
Testimony38
<i>by Danny Downing</i>	

Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings to all in the wonderful name of Jesus!

Well, as of a couple of days ago, fall has arrived and with it the beginning of relief from an unusually hot summer. As the days rush by it hardly seems possible that our November Meeting in Lexington, South Carolina will be upon us very soon. I hope you will prayerfully consider joining us as we come together and look to the Lord.

In this issue we continue with the series, "What Does Deception Look Like?" with part 7. At this point in the series we are exploring the true nature of the church as revealed in scripture. Increasingly my prayer is, "Lord, may we increase in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Show us truth, pure and simple. Deliver us from our own ideas and prejudices as well as the traditions of men. Reveal to us your heart regarding the nature and destiny of your people in the earth as well as our place in it. Prepare us for all that lies ahead."

There is a simplicity in Christ that is so easily missed. We have not been called to produce great programs or build churches that are great in the eyes men. Rather we have been called to walk together in love, united in God's Spirit, to proclaim Christ's message by the anointing without compromise, to pray, and leave the results to God. Isn't that what Jesus did? He never sought for numbers but for those who were being drawn by the Father. John 6:44. Nor was he in the least dismayed when so many turned back from following him later in the same chapter. He understood the unstoppable eternal purpose of God and simply sought to live in harmony with it. May we find grace to do the same.

We have also included a reprinted article by Bro. Thomas called, "One Man Pastor," which shines a light upon a major "sacred cow" of religious tradition. Is the modern concept of a "pastor" scriptural? Does it harmonize with the purpose of God?

Recently I received a letter from a man who had come from a religious background where "God's laws" were emphasized. He

asked some questions that I believe were sincere and deserving of a thoughtful answer. As I feel that the answer is intended for many others as well it is included in this issue. I pray that your understanding of “Law and Grace” will grow and that we all may grow in grace.

Testimonies of God’s working in individual lives are a wonderful source of encouragement to others. This issue includes a great testimony by Bro. Danny Downing that I trust will help many. Although the details may vary we all are made of the same “stuff” and need God to deal with many things in our lives.

May God’s grace be with you all.

Your brother in Christ,
Phil Enlow

What Does Deception Look Like?

Part 7

by *Phil Enlow*

Paul's understanding of God's vision and plan for His church is not something he learned in school, nor was it the product of his own diligent study. He did not even learn it at the feet of those who were apostles before him. It was very simply something God supernaturally revealed to him. God singled out Paul to communicate His heart and thus it is no accident that Paul was the human author of so much of the New Testament.

It is easy in his writings to sense not only *his* passion on the subject but *God's* as well. There is everywhere expressed a burning desire that his readers "get it," that they understand and experience the greatness of God's purpose.

In Ephesians 3 Paul uses an interesting expression: "the mystery of Christ." In verse 3 he notes the fact that this mystery was "made known to me by revelation." It should be obvious from his words that what Paul knew could **only** be known by divine revelation. It has nothing whatever to do with how smart we are, how sincere, or how hard we study. When it comes to divine mysteries we are completely at the mercy of God.

Paul summarizes this divine mystery in verse 6: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

In part this mystery addressed a very important first century issue, that of the place of Jew and Gentile in the plan of God. In Christ this distinction has been forever destroyed as Paul so clearly expresses in Eph. 2:11-22. The "barrier," the "dividing wall of hostility," was "destroyed" (verse 14). Access to God and citizenship in His kingdom is now equally available to all through Christ and his death on the cross. It has nothing to do with national or ethnic background.

One New Man

In Eph. 2:15-16 Paul writes, “His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” Note the interesting expressions of oneness and wholeness he uses: “one new man” and “one body.” It is not simply that God sought many new men but **one new man**. He sees things differently than we do.

Notice also that this one new man was *created* and that this creation took place *in Christ Jesus*. Such language highlights the fact that this is entirely a supernatural work of God, just as much as the original creation was when God spoke the universe into existence.

A lot more happened when Jesus was raised from the dead than simply the resurrection of a one person from physical death. It is not just Jesus Christ the individual that had Paul excited. It is what was **in him**. In him a new creation was born. We were there! All that we will ever be was there in him just awaiting the day when we would by God’s grace be brought to the hope of the gospel and become partakers of the life that was in him.

Remember John 12:23-24 where Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” A seed contains all of the future generations that will result from the life that is in it. In particular the life that was in Jesus contained the Church he died to redeem, right down to the very last member. If you are His then **you** were there.

Alive With Christ

In Eph. 2:4-7 Paul writes, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the

coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Notice the way he puts it. God “made us alive **with Christ.**” “God raised us up **with Christ.**” He also “seated us **with him** in the heavenly realms **in Christ.**” All of this extends into the eternal future when He shows us “the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us **in Christ Jesus.**”

When were we made alive? When Christ was. When were we raised up? When he was. Where are we as a result? In the heavenly realms. How? In Christ. If you hand someone a box you hand them not only the box but whatever is *in* that box. Everything that happened to Jesus Christ happened to all of God’s people because they were “in him.”

If you go to a tree nursery and buy a young fruit tree to plant in your yard you buy not only the young tree as it is but also every leaf and every branch it will ever produce. They are already there – in the tree. Leaves and branches are not special options bought separately from the tree! And every part of that developing tree plays a part both in its growth and in the fruit that is produced.

For Us Who Believe

That is why Paul wanted his readers to understand the greatness of what God did in Christ — because we were there. In Eph.

1:18-21 he writes, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”

This is not mere abstract theology, interesting to think about but not really connected with everyday life. If we would see things as God sees them we would see that the awesome things He did in His Son were done “**for us who believe**” and were meant to give

us a solid foundation of hope not only for the eternal future but here in this world as well. No devil in hell can withstand or undo what God has given us in His Son!

Christ?

What do you think of when you hear the word “Christ”? I daresay that most would think of *Jesus* Christ, the individual, the Son of God who once walked the shores of Galilee and who now reigns on high. That is true enough but God’s vision is larger. In Eph. 1:22-23 we read, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Christ’s power and exaltation is not just for his own benefit; it is “**for the church.**” More than that it is “for the church, **which is his body.**” But even that doesn’t quite paint the picture. This body is “**the fullness of him....**” What does that mean? Put crudely it simply means that the church is the **rest of him.** He is not complete without the Church any more than your head is complete without your body.

If I were to meet you and all I saw was your head I might well ask, “Where is the rest of you?” I am sure that the Father welcomed His Son back to glory with great joy and yet His great heart longed for the day when the “rest of him” would likewise be glorified. We tend to see Christ and the Church as separate things but God doesn’t see them that way.

Paul didn’t either. We can see the roots of Paul’s understanding in the very moment he met Christ on the Damascus road experience. Knocked from his horse by a blinding light he heard a voice say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” His response was to ask, “Who are you, Lord?” The answer came, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting?”

Of course in his mind it was the *followers* of Jesus who were being persecuted but in the mind of Jesus his union with those followers was so complete that the persecution was actually against *him personally.* Thus was Saul, later known as Paul, introduced very early to the reality of Christ’s living union with his Church.

The Oneness of Christ's Body

In 1 Cor. 12:12-13 Paul writes, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” So *what* is with Christ? **“Christ” is a many-membered body.** *Jesus* Christ is the Head — but the Church is the body. It is only *together* that we have the entire Christ as God sees things. Of course the Church is nothing in itself and has nothing to boast of except its glorious Head.

Notice that word “unit.” Paul is not writing to emphasize the “many parts” but rather the “unit,” the simple fact that those parts make up “one body.” In the minds of so many the “body of Christ” is a somewhat vague mystical thing perhaps illustrating the variety of gifts and abilities in individual believers but little else. While it is true that every true born-again believer is a member of the body of Christ it is also true that in Paul’s teaching the body of Christ was meant to be a practical and local reality.

People weren’t baptized into a mystical body and left to do as they pleased. He said to the Corinthian believers, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Cor. 12:27-28. He didn’t say, “You are *part of* the body”; he said, “You are *the* body of Christ.” They were the living, breathing, body of Christ in that location, members one of another, every part vital.

Every part of your body, including your head, is vitally connected to every other part. All of the parts share the very same life. There is a total interdependence in the relationship of those parts to each other. Every part contributes something to the whole according to its designed function and every part receives what it needs as all the other parts do the same. Every part takes its direction from the head.

How well would your body function if all its parts declared their rights to independence?!

And it wasn’t just the *spirits* of believers that were somehow mystically joined to other believers. The union also involved

their *bodies*. In 1 Cor. 6 Paul warns the believers against sexual immorality. He tells them why in verse 15 – “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?” Think about what he is saying there. Your bodies are actually part of Christ! They are meant to express his life even as Jesus expressed the life of his Father through his body.

What Satan Fears

But Jesus was a complete expression of the Father. Individually we are *not* complete expressions of Christ. It is only in a living practical union that the world can see him come in the flesh as God intended. It is this corporate expression that Satan fears. He *loves* the “mystical” universal body since it is little more than an idea and no real threat to his kingdom.

Being joined to the mystical body is sort of like a man being married to a mystical wife! No matter what her virtues may be she will never cook his breakfast nor bear his children!

In the body of Christ “separateness” – which is really rebellious independence – gives way to the oneness of being part of Christ. The smallness of self dies that the greatness of Christ may live and find expression in the earth.

God’s Temple

In Eph. 2:19-22 Paul gives us a different picture of the church as God sees it, but one that conveys the same essential message. “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

And so Paul moves from “one new man” and “one body” to a “whole building” that is “joined together” and is being “built together.” The common theme is clear: there is a very real and

practical “togetherness” that God seeks. He is building a home for Himself.

Paul’s thought here is not something separate from the verses that precede it. It is connected by the word “*consequently*.” God’s purpose to construct a house for Himself is a direct consequence of the reconciliation of one body to God through the cross.

Not Just in Heaven

Reconciliation with a holy God is a wonderful thing but it is not an end in itself. God has something particular in mind.

That something has practical implications. It implies some very important things about the life of God’s people *now* – here on earth – and not just in heaven someday. The church does not suddenly leap from individualism to “templehood” merely by being transported to heaven. Rather it is “joined together” *here* and “*rises to become* a holy temple.” What **will be** is our destiny. But there is a God-ordained process that leads to that destiny.

Suppose you decide to build a house and at great cost you purchase the finest building materials money can buy. But suppose those fine building materials are never cut, fitted, and fastened together by a skilled builder according to a good master plan. Where would you live? If someone were to ask you where you lived would you point to the scattered materials and say, “There ... and there ... and, well, everywhere!”? What good would that be?

In the same way materials that are separate and scattered do not a temple make. They must surrender their separateness to the Master Builder and be shaped and fitted together according to God’s design.

Who is this Master Builder? Did not Jesus say, “... I will build my church ...”? Matt. 16:18. The problem is that many zealous religious people have tried to build Jesus a church – according to *their* design. God’s plan by contrast is for Jesus to call a people to the kingdom through the gospel, build them together as a body, practically, locally, as a place where he can dwell and express himself in the earth.

No man can engineer such a thing. We can only repent and cry out to God to bring it about and to reveal our place in the body. There we look to Christ as Head and submit ourselves one to another, ministering one to another according to the gifts and abilities Christ the Head gives.

Christ in heaven is wonderful; but it is Christ in his body that God seeks. The vision of God's heart has been subverted by religious tradition and the zealous efforts of men. The rebellion of individualism has been justified by an appeal to the concept of the "mystical" body of Christ. While God's vision is explained away as impractical and unrealistic the religious machinery grinds on. Has not the deceiver been at work? ■

One Man Pastor

by C. Parker Thomas

(Editor's note: This article was originally published in the July-August 1987 issue of the Midnight Cry Messenger.)

In our desire to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), we find many things in the present day church that are not according to the New Testament pattern. These are things that have to be changed if we get back to God's original plan for his church.

They are not only unscriptural but a hindrance to the normal function of the church as Christ's Body. Error in doctrine leads to error in judgment and practice. In fact most of the ills of the modern church can be traced to departure from the faith in some area.

For this reason we need to indeed contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. To do this we need to search the scriptures and determine from them what the New Testament Church was like.

What about the traditional concept of one minister to the church or parish whether they be called pastor, elder or priest? Do we have any scriptural substance for this practice? The truth is there is not one single scripture in the New Testament that even suggests such a method. All of this is part of the apostate religious system that had its beginning with the papacy and the church of Rome.

The early church knew nothing about a one man ministry over the local assembly. To the contrary the local church had a multiple ministry made up of elders or bishops who were part of the assembly. Acts 20:17, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:5.

These were proven men appointed or ordained by foundational ministries.

FOUNDATIONAL MINISTRIES

Foundational ministries went beyond the confines of the local church. These ministries not only helped bring the local church into existence, but they set in order and ordained elders according

to the need. Titus 1:5. Old Testament prophets along with New Testament apostles were especially endowed by the Lord to do foundational work. Eph. 2:19-22.

Although prophets, teachers and evangelists were active in the establishment of New Testament churches, that was uniquely the work of an apostle. Apostles were especially anointed men whose gifts varied, giving them greater ability to cope with the problems of the church as a whole.

It is evident the apostle Paul had all the ministry gifts residing in him. He was a great teacher writing fourteen books of the New Testament. His revelation of the church, the doctrine of grace, sanctification, the Godhead and endtime events were unsurpassed.

In addition to all this he had the burden and care of all the churches and won men to Christ even in prison. However, like all other ministries the ministries of apostles vary with no two being exactly alike.

A ministry such as an evangelist or teacher may go to a certain place and do a specific work but they would be limited in what they could do. An example of this is Philip's ministry to the Samaritans followed up by Peter and John. Acts 8:5-16. Ministries also grow in grace and knowledge as well as other Christians. Philip and Stephen started out as deacons and later became mighty preachers of the word. Acts 6:1-5, 7:1-60, 8:5-8.

All ministries are considered elders in relation to the local church. Although Peter was an apostle he considered himself an elder along with others in relation to the local church. I Peter 5:1-4. The difference between local elders and traveling ministries is their ability to help the people.

Local elders are for the most part low key ministries that complement each other in meeting the needs of the people. In fact, some of them may not have a public speaking ministry at all. They may simply be good dependable men who have a burden for the church. They may exhort occasionally or contribute a word of wisdom during times of deliberation by the body.

PASTORS

All local elders are bishops or pastors, which means overseer or shepherd. It is their responsibility to watch over the flock, and I might add, each other. In addressing the elders of the church of Ephesus, Paul said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28.

Although some local elders might be more apt to teach or evangelize than others, all of them are pastors. Pastor simply means shepherd. They are shepherds together whose duty is to watch over the flock, caring for the spiritual needs of the people. This includes visiting the sick, witnessing to the lost and dealing with problems in the church.

The language of Peter in I Peter 5:1-4 makes it clear that the elders were under-shepherds whose duty was to watch over and feed the flock of God. In contrast, Jesus is the chief shepherd that will reward them when he comes.

Local elders are local men with families who work on jobs and contribute to the church in their spare time. However, some develop and emerge in process of time as full time workers whose ministry goes beyond the confines of the local church. It is up to the local assembly to recognize those the Lord has his hand upon and encourage them in their calling.

There is also a difference in the major prophet of the Old Testament and the New Testament Prophet. The Old Testament Prophet was God’s number one representative in the earth in his day. Numbers 12:6-11. Where the New Testament Prophet was often limited to the ability of a seer (Acts 21:10-11), the Old Testament Prophet was a mighty preacher of the word that expounded the law and received direct revelation from the Lord. The Old Testament Prophet as well as the law gave way to the apostle and the day of grace. Luke 16:16.

It is a great mistake to compare the ministry of a local elder with that of an apostle. The apostle has an anointing and insight into the word that completely overshadows other ministries. Ministries are

gifts of Christ given to his church when he ascended to the right hand of the Father. Eph. 4:7-16.

We must accept and honor ministries as they are given to us. Better still we need to recognize these ministries as an extension of Christ himself through the anointing. It is by and through the anointing that he is in our midst. Matthew 18:20.

Although the one man ministry or pastor is not according to the New Testament pattern, God has used some sincere men and churches limited to this concept. God's grace has ruled and overruled many things that have not been according to divine order. This in no wise justifies error but it does exemplify an aspect of God's condescending grace that has followed the church.

However, the one man pastor concept needs to be corrected. The church can never function as it should or enter into its true inheritance apart from divine order.

A TYPE

David's first effort to take the ark back to Jerusalem is a perfect example of trying to do a good thing the wrong way. II Samuel 6:1-11.

In spite of all the impressive fanfare, the new cart, the marching band and the personal attendance of David and other dignitaries the first attempt failed. It failed because the priests who were ordained of God were not carrying the ark. All the noisy display did not take the place of divine order.

Realizing God's displeasure in what he was doing, David had the ark carried aside and placed in the house of Obed-edom. This was a case of expedience rather than divine order.

Although the Lord blessed the household of Obed-edom because he took care of the ark of the covenant after the Lord smote Uzzah, this was only a temporary provision. The ark belonged in Jerusalem. After David sought the Lord and discovered what was wrong he was able to carry the ark back to Jerusalem, its rightful place. I Chronicles 15:1-20.

Many one man ministries like Obed-edom have been blessed of the Lord because they have done the best they could under the circumstances. However, it is time for the priests of the Tribe of Levi that have been ordained of God to take up the ark and carry it back to Jerusalem.

The first effort that failed typifies a presumptuous spirit that motivates the natural religious man. It was also typical of the do-gooder spirits that think they are doing God service regardless of their method or conception of things. The religious assembly lines and the do-gooder organizations are flooding the world with Satan's counterfeits. Rev. 12:15-16.

But Praise God! We who are part of Christ's church which is built by revelation (Matthew 16:17-18), can thank God for his sovereignty in permitting this diversion. Although these satanic counterfeits are designed to deceive and snare God's people they are working for our good.

The earth that is opening her mouth and swallowing the flood is a type of the natural earth man, devoid of spiritual discernment. I Cor. 2:14, 15:47. It is actually a means of diversion that keeps Satan's forces occupied, thus relieving God's people from having to bear the full brunt of Satan's fury.

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” Rev. 12:12.

Those who dwell in the heavens can rejoice because they have ascended above the carnal realm of warfare, strife and diversion. The inhabitants of the earth are those living in the earth realm controlled by their base sensual appetites. Their state is one of misery and woe because they have no defense against Satan and his demonic hosts.

There are several reasons for the evolution of the one man ministry. No doubt it had its beginning with strife and division in the early church. Even today some think that one man with authority is better able to cope with divisive problems than a plurality. This

may be true where a low spiritual ebb or carnal condition exists and the one man ministry has a benevolent disposition.

And it is also true that the ministry of an apostle had the anointing and authority to deal with problems that might arise in a local church, but God never intended for every local church to have the ministry of an apostle on a permanent basis.

The average congregation likes the one man pastor system because it relieves them of their responsibility. They had much rather have someone do their work for them. They had much rather have someone do their praying, their bible reading and their witnessing. The only time they want the preacher or the church is when they get into serious trouble. Even then, they had rather consult their doctor, lawyer or psychiatrist. There is very little difference in their spirit and those who go to the fortune teller when they want help.

Having a pastor today, especially one with a degree, has become a status symbol. The average congregation, like the children of Israel in Samuel's day (I Sam. 8:4-7), wants a king (Pastor) like all the other nations (Churches).

They like the hire and fire method which enables them to vote for one that will tickle their ears and against the one that crosses their wills. The way you tickle their ears is by preaching what they want to hear, especially their doctrine and traditions.

SELFISH ASPIRATION

No doubt selfish aspiration was a factor in the development of the one man ministry concept. Man by nature wants to be chief and not just an ordinary Indian. The one man concept gives the average pastor rank and authority that he could not have otherwise. At best, most of the pastors working in the religious system of today would have a hard time qualifying as an elder in the primitive church.

I'm afraid most of them need to be born again. Of course the real author of the one man ministry for every church is Satan. Like all error it is a means of hindering and frustrating the progress of the church. Too many men become tyrants or little Napoleons when left to themselves.

The balance and check of the multiple ministry is necessary to prevent this. One of the greatest causes of gullible souls being led into spiritual bondage and oblivion is one man ministries that have been led astray by seducing spirits and doctrine of devils. I Tim. 4:1-3. A good example of this is the Jim Jones tragedy that took place in Guyana.

Apart from the result of selfish motivation that was instrumental in bringing the one man ministry into existence, there are other evil results from this practice.

TOO MUCH BURDEN

It is very difficult for the average man to carry the burden of the church by himself. He is actually expected to do more than he is capable of doing. When he fails or comes short he condemns himself and is condemned by others. Very often accusing fingers point immediately to the pastor when something goes wrong.

If he is considerate and long suffering he is accused of being weak and vacillating. If he is firm and diligent he is accused of being a dictator or tyrant. If he deviates from the hallowed tradition of his group he has departed from the faith and becomes a heretic.

He is the easy and logical target when things go awry in the church. When the position is shared by others it is far more difficult for Satan to zero in on one man.

When the position is shared, the involvement of so many people — including families, kindred, and friends — makes it more difficult to blame the leadership. There is more of a close-knit tie to the leadership and consequently more tolerance and understanding. This results in a greater reluctance to accuse and condemn when something goes wrong. The elders themselves become more considerate of each other because they are in the same boat together.

The one man ministry not only works hardship on the man, but his wife and children are made to live in a fish bowl. Several years ago there was an article in the Reader's Digest on the subject of ministers and their wives and their vulnerability to nervous breakdowns. This article went on to say that ministers and their

wives suffered more nervous breakdowns than any other group of professional people. Anyone identified with God and his kingdom is subject to be the target of Satan and his demonic forces. Satan likes nothing better than to cause preachers to fail or become a sorry spectacle before the world. This includes his wife and children. And the way this is accomplished is through the people. Sad to say the people he uses most adeptly in this evil work are religious people.

IDOLATRY

Another potential danger resulting from the one man ministry is the exaltation of the man. Men by nature are idolaters. This is why we have so many hero worshippers. During the days of Rome it was the gladiator. Today it's the gridiron, the baseball field, the tennis court, the movie star, the race car driver and the boxer.

In the religious world you have the same type of idolatry. Some have worshipped Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen, William Branham, Father Divine, Reverend Ike, Pope John Paul, Jim Jones and many others. They are heroes to some as surely as O. J. Simpson is to millions of football fans.

It is too easy for the congregation to get their eyes on the man instead of Christ. When the position is shared it is more difficult. The multiple ministry, which is usually less dynamic, causes the people to recognize and look to Christ as head of the church.

This situation is ideal in that the people feel more responsible to pray and look to Christ as the head of the Church. This dependency on Christ causes the people to exercise their faith and honor Christ as head of the church. This act of faith enables the captain of the Lord's hosts to take his place as head and lead the people in the way they should go. Joshua 5:13-15. The end result of this is the brethren dwelling together in unity and the Lord being in the midst. Psa. 133:1-3, Matt. 18:20.

When we analyze the result of the one man ministry it is actually a clever trick of Satan to take the leadership of the church away from Christ and put it into the hands of man, and if that man can be deceived and led astray Satan becomes the head of the church

through corrupted man. This is actually what has happened in millions of religious movements and churches.

NOT A DEMOCRACY

Although God never intended for the church to be ruled over by a one man ministry called the Pastor, neither did he intend for the church to be a democracy.

A democracy is a rule of people with every individual having an equal vote. The so-called democratic way of life may sound good to much of this generation, but it is not the form of government God has ordained for his church.

Democracy supposedly recognizes everybody regardless of their inspiration or lack of it. Satan likes the democratic form of government because it enables him to gain control of the elective process and put his man in the driver's seat.

God's government is a theocracy. It is Christ's rule by and through the anointing. The only people that will have this form of government are those who have been brought to birth by Christ through anointed ministries. These people have experienced something that enables them to cry Abba Father. Romans 8:15.

The reason there are so few that want the theocratic form of government is because they have been begotten by another Jesus, another gospel and another spirit. II Cor. 11:3-4. There are many perverse spirits at work in religion using the name of Jesus. The same spirit that caused Israel to reject the rule of God through Samuel and desire a king like other nations is often responsible for the one man rule or pastor concept. Samuel 8:4-7.

This is also why Paul would not build on another man's foundation. It is much easier to start a church where the people haven't been corrupted by apostate Christianity.

TWO TYPES

We must also realize there are two types of people in the earth that are different in their attitude and response toward God and his word. The Cains, Ishmaels and Esaus may put on a cloak of

religion but they hate true righteousness. Gen. 4:3-14, 16:1-12, 25:23.

I believe most religious people are in this category. Gal. 4:22-31. They are blind and deaf to anything different or contrary to their own particular brand of doctrine and religious traditions. It is a very small remnant that can hear his voice. Isa. 1:9, Matt. 7:13-14, Rom. 9:1-13.

Jesus said, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Jn. 10:26-29.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Another reason the multiple ministry is so necessary for the local church is the need for more people to exercise themselves. Distribution of responsibility accomplishes this. Too many churches are simply congregations of bench warmers that don’t want to be bothered.

A church that doesn’t exercise itself can be likened to a human body that never exercised or exerted its muscles. The end result in the church is spiritual atrophy. This is also the direct cause for the lack of ability to discern between good and evil. Heb. 5:13-14. Only the Christian church that is exercising itself in spiritual matters can learn the ways of God. Heb. 3:10-11.

ANOTHER BENEFIT

There is still another great spiritual benefit that results from a service which is not programized and dominated by one man called the pastor. Where one man feels responsible for the service, he is in bondage to the concept that he must have a sermon.

Whether God is leading or not he feels responsible to get his sermon ready, and it’s really ridiculous how some preachers go about getting their sermons. Some consult their commentaries or other books containing sermon outlines. Others read all kinds

of religious literature seeking inspiration and the material for their sermons. I remember an evangelist I met several years ago who consulted his book called “Snappy Pulpit Jokes” for sermon material.

When the church comes together with no particular individual feeling that he alone must have the message, there is a liberty and rest that enables the Holy Spirit to take charge of the service. In such services the people as a whole are more apt to pray and look to the Lord for inspiration and leadership.

There is no doubt in what Paul is teaching the church in I Corinthians 14:26, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

When coming together for regular church services every member should be prayed up and prepared to contribute according to his or her ability. I Cor. 12:11. This doesn't mean that every single individual has to minister in every service. Although they should be spiritually prepared for every service, time would limit the number of people that could participate.

WOMEN

Although women are not to occupy positions where they teach or usurp authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12), they can contribute to the service when the spirit of prophecy rests upon them. However, they are forbidden to do even this if their head is not covered symbolizing their God ordained subjection to the man. I Cor. 11:3-5.

There is absolutely no scriptural justification for the ordination of women as elders or leaders in the church. The spirit in the world today that is seeking to exalt the woman to the same level as the man in religion, politics and business is a perversion of God's word.

JUDGMENT

All contributing ministries should be subject to the judgment of the body. It is the duty of the body to discern and recognize the spirit that is operating through any human vessel in the church.

The idea that one who prophesies must preface his remarks with a “Yea, I say unto thee” or a “Thus sayeth the Lord” is erroneous. The Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Rev. 19:10. It is the Spirit of Jesus Christ speaking through the vessel.

The surest way of determining whether a person is motivated by the Spirit of God or the spirit of antichrist is whether they will recognize and honor the voice of the church. Matt. 17:18, I Jn. 4:1-3. And it's possible for the same human vessel to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at one time and speak by the spirit of Satan the next time. A classic example of this is Peter in Matt. 16:13-23. This is why judgment in the church where you have body ministry is a must. I Cor. 14:29.

The fact that Satan and his demonic host will take advantage of such freedom to try and minister to the people should not intimidate or stop a church from moving in this direction.

I Thessalonians 5:19-21 says, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Judgment in the church will also make manifest who has the revelation of the body of Christ. Those who reject the corporate wisdom of the church have the spirit of antichrist. They do not really believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh of his body the church. I Jn. 4:1-3, Eph. 5:30.

As I teach these things I am aware that thousands of little groups have tried to practice what they call “Body Ministry.” Much of it has ended in confusion and division. At best most of it can be compared to child's play.

If you build a house you need to get a qualified architect to draw you a set of plans. You then need a qualified builder to coordinate the various trades and put it together. If you got a group of children you would end up with squabbling arguments and fights. The

finished product would be a shack or tree house blown away with the first hard wind.

No group can get back to New Testament order without a leader that has a revelation from God. We do not get out of Egypt or the wilderness without a Moses that God has met with at a burning bush.

My advice to any group sincerely desiring to get back to any semblance of New Testament order is to simply seek God. And I mean keep seeking him until he sends you a ministry with such a revelation. Remember also that many false prophets are gone out into the world. I Jn. 4:1. Don't be deceived by their fair speeches or lying signs and wonders.

God is in the saving, delivering, healing and restoring business. Don't get over anxious and build your own fire and walk in the sparks of the fire of your own making. Isa. 50:10-11.

“For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.” Heb. 10:35-36.

Law and Grace: Answer to a Letter

by Phil Enlow

The following is an answer to a letter that we received. I will briefly try to summarize the questions and the main points made. The letter begins, "I understood you to say that the Old Covenant has been done away with and it has been replaced with a New Covenant. I would like to hear your explanation."

The letter also said, "Christ said that he came not to abolish the law. He fulfilled the law in that he became the sacrifice. Matt. 5:17. He says the law will remain until heaven and earth disappear. Matt. 5:18." The claim is made that Matt. 5:19 was addressed to believers and that our status in heaven will be determined by our obedience to the law.

The author disagrees with the idea that there was an age of law but now there is an age of grace. Again he says that God's law will remain until heaven and earth pass away. God's law is "my guideline for living. It tells me how to please God and what God expects of me."

He says, "Don't get me wrong, trying to keep the law doesn't make me born again. I say that the law is for believers, first things first."

He also says, "I think God's law should be taught in the home, in the churches, and even in the schools." The final question: "Just what part of the law is it that evangelical churches disagree with, so very strongly?"

Dear _____,

Thanks for writing. I hope you are well. I believe you have asked some thoughtful and sincere questions, ones that are very understandable given your religious background. No doubt many of those who emphasize God's laws do so for the reason you cite, namely in order to uphold a standard for righteous living. Certainly there is nothing wrong with that. It should be obvious that the New Testament has a lot to say about righteous living.

However, I believe that much of the "debate" between an emphasis upon law or grace is founded upon misunderstanding so lest we

talk past each other some points need to be established. As I noted above at least some of the emphasis upon God's laws has to do with upholding a standard of righteous living and those who make that emphasis see the teaching of grace as a departure from that.

And sadly it must be admitted that many who emphasize grace exhibit little of it, living lives that show scant evidence of godliness, yet claiming that they are "saved by grace." To one looking on, therefore, it seems that they are saying that whereas God once had a very high inflexible standard of righteousness under the law, things have changed now and God doesn't care about that so much anymore. He is now more understanding and indulgent, declaring men righteous even though they really aren't and seem to have a limited desire to live in a godly manner.

A Caricature of Grace

If people confuse such a caricature of grace with true biblical grace I can understand their desire to emphasize God's laws. The fact is, however, that biblical grace actually upholds a much higher standard of righteousness than does the law! The law tends to deal with outward behavior whereas grace changes the heart.

The Pharisees were among the most scrupulous observers of the law – at least in their own estimation. But Jesus said in Matt. 5:20, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." He went on in his discourse to set forth a higher standard than the law in several specific examples: anger is murder (verse 21); lust is adultery (verse 28); and others. The command to love your enemies certainly goes beyond the law (verse 44).

The Real Questions to Ask

The real questions to ask regarding law and grace are these: how does a man become righteous before God? And what role, if any, does the law play under the new covenant?

It should be abundantly obvious what the answer to the first question is. Rom. 3:19-20 tells us, "Now we know that whatever

the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” Gal. 2:15-16 says, “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”

Obviously many other scriptures could be cited but I rather imagine that you are in agreement thus far. What, then, about the *role* of law?

The Role of Law

As you noted Matt. 5:17-18 says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

The question then becomes, how is the law fulfilled and what is it that needs to be accomplished? You rightly note that Jesus *fulfilled* the law by becoming a sacrifice but he also fulfilled the *righteousness* of the law that he might become a *sinless* sacrifice. And so the type of the unblemished lamb was fulfilled. Thus when he died he cried, “It is finished.” John 19:30.

But *what* was finished? Thank God that Christ fulfilled the law by becoming a perfect sacrifice for sins, but according to Paul he also “... canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” Col. 2:14. Scriptures like that make the “law” folks nervous! But does that mean that doing away with the law with its commandments does away with righteousness? Of course not! Righteousness just happens a different – and much better – way.

Another way in which the law is fulfilled is through our faith according to Rom. 3:31. Faith upholds the law. That is, when we believe in Christ, we are affirming the justice of the law, our guilt before it, and the sufficiency of his sacrifice on our behalf. The *role*

of law, therefore, is to establish guilt and bring us to Christ, but our faith affirms that law. When we are thus brought to faith the law has done its job and its role ends. As Rom. 10:4 tells us, “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

When you break it all down Christ has given us just one command: “love one another.” John 13:34. In Rom. 13:10 we find Paul writing, “... love is the fulfillment of the law.” Where genuine divine love is manifest in a believer what need is there of “commandments”? Did Paul mean what he said or not?

But yet another role still played by law is the judgment of the ungodly – and that indeed extends the role of law until the passing away of heaven and earth. Those under the law will most certainly be judged by that law. That includes the wicked who know it but choose to live in sin nonetheless, but it does NOT include believers since they are NOT under law but under grace. Romans 6:14. For the believer, his sin against the law has already been judged in Christ. God’s wrath against his sin was vented upon Jesus and those sins – and their guilt – are completely gone! Hallelujah!

The Law and the Righteous

Paul and his fellow laborers had to contend with many people who emphasized the law. In 1 Tim. 1:8-9 he wrote, “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that **law is made not for the righteous** but for lawbreakers and rebels” Focus on that thought for a minute! If the law is NOT made for the righteous why do so many emphasize it and teach it as though it is? Trying to impose it in any sense upon the righteous is clearly NOT using it properly! Did Paul mean what he said?

What is Grace?

What about grace? What is that about? I believe in the minds of many grace has been confused with mercy. We are all helpless, guilty sinners, justly condemned by the law, and God has a choice. He can show judgment or He can show mercy. Thank God He has chosen mercy! God in His love reaches out to the undeserving.

Yet even in mercy He upholds justice since our sins against Him are fully punished in His Son. But that satisfaction of justice is what makes a way for us to be reconciled to Him, free from sin. There is an amazing exchange that takes place: we give Christ our sins and he gives us his righteousness! 2 Cor. 5:17-21. Through faith I legally become as righteous as Jesus is!

Mercy might be described as God's *attitude* toward us, an attitude rooted in love that chooses to reach out to us with the help we so desperately need. **Grace is the actual help** He extends. It is simply His Spirit at work in our hearts and lives.

Demand or Supply

I once heard a preacher aptly describe law as “demand” and grace as “supply.” The law imposes demands upon me. It is up to me to meet those demands. Law not only offers no help, it even has the curious effect of making sin stronger! Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:56, “... **the power of sin is the law.**” In Rom. 7:10 he said, “I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” Law demands something from me that I cannot produce and causes sin in me to rise up and grow stronger.

Grace, on the other hand, is about God *supplying* what we lack. And we lack everything! If God didn't seek us out we would never seek Him. Rom. 3:10-11. But in mercy He extends His grace to us by working with our hearts and minds to show us our need and draw us to Christ. John 8:44. It is by grace – the overshadowing of His Spirit working with our hearts – that we are enabled to repent and believe. Eph. 2:8-9. We have no power in ourselves to do either.

And it is by the supply of His grace alone that we are able to live for Him. Rom. 5:17 says, “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” **Law condemns but grace empowers.** Grace is the *only* thing stronger than sin. And God promises an abundant provision!

We Died

Another reason that law is not part of the new covenant is the simple fact that in Christ **we died!** In Rom. 7:4-6 Paul wrote, “So, my brothers, you also **died to the law** through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”

Bro. Thomas, the founder of this work, recalled an incident in which a man was in jail for some crime he had committed. But when they went to get him to bring him before the judge they found he had died! Did they haul him into court anyway? Of course not! He was dead, beyond the reach of the law. They took him out and buried him.

And so it is in Christ. When we are truly united with Christ we actually are united with His death. His death is our death. We died. But to what end? Paul says, “that you might belong to another.” OK, so we belong to another, but why? He continues, “in order that we might bear fruit to God.” Thus the end result of dying to the law is not *lawlessness* but rather *godly fruit*. The law actually arouses our “sinful passions” resulting in our bearing “fruit for death.”

Two Approaches to Serving God

Paul refers in Rom. 7:6 to two different ways people approach serving God: “the new way of the Spirit” and “the old way of the written code.” The law “once bound us” but by dying to it we have been “released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit....”

The rest of Rom. 7 and the beginning of Rom. 8 enlarges on this thought. Paul first explores his experience with the law. Even though “the law is good” he found himself in a state of utter failure because of the law of sin within. It was this experience that

ultimately caused him to cry out in Rom. 7:24, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” The answer comes through “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Then comes the glorious truth of Rom. 8:1-4, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”

Notice carefully that it is through living according to the Spirit – and not by striving to obey commandments – that the “righteous requirements of the law” are “fully met in us.” This is the new covenant! Heb. 8:10-12 quotes from Jeremiah, “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

The righteousness that is actually impossible under laws and commandments becomes possible under grace. As I indicated earlier there are so many religious folks that use the word “grace” yet are strangers to the real thing. Of course it must also be acknowledged that even those who have begun to enter into true grace have a lot of growing and maturing to do. The transformation that is needed to make us fit to live with a holy God – called “salvation” – is a process that is worked out in us over a lifetime.

A Description of True Grace

One of the best descriptions of true grace is in Titus 2:11-14 – “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and

to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” If a man calls something “grace” that doesn’t do those things in his life it’s not grace!

You mention practical issues such as premarital sex. I have no problem at all with teaching such righteous principles – nor did Paul. For example Eph. 5:3 says, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”

Paul’s letters to the churches are full of practical instruction in righteous living, instruction that goes far beyond the law. The law indeed condemns sex outside of marriage. But new covenant truth goes beyond the outward act to issues of the heart such as lustful thoughts and looking with lust, etc. Remember that in the new covenant God writes His laws in the *heart*. Heb. 8:10.

Fruit

Practical righteousness under the new covenant is described as “fruit.” Any so-called “righteousness” that results from law-keeping is really self-righteousness, something God hates. It is a nothing less than a self-willed attempt to demand acceptance from God based on self-effort. This is legalism, pure and simple. It deceives people into believing that they are righteous while leaving them in their sins. It is a downhill road that leads to the condition Jesus described in Matt. 23.

On the other hand Paul writes in Gal. 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Eph. 5:9 says, “... for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.” Phil 1:11 speaks of being “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”

Think of the vine and its branches. John 15. The vine represents Christ, filled with the very life of God. The branches represent people whose sins have separated them from God. Does the vine simply issue commands to the branches to produce fruit – somehow? Of course not. Because of what Jesus did a union between vine and branches is now possible. Sin has been dealt with and put away and the branches have been made “clean.” Therefore there is a real living connection that allows the divine life that is in Jesus to flow into the branches and the result is fruit that is according to the nature of that life. Fruit is produced not by striving and self-effort but by yielding and believing.

New Testament “Commandments”

Many see words like “commandments” or “commands” in the New Testament and they immediately think “law.” But there is a huge difference between Old Testament law and those New Testament commands. As we have said, law demands obedience based on *our* ability. But commands under the new covenant are really the instructions of a loving Father to His children.

He desires that we grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding and learn to cooperate with the great salvation He is working out in us. Certainly the “commands” we read in the pages of the New Testament convey the practical things that God desires of us but they also *imply* His help. God is saying, “This is what I desire of you – but don’t ever forget that I am in and with you to empower you to live a life that pleases me.” As the Lord said to Paul in 2 Cor. 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

A Legitimate Role for Law

There *is* one legitimate role of law today and that is to awaken the lost to their need of God. Remember Paul’s words in Gal. 3:23-25, “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”

I know of some who emphasize using the ten commandments as a witnessing tool to bring people under conviction. I have no problem with using the law in this way. It is exactly what the law was designed for. But notice Paul's words, "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." That's pretty plain!

No doubt where there is a belief in God and judgment the law acts to some extent as a restrainer of evil but that certainly isn't salvation!

Why Not Use Law?

But why not use the law the way you describe to instruct people in righteousness? Again, if you are talking about the lost I have no problem with that. But trying to use "law" among God's people is totally contrary to new covenant truth and has bad fruit.

As we have pointed out there are plenty of instructions to God's people in the pages of the New Testament that cover the righteous principles of the law. God hasn't done away with righteous living simply because His children are not under law. Paul's letters are full of instruction and admonition in this regard.

The Spirit of Legalism

My biggest objection to using the language of "law-keeping" to produce "righteousness" is one of spirit. There truly is a religious *spirit* that promotes law-keeping. But the fruit of *that* spirit is not good. It includes such things as self-righteousness, pride, and a judgmental spirit. However mildly and subtly it begins it sets people on the road to full-blown legalism with all its bondage and deception. Those under that spirit begin to base their supposed relationship with God upon what *they* do instead of on what *Christ* did. That is a spiritual dead-end totally contrary to the spirit of the new covenant.

I readily agree that those who embrace what they call "grace" apart from a true work of grace in the heart are likewise heading toward a spiritual dead-end but that is not the fault of the true doctrine of grace. The gospel of grace needs to be preached with the power

and anointing of God's Spirit. If it is then God will call people to Himself thereby, resulting in a work in the heart that will produce true righteousness.

Freedom in Christ

As Paul said in Gal. 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." It is in the context of this very question of law and faith that he also continues in Gal. 5:13-14, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" The love of which he speaks can only be produced as a fruit of the Spirit. Verse 22.

I pray that these thoughts will help in some measure to answer your questions and that the God of all grace will continue to work in the lives of all His children for His glory.

Sincerely in Christ,
Phil Enlow

ONENESS: How Important?

Francis Frangipane

In our growth, if we think of ourselves as “mature,” it is usually in context with some sin or area of knowledge. No spiritual growth comes without effort or without the enemy trying to stop it. But the maturity that Satan fears the most is that state of spiritual development that produces oneness in the church.

I am reminded of President Reagan’s “Star Wars” defense plan. The purpose of this system is to intercept enemy missiles and destroy them in outer space. The major complaint we hear about this plan is that it is “... too costly and it will never work.” That observation may indeed be true, but it is interesting that of all the weapon systems we see in America, the “Star Wars” defense system is the biggest fear the Russians have.

In the same way God has a defense system also. His system of defense is seen in our spiritual oneness, where we intercept the enemies “missiles” and protect the homeland of one another’s hearts. Yet, we hear time after time people say, “... it is too costly, it will never work.” Even the way the Russians rejoice over dignified scientists and statesmen criticizing the Star Wars concept, so Satan uses even good, seemingly mature Christians to try to discourage those who have a vision of oneness. Why does Satan hate the oneness of God’s Kingdom so viciously?

He hates spiritual unity because he knows when we become one with each other, loving, caring for and protecting one another, the devil’s weapons will become ineffective.

And I heard a loud voice in Heaven saying,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

“And they overcame him because of the **blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.**” (Rev. 12:10-11).

In order for the salvation and power, the kingdom and authority of Christ to become more than just empty doctrines, the accuser of the brethren must be cast down. That means no more fault-finding, gossip, or criticism. It means that the blood of Jesus makes us one body, giving each of us justification, life, and forgiveness. It means that our prophetic word spoken in faith brings forth God's victory regardless of what the "facts" initially indicated. And it also means refusing to be reactionary, refusing to return evil for evil but rendering a blessing instead even "... to death." The Kingdom of God won't be manifested any other way. And believe me, Satan will resist every inch of the oneness we possess in God.

Today, the devil will try to find some area of our lives, some root of bitterness, or hidden sin or weakness, and then try to use it to stop us from truly becoming one in the body of Christ. None of us are perfect. All of us say the wrong things, do the wrong things, and react wrongly at times, but the maturing saints are pressing and reaching toward God's perfect love, that love that enables them to overcome every fear and barrier, that love that leads them into oneness.

Testimony

by Danny Downing

My name is Danny Downing. Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. I'm writing this because I believe the Lord put this on my heart quite some time ago and I've been praying the Lord would help me write this. I know I can't do this in myself.

I believe the Lord put His Almighty finger on a great need in my life a few years ago — by the way, one of many needs over many years and surely of many more to come. And I believe that need was that God has shown me that I have a responsibility to be the spiritual head of my home.

I believed in my thinking that if I worked hard, had a roof over our heads, paid the bills, spent a little time with the family, and took them to Sunday Church, I was doing my part as the head of my home. And that's part of it but as the Lord started dealing with my heart, only part of it.

Around 5 years ago the Lord gave a call to our church for a need of prayer. I was a father of two, a one-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy at the time with a wonderful wife. One evening we had prayer meeting and me and my wife decided to go. They had been having these prayer meetings at church for awhile and we didn't go to hardly any of them. When we walked in the door a brother named Chip King — who by the way had married us 16 years earlier and that we love dearly — said, "Hey, you all, I'm glad you could make it." Well, that sounded good, and it was, but somehow in my spirit I was offended. Why was I offended?

What happened then was I believe God started working in a need in my life. We didn't go back to the prayer meetings for awhile. Not only that we were practically missing all the Wednesday night services. So basically we were going to Sunday morning services.

Being a brick mason and being married and having children, I found the enemy and my own natural man always faithful to remind me how tired I was and how I needed rest, and how I needed to do other things than to go to church. One thing I began to notice was when I was at home and didn't go to church my

family didn't go either. Not only was my self will and the enemy robbing me, but my family also. The Lord has taught me not to go by my feelings and that the enemy is a liar and not to listen to him. And how blessed we are every time we come together. This is a dry world but how faithful He is to fill my cup!

But as time went by God was working and is working in my heart. He started showing me what a great responsibility I had for my family and how I had been failing them. Praise God for Romans 8, verse 1. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But God does want to teach us and grow us in grace and knowledge.

If you read Eph. 5, verses 23 and 23 it talks about, wife submit to your husband as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Verse 25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Eph. 6:1-2 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' — which is the first commandment with a promise."

I believe God has a wonderful order for the home and by the scriptures God was showing me my responsibilities in the place He has put me in. The Lord is showing me in His mercy that I need to lead my family by example.

That probably sounds great and it is, but God started tearing down a lot of self will and what I liked to do. Naturally speaking I like going out with my family to eat, movies, ball games, hunting, fishing, and pretty much what everyone else is doing. And nothing is wrong with these things in their place, but God is showing me in my heart what was more important to Him. And that for me was being where God was for me and my family.

The scripture in Matt. 6:33 says, But seek **first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." See, God is so wonderful! All He wants is to be Number One in our lives, period. I believe what it boils down to for me is, where is my heart at? What do I want? or what does the Lord want for me and my family?

One scripture that comes to mind is Psalm 133:1 — “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” This scripture has shown me when the saints of God are together, whether it be church conventions, services, prayer meetings, church sings, choir practices, get-togethers, etc., that this is where my help and blessing is for me and my family. Do I make all these? No. But God knows my heart and the desire He has placed there to learn His ways and be with His people.

We had a convention meeting in Florida a few years ago and in the Thursday night service the Lord began dealing in a need in my life that affected my whole family. The service was on bondages in our lives and how the Lord wanted to deliver us from them. The Lord specifically spoke to me in this service. I had an addiction to chewing tobacco. I had chewed tobacco for several years. After the service I knew God had spoken to me and that with God’s help I was quitting.

I would hide this from my son the best I could but he knew what was going on. I was addicted so bad I would leave him home most of the time so I could do my habit. He would ask me, “Daddy, why can’t I go with you?” It saddens me to think of it but thank God for His deliverance.

Well, when we got home that Sunday from the meeting around 3:00 I got Hunter and took him in my truck to the store to get some gas. When we got to the store I had 2 or 3 tobacco cans in my truck, some not even opened. I opened the center console up and pulled them out in front of him. His eyes were big and he said, “Daddy, what are you going to do with those.” “I’m going to throw these away.” The Lord delivered me and I’m not going to do this anymore. He had a big smile on his face.

When we got home Wendy was sitting on her chair when we got there. Hunter told his Mama, “You’re not going to believe it, Daddy threw his tobacco away. He is not going to do it anymore. The Lord answered our prayers.” Come to find out, Hunter and Wendy had been praying together for quite some time that I would be delivered from chewing tobacco. I can’t express how humbled

I was by this. My 11 year old son and his mother were praying for my deliverance and the Lord answered their prayers. Praise God!

That was four years ago. The Lord has totally changed our family since all this started. The Lord has brought us so much closer to Him and to each other. Whether we admit it or not everything we do as the heads of our families affects one another. Our children see what goes on in our family lives. They see Christ in us, or self will. My desire for my family is that they see Christ in me.

Through this God has caused me to have a greater relationship with my family, God, and the body of Christ. I now look forward to my time with Him, whether it be in prayer, scripture, or the people of God. Thank God the Lord is taking a heart that is full of self will and turning it into a heart that has a desire that He has put there to love and serve Him. I'm so thankful that He is the potter and I am the clay. I know the Lord has a lot more to do with me but I am glad He started it and He will finish it.

God bless,
Danny Downing