

STRAIGHTWAY

“And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.” (Mark 1:18)

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Self-Born Versus God-Created

Dr. H. T. Spence

For the next two issues of *Straightway*, we draw from the words the Lord prayed late Thursday night on His way to the Mount of Olives:

Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him (John 17:1, 2).

From these opening words we read, “Thou hast given him power over all flesh.” Although the burden of these two issues will draw upon the word *flesh* and Christ’s authority over this unique power, we must begin with the creation of the angelic world, especially the creation of Lucifer. He would become the critical influence behind the beginning of the *power of the flesh*.

The Creation and Fall of Lucifer

One of the great biblical enigmas, as well as a source for continual debates throughout Church history, has been the subject of Satan. Who and what was this creature? Why did God create this powerful angel, knowing the outcome of this created being and the

mysterious, overwhelming wickedness he would birth both in heaven and throughout the history of the earth? Yes, why did God create Satan? To approach this question from a biblical perspective, we must carefully view the few scriptures given concerning his beginning.

There are two important passages of Scripture for this opening insight: Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. In these two passages the Holy Spirit couches the story in both proverb and lamentation. In Ezekiel 28 we read a lamentation, or a weeping, taken up upon the King of Tyrus (28:12); in Isaiah 14 we read a proverb taken up against the King of Babylon (14:4). In both of these passages, the prophets give particular insights into the mighty power behind the kings of Tyrus and Babylon.

The King of Tyrus is called both a prince (28:2) and a king (28:12). In verse 2 he declares, “I am a God, I sit in the seat of God.” In response, God declares, “Yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God.” As the chapter unfolds, we read of the exquisite description of this prince/king as well as the

power behind this prince/king: Satan. Although he was perfect in all aspects of creation, something happened:

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee (28:15).

What was this iniquity that sprang forth? Note the response:

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee (28:16, 17).

Isaiah 14:12–17 records the

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thoughts that came into this being's heart before God:

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High (14:13, 14).

In Ezekiel 28 it seems we see the power and history behind the fall of the King of Tyrus. Is this an insight that God lamented the fall of Lucifer? Yet the description reveals the perfection of Lucifer, notwithstanding his fall before God. What was this perspective? He was created in the privilege of an anointed cherub, a covering of the Throne of God, and the highest beauty of creation. We read, "Thou hast" (28:13) and "Thou wast" (28:15). Oh, the perfections and glories that accompanied this creature at his creation and his divine appointment by God above all the angels. Perfection, anointing, coverings, beauty, and the Creator's workmanship "till iniquity was found in thee" (28:15b). This creature was designed for beauty and for glory, as a doxology to God. Yes, he was perfect in his ways "till iniquity was found in thee [him]."

What happened to this creature? Isaiah 14 reveals that the *will* of this creature rose up against the will of God in the thoughts of his heart. It is not indicated that these were words declared vocally; these were the thoughts of this creature within his

heart. Bringing these two chapters together, his thoughts were, “With all my beauty and glory, and perfection, I could be the one that is worshiped and glorified. Yea, I could be God.”

The Scriptures make it very clear that Lucifer was God-created, the shining one, the brilliant one, the beautiful one, a musical doxology to God. *But*, this creature, within his heart, with thoughts that united with his will, birthed another entity: Satan, the Adversary, and the Devil—the accuser and slanderer. Lucifer birthed or made another creature, another self.

In Luke 10:18 the Lord Jesus revealed He personally witnessed the fall of Lucifer in heaven: “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” The verb *beheld* is in the imperfect tense, indicating there was a process in the present tense of beholding him that led up to the crisis, aorist-tense “fall.” Did God create Satan? No, He created the perfect creature Lucifer. Lucifer himself birthed Satan, the Devil. *Satan was self-born*. This is an enigma that often has marked the history of nations, such as Tyre and Babylon.

The Enigma of Israel

The prophet Isaiah unveils an unusual parable in chapter 5 concerning the nation of Israel. A song is taken up of the Lord and His vineyard planted on a very fruitful hill. In the Hebrew language the hill is called *Ben Shemen*, or “son of oil.” A *sorek* (“choicest”) seed was planted that was guaranteed to

bring about the choicest vine in the vineyard. A tower was built; a wine press was placed in the vineyard. The land was perfect, the seed was perfect, and the preparation was perfect. Yes, it seemed that the best of grapes must be the inevitable result. Shockingly, when the time came for harvest and the grapes were placed in the wine-press (judged under the crushing feet), the fruit was revealed to be *bushim* grapes: “He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes” (5:2); these wild grapes produced a bad smell. Isaiah 5:3, 4 states, “Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” The answer was obvious—nothing more could have been done! Although we are not told how this came about, there was no failure on the part of the owner.

The Enigma of King Saul

The life of King Saul, Israel’s first king, is yet another enigma found in the historical annals of Scripture. There is still debate among Bible commentators of whether Saul was a saved man. He is introduced to Bible history in 1 Samuel 9 when he was chosen by God to be the king of Israel. We read in chapter 10 of several impressive characteristics that are uniquely identified with him. First Samuel 10:7 states, “for God is with thee”; in 10:10, that the Spirit of God came upon him; in 10:9, that “God gave him another heart”; in 10:11, that “he prophesied

among the prophets"; in 10:21, 22, that he "hid himself," revealing himself to be a humble man; and in 10:27, that when the children of Belial refused to bring him gifts (acknowledging his having become king), "he held his peace" rather than retaliate against them. When Saul returned home, "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched" (10:26). Tender words are written in 10:1, "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?"

As his history unfolds, we see him projecting himself into the priestly office and offering the burnt offerings and peace offerings, which he should not have done. This necessitated the rebuke of the prophet Samuel; it is evident Saul's spirit was changing. By the time of 1 Samuel 15, providence gave him another test to utterly exterminate the Amalekites, which he did not; furthermore, he was deceptive when Samuel inquired of the matter:

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king (15:22, 23).

From the day Saul sought a witch for help to his eventual thoughts of suicide, this man was in a life of darkness. An evil spirit sent by the Lord controlled his thinking; he was obsessed with hatred against David for the last thirteen years of his life. The world with its sympathy for such an individual may present a number of psychological reasons why this happened to Saul. They may even reason that Samuel was too hard on him, or he was under great pressure to do right.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures reveal what led to Saul's destruction. He was a consistently disobedient man to God's Word; he did not hearken to the things of God; he was a rebellious, obstinate, and stubborn man. Obedience is a crucial truth needed in walking with God; God can only be served from the heart, not through mere outward sacrifice. Saul became self-deceived; he boldly rejected the Word of the Lord for his rule in life. He came to believe truth a different way, from a perspective other than of God and His Word. He believed he had a right to go against God's Word. Saul created himself! He became a self-centered man, consumed in his own desires and ambitions which alienated him from God.

The Enigmas Found Today

It is not considered unusual for a child to grow up in a drunkard's home of foul-mouthed communication, lying, and cheating, and to become the same kind of person. Apart from a

miracle of deliverance, such an end is typically assumed.

In the county jail some thirty-five years ago, I met a grandfather, a father, and a son who found themselves together in three different cells at the same time for drunk driving. There is no enigma in this, for the grandfather and the father became role models for the seventeen-year-old boy. The sad reality of that evening was that the grandson had never met the grandfather! This reunion took place in jail, when the three were arrested for drunk driving on three separate nights! Yes, there is no mystery in this situation.

Now, consider a child born in a loving, caring home with parents given to God and living in His precious will. The child in such a home is trained in the ways of God. Yet as he grows up, the concepts of life start to change from those which have been instilled in his heart. He leaves home, leaving the God of those parents and what was given in love to him or her.

Oh, the complexity of the concept of human thought! Babies do not initially rea-

son; they experience only simple images upon the mind. But once a concept of language develops, thoughts form. These thoughts are rationally rather simple at the beginning. The more children learn, see, and take into the mind, the broader their conceptual thinking becomes. There is a crisis point, a season in the life of the child

when he or she begins to *think*. The child begins contemplating thought independently of what he was taught. This happens to all children, both in secular homes and Christian homes, when the heart of self begins to think independently from the father and mother. Such thoughts are influenced by heart and will. These thoughts are very powerful, with the potential of life now being viewed solely by self. A young person can grow up in a Christian home, a Bible church, and perhaps even rarer, attend a separatist Christian school. Yes, even taught and instilled with principles and concepts of God, that young person may still think independently through the powerful influence of self.

There may come a season, however, when the heart of self begins to re-adjust from what it has been taught. And by the time one becomes a young adult, he may retreat in heart from the most basic concepts of God and the clear biblical concept of what a true Christian is to be. Such young people

Oh, the power of self to alter truth into error and believe it to be the truth!

are creating their own belief, even while they sit and hear the Word of God, the Truth. In their thoughts they create failures in others to justify their own failures. Through all of this secret thought life, they (child, teenager, young adult) birth a Christianity of their own; they are *self-born*. This possibility is not just confined to

teenagers and young adults, but any Christian who secretly leaves God and the work of His Son will begin the process of backsliding. Then there will be the danger of changing truth in order to accommodate one's backsliding. He will create new thoughts about the Christian life, about biblical separation, about biblical doctrine, and, ultimately, about truth and the Bible, and a pastor and teacher. The will and these thoughts begin to unite and bring about a *self-born* entity. He becomes a stranger to God and to God's people. God did not make him this way; he is now a *self-born* enemy of God. Dear reader, this was even true of one who was an anointed cherub, covering the very throne of God. Oh, the power of self to alter truth into error and believe it to be the truth!

The Need of Psalm 51

We recall the historical story of David's sin with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. It is evident through that chapter how this precious king endeavored to cover his sin of adultery and, ultimately, the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah. A child was conceived from this sin. The Lord's providence permitted this sin to be hidden for nine months until the prophet Nathan confronted David at the birth of the child (2 Sam. 12). It is evident that David repented before the prophet and before the Lord immediately after the prophet declared, "Thou art the man." It was then that David

went before the Lord for seven days within the tent that he erected for the Ark when it was brought to Jerusalem on Mount Zion. We believe it was during this time that the king penned Psalm 51.

When David was confronted for this sin, he could have retaliated against God and even against Nathan the prophet. But Psalm 51 is the insight of this dear man's cry of acknowledgment, keeping the record straight before others but especially before *self*. Another "David" could have been "born" at this time that would have altered his entire life away from God and away from the fullness of a life we know he experienced after his repentance and recovery.

What are the spiritual keys in this psalm concerning David? It is evident that this sin brought both sight and insight to David concerning the past of self. Self-born people do not see the continuity of life being lived. The tendency is to view life fragmented and in isolated pieces. There is no law, order, or design to their lives. But David looks back as if to say, "This is the way I have always been; I see this! I see myself." And as the psalm unfolds, David knows what must be done to right his wrong. If a person ever leaves the creation of God of the self and creates his own self, it will not include God! He will not see what should be done! Yes, David knew what must be done: "Create in me a clean heart" (51:10); "Renew a right spirit in me" (51:10); "Cast me not away from thy

presence" (51:11); "Uphold me" (51:12). The heart is the core of the *self*. This is why in Proverbs 23:26 the sage of Jerusalem declared, "My son, give me thine heart." I am under a father, a natural father for a season of life. But I am always under a spiritual Father; His care is constant. I will not give obedience unless I see this precious relationship. A father-and-son relationship is not an enemy relationship, nor is it a slave relationship; it is a precious son relationship.

We must remember that the heart has many claimants. Even heaven and hell contend for our hearts. The world, with its riches, honors, and pleasures, is vying with the cry, "Give me thine heart!" And then, there is Satan who is calling us: "If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." The Devil wants us to be as himself: self-born, away from God.

Conclusion

Yes, the Father of heaven is calling, "My son, give me thine heart." Do we have a heart for God? Some may say, "I do not know what I am going to do with my life; I cannot make up my mind yet." Oh, we must come to this very soon; later may be too late! We cannot live the Christian life if we have not given God our heart. Conviction must come to the heart in order to give all the heart to him! The heart must be given fully in order for the rest

of our being to become His. God wants the heart as a gift given to Him, even though rightfully it is to be His. He deals with us, He convicts us, He draws us. At times He must strive with our will, but He wants all that we are, including the throne room of our being. Delilah told Samson when he would not tell her his secret, "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?" (Judg. 16:15). Before God the heart cannot be divided; before God it must only be broken. The heart is given either to self or to God. When the heart is regenerated, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

Dear reader, are you self-born or are you God-born? The potential of the transition is always there: will the heart and will unite in a process of time? Of utmost importance in your life is that you allow the power of Christ to deal with the *self*, in the heart and will. Will the danger of creating a self that is antithetical to the one that God created and intended for you become the reality?

May the Lord grant us discernment to see whether we are truly born of God into the Kingdom to conform us to His Son's image, or if we are the product of being self-born. God must not only be dwelling in us, but He must also be working effectually in our hearts daily.

"The young fundamentalists are seeking to be relieved from the battlefield believing [in] a more tolerant spirit with the Charismatics and the Neo-Evangelicals."
(O.T.S.)

Flesh Versus the Flesh

Dr. H. T. Spence

This article concerns a very important and critical truth of discernment for this hour in which Christians live. Sad to say, most Christians will fail to come to a clear consciousness of the flesh's power and its profound influence in their living.

Sometimes biblical terms may appear as a play on words or perhaps be synonymous at times in certain contexts. The appearance of both *flesh* and *the flesh* is such an example. The term *flesh* has prompted confusion in the latter centuries of Church history, especially when a distinction was not seen between *flesh* and *the flesh*. Even in the deeper life truths of Christian living, there must be a distinction between the terms. The Christian must understand how the Bible deals with this term in each context.

The Distinction Between Flesh and the Flesh

We must go back to the beginning of creation and into the early unfolding of history to discern the distinction between *flesh* and *the flesh*, and especially how the Bible carefully reveals these two terms. Although the terminology is the same, the context clarifies the distinction. If the distinction is not seen, the Christian will not understand the deeper life and may expect a realm of perfection that the Bible never declares.

The first time that *flesh* is mentioned in the Bible is in the context of the cre-

ated *physical* flesh. In Genesis 2:21 God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and performed the holy surgery to extract both a rib and its surrounding flesh from his body. When the Lord brought to Adam this new creature, Adam declared:

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed (2:23-25).

From this context we see the physical body and all that God made it to be for the natural man. However, a part of this *flesh* is the human nature that is an integral part of the complete human being. This nature must equally be understood because it is essential to what makes a human being.

God created angels a one-nature essence, a spirit being of only an angelic nature. Though they live in the limitation of space, they are invisible to the human eye and the human senses, unless God allows a visible form for a human to see. These visible manifestations are not their true nature nor spiritual appearance (Gen. 18 and 19). Angelic beings have only an angelic spirit nature. Human beings have a human body and a human nature, with a human soul/spirit. Flesh is

the distinguishing part of being human.

The Temptation

Genesis 3 records the scene that led up to the temptation of the first man and woman; it is most revealing concerning human flesh and human nature. Man and woman were placed in the Garden of Eden unfallen. There, Satan initiated the first temptation through a tangible serpent (Heb., *nachash*, “the brilliant, shining one”). The temptation to Eve and then to Adam came through the avenue of the flesh, *the human flesh*; it did not come through the flesh, *the sin-principle flesh*.

When we carefully read the narrative and conversation between the serpent and Eve in Genesis 3, perhaps we are surprised that this temptation took place despite her having no sin nature within. First Timothy 2:14 reveals that “the woman being deceived was in the transgression,” and yet Adam was not deceived.

Unfallen, holy angels in heaven, prior to the creation of man, were tempted to sin. However, they were tempted through the spirit, not through the flesh; a spirit self can be tempted to pride. It is clear in Ezekiel 28:11–19 and Isaiah 14:12–15 that Lucifer became his own temptation

through his inward heart and thoughts; he created his temptation from within. Lucifer then became the temptation to the angels, tempting their own thought lives, hearts, and wills (Rev. 12:4). They had no sin principle; they were created without sin, yet their own nature was used for the avenue of temptation. The personality and thoughts of *self* united with the *will* of self to choose to rebel against God. The first great fall from grace was solely in the spirit realm of angelic persons.

With Adam and Eve, the temptation was to persons with a fleshly body and a human nature. Both man and woman could be tempted. Yielding by uniting their wills with the temptation, they brought sin into existence within the human race.

Man is given to the flesh, the controlling flesh, in all of its aspects, proclivities, and desires. What must I do with the flesh principle as a Christian? And what must I do with my flesh?

Yes, they could both be tempted and sin in a holy environment.

They were holy, without sin. Yet Eve could be drawn away from God through the enticement of a temptation directed at her human nature, the nature of the flesh. Genesis 3 illustrates the three classic desires that God made for the human nature’s flesh:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food [lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [lust of the eye], and a tree

to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (3:6).

It was both a temptation of her human flesh and human spirit—"she took of the fruit thereof." Eve was tempted in both the natural flesh and human spirit.

God gave these desires of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life for the good of man. However, within this flesh there is the constant danger that its desires could be used to draw man away from God and to rebel against God and His Word. Within the flesh and human nature that God made, there was the potential for this flesh nature to fall away from God. Could God have made the flesh that would *not* fall? Could God have made an angelic nature that would *not* fall? Yes, He could; yet, He did not! However, along with both the angelic and human natures, each was given *personality*. Each creature had (1) a will to make a choice and to execute that choice (whether for good or against God), (2) intellect (a thought processing ability), (3) emotions (a sensitivity to enhance thought), and finally (4) a will of self for the choice and execution. Yes, it was a perfect creation. Yet, it was a creation of weakness that could choose to think thoughts away from God even unto its own attempted deification.

The flesh, even without the sin principle, is ever in a present danger or risk

of being drawn away from God. The flesh can project itself beyond its headship (as with Eve) and make decisions considered good but inevitably unprofitable and deadly. The flesh nature is weak and potentially drawn to that which is good or to that which would cause it to fall away from goodness. Something must control or influence our flesh no matter how pure it may be. Whatsoever is flesh is flesh; its weakness will always be there and the potential of flesh's *self*.

The Fall of the Flesh

When Adam through the flesh and nature that God made for him partook of the forbidden fruit, he willfully chose to go against God's Word. This failure and disobedience brought into existence another nature that came to reside in his human nature as well as in his offspring's. All offspring of mankind came through the seed of Adam; Adam passed down the inheritance of a human body, a human nature, and the human spirit. Additionally, these offspring were polluted and corrupted by the nature and principle of the *flesh* passed down from Adam.

This pollution and corruption inherited with the human nature is called the *sin principle*, the *old man*, and *the flesh* because the Fall came through the desires of the flesh. Now this sin principle controls man's flesh; his flesh is empowered with the flesh principle. This principle was a new and powerful nature controlling the human nature. These two natures (*hu-*

man nature and *sin nature*) are distinct from one another. The older a person grows, the more interwoven these two natures become, making them more difficult to separately detect. It is a power, a principle, that came out of *flesh*; it is known as the *principle of the flesh*, ever drawing the human nature away from God and deeper and deeper into the *self* of man and what he is: *flesh*. This principle of the flesh is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-spiritual, and it ever promotes *self* to be its own god in the flesh.

The Flesh by the Days of Noah

By Genesis 6, one begins to truly see how powerful this principle of *the flesh* is. Note Genesis 6:3: "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." There was a measure of God's Word that had been divinely revealed to mankind: this truth was a striving, a reproof, and a judging of man. This work of God's Spirit was aiming to correct and to check man's strong propensity toward evil in his flesh during the days of progressive degeneration. But most men persisted in abandoning the way of truth and life. They did not want their homes centered in godly instruction where divine truth prevailed; instead, they chose the way of *the flesh*. The lust of the flesh caused the men to take all the women they desired in marriage as the whim of the moment moved them (6:2). Man was no longer simply being sinful; the human race had practically sunk to the

level of being only *flesh*, totally and absolutely *flesh*, with no consciousness of spirit, the realm whereby man may know God. Man was no longer only sinful; man was fully controlled by and abandoned to *flesh*.

There was to be only one last period of grace fixed by God for the repentance of mankind. God's economy was now to change. We read in Genesis 6:11, 12:

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth [the way and purpose for which God had made man a fleshly creature].

In 6:13,

And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

The *end* of man's rejection of God in his living was coming to a climax before the Flood. How serious had this principle of *flesh* become? It had come to the point that it was the all-consuming reality of man; thus, God's purpose was to destroy men together "with the earth." Up to this point God had not revealed how He would destroy both man and his habitation. But Genesis 6:17 states that God would destroy the earth and "destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life,... and everything ... shall die."

The earth had become fully corrupt,

and violence had filled the earth. Mankind had not only given himself fully to the sins of the flesh, but also the very principle of *flesh* had gone out of him to corrupt the whole earth, the system of the world. Even the earth was exclusively used by man for the flesh alone. In our present day we have come to this fleshly world power once again. The Flood judged mankind, but it did not destroy sin, the flesh principle.

The World and the Flesh

First John 2:15–17 records John giving a description of the spiritual strength of his readers and declaring the various spiritual stages among God's people. Then he warns them about the world. This is the first time he mentions the word *world* in this epistle.

In his Gospel rendering, John speaks much of the world and of the desperate need of sanctification to overcome the world (John 17). In 1 John 2:15 he declares,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Why?

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (2:16).

The Christian has entered a great inheritance through the forgiveness of

sins, a fellowship with God, and the conquest of the wicked one. Nevertheless, the Christian's temptations have not come to an end.

Since the Flood destroyed the first world, the Lord brought into existence a renewed world, as noted in Genesis 8 and 2 Peter 3. But once again this present world has become the product of man's obsessive principle of sin, *the flesh*. Another reason we should not love the world is seen in 1 John 2:17: "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The Christian must be neither conformed to nor contaminated by the world. For the world is the product and manifestation of the flesh of man.

The Power of the Flesh

By the time the centuries unfold and we come to the New Testament, we read of the *powers* of flesh. The flesh within mankind is still the consuming passion of his existence. The two terms now become prominent in their control of man's nature and living. Jesus reveals in John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is no hope for anything of eternal worth to be birthed out of the flesh; it will always be flesh. Only the Spirit can pierce through the proclivities of the natural flesh and the controlling law of the flesh. The Son of God came into the world and took on flesh: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned

sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, “yet without sin.” He lived in the flesh, the body, but He was not “of the flesh.” The flesh was not the controlling power of His life. He had a body; He had *flesh*. He did not do the will of the flesh; He did the will of His Father.

We live in the flesh, and a fleshly body in and of itself is not sin. But it is weak; it is made from the ground of the earth; it is made of clay, the weakness of what man was created in. Our fleshly body is not sin, but its very weakness possesses a potential proclivity to be tempted away from God. At the same time, *I am born* with the principle of that flesh. That principle, that governing law in which I was conceived and shaped will always be my enemy. For the law of sin, the flesh principle that Adam brought into existence, is my aggressive enemy. Lucifer’s sin was *not* perpetrated by flesh,

but by his spirit. Pride is a power that can be found in an angelic or human spirit because it can reside in personality. Man’s sin against God and that which brought sin into existence on this planet was the “missing of the mark” or missing the purpose of the body’s creation: to obey God’s Word and for the spirit of man to control the body.

Man is given to *the flesh*, the controlling flesh, in all of its aspects, proclivities, and desires. What must I do with the flesh principle as a Christian? And what must I do with my flesh? *God must bring about a miracle for both*. We read in John 17:2, “As thou hast given him [the Son] power over all flesh.” Is Christ the power over *all* flesh—my carnal flesh and my human flesh? As a Christian, I must come to know the answer to these questions! And only the Word of God can give me the answer!

Summer Events at Foundations

23rd Annual Marriage Conference

Saturday, July 27, 2024

This one-day conference at Foundations is dedicated to the preaching of God’s Word and seasons of prayer with the hope to instill within our marriages a greater biblical knowledge and a fulfilling of all that God has desired for such an institution between a man and his wife. Registration begins at 8:30 AM.

25th Annual Ladies’ Prayer Fellowship

August 9–10, 2024

The Ladies’ Prayer Fellowship is a needed call to prayer to Christian women. With the woman leading in the fall of mankind, God’s design was to save man through the “seed” of the woman, and that seed is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since her fall, the call to woman has ever been to give her life to God and allow the inner man to become the true adornment of her consecrated life.

The Remedy for the Flesh Nature

Dr. H. T. Spence

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (Col. 2:11).

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of [the] sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve [the] sin (Rom. 6:6).

The critical key in the fall of Adam and Eve was their choice for the flesh life of *self* rather than the spiritual life with God. Thus, mankind has continually been drawn to the sin principle inherited from Adam; the New Testament calls this principle *the flesh*. Every child, with the exception of Jesus Christ, has been born with the sin nature or the nature of *the flesh*.

Is there any hope of the deliverance from this inherited power that controls life from infancy? If there is hope, what is the remedy for this flesh nature and power? Perhaps the question needs to be embellished. Is there hope in this life for God Himself to destroy or render inoperative this inherited "old man Adam," this flesh principle nature that is interwoven in our human nature from Adam?

Sanctification: The Circumcision of Heart

The formal term used in Scripture concerning a confrontation with this flesh principle is *holiness*, or *sanctification*. Perhaps the two aorist, crisis

terms in the New Testament identifying the work of sanctification with the flesh are *circumcision* and *crucifixion*. Both of these terms in the natural are attacks against the flesh. In this article we will unfold the term *circumcision*; in the next issue of *Straightway*, we will pursue the word *crucifixion*.

It must be noted that Paul sidesteps the Old Testament concept of circumcision of the natural flesh and reveals in the New Covenant a circumcision wrought by Christ which is "without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col. 2:11).

From the natural perspective in history, circumcision began with the command by God to Abraham and his household: "And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin" (Gen. 17:24). This token continued as part of the witness of Israel entering a covenant with God; this token was exacted for each male child on the eighth day. This was a literal work by a sharp instrument to cut away the foreskin surrounding the head of the male anatomy identified with the perpetuation of offspring seed.

Early in the Old Testament are several passages in Deuteronomy given to the second generation, where we surprisingly read of Moses mentioning this term *circumcision* in a spiritual context. For example, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deut.

10:16). The great Emancipator also declared this truth in Deuteronomy 30:6, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that

In the Revivalist movement of the 1700s, God's men viewed this term *circumcision* as a classic term in the New Testament for a work subsequent to the New Birth; another term for this work is *sanctification*. Circumcision

Is there hope in this life for God Himself to destroy or render inoperative this inherited "old man Adam," this flesh principle nature that is interwoven in our human nature from Adam?

was especially used as a description of sanctification attacking *the flesh*, or the carnal nature that had

thou mayest live." What is the spiritual meaning of which Moses speaks concerning this literal act?

While one may ponder the Old Testament spiritual meaning of a heart being circumcised, the apostle Paul gives the commentary of this principle in the New Testament. He reveals its importance in the New Covenant given through Christ Jesus. Paul declares this word *circumcision* to be a work of grace, a crisis work of grace, just as the circumcision in the natural was a crisis on the eighth day of a male child's life. This spiritual work cannot possibly be regeneration, for this circumcision was performed distinctively *after* the birth of the child. In Romans 2:29 we read, "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Dealing with the Jew in Romans 2, Paul emphasizes this *inward* circumcision and not that which is *without*. He reveals a work made without hands, yet made of the Lord Jesus.

power over the human nature.

Regeneration is viewed in the Bible as the figure of birth: "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Circumcision in Scripture is declared as a work *after* birth. A Jewish child certainly had to be born before the rite of circumcision could be administered eight days later. Birth is the giving of life; circumcision is an excision, or removal of something. Although circumcision was typically performed on the eighth day, there were a few times where we read of circumcision performed on grown men. A classic example is the second generation of those who came out of Egypt, who were circumcised after they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Canaan land. Their first encampment was at Gilgal:

At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time [those who were born during the wandering]. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the cause why

Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt....And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day (Josh. 5:2-4, 8, 9).

When we read of circumcision in the Bible, there are several characteristics that must be seen in identification with this work: (1) Circumcision is dealt with in the hidden part of man. (2) It somewhat brings shame because of its delicacy and privacy. (3) It is a delicate cutting away of the flesh that covers the head of the seed organ. (4) The surgery of circumcision humbles the man child, and in that season brings a weakness to an otherwise strong male.

When circumcision is spoken of in the New Testament in the spiritual sense, it is a cutting made without hands in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. It is a complete, definite, clear-cut separation of the power of the flesh, the sin-nature power.

To Israel circumcision meant a mark of separation from the Gentile world and identification with Jehovah and the Covenant. It was the sign that the Jew or proselyte had separated

himself from the world, and had separated himself unto God, and had God's mark and seal on him. God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:10, 11:

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

In Acts 7:8 it was called the "covenant of circumcision."

In Genesis 17:13 God says, "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Circumcision is the sign of the covenant of obedience and the seal of the righteousness of faith. Circumcision was the tangible commitment of Abraham and his seed after him to walk in the steps of that faith in righteousness.

The key to sanctification is that it is the work of God, without human hands, wrought on the spirit heart of the soul, that enables the individual to obey God's law and Word. Note Paul's words in Romans 2:25, 26:

For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision [the Gentile] keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

The apostle Paul also stated in Galatians 5:3, "For I testify again to every

man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law [to obey all the Law]." This is what circumcision meant: "I will obey God's Law."

This external circumcision, which was by man's hand and executed with the knife in the flesh, was only a symbol of that internal circumcision, made without hands, the cutting away of the principle of sin, the old man, the evil heart, with the sharp instrument. This sharp instrument is revealed in Hebrews 4:12 as the sword, or dagger of the Word of God, that in this context is to cut away the flesh power that hinders the soul's heart from complete obedience.

Again, in Colossians 2:11 we see this strong statement of the force and effect of this spiritual circumcision:

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

This declares a definite and positive "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," by the act of circumcision, once and for all. The "body of the flesh," must refer to the same thing as the "body of sin" in Romans 6:6.

From this spiritual perspective, the flesh covers the heart and suppresses that heart from fully obeying and fully loving God. Thus, when spiritual circumcision happens, God gives believers a new heart. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit at the New Birth in order for us to love God and to love His Word in

obedience; but in spiritual circumcision, made without human hands, this work of God cuts away the power of that flesh, as God creates a new heart to bring this love to perfection and to bring our obedience to consistency.

The New Covenant

Ezekiel 36 speaks of the New Covenant that one day would be received by the nation of Israel. Verse 25 describes holiness beginning in the New Birth:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Then verse 26 presents the work of a new heart:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh [or a soft, pliable heart].

The heart is the center of our being, the seat of our conscience, and the mainspring of the activities of life. The heart is also the source of desires, affections, passions, lusts, appetites, and the will. The physical heart pulsates with perpetual motion from the cradle to the grave. It is the receptacle of the blood and causes the blood to make its way through the arteries and veins in its endless round of circulation, until the blood pumped from that heart carries the stream of life to and permeates every part of the body.

The spiritual (moral) heart is the fountain from whence flow all the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). In the natural man this spiritual heart flows out in a natural, fallen, sinful life. The natural spiritual heart bears evil and corrupt fruit. Note Mark 7:21–23:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

This is the flesh nature and the works of the flesh.

Speaking of the natural heart, Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” But God is able to change the natural heart, to deliver it from the powers of *the flesh*. God wants to give man a new heart in his converted life. Christ comes into this spiritual heart of the soul; but there is the Old Man dwelling in that heart as well, and thus, “when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom. 7:21). God must do something to this Old Man for the New Man to be at liberty to live His life through the New Man without the power of the Old Man controlling or competing with Christ in the life. The effectual working of God gives a new heart in this spiritual circumcision, the outflow of the new life in Christ. Note James 3:11, 12:

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

The words of our Lord in Matthew 7:16–20 reveal several principles: (1) The heart bears fruit; (2) the old, unregenerate heart bears evil, corrupt fruit; (3) a new heart bears peaceable fruit of righteousness; (4) the natural, evil heart can never bear any other fruit than evil. But in the light of these principles, the *old* heart cannot be made into a *new* heart; for the new heart must be a new creation from God. Psalm 51:10 states, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” David did not ask for a mending up of his old evil heart; he wanted a new heart created fresh from the hand of God: a new heart! This is to be a heart of life, of peace, and of righteousness that could not flow from the old sinful heart. It is a new fountain for life, for living the Christian life. He wanted a new seat of desires, affections, passions; he wanted even a renewed will. Oh, for an effectual working of the fountain of life!

The Crisis of Circumcision

Earlier, we noted several characteristics that were identified with the work of circumcision: (1) Circumcision is dealt with in the hidden part of man. The New Birth deals with *my* personal sins, bringing forgiveness of all sins I have committed. But spiritual

circumcision deals with the heart, the hidden part of my Christian life. It must deal with the power that controls my heart: the power of the flesh.

(2) Circumcision also somewhat brings a shame due to its delicate and private work. It is one thing to deal with my sins but another thing to deal with my heart. This is the most private, inner sanctum of my existence. It is the sanctuary of the *real* me: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is easier to give God my sins to cover than to give Him my *self*, the *I* of my life. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). The answer to this cry is, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:25).

(3) Circumcision is also a delicate cutting away of the flesh that covers the head of the seed organ. It is the power of the flesh that covers the spiritual heart that must be broken, cut away by the Word of God: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

(4) The surgery of circumcision also humbles the man child and for a season brings a weakness and vulnerability to the otherwise strong male. Sanctification, or spiritual circumcision, will make us weak in *self*; our strength is to be found in Christ alone. The wrestling of Jacob in Genesis 32 brought a permanent weakness to Jacob: he halted upon his thigh until the end of his days. He later declared, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. 48:16).

Sanctification is an attack against the carnal heart. It exposes the heart to God alone for Him to purge from the power of the flesh. Only then can one speak of being "pure in heart."

Conclusion

Sanctification, the circumcision of the heart, brings about the casting away of the filth of the flesh. Ezekiel 36:26 declares, "I will take away the stony heart." This stony heart is the stubborn heart, the fleshly heart that is always at enmity with God and His Word. It is the heart that does not want to live in complete obedience. His effectual working within is needed to take away the stony heart out of our flesh. The stony heart includes the self-stubbornness, the flesh, the fleshly appetites and desires, as well as the old passions. This new heart is delivered from the power and control of the flesh. This new heart is sensitive to the blood of Christ and to God in will, passions, appetites, and desires. Yes, both Moses and Paul called it a *circumcised heart*.

We also read in Ezekiel 36:27:

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

When the *new* heart is put in, and the *old* heart is taken out or circumcised, we now seek for the fullness of God's Spirit to control our heart. It is hard to obey God when the heart of flesh is controlling the life of the believer. The Holy Spirit cannot work fully in the

stony heart, the fleshly natured heart. When there is a submissive will, when there is obedience flowing from a new heart, when there is deliverance from the Old Man (that stony heart), *this* is the revelation that the heart of flesh has been circumcised!

Yes, disobedience is what brought the Fall. The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought the human nature into a captivity to the sin principle. In this captivity the human nature is naturally drawn to the power of the flesh. It is ever the heart's proclivity to the flesh until God circumcises that heart, rendering inoperative the power of the flesh.

This circumcision of the heart by Christ is a definite act, performed solely by Him. This work of grace will happen when through faith we present ourselves to Him for the operation. It is a real work of grace wrought in us. It cuts away "the body of the sins of the flesh," or the "body of the flesh," and delivers the heart from the affections and lusts thereof.

Interestingly in Philippians 3:2 and 3, Paul draws a contrast between the words *concision* and *circumcision*:

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Paul says "beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision." The word *concision* seems to have the idea of cutting into, an incision or mutilation;

while the word *circumcision* signifies the clear cutting away, without any mutilation or piecemeal operation.

Beware of the concision! Beware of a compromise thought, a partial cutting away of the body of the sins of the flesh, or leaving it in a mutilated form, as a source of continued trouble and cause of offense to the new man in his spiritual progress.

Paul pleads in Colossians 2:11, "Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." In the original Greek "putting off" carries the meaning "the extinction of the passions and the removal of spiritual impurity."

In Galatians 5:24 we read, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Christ as the God-Man has been given the power over "all flesh." I must believe He can do it! I must preach He can do it! We dare not continue in the bondage of this flesh. The Apostle gives us the hope in Romans 5:20: "But where sin [the sin principle] abounded, grace did much more abound."

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8).

UNTIL I DIE, A PREACHER AM I!

DR. H. T. SPENCE

Amidst the great falling away of our times, I believe the greatest need at this hour in history is godly, Holy Ghost anointed preachers who are willing to pick up the mantle of God's men of the past and declare uncompromisingly, "Thus saith the Lord!" to this present ungodly and wicked generation. It is with this pressing burden that I have desired to write this book, pondering and investing in its hopeful reality for the last 30 of my 48 years in the ministry. Therefore, written for the younger generation and especially for those who will dare heed the call of God to preach His Word, I send its burden forth. May the fire of the calling ever burn until the end of our days! For "until I die, a preacher am I."

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My Pride

My heart was in communion bright
With Christ, the Lover of my soul.
I daily longed to bring delight
To Him alone, His name extol.

The days increased His presence fair;
He blessed me, used me in His will.
Each moment proved I was His heir;
Temptations fled, I fought with skill.

The days increased my confidence;
I stood and shouted—strong, mature—
“See what I’ve done: here’s evidence,
There is no test I can’t endure.”

I then began to look within:
Neglect did come in wooing Christ.
Unnoticed was the growing sin;
My fall would come, my pride enticed.

I saw with fear ‘neath buried moss
The ugly head of pride arise.
I knew right then a double-cross;
I sold myself my own demise.

He rose with might, his sword did swing
With cutting edge no match for me.
His stench of hatred for the King
Did wreak my soul with agony.

His spittle foamed with bitterness;
His breath brought coldness for the Lord.
His eyes of envy did obsess;
God’s Word and prayer were now abhorred.

My strength was gone; I laid exposed.
His sword was poised with serpent fang.
It seemed that death’s door was to close
Upon my life with awesome pang.

I cried to God, “O help me now
To kill this giant of my pride.
O Christ, Thy blood my soul endow,
Or this will be heart suicide.”

I saw just then my Lord above
Did intercede in my behalf.
His cleansing pow’r was sent with love,
As pride now lost its ghoulish laugh.

I curse thee now, O bitter pride!
Thou foulest fiend within my soul;
Thou risest up, God’s grace deride,
To seize my life and take control.

I wage a war against you now,
O fierce Goliath of my heart!
Before the Throne of God you’ll bow;
The voice of grace will cry “depart!”

I saw this enemy of mine
Sink down beneath the cross of Christ.
For God will there this foe confine,
Who did become an antichrist.

O Christian, do you now not see,
That pride’s the enemy of grace?
You cannot afford affinity,
Or dare to give your pride embrace.

Your service and your love for Christ,
Will come to naught, to death’s decay.
Your pride is now your antichrist,
Let Jesus kill your pride today!

Draw from His storehouse full and free;
Lay prostrate at His feet in shame.
Let Christ’s own work at Calvary
Bring restoration through His name.

*Each time you see Goliath’s head
Emerge from underneath the sod
Cry out to Christ: His blood was shed
To kill the pride you made your god!*

—H. T. Spence—

Forty-Second Men's Prayer Conference

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