

That They Might Be One

By Michael Clark and George Davis

Just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed the words we now know as John chapter seventeen. He did not pray for Himself, but for all that would come after Him in pursuit of the kingdom of God.

"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. (John 17:11, NKJV).

What did He mean when He said, "that they may be one as (in the same manner and by the same means as) we are"? Just how are Jesus and the Father one? We know that they are and always have been one in agreement. Even when it meant the loss of His life, Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matthew 26:42, NKJV).

Elsewhere Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." (John 10:30, NKJV).

But is it possible that they are one in a more singular way? Is it possible that first, in and of themselves they are each one? We often speak of ourselves as being body, soul and spirit. We speak of being in the spirit or in the flesh. We speak of our secular lives and our religious lives as two separate things. We seem to be all compartmentalized into many different categories. If so, are we truly one? Was this the life that Jesus lived, fragmented and deluded?

Now consider this verse:

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matthew 6:22, KJV).

Jesus is the Light of the world. He has a single eye. What does it mean to have a single eye? We don't think that Jesus is talking about us being a glowing Cyclops here. No, to have a single eye is to have a single vision, a single motivation and purpose, a single life source and that is the kingdom of heaven and the Spirit of the Father. Those

that have such singleness of sight are often accused of "being so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good."

Do we have a single eye? If so, what is our sole purpose in life? We have known many people who are singular in their pursuit of wealth. Some even call themselves "Christian." They spend their time christianizing their ambition for wealth, twisting the scriptures to justify their inordinate love of money. How could this be when Jesus said so plainly that a man cannot serve both God and mammon? In fact He said that we will love the one and hate the other. People who worship many gods can never be united. If all Christians truly had the same object of worship, there would be a much stronger bond of unity among them. In fact, there is little unity at all. People who have different pursuits and different objects of supreme affection, such as Mammon and various other idols, can be expected to have no unity, for they are not single of vision within themselves. They are wall-eyed Christians.

Permit us to take this a step further. You cannot be a "carnal Christian." You are either carnal or you are a Christian. Sorry, but the phrase "carnal Christian" is not in the Bible. To be a true Christian is to have a single eye. The word carnal is in the scriptures, but it is not found in association with those who are securely in Christ and of His kingdom.

As soon as we put our mind's eye on the things of this world, or even on those who minister in the things of Christ instead of on Jesus, our light becomes darkness. We are yet carnal. Can you see why we say that there are so many walleied "Christians"? These are carnal and not following Christ.

Are we being too harsh on the lukewarm? No. Please don't mistake our frankness for cruelty. We contend zealously that we might all be one even as Jesus and the Father are one, knowing that until our focus is single we will remain divided. Such division is proof that the eye is not single and accordingly the "light" is actually darkness. Jesus said,

"But if your eye is bad (double), your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23, NKJV).

I (Michael) knew a kid in high school we called Dickey, who was walleied. I could never tell if he was talking to me or somebody else near me. He had an eye on us both.

I never knew what to think. Like a walleyed person, our vision is double when we are carnal. We can-not rightly make out what we are looking at. We are like a drunk with double vision and our walk is a stagger at best. Men look at us and say, "That guy is drunk!" They don't know what to make of us. Is this the witness that best portrays Jesus and the kingdom of God? No, this is the witness of somebody in darkness who has to hang onto everything, groping and feeling his way, not knowing what dangers the next step might have in store. These are carried about by every wind of doctrine.

Take Up Your Bed and Walk!

I (Michael) was in a Bible study more than twenty years ago where a brother was teaching from the book of John. As he read from John chapter five, I came under deep conviction. He was reading about the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. You know the story. This lame man had been lying there by that pool, waiting for somebody to put him in the water when the angel came down and stirred it up, believing that if he could just be the first one in the water, he would be healed. He had been lying there lame for thirty-eight years! Now that is faith! It is amazing what great faith people can have in outward signs, but having true faith in what comes without outward observation is a rare thing.

So along came Jesus and he said to this guy, "Would you be made whole?" Whoa! Did He say whole? He could have said, "Do you want to walk?" Was Jesus offering this man a chance to be truly whole? When I heard this, my mind raced! Could you truly be made whole? I mean free of all sin and its stumbling consequences? The very thought was a challenge like a glove slapped in my face by an opponent. Jesus was saying to me, "Would you be made whole? My grace is sufficient for you." My mind was answering, "But Jesus, you know I am but dust and prone to sin." I was making excuses like our lame man did 2000 years ago, "Sir, I have no man!"

As the passage went on, I heard Him say, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk!" Take up my bed? You have to be kidding! I have spent the last 38 years working my way down through this sea of humanity, trying to get to the edge of this pool so I could be the first one in and now you want me to rise, take up my bed, loose my place and identity as the lame man by the pool and walk away? What if I should suddenly go lame again? I would have to start all over.

Jesus was saying to me in that moment, "You can keep your lame excuses and your place as a lame sinner or you can choose to walk in my light with singleness of eye. It is up to you. My grace is sufficient for you, for when you are weak I am strong." Then I read further where He said to the man that was now walking, "Behold, you are made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come to you."

Well, I am sorry to say that I had more faith that day in my ability to sin than I had in the power of His grace to keep me. I went on to fall into sin and to cop to my lameness and weaknesses as I kept my place with my bed by the pool of fallen humanity. It was always easy for me to point and say, "I have no man." I could always find a way to blame others' lack of support or the shallowness of the church for my sin. Or worse, I would blame my parents for the way I am. Now God is saying to me once again, "Would you be made whole?" Would you have a single eye? Would you have a body filled with light? And now I answer, "Yes, Lord, yes, I would!"

Elijah once challenged the nation of Israel who were a walleied mixture to walk with a single eye,

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word. (1 Kings 18:21, NKJV).

Jesus challenged His already fallen church in Laodicea with these words:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:15-17, NKJV)

God is still speaking this same message in the spirit of Elijah today. God has always desired a people who were one. First, one in themselves and then one corporately. Did you see here in these passages that God wants us to be totally cold toward Him or totally hot after Him? He desires unity of purpose in us. He knows that if we are completely cold toward Him we have a better chance of repenting than if we are clinging to our false spiritual riches and our lukewarm religion. We have found that the most real Christians Jesus has saved are those who were flat out for the kingdom of

Satan, fully in his kosmos system before they came to Christ. They know where that road goes. So many who come to Christ today seem to have taken the advice of one of our modern American heroes, Casey Stengel, "If you see a fork in the road, take it."

That They May Be Where I Am

Jesus prayed, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24, NKJV).

That they "may be where I am." Just where was Jesus, the Father's Beloved? Above we read where He said, "Now, I am no longer in the world (kosmos)." Yet He was there, standing before them on this earth! No, He was in the world but not of the world, that fallen system of demons and rebellious man. He had come to His own and His own received Him not. When He stood before Pilate a few short hours later, Pilate asked him, "What have you done?" Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world. . ." That was His crime! This is what the Jewish leaders and Rome wanted to kill him for. He had a single eye on the Father's kingdom, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17, NKJV). His works were always the Father's works. His words were the Father's words. His every act and thought went toward that kingdom.

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (John 14:8-10, NKJV).

So how can we be where Jesus is? By having a single eye and a body filled with His light, by being totally focused on Him as He does the works the Father does. Did we hear you say, "Well, sure! That was Jesus, the Son of God, but we are mere men." Think again. Paul was also a mere man and called himself the chief of sinners. Consider His words:

". . .according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body,

whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:20-21, NKJV).

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in (of) the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20, NKJV).

What? Did we hear you say, "Well that was Paul, you know the great anointed apostle, but I am me. I am weak and despised of men." To that Paul answers,

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, NKJV).

All we need to be holy and filled with light has been made available in Jesus Christ. We have available to us the fullness of Jesus, His faith, His holiness, His life, His boldness, His calling, His choosing, His wisdom, His righteousness, His sanctification and His redemption that we might glorify His name forever.

One time Charles Simpson told a story about being at a meeting with Bob Mumford. Bob had been the guest speaker and at the end of his discourse he told people with different prayer needs to go off to different meeting rooms off of the main auditorium. Well, finally he got around to those needing healing and said, "All you in need of prayer for healing go over there with brother Charles Simpson." Simpson said that he about freaked out. He would have rather had the group that needed prayer for financial help or had marriage problems, anything but healing! People who get prayer for healing expect to see results right then and there.

Then he thought to himself, "Maybe most of the people will go to the other rooms for prayer and I can skate through this after all." No! He said that 90% of those needing prayer went to HIS room. So what was he to do? He started walking back and forth

praying that God would send a Spirit of healing to these people, etc. He prayed and he prayed as he paced back in forth in front of them.

Finally, He heard the Lord say to him, "Charles, what are you doing?"

He said, "I am healing these people, Lord!"

The Lord answered, "Do you mind if I do it?" At that Simpson shut up and opened his eyes and looked over the people in the room and saw a lady light up like a neon lamp. He went over and laid his hands on her and said, "Mam, I do not know what your sickness is, but God is all over you and is healing you right now!" Bam! She was healed. He then looked up and saw another one light up, went over and laid hands on him and Bam! He was healed! Simpson went around the room this way, watching for the works that he saw the Father doing and doing only those works. He said it was one of the most important lessons he ever learned.

Jesus prayed that we would be where He is, doing only the works we see the Father doing and speaking only the words we hear the Father saying. You want to have success in ministry? You must be where Jesus is. If you are, you WILL behold the glory that the Father has given Him.

Paul wrote to the Colossians,

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:1-4, NKJV).

Back to Jesus' high priestly prayer, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

He was not talking about pie in the sky by and by. His appearing in us is for the NOW as we set our minds on the things above. "When Christ who is or life appears, you will appear with Him in glory." If Christ is our life, it is He who fills our bodies with light, shining forth His glory. God is the great I AM, not the I WILL BE! He is our ever-present

help in a time of need. If the world has ever needed His light shining forth from His people, it is now.

What About This Thing We Call Fellowship?

We all long for fellowship. We go to fellowship meetings. Our church buildings have fellowship halls. We have organizations with fellowship in the titles, but are we getting true fellowship? Is our eye single? Is our whole body filled with light? If not, we are not going to find true fellowship no matter what room we meet in, what meeting we go to or what group we belong to. How do we know this? We know it because God told us so. John wrote,

"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:3-7, NKJV).

Here again we see that choice between being filled with His light and our own darkness. How did John find fellowship? He found it in fellowship with the Father and the Son, just as Jesus found fellowship with the Father. He did the works He saw the Father doing and spoke the words He heard the Father saying. John found great joy in hearing and seeing God in action and He wanted us to know it, too. Only as each of us has this fellowship with the Father and the Son can we have fellowship with each other. The vertical must come before the horizontal. Only those who are one individually with the Father and His Son can be one body.

Do you want to be free of walking in darkness? You must walk in the Father, because in Him there is no darkness or shadow of turning. If any two or more of us are walking in His light, we will have fellowship. We must be first found in HIS light individually before we can be one in each other. It gets back to the fact that we must be one just as Jesus and the Father are one, not double minded, not walleyed, but singular in Him. So you might say that fellowship is not out there somewhere in the church, but rather it is

first an inward thing. We must be one in ourselves, one with Jesus and the Father, abiding inwardly in unity with them.

Notice how many times that the words *one* or *unity* shows up in the following passage from Ephesians chapter four:

" . . . endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended" --what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:3-13, NKJV).

Note here that Paul refers to the unity of the spirit first (Verse 3). Without the unity of the Spirit we will never realize the unity of the faith (Verse 13). Historically there have been many attempts at the unity of the faith that have further fractured God's family. We have put the emphasis on the "five fold ministries," on buildings, denominations and having the right church structure, but not on the need of each first being one in the Spirit. Evidence of this is clearly seen throughout our cities in the form of cathedrals, temples, and church buildings, all built on some unifying doctrine or creed. The primary focus of these institutions is on the unity of the faith, arriving at some unified doctrinal statement of what they believe.

We are to be one in Spirit and thus bound together in peace. It is in the Spirit that the Father and the Son are one. "The Spirit IS truth." In the mind of God, our lives are a lie if we are not in His Spirit. Likewise we are to be one body in that one Spirit. We all have a common hope, one hope in our callings. We are to only have one Lord, one object of affection, and abide in one faith together.

The next one mentioned above might stumble some of you. There is only one baptism. What? Paul, are you nuts? There is the baptism of the spirit, there is baptism by sprinkling, baptism by immersion, baptism in the name of Jesus only, baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just to name a few. Nope! There is only one baptism.

If we knew what baptism meant we would not have all this disunity over one baptism. Baptism is an outward sign that we are dead to the world [*kosmos* system of the devil], coming up out of the water alive only in Christ and His kingdom. We are crucified to the world and the world is crucified unto us. We are one in His kingdom alone. We are one in His death, burial and resurrection. We are singly focused on that one domain and that one Lord in our lives. Where do all these other "baptisms" come from that men boast in? They come from not having a single vision, they come from the darkness within. Believe me, THIS one baptism covers and includes all the rest. Paul said it so well,

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. (Galatians 6:14-15, NKJV).

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, NKJV).

You cannot get away from this theme of being one in Christ even as He is one. The cross severs us from the world and the things of the world and baptism is an outward sign of that. Our old man goes down into that watery grave and a new man separated unto Jesus and His kingdom is raised up. Only in Christ by His one Spirit can there be one body and true fellowship.

Insistence upon doctrine or unity of creed is the primary reason that the family of God is so divided. The belief that unity can and must be reached through human consensus is responsible for the savagery of the inquisition. It creates an underlying sense of self-righteousness that causes believers to bite and devour one another. Why do we feel we must contend for "truth" even to the expense of truth, insatiably driven by an inordinate

desire to bring others into our viewpoint? This results in a myriad of congregations, all gathered around their own unique versions of "the truth." God has not appointed us to be anyone's inquisitor. All sheep belong to the One Shepherd. We are all members of one body and Jesus is its Head.

Years ago I (George) heard Campbell McAlpine tell his story of how God dealt with this matter in his life. The Lord spoke to Campbell and told him to fellowship with another brother who had a totally different doctrinal perspective. He argued with God, even using the scriptures to make his point. "You see Lord, it says right here in Amos 3:3, Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Waiting for the Lord's response, and feeling certain that he had convincingly made his point, Campbell rested his case. The Lord's response to Campbell's overwhelming defense was, "I disagree with you on a lot of things."

How can God walk with us when we fall so short of his glory? How can God walk with us when we refuse to meet each other on the grounds of Spirit unity, insisting upon man's unity of faith? If we were to take an accounting today we would find, like Campbell, that God disagrees with us on a good many things. So why do we withhold from others the acceptance that God has so graciously extended to us? Though we individually fall short of God's glory, we still expect perfection from each other. We are not afraid of the truth. Forcing our opinions of "truth" on each other as a condition of fellowship is what concerns us.

Most denominations have an elitist attitude, thinking that, "We could all be in perfect agreement, if everyone in the world would just agree with us. If everyone would just accept our creeds and doctrines, then we could all be one."

Now let us look at God's means of unity from a slightly different angle.

Gathering or Scattering?

Another important key to unity is the way we are gathered. What might appear to be gathering from a human perspective may, in truth, be scattering in the eye of God.

The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power Beelzebul, the ruler of demons. Christ's response reveals a foundational truth about unity in the family of God. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, "[Every kingdom that is divided](#)

against itself will be destroyed. And any city or family that is divided against itself will not continue. And if Satan forces himself out, then Satan is divided against himself, and his kingdom will not continue." (Matthew 12:24-26, NCV)

In verse 30 of this same passage, Jesus applies this principle to the kingdom of God and our participation in it. Revealing the ground of unity or division in the Ekklesia, His Church. "He who is not with me is against me, and he who doesn't gather with me, scatters."

Note that Jesus said, "He who doesn't gather with me, scatters." We might be gathering, but if we are not gathering with Christ, we are not gathering at all but dividing, disjoining and scattering. The development of denominationalism in the world today is viewed by many as gathering, but is it really? Denominationalism is sectarianism, dividing the family of God into isolated sects. This is not gathering. It is scattering! The proof of this is the many denominations scattered throughout Christendom today, each holding different "unifying" doctrines that are used like wedges to divide each from the other. The real question is, are we gathering WITH Christ? If we are gathering without Him, we are scattering. If we are gathering with Him, we can no longer recognize many flocks of sheep with many shepherds but one fold with One Shepherd. In Him we are of one Spirit.

What if all the denominations became one big denomination, wouldn't that be wonderful? No matter how you add it up, 1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1 will never equal 1. It will always equal five! This kind of ecumenical math simply does not add up. In this ecumenical unity you have many people trying to be united by the very thing that separates them, human organization. If a group did manage to unite on these terms it, would not be long before someone would once again come out of the larger "one" to start a more perfect "one" of their own, "The Reformed Ecumenical Church." This new church uses the very same means of unification-- drafting creeds, special doctrines and bylaws to maintain their oneness and their own charismatic leaders for men to follow. The coming out is not the problem, but their means of unity is, because it is not true unity, but scattering. The way they try to unite themselves is the very thing that separates them from the rest of the believers and the disunity continues. Like the mythical Hydra, every time you cut off one head, two take its place. The math of God is $1+0+0+0+0=1$. Only in the death of our old natures and taking on the nature and Person of Jesus Christ will there ever be any unity.

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36, NKJV).

Are We Really Good?

There is as desperate cry in the heart of man to be like God, yet to remain autonomous and separate from Him. This is the very nature of the sin that precipitated man's fall. The serpent told Eve, "If you eat of this tree you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." This also carries over into the visible church.

Jesus told Peter that He who would build His church. Yet well meaning men and women set out daily to do just that by their own strength. Behind all these efforts to build Jesus' church are what men think of as good works. Men and women encourage good men to be their leaders. They pool their best efforts to build a good thing. Again, our ways are not God's ways and our thoughts are not His thoughts.

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:16-17, NKJV).

Many in this world want desperately to be "good" or at least thought of as a "good" person. In and of ourselves, we cannot be good. Jesus went so far as to say, "No one is good but One, that is God." Yet man seeks to prove Him a liar with his own goodness. Quoting the Old Testament Paul wrote, "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12, NKJV).

We can never know goodness of and in ourselves. True goodness comes not from within us and any goodness that comes through us is from God Himself. All other goodness is from the wrong tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Jesus tried to make this plain to this Jewish ruler when He said, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."

There's that word *one* again. All goodness comes from being one in the Father. If we try to do good works on our own, they are only dead works and a stench in God's nose.

The old man wants to be good, to be accepted and thought of as righteous and upright. This is the source of empty religion which chokes out true faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, the One source of our unity. All that is done from this false idea of our own goodness stems from idolatry. We have become our own idols and in so doing have rejected the atonement of Jesus as well as the goodness of God. This is the spirit of antichrist at work within us.

Jesus did not claim to be good. How can we dare to do so? How often we use that word good in association with a mere man? He is a good man. She is a good mother. He is a good brother. We have a good pastor. He is a good Bible teacher. Did you know that this very word good comes from the word God? None are gods, but One. If we are not one with the Father, there is no goodness in us. It is a spiritual law. If we look to ourselves for the source of goodness, we are no longer one in Christ and the in the end we will bite and devour one another for failing our expectations of goodness.

My (Michael's) wife, Dorothy, grew up in a holiness church where everyone was held to a legalistic standard of goodness. The women were not allowed to wear makeup, and were encouraged to wear high-necked dresses. Movies and dances were forbidden and never would one be found in a bar. Every time the church doors were open, the faithful were expected to attend. These and many more observances were expected of the people to make them "holy." Instead of unifying the congregation, it made the ones who were not so successful in keeping the standards afraid of the ones who were. It also caused many of the young people like Dorothy to grow up with distorted ideas of God. For many years, even after getting free of this legalism, she saw God as a huge man with a fly swatter, just waiting for us little flies to sit down somewhere so He could squash us.

Andrew Murray wrote in his book, *Be Perfect*:

"The chief hindrance in the way to obedience to this command ("Be ye perfect.") lies in our misapprehension of what religion is. Man was created simply to live for God, to show forth His glory, by allowing God to show how completely He could reveal His likeness and blessedness in man. God lives for man; longing in the greatness of His love to communicate His goodness and His love.

"It was to this life, lost by sin, Christ came to redeem us back. The selfishness of the human heart looks upon salvation as simply the escape from hell, with so much of

holiness as is needful to make our happiness secure. Christ meant us to be restored to the state from which we had fallen--the whole heart, the whole will, the whole life given up to the glory and service of God. To be wholly given up to God, to be perfect with the Lord our God, lies at the very root, is the very essence of true religion. The enthusiastic devotion of the whole heart to God is what is asked of us."

Again it is not in our doing the works, but in our yielding to His Spirit as He conforms us into the image of Christ and it is from there that all good works come. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." (John 15:4, NKJV).

The Root of All Temptation

What is the root of all temptation? What was the nature of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness? Was it not to act in some way on His own, to commit an act that He did not see the Father doing? Was He not tempted to do some work that would be solely self-gratifying? Yes. That is where the enemy always focuses his attack. All sin is summed up in these three motives, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. If we are One in the Father as Jesus is one in the Father, the Prince of this world can come, but he will find nothing in us... no handles he can use to throw us.

If Jesus had been concerned with temporal things, as carnal man is, He would have seen the temptation in the wilderness as an opportunity to "get a piece of the rock." He was offered a chance at free food for His starving belly, and an opportunity to prove to Jerusalem's religious community that He was the Messiah by doing a miracle in front of them (jumping from the pentacle of the temple). Finally that serpent offered Him the nations of the world if He would just bow down and worship him.

Jesus saw Himself in the Father, not in Himself. All that He could have or had or ever will have was in the Father, not in the enemy of our souls. Of Him John wrote:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4, NKJV).

Again we see that single eye of Christ, unity with the Father in all things past, present and future. Because of His single eye, the whole Body of Christ can now be filled with Light. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." It is His Life in unity with the Father that gives men light.

God allowed Jesus to be tempted by the serpent because He had to be tempted in every way just like us, yet be without sin to be that true propitiation for our sins. Satan is just a tool. He tests and refines us for God's good pleasure. The Spirit of God, not Satan, led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. In turn, Jesus led the way for us to become sons of God.

The opposite of good is evil, and the opposite of life is death. The forbidden tree in the Genesis account gave Adam and Eve a choice, but the tree of life did not. It was the tree of Life, not the tree of Life and Death. Everything in the created universe has an opposite, light --darkness, male--female, in--out, black--white, wet--dry, good--evil. But here we have a tree that stands alone, the tree of Life. God was saying, "Choose Life!" The devil was saying, "Use your free will, choose death."

Our learned teachers tell us that we have a free will to choose what is good and what is evil, but that is the state of fallen man. Jesus walked a different life before us. He lived as if there was only one choice before Him. He always chose the will of the Father of life. Jesus shows us the way to true unity. We can never be one as long as we see ourselves as righteous.

"There is but one that is good, and that is God." This was true when God had as yet created nothing; and this truth has not changed after He has created innumerable hosts of blessed and holy heavenly beings. Therefore, any goodness in the creature can be nothing but the one goodness of God manifesting a birth and discovery of itself as the created nature is fitted to receive it. No creature could produce of itself that which is good and blessed any more than it could create itself. "The heavens," said David, "declare the glory of God"; and no creature, any more than the heavens can declare any other glory. As well might it be said that the firmament shows forth its own handiwork, as that any man shows forth his own goodness.

The Spirit of the triune God, breathed into Adam at his creation, was that alone which made him a holy creature in the image and likeness of God. A new birth of this Spirit of God in man is as necessary to make fallen man alive again unto God as it was to make

Adam at the first in the image and likeness of God. And a constant flow of this divine life by the Spirit is as necessary to man's continuance in his redeemed state as light and moisture are to the continued life of a plant. A religion that is not wholly built upon the supernatural ground, but which stands to any degree upon human powers, reasonings, and conclusions, has not so much as the shadow of truth in it. Such religion leaves man with mere empty forms and images that can no more restore divine life to his soul than an idol of clay or wood could create another Adam. (William Law, *The Power of the Spirit*)

A Lesson from His Life

The scribes and Pharisees dragged a woman before Jesus whom they said was caught in the act of adultery. They were trying to force Jesus to make a choice between good and evil, between life and death, condemning her for her sin. They said, "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

Did Jesus answer like a self-righteous Jew? "By all means then, we must stone her!" They could have killed Him if He spoke out against the law to save her. No, He did not condemn her to save His own neck. In fact he did not say anything. He just wrote in the dirt while the life of this woman and His own life hung in the balance.

When Jesus finally spoke, His answer was from the Father. He did not answer them according to good or evil, but according to life. When He finally spoke He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." Now He had THEM over the barrel. If just one of them threw a stone at her, he would have been making the law of Moses a lie and would have become subject to being stoned himself by saying that he was sinless. The law condemns all men under sin as sinners and the Jews knew it.

Jesus answered them according to the principle of life.

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:9-11, NKJV).

He did not condemn her, but offered her a chance at a new life free of sin. Just as Jesus once said thousands of years earlier, "Let there be light," and there was light, When He said, "Go and sin no more," He gave her new life and grace to not sin and to never again fall prey to adultery. He gave her a new life and a new heart. The Pharisees and scribes could only offer her death, but Jesus, the Tree of Life, gave her life more abundantly.

There is a rich lesson to be learned here in John chapter eight by us all. Will we choose life or will we choose the tree of death with one another? Daily, in the way we treat one another, we are showing just who is our father. Jesus told these self-righteous Jewish leaders that they were of their father the devil, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. We live a lie as we hide behind the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in our self-righteous robes and fig leaves of religion. We are guilty of murder in our hearts as we hate those who do not live up to our religious standards of good and evil and refuse to live by our rules. Because of our clinging to this tree instead of the tree of life we are constantly either excusing ourselves, "I am a good Christian," or accusing others, "They are evil sinners." If we are ever to be free of sin and be one with the Father and with each other, we must instead choose life and walk in His grace. The letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. A serpent hangs out in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Jesus is the Tree of Life.

We encourage each of you to have a single eye, keeping it fixed on Jesus alone. As long as we continue to compare ourselves among each other, whether saint or sinner, we are in the enemy's trap and we will never be one. Jesus Christ is our one true measure and standard of life. Look only to Him.

". . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2, NKJV).