

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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With Purpose of Heart

Dr. H. T. Spence

Our present history of human time is marked with dark and foreboding powers of which the Christian must ever be conscious. These powers are filled with moods and influences that can have a profound effect on the Christian's life if he is not careful. We live in the end time, a time like no other time. The Devil has come to his most artistic season of wicked existence; he has had six thousand years to experiment on mankind. His arsenal of subtleties for drawing man away from God and love for spiritual things has come to its prime. How often we are reminded of R. C. Trench's definition of "the age":

All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world, which it

may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral, and or immoral atmosphere which at every moment we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.

Such a floating mass is present everywhere we turn. The Christian must truly purpose in his heart to overcome such an age or he will be overcome by its power.

Three Worlds to Overcome

There are three worlds that the Christian is daily facing that possess innate destructive powers: (1) the secular world/age in which he lives; (2) the Church world/age in which he lives; and, (3) the world within his heart. All three worlds are ever vying for control of the Christian and often unite in subtle attack upon the mind and affections.

The Secular World/Age

This present world/age is a visceral age, with much emphasis upon the flesh. Christ compared His Second Coming to the days of Noah. Genesis 6 speaks of “the flesh” four times. Genesis 6:3 reads “My spirit shall not always strive with man, for *that he also is flesh*.” Man had come to such aggressive living in his body that he believed his whole existence was flesh—having no spirit or soul. Genesis 6:12 then states, “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for *all flesh had corrupted his way* upon the earth.” This declaration from God announces that His appointed way or purpose for making flesh had been totally corrupted; man had fully misused his fleshly body. Genesis 6:13 states, “And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh is come* before me.” The sins that could be committed with the fleshly body had reached a consummation; there were no more sins that could be sinned with the body; the flesh and its lusts had dominated the total existence of

mankind. Finally, Genesis 6:17 states, “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, *to destroy all flesh*.” This conclusion was the only thing left for God to do: He must destroy all flesh.

In the light of this fourfold reality of the flesh in the days of Noah, we can see that such a condition has become the preeminent reality of our present history. Western civilization is consumed and even obsessed with the body. Society has become deeply concerned with health-care; it seeks through medicine, hospitals, and specialized doctors cures for every disease. Concern for the body has truly become the priority of humanity; this is especially true as one ages. The “care” of the body has taken precedence over the care of the soul. Our modern civilization presses for the satisfying of the body in designer clothes, all kinds of jewelry for every part of the body, “the look” in fashion cosmetics, soaps, lotions, creams, and everything that seems to be needed in keeping the body “in shape.” Materialism has become a master sin and obsession. The money we make, the cars we drive, and the homes we live in are all part of the sensual and visceral drive of man’s existence and status. The great master sin of fornication is sweeping our world through its variously manifested fleshly sins. Our society is consumed by pornography, divorce and remarriage, and child pornography and molestation. The TV, movie, and video media are now consumed with these

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things along with the flesh sins of sodomy.

Dear Christian, this is what we must aggressively fight every day we live. Every time we go to a mall there is the pull to become more of a compulsive shopper for the material things of life. The media is ever calling to our thinking and the desires of our bodies to satisfy with comfort, ease, pleasure, amusement, and with the certain look and feel. According to the Food Network, over 870,000 restaurants populate America with the average person spending \$1,400 a year for dining out. This brings us to \$440 billion spent on 54 billion meals a year. It is evident that our fast-pace lifestyle has pressed for more eating out, and this was part of the warning Christ gave to His disciples (Luke 17:27,28). If we are not careful, the primary occupation of our lives will be for the body, for its health, and for its desires. We must fight this world/age obsession daily or we will be sucked into the vortex of its powerful influence in our living.

The Church World/Age

There is also the “floating mass” of thought coming from the world/age of the Church. We are living in the Laodicean church age; it runs parallel with the secular world/age. The reason for such parallelism is that the church has been secretly inhaling the philosophical atmosphere of its time. The distance that may have been between the two worlds is fast closing. The church’s master sin has become carnality, the “flesh,” the material, and the physical.

Christ revealed the testimony of the end-time church: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). The same powerful influence of the physical, the visceral, and the flesh has greatly undermined the spiritual within the institutional church of our generation. This is why the Charismatic movement has become a dominating and influential force in the main stream of modern Christianity. The belief that health and wealth are signs of God’s favor while sickness and poverty are signs of God’s disfavor has become the hallmark of Neo-Christianity. The Christianity that was hated by the world fifty to one hundred years ago has now changed to become popular with the new generation. Larger churches, staggering multi-million dollar budgets, the latest technology, the high salaries paid to these modern Christian workers, the professional look and sound, the contemporary (worldly) music, and the physical “image” have all become important to “promoting the gospel” in the Laodicean Church Age.

A young minister today is under the all-pervading pressure to attend the “accredited” schools, to get the “professional” look and delivery in his ministry, to be less offensive in his preaching, and to do whatever it takes to get the numbers higher and the churches bigger. This is the view of success before his ministerial peers. He may begin his ministry with a true spiritual motive and passion for souls; however, if he breathes the atmosphere of this

present church age, his motive for those souls will eventually change to the need of new souls to keep the church looking outwardly good and for the budget to be met.

This generation of the institutional church is under the secular world spell of the flesh, the physical. It has greatly undermined the spiritual; it is a deception beyond all previous generations of the church. What kind of deception is this? It is a deception to the true condition and spiritual state of the individual. The institutional church does not know that spiritually it is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

Three things are absent and greatly needed in this church: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (3:18). The flesh of the church has become more and more evident: it is naked. It is poverty stricken when it comes to the wealth of heaven and Calvary. The church has no insight to its true condition. With all its materialism and “praise” music, it has deceived itself that this is the sign of God’s favor upon it. The Church/age is another world we must overcome! The lukewarmness before God is apathy, indifference, and indolence. God hates such a life before Him.

The World Within

But there is another world that must be watched and taken seriously

in its power to deceive and overthrow the Christian’s walk. It is the world within. Our past has made this world. It includes our memories, our training, our sins, our secret sins, our deceptions, our failures, our unchecked failures, etc. All of this has an effect on one’s outlook of living. Most people live just to get by, with an indifference to life, to God, and to the important things of life. The greatest sin in the days of Noah was that “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Yes, our thought life is part of the world within. There are those who have never gotten over their past; it still haunts them, and paralyzes them, and its ever present thought causes much apathy in spiritual living. The world within is what we have made ourselves to be rather than what God has wanted us to be. The world within can be a deceptive one; the world within can be a fearful one; the world within can be one that never comes to deliverance through Christ the Redeemer. This is our private, personal world. We must overcome it through the power of the grace of God.

A God-Given Determination

This generation in which we live will truly need a special working of the grace of God to help us make it through without compromising, yielding to the power of these worlds, and becoming what we have fought against for years. It will also necessitate a determination in the

heart of every Christian by God's grace, a determination, a tenacity, or a deep resoluteness: "I am determined to make heaven my home, and I refuse to give in to this generation." My earthy father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, often told his students, "Always keep communion with God and His Word, and find yourself in the Scriptures."

When looking within the sacred Book it is evident that we are living in similar times as that of Daniel. He lived in a worldly age (secular Babylon) and the religiously lukewarm age (his own Jewish nation). Daniel, as a teenager, was thrown into circumstances peculiarly adapted to take a young man off his guard and to view convictions as scruples. He was a captive in a foreign land (we are so in this world); he was removed from the restraints of home and the inspiration of collective worship in the Temple; he was away from the guiding eye of his parents and the preaching voice of the prophet Jeremiah. He was placed in a position of honor, and the king intended a kindness in the unique temptation that was presented to Daniel in chapter one of his book. He could have viewed this situation and convinced himself, "It doesn't matter what I eat or do, as long as my heart is right before God." He could have convinced himself that it was impossible to keep the principle of the clean versus the unclean meats in the environment of Babylon. He could have feared offending the king. He could have been viewed as a stickler over non-essentials. He could have

gone so far in his reasoning to believe that God would forgive him if he laid down these "scruples" under these circumstances.

However, we are clearly told that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). What a firmness of resolution! The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew) reading of this says "Daniel strongly desired in his heart." A person is most of the time spiritually defiled by his own act. Don't defile *yourself*. If he had failed here we probably would have never heard from him again. This act of determination did not make Daniel great; he was already of this heart before he came to Babylon. The opportunity that arose simply revealed what was truly his heart. He was a young man (the Rabbinical writings place him around seventeen years old at this time) with the principle of Romans 12:1,2. He had given himself totally to God and refused to be conformed to his world/age, both secular and religious. We only read of Daniel and his three companions refusing to defile themselves in this matter; it is evident that the rest of the Jewish young men conformed to the king's wishes.

These world/ages powers have become so aggressive in our generation that apathetic Christianity will not be able to withstand their aggression. Our hearts must purpose to be

fully determined to overcome them. One must turn away from the diet of this world and the powers such a diet professes to have. Our food as a Christian is Christ and our water is His Word and Spirit. These will be the powers to keep us!

In Acts 11:23 we read of Barnabas coming to Antioch, “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” This purpose of heart has got to be maintained whatever comes or does not come. Purpose of heart in most Christian lives tends to pass after the glow of the feeling is gone. But the purpose of heart must continue when the glow is gone, when the feeling is gone, and when the manifestation of God’s Spirit has subsided. What will we do when we get tired and refuse to live with fervency on a given day? What will we do when dryness comes in reading our Bible or prayer? What will we do when circumstances change? What will we do when the thrill leaves?

What will I do when I don’t feel like reading and praying? I must do it anyway. I must maintain my heart; I must set forth my heart to God; I must, with purpose of heart, with determination, go on with all that is within me! Isaiah 50:7 states it well: “For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” It is that setting of the face like a flint and

going on. And part of that purposing of heart is found in “they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). The Greek word is that they would “cling like glue” unto the Lord. Christians tend to live up and down in their walk with God. They tend to live always on the verge of backsliding. We must be determined to go on with God. Don’t allow anything to deter that burning heart for God.

Dear reader, there is a whirlwind of changes taking place in the lives of people, churches, and Christian schools. These world/ages desire to wear us out, make us tired of the principles, the standards, and the ways of Scripture. We have never known a time like today when leaders are throwing to the wind what had been the adornments of a walk with God. But whatever happens, whatever is said, whatever is changed, whatever conservative school leaves its legacy, we must go on regardless. We tend to give in too easily to the pressures of the world, the church age, and ourselves. May the Holy Spirit give us resoluteness, purpose of heart, and tenacity of conscience in the Word of God. Whatever the people say, whatever changes may come, by God’s grace let us walk on with God and in the principles of His Word. “As for me and my house,” “As for me and my church,” “As for me and my school, we will serve the Lord.”

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A BURNING HEART

Night of Darkness, Now Prevails;
Hearts Corrupted, Truth Bewails!
Sin's Great Passions Now Excel,
And Souls Burn With The Fires of Hell!
Men Are Doing Things Unnatural;
Bodies Burn In Flames Of Lust!
Man With Mercy Is A Prodigal,
Claiming God Is So Unjust.

Evidence Of Fervent Love
Is Not Seen For God Above.
Christians Veil Their Hearts of Stone
As Love For God Is Left Alone.
Their Beloved Woos Through Judgment;
Their Beloved Woos Through Joy.
But Their Heart Still Lacks The Ravishment;
Love Is Mixed With Earth's Alloy.

Now I Hear My Lord and King,
My Beloved Whispering,
"Grant My Grace To Take Control,
My Blood To Make Thee Fully Whole.
Let The Altar Of My Cross Bring
Coals To Purge Thy Soul From Sin.
Let My Spirit Bring Anointing;
Daily Let Him Burn Within!"

Every Measure Of God's Grace
Brings The Fire to Fuller Pace.
Purity The Flame Inspires
As More Of Christ The Soul Desires.
All My Springs Are Found In Jesus;
All Affections Cry For Him!
Life Devoured In Love That's Copious;
Zeal For Christ, A Fire Undim!

God, Grant Now A Burning Heart For Thee!
May Thy Pow'r Bring Inward Purity!
May The Flame Of Love Burn Fervently!
For Perfect Love, I Pray!

—H. T. Spence

The Great High Priest

2004 Men's Prayer Conference
"Bearing the Iniquity of the Holy Things" — Ex. 28:38

H. T. Spence

Robert Wilson

1. My great High Priest is Christ on high, Who in - ter - cedes for me.
2. This great High Priest be - fore God's throne Stands in His glo - ry fair!
3. Christ bore my sins on Cal - va - ry, He bore my Old Man too.
4. So let us come in wor - ship now, In prayer and ser - vice true.

His great au - thor - i - ty and pow'r Sus - tains my his - to - ry.
He wrought a - tone - ment all a - lone, The Gos - pel does de - clare.
But now He bears in - iq - ui - ty Of ho - ly things so true.
Him - self these ho - ly things en - dows With pur - i - ty in view.

'Tis Christ the great High Priest a - bove, In beau - ty — glo - ry seen!

He bears me on His heart in love; He bears me ev - er clean.

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