

**THE CAUSE**

**OF**

**THE**

**GOSPEL**



*by*

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## THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL

There once lived a man and wife who were up in years, and yet unsaved. One evening the husband picked up the Bible and read quite a bit from it. Finally, he laid it down, took off his glasses, and said, "Mom, if this Book's right, we're wrong." He put his glasses back on and read a little more before he said, "Listen, Mom, if this Book's right, we're lost." Then he put his glasses on again, and read a little further and said, "Look here, Mom, if this Book's right, we can get saved." All this is in the Book, the Bible.

In 1 Peter 3:18-9:6 we read, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lasts of men, but the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

I want to consider a very simple subject found in the sixth verse, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also. . . ." Now, notice that this "also" indicates that the Gospel is preached for one cause to all mankind. My subject is, The Cause of the Gospel. I believe that if we better understand what the real cause of the Gospel is, we will be able to discern better what is Gospel and what is not Gospel. Peter teaches in this text that the Gospel was preached before to them who are dead, speaking of the Antediluvians and of Abraham. Galatians 3:8 says, ". . . the scripture . . . preached before the Gospel unto Abraham"; everyone from Abraham to you and me has had the Gospel preached for a cause. Peter tells us that the cause of the preaching of the Gospel is basically for two things. First Peter 4:6, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." In the course of this message, I'll clarify two thoughts, but allow me to make a general statement at this point. The first thing the Gospel does is put judgment on man and show him his true condition. He came into the world born of the flesh, in the flesh, and under the control of the flesh until he is born again. When he is born again, he no longer lives after the flesh, but he can live according to the will of God in the spirit. That is why the Gospel came.

Now, the reason many become upset at the preaching is that they do not hold still long enough when the Gospel is preached. Most generally, the first part of the Gospel will bring judgment on you. Many times people go to church and the Word of God gets so close to them that it uncovers their needs. In Isaiah 28:15-17, the prophet speaks of people who have made a false agreement with death and hell. They think they are ready to die, having made lies their refuge and hidden under falsehood. Therefore, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, and he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet." The line is the horizontal stretch with which you line up the blocks or bricks when you build. The plummet is the vertical stretch. God didn't say He laid righteousness first, but the first thing He did was to lay judgment to the line. He stretches out the Word of God right through the audience, and if anyone's life does not line up with that line, it's crooked, whether

he's a preacher or a layman. Then, after He lays judgment to the line and shows one his true condition, He drops down the plummet and says, "You can line up this way if you want to." There is a way you can be made righteous and live according to the Word and will of God through His Spirit.

The Cross of Jesus Christ had two beams. One was horizontal and one was vertical, and right through His cross He laid judgment to the line.

Too many people do not know their real condition. We live in a sad, jumbled, confused world. Multitudes live in sin because of false teaching and false leaders, while men groveling in sin and disgrace say that they love Jesus just as much as anyone does. There is not a sinner on the face of the earth who loves God. Only false religion has caused men to think that way. Show me one Scripture in the Bible that even hints that a sinner loves God. Jesus said if you love Him, you'll keep His commandments (John 14:15, 15:14). Anyone who does not keep all His commandments does not love Him, and is simply deceived if he thinks otherwise.

Men's minds have been deceived in yet another way. Not only do sinners say they love God, but they make great religious show. During the season that men have called "Easter," their minds are turned toward the Cross of Christ and all the suffering it represents. All one can hear preached is that God shed His blood on the Cross of Calvary to save mankind. That was the greatest manifestation of love that man will ever know. That love was for "whosoever will" accept Him as their Savior. Well, that is only half of the story. In that Cross is also a picture of God's hatred for sin. He hated sin so much that when He laid the whole world's sin on His Son, Christ became sin for us. God would not compromise with sin, even in His Own Son, so He turned His back on Jesus and let Him die alone, showing us in the Cross God's hatred for sin. I want you to see that "for this cause was the Gospel preached."

## **MEN IN THE FLESH**

First of all, the Gospel was preached that all mankind could be judged as men in the flesh. I'm sorry to say that many do not understand that expression. If they understood what the Bible means when it says we are judged as men in the flesh, there would not be so many trying to make moves in their own power. When you hear the Gospel and see it, there is no move you can make to help yourself one bit short of a real, born again experience. You are wasting your time running to priest, pope, or preacher, joining a church or being baptized, for there is no move whatsoever that can help you in the least. You are wasting your time, your money, and your effort on anything short of a real born-again experience that regenerates and makes you a new creature.

Some scriptural expressions are often misunderstood, so let us stay with the text. For what is the Gospel preached? Well, "for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead" that, first of all, they might be judged as men in the flesh. Secondly, when they believe the Gospel, that they be able to live like God in the spirit. That is the only cause for the Gospel. It is being preached over our land for every other cause. The Gospel was never given to build a religious organization, and all these other things that man supposedly has taken the Gospel and built. The Gospel was not for that, but was to bring judgment on their true condition. If men could see their true condition without Jesus Christ, they would abandon their futile efforts and begin to seek for the truth. So, the Gospel was given that we might be judged according to men in the flesh (and that fits everybody). Then, if we believe it, that we may live according to the will of God in the spirit. I want to deal with these two clauses that everyone may understand what the Bible means by the two phrases, "In the spirit" and "In the flesh." I believe 85% of the confusion among God's people over some teachings is because these expressions are misunderstood.

There are basically two kinds of people. Everyone is either in the flesh or in the spirit. If we are in the flesh we cannot please God, so there is no use in exerting any effort. The Gospel was preached first of all to judge all men as in the flesh. Although there are many passages we could read, let us turn to Romans, Chapter 8, where Paul used these two expressions, and we can know

beyond all doubt what "in the flesh" and "in the spirit" mean, biblically.

Everyone of us is either in the flesh or in the spirit. Anyone who has not been born again is in the flesh. There is no need to talk of your self-righteousness: You are either in the flesh or in the spirit. If you have not been born again and are not walking in the light, you are in the flesh and you cannot please God. What do we mean by "in the flesh or in the spirit"? Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He is not talking of gaining a Christian experience, but how one walks after he has one. People often misuse the Scriptures by using only half verses. If you read the Scripture just as it is, it will teach only one thing. We have people who glibly say, "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, and no matter how I live I am not condemned because I'm in Christ Jesus and Paul said there was no condemnation in Christ Jesus." He didn't say that. He said, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk. . . ." He's writing of the walk after our conversion. He deals with how you live the minute after you are converted. As long as you are in this mortal body the thing that governs whether you fall under condemnation is whether you walk after the spirit or after the flesh. You can be born again, you can be sanctified, you can be schooled in Church of God theology, but everyday you must make a decision whether you are going to follow the flesh or the spirit.

Let the Word of God speak. So, Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation. . . ." Romans 7:25, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God. . . ." Even after you have been delivered from sin, after you have repented and been born again, you must have a mind to serve God. You are no spiritual robot that God wound up and headed toward eternity. Paul had a mind to serve God even before he was saved, he tells us in Romans 7:25, but he found out that sin is stronger than the mind. He said, ". . . with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." He wasn't talking like preachers who say, "With my soul and my mind I'm serving God, but this flesh runs off and sins." He didn't say that. He said he made up his mind to serve God, but he could not because there was sin in his life. Sin was stronger than his mind, but even after God delivered him from sin, he said, in essence, "If I turn and follow the flesh. I'll fall again." I know this is what he meant because the next verse reads, "There is therefore now. . . ." When is "now"? It is a present tense word. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

There are good brethren who feel that the law in the 7th chapter was inbred sin or a carnal nature. Whatever it was, whatever you think in your mind that law was in this text that made Paul sin, when he was born again he was freed from it! I am sure of that! You can call it what you may, but when that new life entered, he was liberated. Some say one is not in Christ Jesus until he is sanctified, but there are too many plain Scriptures that teach that one is brought into Christ Jesus when he is born again. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Paul wrote that by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, the body of Christ, the church. How were we inducted into this body? We were all made to drink of one Spirit. When does one drink of that one Spirit? In the 4th chapter of John, Jesus met a woman at the well and said to her, "If you ask me, I will give you such a drink that you'll never thirst again."

She was in the flesh, so she could think of nothing else but fleshly things. She turned to Him and said, "Give me this water." She thought He was going to put plumbing in her house! She said, "Give me this water so I'll never have to come and carry a pot again." He told her she didn't know what He was talking about. When He told her to bring her husband and she said she had no husband, Jesus told her that she had had five husbands, and the man she had then was not her husband. Did He bring judgment? Did He point out her true condition? She didn't run away, but stayed right there and got her a drink. She liked it. She had played around in sin, but she didn't know any better; she didn't know there was a better way to live. But, when she found it, she grasped it eagerly, went into the city and moved a crowd to come to Jesus. She drank of the water,

the Spirit, and had been baptized into Christ.

Allow me to clarify living in the flesh. Remember, the cause of the Gospel is that all mankind can see that they are in the flesh, and that they may be judged as men in the flesh. Paul said in Romans 8:3.6, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. 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 people have preconceptions of a carnal nature (and many other things the Bible does not teach), they often misuse the word "carnal." Throughout the first ten verses of Romans 8, Paul merely contrasts walking after the flesh with walking after the Spirit. He taught that you can tell who walks after the flesh because they mind, they obey, the things of the flesh; while those who walk after the Spirit do mind, or obey, the things of the Spirit. Reading from the Greek, verse six says, "To be fleshly minded. . . ." In verse 5 he was writing about minding the flesh.

Now, one Greek word often may be translated in many different ways, and this particular Greek word is variously translated as fleshly, earthly, carnal, sensuous. The same Greek word is translated throughout the New Testament by at least these four English words, so we must read the context to understand any passage in which this word is used. In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul said, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Now, of what was he actually writing? Reading from the Greek, this text says, "If we sowed you spiritual things, we ought to reap your earthly things." He is talking about financial, material things. So, I am not changing the meaning of this Scripture, but merely telling you what Paul was writing. All the way through these verses he talks of being in the flesh or in the spirit. "For to be fleshly minded is death." In other words, to mind the flesh will bring spiritual death on you no matter how good your experience may be. ". . . 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." Here is the cause of the Gospel: It brings forth the wonderful truth of the universal need of the new birth.

Everyone must be born again. Everyone who has not been born again is in the flesh. What does the Bible mean "in the flesh"? It does not mean in this mortal flesh, for Romans 8:8-9 was written to people with mortal bodies, and it reads, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you; Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So, this is the first cause of the Gospel: To tell all mankind they must be born again. The pope, the priest, the preacher, the church member, and everyone else who has not been born again needs to hear it. Anyone who has not been born again is in the flesh. Now, "in the flesh" means under the control of the flesh, following the leadings of the flesh; and all men, short of regeneration, are in the flesh and cannot please God. There is no need to change your mind and say you will do better, for you can't please God. The standard of holiness and righteousness, the standard for God's people to live, is too high for man. He definitely, assuredly, must be born again. So, the first cause of the Gospel is to let all men know that they are in the flesh.

What have we learned, now? In the flesh means to be under the control of the flesh, following the leadings of the flesh, minding the flesh. As long as you do that, you cannot please God. This puts all fleshly religions out of the picture. No matter how sincere they are, they cannot please God while in the flesh. The Word of God lets us understand that men in the flesh are judged and cannot please God. God has the same message for religious folks that He has for outright sinners. They all need to repent! I am so glad I do not have to learn ten different messages, and then sort out which one to preach because of the crowd that comes to church: they all need the Savior. "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead that all men might be judged as men in the flesh." Everyone short of regeneration is in the flesh.

## WHY THE NEW BIRTH?

In Matthew 3:7, John baptized penitents who confessed their sins, and when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to be baptized, he asked, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee?" When John the Baptist preached, he didn't trace a man's sin to Adam: he traced it to the devil! John did not say, "O ye sons of Adam," but, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." The fruit of your life will never change until you become a different tree. John did not say, "Go and do some works so I'll know you've repented," but he told them to bring forth fruit, and he taught them that there is no way one can produce different fruit until he becomes a different tree! He preached, "Now also is the ax laid at the root of the trees: therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

That is what straight Gospel preaching will do for people yet. That is why they come under conviction. They stand right in the fire and the preacher chops right at the roots. When that tree falls it will fall right into hell. Someone might ask, "Don't you know of a better way to teach that than to say he cut the tree down?" Some men try to get around this by saying, "I don't know anything about grubbing trees."

"You don't use an axe to get the root out," they say, "it will dull the axe." If you buy an axe at the hardware store and start grubbing and chopping stubs, it will dull the axe; but John didn't get his axe at the hardware store, and when it starts cutting, it cuts right down through the earth and reaches the heart, the stump, the root. When Peter stood up and preached on the Day of Pentecost that crowd cried out and said, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" They were pricked to the heart. When Peter used the axe, he didn't hit at the stump, but at the roots! They were pricked clear to the heart. That is exactly where the axe is laid yet, right in repentance. The axe is laid right in the root, because out of the heart flow the issues of life, and until you get a new heart you will never have a new life. Until you get a new root you will never be a new tree.

Jesus came as a great physician, healing all man's ailments. John 2:25 says, "He knew what was in man." He knew what men really needed for He was a great physician. If you go to a medical doctor, he will ask you what your trouble is, and when you tell him the symptoms, he tells you what your real trouble is. Smoking, drinking, lying, committing adultery and all other sins are merely indexes. Jesus is a great physician, and He didn't come to treat the symptoms, but to let man know that his heart is bad. Those men were pricked in their hearts because the message struck them right in their hearts and let them see their real trouble was in their hearts. Jesus made this very plain in Matthew 7:18, when He said, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." This is essentially what Paul said: if you are in the flesh you cannot please God. You must be born again.

Our text stated that the Gospel was preached for this cause, that all men who have not been born again and are not walking after the spirit know that they are in the flesh. As long as they are in the flesh, they cannot please God. If I am crossing up some of your theology, I would that you lend your mind to God, not to me, and at least consider some of these things.

How did all mankind get in the flesh? John 3:1, "There was man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In verse six he answers the question asked in verse four. How did mankind become flesh? He was born of the flesh, and he is flesh.

In the past some, including myself, have failed to see the depth of this Scripture. I used to think He was talking about the physical body only, but he was talking about the whole being. I can prove

it to you. Nicodemus asked, "How can a man when he is old enter a second time into his mother's womb?" Nicodemus was talking about a baby born of his mother. That which is born of the mother is flesh. It is born under the control of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." A child is born imprisoned by his own fleshly desires. That's why his impulses change. He can act like a little angel one minute and a little devil the next. His impulses are his own fleshly desires. I can prove to you by the Bible that he doesn't have a fallen nature, that he hasn't any "seed of sin" within him that produces sin. He is merely born of the flesh and he is flesh. Since he is born of the flesh and he is flesh, he follows the flesh; he minds the flesh. As he yields to his own fleshly desires he bends his will. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

In Genesis, Chapter 6, you will see why Paul said that to mind the flesh is enmity against God. When God looked on the world, He said, "Man is flesh." That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and he followed the flesh. Everyone of the Antediluvians had the same opportunity as Noah. When God looked down He saw that man had corrupted his way, had given over to the flesh. How was Noah saved? He found grace in God's eyes, and so could have everybody else. Everyone else was living for the flesh, but Noah looked up and found grace in God's eyes. He discovered that God was looking down on him. Every little child that comes forth from the womb is flesh, completely engrossed in fleshly desires. He is born of the flesh; he is flesh; and he follows the flesh.

Someone might ask, "Weren't we affected by Adam?" The Bible definitely teaches that we received something from Adam, but it was not "inbred sin," and it was not a sinful nature. Every little child that is born of the flesh is flesh. Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it off". The truth of the matter is that every child born of the flesh is flesh. He follows fleshly desires and if he has a good father and mother who understand his true condition, they will take the rod of correction and change his desires. Some of those desires that are not so proper, a good old hickory stick will "drive far off." If it were an "adamic nature," a paddle would not do any good. They are simply desires of the flesh and of the will. There are two rods to use on a child and God expects Mom and Dad to use the one until he comes to the age of accountability, and then God will use the other. Some still may think that we were born with something that made us sin. If that be true, then babies are not holy or pure. All men are judged in the flesh. Why? That which is born of the flesh is flesh! He is under control of the flesh. Just whatever the flesh wants to do that is what he wants to do. This is why some children behave and some children don't. The old teachings used to make us feel that some of them had a bigger "shot of Adam" than others. That was charging God with a terrible thing. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

Someone might persist, "But, don't you know they received a depraved moral nature from Adam?" I used to think I knew that, but I lost that "knowledge." When we study the very cause of the Gospel, we find that it judges all men as in the flesh. A little child doesn't even have a moral character. He is not right or wrong as far as his moral character is concerned. A moral character is a conscience that discerns right from wrong, and a child doesn't have a conscience until he comes to the age of accountability. This is why he can follow the works of the flesh in innocence. But if he follows the works of the flesh after he comes to that age, then it becomes sin to him. A child, however, can follow the works of the flesh and it is no sin to him because he has no moral character. A child is neither moral nor immoral. When he comes to the age of accountability and knows right from wrong then he chooses his character and he blights his own nature by the choice that he makes. A long time ago I had questions I was afraid somebody would ask me. I asked a ministerial assembly a question one time and they didn't have the answer either. A few weeks later God gave me the answer. This was the question: If there is such a thing as a carnal nature that every child possesses at birth, and that child comes to the age of accountability, knows right from wrong, and gets an experience with God, then is sanctified and is purged from it, if he backslides, how does he get it back? When you rightly divide the Word of God, you can see how he regained it. He was not born with any nature spoiled in any way, but he was born pure. He was clean, but

that which is born of the flesh is in the flesh. He is flesh; he is under the control of the flesh. Even though he followed the works of the flesh, it was not sin to him because he had no moral character. He did not know right from wrong. Now, if we can comprehend that, we can understand some of Paul's writing in a greater way.

To say little children are alive spiritually is not to say that they do not manifest the works of the flesh, because they do. Even though they are in the flesh and they follow the works of the flesh, they are pure; they are clean; they are not separated from God. Someone may ask, "Well, how can they do such nasty little things and be right?" They can because they have no moral character; they have not come to the age of accountability, so they follow the works of the flesh.

I read a recently published article (and I am not speaking against the writer) which said in essence, "I know there is a carnal nature because Paul said in the Ephesian letter, 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath'; and if there wasn't a carnal nature down in there you couldn't provoke them." Now, let us not be foolish. I can make a horse angry just as quickly as a child. I have raised a lot of horses, and you can have the best horse angry in two minutes. He doesn't have any "carnal nature"; he doesn't even have a soul! That is nothing but animal nature, and if you provoke it, it will become aroused.

You may ask, "How can little children be alive unto God?" First of all, we need to understand what "alive unto God" means. To be alive unto God means that one never has been separated from Him. Some think that to be alive unto God means that children live holy. Rather, it means that they never have been separated from Him. Spiritual death is separation from God, and there is only one thing that can separate one from God and that is sin. If a child has not reached the age of accountability, he may be working the works of the flesh, but he is still alive unto God. He does not need to be baptized or have anything else done to him, because nothing can separate him from God except sin, and he has not disobeyed God. He is working the works of the flesh, but it is not sin.

Now, perhaps, you can understand Romans 7:9 in a greater way. Some try to use this Scripture to prove that there is inbred sin in the heart, lying dead like a snake, and when Paul came to the age of accountability, that old dead sin in him revived, came to life, and cut him off from God. Now, read what Romans 7:9 actually says, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He is speaking of nothing more than this: He had done many things that were wrong, but he was alive until the law came, when he was old enough to understand the law of God. He developed a moral factor within him, then, and received a conscience. "When the law came, sin revived, and I died." Some assume that there was sin in him before, lying dead, and it revived when the law came. In a better translation, this reads, "I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin took strength, and I died." To corroborate this, read 1 Corinthians 15:56, "For the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." When Paul reached the age of accountability, sin gained strength over him. Before this it had no strength to cut him off from God because the strength of sin is the law. When the law came, however, sin revived, took strength, and cut him off from God.

Some may think it strange to say that little children are born after and follow the flesh. Why do they follow the inclinations of the flesh? Why do all men sin? Many people think that everyone had to become a sinner because of something received from Adam. Now, let us get the proper picture. Everyone that is born of the flesh is flesh; and since he is flesh, he follows fleshly desires, which are not sin to him until he comes to the age of accountability. Then the law enters and sin gains strength. There are two reasons, then, why all sin: First of all, they sin because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. The second reason is that no one can live free from sin without the grace of God, which a child does not possess. If you understand this, you will know what Paul meant in Romans 5:6, where he said, "We were yet without strength." There is a man in the flesh: he is without strength, and "strength" is the grace of God. Look up "grace of God" in a dictionary. It will tell you that the grace of God is the unmerited love of God toward a sinner, and it is also the strength of God working in the heart of a saint. Why do all children sin? They are born of the flesh,

and they lack the grace of God. So, when the law comes they have no strength and no ability to keep it. While we were all without that strength, void of the grace of God, while we were all going the way of the flesh, Christ died for us. He opened up a plan to give us that divine strength.

Why do all sin? We were all born of the flesh and are flesh, but as children we were all clean. There is nothing except sin that makes one unclean, and children do not know sin. They are not separated from God; they are pure and need nothing. When they come to the age of accountability, since they have been following the flesh, their will is bent through use. My grandmother was different than most modern grandmothers. Today if Daddy starts to whip a child, grandmother cries, "Don't whip him! Don't whip that baby!" My grandmother didn't do that. When my father whipped me, she would pat him and say, "Allen, bend the tree over every day and it will grow straight." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." The Proverb writer has much instruction for father and mother.

So, the first cause of the Gospel is to let all mankind see that they are just in the flesh. Why are they in the flesh? Because they are so born. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." A child has not one ounce of the grace of God, and no one can live true from sin without the grace of God. This is why we should work to reach them as young as we can, before they get into sin, before the evil day comes. We know that when they come to the age of accountability, every one of them will sin because they have no strength, no grace, to withstand temptation.

## IN ADAM'S IMAGE

One may object, "Brother Wilson, don't you know that everyone of us was born in the image of Adam?" Yes, but let us see what the Bible means by that image. In the past we have read in the Bible things about one man and made them universally true of all mankind. For instance, we read how one was born and applied it to everyone. Now, let us read one of the Scriptures frequently used to teach that we received a moral "image" or "adamic nature" from Adam.

Genesis 5:13, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name .Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Adam had a son born in his own likeness, after his image, named Seth, and away men go, teaching that everyone is born in Adam's image. Since he sinned, they say, and lost the image of God and his nature became sinful, then all men born are in it. But does the Bible say that? Genesis 5:3 said he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."

Now, let us read Genesis 4:25 to see who that boy replaced. "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel." Isn't it strange that nobody mentions Abel? He was righteous (see Matthew 23:35 and Hebrews 11:4), and he was born before Seth.

You may say, "Everyone who has ever lived has committed sin." Well, there were a few exceptions. The Gospel shows that all mankind in a general sense was born of the flesh, is flesh, is in the flesh, and cannot please God. This is why all need to be born again. There were individuals, however, who never sinned. Consider John the Baptist. "Everyone," you say, "born of natural generation has that Adamic nature." Well, John the Baptist was born of natural generation, but he was filled with the Holy Ghost before he ever was born. Then, someone always says, "You cannot take Christ as our example when you talk about how we were born because He overstepped the natural rule." No, He did not. He was born of a virgin, it is true, but let us study Paul's lesson in Hebrews 2:14-18. (We will return to Adam's image shortly.)

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took

exactly the same seed that all men have. "Ah," you say, "He was born with a different seed." No, He wasn't. He did not sin, however, because He had strength; He had grace; and He desires to give it to you! Let the Word of God be true and every man a liar. He did not take the nature of angels, but He took the nature of man, the seed of Abraham. What is the seed, of Abraham? It is a natural seed, Paul said, a fleshly seed. Verse 17, "Wherefore in an things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." He was born in the same manner as we are, for he was born of the flesh. He had the likeness of sinful flesh, but He was without sin, because He had strength. He could say "no" to the devil. He was born just as we were, only He had grace; He had strength; and He walked in the flesh and condemned sin in the flesh, and showed us that men just as we, born of the same kind of seed as we, possessing the same kind of nature that we have, can live here and not sin. He died on Calvary's Cross that we may have the same kind of grace He has. If He was not flesh, then He could not have been tempted by His flesh. Although He was drawn by His own desires, He did not yield because He had grace. He had divine strength as the Son of God, and He wants to give it to every man and woman that they may walk in His footsteps.

I said that we all were born in Adam's image. What does Genesis 5:3 mean? "He brought forth a son in his own likeness and his own image." I brought forth a son in my image. Some have said, "Brother Wilson, as long as Pete [my son] lives, you will never die. He's a 'spittin' image' of you!" The Bible says no more than that Seth looked just like his Daddy! All of us, however, bear Adam's image. First Corinthians 15:45, "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul." That is exactly what a baby is when he is born. Adam had no power to affect anyone but him for good or evil. He was just a living soul. When you were born, you were just a living soul. Since Adam was just a living soul, he affected no one else. I have read some older Church of God books (I could cite at least four of them) that use the expression, "assuming that Adam was the head of the race." *Assuming*. That is purely assumption. There isn't a verse of Bible that states such a thing. Let us not just "assume" something. The Bible said that Adam was just a living soul. Some say that since Adam failed God, he lost his soul, died, and went to hell. But the Bible does not say that. I believe that God is just and that God is merciful, and that He provided a way for Adam to be saved. Adam was just a living soul.

When I first tried to trace the origin of the teaching of inherited sin, I heard people say, "We assume that man is born with inbred sin." I wanted to know where the Bible said it, but the Bible doesn't teach it. So, I searched to see where something did say it. When I went into history, I found that in the falling away from truth and the rising up of apostate Roman Catholicism, that Augustine first taught that sin exists in two forms. Roman Catholicism still teaches it. A man once tried to prove to me that we inherit sin from Adam. He said, "Man, you ought to see it; even Romanism and Protestantism teach this is right." I just smiled, because that aids in proving it is wrong. Rome started the teaching, and they still practice it. A little child is born into the world with a mortal sin, they teach, so as soon as he is born a sister or priest sprinkles him quickly, because if his breath stops, he will go to Limbo. Then, when he is old enough to sin volitionally, he commits a venial sin, actually transgresses. Luther carried it into Lutheranism; Wesley transmitted it to Methodism and the holiness sects; and it was introduced from them into the Church of God Movement. There is no Bible for it.

Well, you may wonder, how do we all bear the image of Adam? Let us read a few more verses in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning with verse 45: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was a living soul: the last Adam was a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." Why did Adam sin? He had no grace. Adam and Eve were living souls, just as a small child. The only difference between them and a little child is that the child comes into life a baby, and Adam came forth a grown man. Adam, however, had no grace, no strength.

Verse 48 reads, "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy. . . ." How, then, do we possess Adam's image? By having a mortal body made of the dust. That is the only

image we have received from Adam. He was made from the dust, and we are, too. Listen to the Bible, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We bear the image of the earthy. Everyone of us has a mortal body, just like Adam's, it is made of the dust. The only difference is that Adam was made as a man, while we entered life as babies. He was made a living soul; we were born as living souls. As we have all borne the image of the earthy in our mortal bodies, we shall all also bear the image of the heavenly in our resurrected bodies; for when Jesus comes again, saints and sinners alike will receive glorified bodies. Verse 53 explains how we have borne the image of Adam: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." So, everyone of us is in Adam's image, possessing an earthly body, a mortal body, a body made of the dust. This is why Paul wrote in verse 22, "In Adam all die." In Christ, all will be resurrected. We all bear the image of the "earthy" in having a mortal body. That is the only point of relationship the Bible teaches exists between Adam and his posterity.

Just as Adam was made a "living soul," you and I are born as born "living souls." Let us return to John 3. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." Men use the word "again" to mean that one who has been born once needs to be born another time. That is not what He said. Here is the simplicity of the message: That which born of the flesh is flesh. All have had that birth, but all need a different birth. "Born again" is better translated by "another birth." Being born again is not the same thing as being born over a second time. You have had a fleshly birth, but you need a spiritual birth. The Gospel judges all mankind in the flesh, as following after the flesh with no power to do differently, and its message is: You need to be born again; you need another birth, a spiritual birth. You need to be born of the spirit, and when you are born of the Spirit, you are no longer "in the flesh."

Paul used the same teachings of Jesus when he wrote in Galatians 1:13-15, concerning his own experience: "For ye have heard of my conversation in times past in the Jewish religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers [and traditions of our fathers are wasting the church today]. But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb. . . ." Now, what do you think of that? Jesus said to old Nicodemus, "You must be born again."

"Why, how could I enter the second time into my mother's womb?" Now, Paul writes of his conversion, saying, "The same God who separated me from my mother's womb. . . ." What happened then? God's power operates when every babe is separated from his mother's womb. As long as he is in the mother's womb, he lives on life from her, but when the cord is clipped and the separation is made, a new "life begins. And if God does not give life, that baby will die. So, Paul said that same God who separated me from my mother's womb and gave me a new physical life, separated me from the old life I was living and gave me a new spiritual life. I was born of the spirit just as I was first born of the earth. Being born again is not being born over, but it is having a new and different birth. Everyone was born of the flesh, but he needs to be born again of the spirit.

Did you know that there are as many people living in this generation as have lived from Adam's day to ours? That is how much our population has exploded, so what a job we have for the Gospel must be preached to everyone. What is the cause of the Gospel? Why was it preached to everybody from Abraham to us? First of all, it is to put judgment on all mankind and let them see that they are in the flesh, and that as long as they are in the flesh, they cannot please God. They are all in the flesh because of their natural birth. God, however, is so gracious, good, and kind that He governs the child to the age of moral responsibility, even though he follows the works of the flesh and has a father and mother who will not teach him right from wrong, who will not bend or correct his will. In spite of this, God does not impute sin to him until he comes to the age of accountability and develops a moral character. When he reaches the age of accountability, the law comes and every child sins. He sins because he has no strength, no grace, to repel sin. So, the Gospel judges all men in the flesh. Secondly, it is given that those who believe it may experience

a new birth and can live according to God, in the spirit. All mankind is in one category or another. You may be living according to your own selfish desires, in the flesh, but if you will be born again the power of the Gospel will so change you that you will live after God in the spirit. This is the whole cause of the Gospel.

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