

The Contender

"CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS" JUDE 3

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Up to this point in the message, we have not actually gotten past verse 16, here in the 4th chapter of Ephesians, so let us read verse 17 and see where Paul begins to narrow this thing down. Remember, he is writing to born again believers, and this was before there ever was such a thing as a tare sitting among them; so whatever we see here,

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was written to the true children of God. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth (From this point on) walk not as other Gentiles walk, (or live) in the vanity of their mind." The word vanity has many definitions; so you have to consider the one that fits the setting, Therefore we would have to say, In this case, it pertains to useless or valueless thinking, vain, and empty of any worthwhile purpose. That is what we are seeing a lot of, out here in the world today; a trend toward humanism. There again, we have a word that can be looked at in different ways. But when I say humanism, I am thinking of a doctrine, or way of life completely centered on human interests, that promotes self-realization through reason, and usually rejects the supernatural power of God. Maybe there is a better word that we could use, but we are speaking of the natural man, in his natural makeup, apart from any work of redemption by God's grace. In other words, just to be plain about it, it

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is unregenerate mankind, trying to make their own way, without God. You hear of a lot of the psychiatrists of our day, telling people, You have got to express yourself in whatever way it takes, to get certain feelings out of your system. They will even tell them, Go tell your boss off, if that makes you feel better. Brothers and Sisters: That is just plain foolishness. Will those who promote such a thing, pay your grocery bill and your rent, when the boss tells you to pick up your check, and look for a job somewhere else? No they will not; and neither will they see you any more; when you are unable to pay their fee. Well any way you look at it, man in his natural state is an enemy of the God that created him. That is why the Bible says in the 3rd chapter of Romans, “There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” You have probably heard people say, Ever since I was a little boy, or a little girl, I have always had a desire to learn about God. Well it is ignorance of truth, that keeps us apart from God, and many times, when truth does come walking down the road, we run the other way. Why? Because He comes at a time when we are totally unprepared to meet Him. He doesn’t come the way we thought He would; so we run from Him, instead of to Him. But to those born again believers, Paul wrote, From now on, be certain you do not live according to

your former ways; like the other Gentiles still do, for that old way of life was vain, having no certain purpose.

BLINDNESS OF HEART

In verse 18, Paul elaborates on what he meant. Notice, “Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God (cut off from Him) through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” It is strange that Paul would use a term like that: “blindness of their heart.” Was he actually saying that our heart has eyes? Well you have to realize that there is something about the heart of man that is very sensitive to wrong. If someone comes up to you and starts talking to you about doing something wrong: what is the first sensation you feel in your body? Is it that your eyes start quivering? No. Your heart gets nervous. That is the very seat of your soul. Your mind is the communicator; but your heart is the reactor, and that is why Paul spoke of it like that; for it is the heart that God wants to deal with. Therefore as he continues describing the former state of these Ephesian believers, Paul realizes that they have all been converted right out of raw paganism, and he wants to be sure they get completely free from all those pagan practices; that they observed in

ignorance. Notice as he continues, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” Now to be past feeling, is to be void of any kind of conviction. Nothing is wrong. Does that sound like our day? Paul wrote this almost two thousand years ago, describing unregenerate mankind of that hour; but as you read it, you feel more like it was written last week; to describe our present generation. Do you know why? The same devil that caused people to live like those Paul was describing, is still around today, pushing God out of the picture, and promoting all sorts of ungodliness. Can God be pushed out of the picture? Some will say. Well what do you think they re-write the school text books for? They want every mention of God removed from the minds of those young students; and they want to be able to teach them to do whatever makes them feel good. No wonder cocaine and marijuana are such a real part of the lives of so many: they have no one to teach them about the true values of life. Never has there been a time in the history of humanity, when young minds were being invaded by the powers of the devil, any more than in our present time. Oh I do not mean to say that it is just young people, a lot of the older ones are just as bad; but except for the few that are Christians: it seems the youth of our day have just given themselves over completely to filth and corruption. Most of them are on dope of some

kind; and it is destroying their minds, and they seem to think that taking dope is a normal part of this modern age. Of course there has always been a certain element of mankind that used dope; but most of them were wise enough not to let that kind of thing destroy them. I suppose what it all boils down to, is that people of this age are allowing what they call democracy; to become a sickness that will eventually destroy them. The only thing is, God will intervene in all of this somehow, in order to preserve an element of natural mortal mankind, with mind enough to pass into the millennium, to repopulate the earth after he once again cleanses it. Right now, you would have to wonder how that will even be possible, but remember, All things are possible with God. As you become aware of certain statistics, you wonder how there are even enough healthy people still working; to pay the bill for all the sickness of this modern generation. Yet to hear our political leaders talk, it sounds like they actually think this modern day lifestyle is making things better for us. That just lets us see how blindness has taken over this society, just like Paul wrote here in Ephesians. I take no great pleasure in looking at the dark side of all these controversial issues of our day; but someone has to. It certainly is not the will of God for Christians to just throw up their hands and turn everything over to the devil in an hour such as this. There is still a standard of righteousness that God's

true children must uphold, no matter what the world does.

BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND

In a time such as we are now living in: When the world at large seems to be yielding almost completely to the devil, it causes Christians to become a little careless also and unless the Spirit of God moves upon someone to sound an alarm, lives can become pretty entangled in worldly trends. Therefore I hope this little message can serve, both to warn of Satan's devices, and also to help children of God understand that every member of the body of Christ has some necessary function in that body. Whether you realize it or not, this whole thing is going to cycle around to the point where every true child of God in this age is going to stand out; just like the Christians of that first age stood out. That is not what Satan wants; he enjoys seeing Christians dabble in the things of the world. But the word of God says, (2nd Cor. 6:17) "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." This was written to you who believe; not to those who are alienated (separated) from God because they have rejected His word, and as the

apostle Paul said, these who are past feeling, who have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, (uncontrolled lust) to work all uncleanness with greediness. You try to talk to that kind, about the error of their ways, and you will hear, Shut up preacher! This is an evil age. The devil is driving people crazy, and they look at us as complete fanatics; but I have yet to see a Holy Ghost filled person who speaks out against this perverted lifestyle, go crazy. On the other hand, psychiatric wards in the hospitals around the world, are filled with people who try to climb the walls, see all kinds of demons, worms crawling, and all sorts of things, all because they have given themselves over to uncleanness with greediness, and refused to give God any place in their lives. In verse 20, though, Paul says, "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." In other words, If you have heard the call of the spirit, to become a child of God: you cut loose from that old way of life, and allow the Spirit of God to completely renew your mind, so that you will think on things that are pure, rather than those unclean things of the world. In the nations of the world where the word of God was respected, many of these perverted evils were held to a minimum; as long

as it remained so. But when a nation began to change its views, and make laws to uphold those changed views, the Sprit of God began to withdraw; and the devil moved in. The same thing is happening in America; that happened in some of those Middle East nations centuries ago. Various areas such as Greece, Turkey, Syria, and many others, where the gospel of Jesus Christ had such a tremendous impact in the first century, were later invaded by the teachings of Muhammad, in the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries, and their desire for something different led them in that direction. You hear very little about Christian influence in those nations now. God will always reserve a few for Himself, out of every nation, but when the nation as a whole, begins to desire something else, and lets them perish with it. That is why I have said, If time lasts long enough, America is headed for the same fate; because she is rapidly shutting God out of the picture. Even multitudes of those who do profess to be Christians, are following worldly trends; set by people who could not care less about what God wants. When Paul said, Put off the old man; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; he meant just exactly that; and the same applies to twentieth century Christians of our day. For just as Jesus also said, you cannot serve two masters at the same time; you cannot serve God and Satan, both at the same time. Our former way of living before becoming a believer in Jesus Christ and surrendering our lives

to him was a way designed by the devil; the enemy of God, for all our interests were selfish. You may disagree at first, if you have not yet had that renewing in the spirit of your mind; for you do not yet clearly see the difference Jesus Christ makes in a life that is totally dedicated to serving God. Some of you think that all it takes to please God is just going to church once or twice a week; but when God puts His Spirit in you, He is after a lot more than that. I suppose a lot of people are like I used to be; I did not drink, nor smoke, nor did I have a lot of the other habits that many people have; so I thought of myself as a pretty good fellow. I did not fight against going to church; but neither did I like sitting in the services very long. I was always the first one that would begin to squirm and look at my watch, and when the services ended, I was the first one out the door. In other words, I really did not have an appetite for the things of God; I just merely tolerated them for the sake of being able to say that I went to church. Going to church is a term we use, and it only means that we go to the place where the church gathers to worship God. For if we do not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ in us; by the operation of the new Birth, according to the scriptures, we are not a part of the church; no matter how often we meet with them. It is usually this type of person, (one who just goes) that will tell you all about what is wrong with the church, for while they are there, they are taking mental notes on

everything they do not agree with. But tell me, How in the name of common sense, can an unsaved person (a person without the Holy Ghost) judge accurately on spiritual matters, when the Bible clearly teaches us that it takes a spiritual mind to understand the things of the Spirit of God? Only a person with a spiritually renewed mind can accurately judge right from wrong; apart from the areas of outright sin. True Christianity is not a game we play; it is a life that can only be lived by those who have met all the scriptural requirements, and been made new by the Spirit of God.

DRESSING UP THE INNER MAN

A lot of people who truly were foreknown of God, have gone for years, without making a total commitment to God; and many times that has caused God to have to use some extreme measures to shake them loose from their dependence upon external good deeds that they do, and cause them to realize that being a Christian is more than just doing good deeds and such like. God has to wrap their old car around a tree, or let some bad sickness or tragedy take hold of their lives; in order for them to be made willing to come to Him His way. If I lived to be a hundred years old; I

could still take you right to the spot where God knocked on my door; and said, Raymond Jackson: You have gone far enough, your way. He had to allow a bunch of drunks to hit my tractor and bring me to the very brink of death itself; in order to get my ear. But you can believe me saints: I did not need anyone to tell me why that accident happened. When I finally regained consciousness, lying there in the old St. Edwards Hospital in New Albany, deep down inside me there was something saying, This happened to bring you to me; and it haunted me until I surrendered my life to God. It is much better just to obey, when you hear it preached; but if it takes something like what happened to me, to bring you to your senses; then just be thankful to God that He knows how to do what needs to be done. Of course we are supposed to be talking about what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of Christian people, even in spite of what is going on in the world round about us; so let us finish our scriptures here in Ephesians. You may be 18; or even a lot younger than that, but when the Bible says, Put off the old man, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; it is talking about shedding your old inherited nature, and allowing the Holy Spirit to mold in you the very nature and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ in you that gives you the hope of glory. Therefore your age has nothing at all to do with what you do about these scriptures. You may be gray headed, or bald headed, and as

wrinkled as it is possible to be, or you may be very young in age; with most of your life still before you, (if time lasts) but regardless of which you are, the scriptures we are looking at have the same application. We are born into this old world with a fallen nature; because of Adam's sin and the devil will harness that nature, and cause you to do and say things that you are sorry for later; therefore if God does not get hold of your life; and cause you to shed that inherited nature, by taking on the nature of His only begotten Son; you just continually get worse and worse; and eventually become hardened to the convicting presence of the Spirit of God, and you can end up just like those Paul describes in verses 18 and 19. But as we said already, These admonitions were written to those who are born again by the Spirit of God; so that we will be conformable to the very image of our perfect example, Jesus Christ. We are not just automatically like Him because we are born again. That nature has to be molded in us; as we walk obedient to His word. That is what we commonly refer to as maturing; and it only takes place as we yield ourselves to what we know to do; to bring our lives in line with the scriptures. That is why I said, Our mind is the communicator; that has the responsibility of sorting out what we hear, and either rejecting it, or passing it on to our spirit where it becomes a part of our makeup. It is through this very process that we do what Paul states here. He goes on in verse 24

saying, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” We can take off a dirty suit of clothing, wash up, and jump into a clean suit in just a few minutes, and the outer man is clean; but cleaning up the inner man is not such a quick process. It takes time for us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind; to the point where our very life continually glorifies God, instead of yielding to our old inherited nature. That old temper has to be taken away and our attitude and motives has to be changed, and that is not something that takes place instantly.

TWO MEN - WITH CONTRASTING ATTITUDES

To illustrate something of what we are looking at here, I am going to relate to you a little story I heard years ago; while still in the Methodist Church. As far as I know, it is a true story. It goes like this, Two farmers living on adjoining farms, out in the big corn country; each had much livestock, and were very prosperous; and at one time they were very good friends; and they both went to the same church. Well one farmer’s cattle was always getting out; and they would get over into the other man’s corn field. This man would drive the cattle back into the pasture field where they belonged; and

then mend the fence where they got out. Not one time did he ever complain to his friend and neighbor; because in his heart he practiced Christian virtues; and would only say, Bro. So and So, your cattle were in my corn field against last night and did quite a bit of damage; but we got them all out and repaired the fence. The other man would say, Bro. I thank you, and appreciate that; and that would be the end of the matter. But then, one day, the picture reversed. The other man’s cattle got into that farmer’s corn field and did quite a bit of damage; so what do you think happened: He came driving into this farmer’s driveway; and up to the house and said, Your cattle are in my corn field; tearing it all to pieces, and I want them out. Well the man took his sons, drove the cattle back where they belonged and repaired the fence. But now this neighbor will no longer speak to him. They both still went to the same church; and the one man did everything he knew to do; trying to bring about a reconciliation, and the other man flatly refused to have anything to do with him; and kept that old antagonistic feeling burning in his heart. Then when he got older, he had a bad heart attack; and ended up in the hospital. Several days passed; and finally the doctor said to the man, If there is anything on your mind that you need to attend to; I advise you to get it done; for I am unable to offer you much hope of pulling out of this. Naturally the doctor was thinking about a will and things of that nature;

but the man immediately told his wife, Get Bro. So and So (his neighbor that he had refused to be reconciled to for years) to come over here right away. Naturally when word reached the other man that his neighbor wanted to see him, it made him feel good; and he went right over to the hospital to see him. The old man looked up from his bed and said, Brother: I have been a fool, acting the way I have. Will you forgive me? The answer was, Sure I forgive you, and after that, they talked for a long time. Then the other man, in the bed, got to feeling pretty good; and when he did, his attitude changed again; and he said, Just in case I do pull through this, I want you to know, everything will remain as it was before today. Brothers and Sisters: There are people going to church every Sunday that have attitudes exactly like that. They read these same scriptures; but they never allow the Spirit of God to make any of it real to them. What a thin garb of religion for anyone to be wearing! That is just like making a mockery out of the word of God. A person like that may call themselves a Christian; but what does the Bible call them? If I read my Bible correctly, that kind of religion is vain. That is not what God is after. Going to church was just a form with him, for there was no Christlikeness in him.

Alright we still have a couple more verses to look at here; and I again remind you that Paul is writing to Christians; telling them what is

necessary in order to grow to maturity. Verse 25, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. (Verse 26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” That literally means this, A Christian person may have cause to become angry; but the Bible way, is to go right to the source of that anger; and get it straightened out, and not let it eat at your insides. If you get angry, and then just let that anger boil inside of you without trying to get it straightened out: it becomes a root of bitterness; like Paul spoke of in the 12th chapter of Hebrews. Well the point is, Jesus is coming back after an element of people that have been washed by the word of God; and that root of bitterness has no part in it. The world is being overrun with the powers of evil; but the Church of the living God is not supposed to be part of any of that. After Paul said, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (he also said) Neither give place to the devil.” Now saints: Do you know what he was referring to there? Simply this, when you have the Spirit of God in you, the only room the devil can have is what you give him. That is what John meant when he said, “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” The Spirit of God in you is there to enable you to overcome all the forces of evil; no matter how severe they are. But God’s Spirit always works according to His word; so you have to do things

His way in order to gain the victory when Satan attacks you.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE CHURCH

This seems like a good place to bring in Ephesians 5:26 & 27, before we continue on in chapter 4, for this is what gives purpose to all those other scriptures dealing with Christian behavior. "That He might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the word." The word of God is supposed to do the same thing for the spirit of a Christian person, that a bath does for our natural body. We take a bath to wash away dirt, and become clean; therefore the word of God cleanses us from all of the devil's filth; and sanctifies us. Why? "That He (Christ Jesus) might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." That is the end result. That is what everything else works toward; so let us go back to chapter 4 now and look at the rest of the chapter. We read it in chapters and verses, but when Paul wrote this to the Ephesian Church; it was just a letter without these divisions. But as we go back here to verse 27, to look at the rest

of the chapter, just try to imagine a pastor of an assembly of born again believers: speaking to them like this. A denominational pastor could not do it; without running the risk of being voted out of his job; but a man called of God to pastor a church, is obligated to preach and teach the entire word of God to his congregation; no matter who gets their feelings hurt. It is not always popular to preach the word of God in its fullness; but in order to accomplish the purpose of God, stated in the two verses we just read, it is necessary. I have been pastoring this congregation for 31 years now; and I have seen a lot of people come and go, for one reason or the other; in those 31 years. But as I look out over the congregation, I see quite a few that have been right here, during all those years. This brings to my mind something one brother in the church related to me the other day. Over where he works, some of them got into a discussion about the hiring and firing of preachers; and they asked him if we have board members here. When he told them that we do, they wanted to know what happens if the preacher teaches something they do not like. His reply was, If you do not like what is taught in Faith Assembly; you do not vote the preacher out; you move out yourself. Brothers and Sisters: That is the way it is supposed to be; unless the preacher somehow allows the devil to get his own life messed up. But even then, the Holy Ghost is the one that should direct whatever action needs to

be taken. Out here in these denominational systems, where the congregations hire and fire preachers at will: you will not find the church being washed by the water of the word of God; for that is not where the Church is. The Church of the living God has already been called out of those systems; and what is left in them is void of the Spirit of God; or they would not still be there. Just as the Jews had to spend years in Babylonian captivity, so did the Church have to do likewise. AS long as the Church remained in those systems of religion, she was just as much in captivity and confusion spiritually, as the Jews were in the natural; when they were down in Babylon.

STANDING - WITHOUT COMPROMISE

I had no way of knowing 31 years ago, what this little church would have to go through with, in order to stand for the truth of God's word; but I am ever so thankful that we have been able to face the trials, tests, persecutions, and so forth; without having to compromise with the truth; in order to please someone's flesh. Furthermore we have not had to build huge buildings, nor amusement parks, nor beg for money; in order to fulfill what God has called us to do. These who do such things,

claim to be having a great Holy Ghost revival, and they talk much about getting the people of God ready for the rapture. But let me tell you saints, You are not going out of here to meet the Lord in the air, on a water slide. The Holy Ghost gets no thrill over a spill. (This message was preached in August 1986.) It will take a revelation in your heart and a total surrender to the spirit of God, in order to get out of here in the rapture; and those who lack these essentials, will still be right here going through their religious rituals; when the great tribulation hits the earth. I think of all the people that moved into this area through the years past; just to be able to sit under the ministry of Bro. Branham; and then I look at where a lot of them are today; and it just proves that demonstrations of the Spirit, and miracles of various kinds, do not serve to perfect anyone. It is wonderful to be in such services; but the perfection God is looking for in you and me, is something that is molded in us day by day; as we follow the present revealed truth of His word. A lot of people that I have had utmost respect for, and felt that they would be loyal and true right to the end, have hit a snag in their walk with God; and do not even seem to care; and some of them flipped, just because of some little minor thing; that to most people would have meant nothing. But like we have said over and over, God knows those that are truly His; and He will correct them in whatever way it takes, to get them straightened out, and get them back on

the right track; even if He has to allow Satan to work on their flesh, and maybe bring them right to death's door. Believe me: He has His ways of doing things; and in the end, every true child of God will confess that all things do truly work together for good to those that love God, and are the called according to HIS purpose. We pray: Lord, lead us by your Spirit, and help us to know your will for our lives; and of course we mean it; but let me tell you: That is a big order. Oh the problem is not on God's part; I can be in the Spirit today, and everything be lovely, and something can come down the road tomorrow; that, if I am not careful, will throw me for a loop. No. It will not take the truth away from me; but if I have never been able to get my feelings, my motivations, and my true desires in harmony with the word: that is the kind of shaky ground I stand on, and I still have a long way to go.

EXAMPLES OF GIVING PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Alright let us get back to verses 27, in the 4th chapter of Ephesians; where Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil." Why did he say that? Simply because we never get so holy that the devil does not try to get us into some kind of a compromising situation. We have to be constantly on guard; lest he

find an opportunity to get something between you and me, or someone else, to create a commotion, and maybe cast a stumbling stone in some weaker saint's pathway. Remember: The world does not see Jesus in His own person; they have to see Him through the lives of the true children of God; and the devil tries to prevent that. He cannot do anything to change our relationship to God; for when we are sealed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit: that seal cannot be broken. But he can sure cause us to mess up our fellowship with our heavenly Father; if we are not constantly on guard, and keep him in his place. We will all agree that this is good advice; and that every child of God needs to hear it; but look at this next verse that was written to Christian people. "Let him that stole steal no more." Brothers and Sisters: A person that has been a Christian for years should not need to hear this; for that is one of the first things the Holy Ghost goes to work on; when He comes into our lives, but as we think back to the time when this letter was written, and realize that Paul was writing to people that had been converted right out of raw paganism, we can better understand why they needed such instructions. Unregenerate mankind, that had lived strictly for the flesh, in a world of unbelief, and had gone about taking whatever they had opportunity to take, and doing whatever pleased their flesh at the moment, did not automatically give up all those habits the very

moment they believe the gospel; and give their hearts to God. That old nature had to be replaced with a new nature; as God revealed to them what that new nature consisted of; and this is how He does it. Those Christians in the first age of Christianity did not have Bibles, like we do today; that they could study to learn godly principles. They had to depend upon the ministry of their day to reveal God's will to them. Therefore these New Testament epistles that are so precious to us, were written to Christians of that hour; to let them know what this way of life was to accomplish in them. In other words, they revealed the mind of God to them; and showed them how to take on the very image and likeness of Jesus Christ. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." This lets us know that a true born again Christian can never be a lazy person. The very God that saves them, expects them to work with their own hands; and earn their own living. I have known a lot of characters over the years, who were nothing but bums; for as they went from place to place, claiming to be living by faith, and following the leading of the Lord, you soon come to realize that they were just simply too lazy to work. Well even though Paul says this here, and in another place says, if a man will not work he should not eat, That in no way changes the scripture that says, If you see your brother in need, and open not

your bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in you; for each of these have their separation application. The devil is always hitting some Christian family with some terrible situation that works a hardship on them financially; and that is the time when others are to recognize that need, and allow the love of Christ in them to do whatever they can to help out. We cannot take the time to give specific examples of every situation that you may be faced with in life; but I do know this, if our own heart is right, we will not have any problem doing the right thing. Any Christian can at one time or another, face a situation in life where they may need some help from their brothers and sisters in Christ; but when people claim to be Christians, called to live by faith, and they are nothing more than free-loaders who live off of the generosity of others, there is something wrong. Somebody needs to go back and read the word of God some more; if their lives are like that, for that is not what living by faith is. Some people who live completely by faith work hard every day; for living by faith does not mean that we just have everything handed to us as we go through life. Two fellows who used to pass through here from time to time, (sort of like old circuit riders) and claimed to be ministers of this end time message, just lived from one Christian family to the other; claiming to be called to live lives of faith. They went to a certain brother's house who lived out around

Depauw, IN. one evening, and he lodged them over night; (Now this kind is always ready to sleep in your best bed, and eat your best food) and at breakfast the next morning he said to them, I have to go to work; digging fence post holes; would you like to come along and help me? Their reply was, We will have to pray about this. The brother said, Well you go ahead and pray about it, and I will see you at dinner time; but when he came in, they were gone, without a word. Now tell me saints: Do you see any Christian image displayed, when people conduct themselves like that? No. You do not; the true Spirit of Christ in a man who is called to minister to others, will cause him to set an example of Christianity wherever he goes; rather than that of a free-loading bum; because the Bible clearly teaches us how to conduct ourselves as Christians. Whether we are giving, or receiving, there is a right and a wrong way for us to conduct ourselves; and I truly believe the Spirit of God in His true children will cause them to exemplify the nature of Jesus Christ in either situation.

CORRUPT
COMMUNICATION
EXPLAINED

Alright, verse 29, gives us another reason to examine ourselves; for as we have been stressing, This letter was written to Christians. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” This word corrupt, has a number of definitions in the dictionary; but keeping in mind the fact that this was written to Christians, we would have to believe Paul was thinking in terms of people being careless about the things they say, and especially about repeating something they hear. One definition of the word CORRUPT, is, “To alter from the original or correct form or version;” which is what gossip usually does. He could not be talking about cursing, telling obscene jokes, and things like that, for these are the first things the Holy Ghost goes to work on, as we begin to take off the old man and put on the new one. Furthermore I believe the rest of that verse lets us know what Paul is dealing with; as he makes this statement. Plain old gossip, something we tell, just because we heard it, is corrupt communication; whether we deliberately alter it or not; for it does not serve to edify anyone who is a true Christian. We have all be guilty of it, as we would hear something and just simply take it at face value and tell it to someone else; but it is wrong for Christians to conduct themselves like that, and this is what Paul is dealing with. I believe with all my heart that the time has come when God will no

longer tolerate the true body of Christ being caught up in gossip; the telling of something that has no possible constructive purpose; just for the sake of telling it. If we do not take heed to these things, as the Lord presents them to us, we are going to end up in hot water. God will make sure that we do. Jesus never had to apologize for anything He said or did; simply because He knew how a Son of God should conduct Himself; and it is His image that we are to be conformed to. It is true He said many things that offended people; and He did things that offended them; but who were those people that were offended, and why were they offended? They were ritualistic religious people who were void of understanding of what true holiness is; and when Jesus told them the truth, it hurt; and they were offended. They thought they were the only ones that knew how to serve God; when in reality, they were not serving God at all; for they had perverted every law of God that they so ritualistically kept; to the point where God's true purpose was completely lost in it all. So when Jesus came revealing God's true purpose in the law they were supposed to be keeping, and showed them how they were missing the mark: they were offended and tried to kill Him. Now why am I saying all of this? I want you to understand that there is a definite difference in the way we repeat what we hear, and in our motive for doing so. When you know something to be a fact and you are not

telling it with a wrong motive, then it is not gossip. In 1st Corinthians 5:1, the apostle Paul wrote these words, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you." In a case like that, I am sure that someone needed to report the facts of what was going on; but at the same time I realize that a situation like that usually generates a lot of useless gossip. People tell that sort of thing just for the sake of talking about it; with no real thought about how the situation could be cleared up; and when people do that, the whole thing usually gets told according to the imaginations of those doing the gossiping; and the gossip itself becomes a disease that is harder to deal with than the fornication. Out in denominations: these things are hard to deal with; because their system of religion is not built upon a solid foundation in the first place. But I hope all of you here in Faith Assembly today, realize that we are not coming here just to play church. We are here to yield our lives to the Lord, and learn more about how to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if there is anyone here for any other purpose, you are in the wrong place; for by the help of the Lord, we are going to allow this Bible to speak to us. The only way we are ever going to grow to maturity, is to cultivate the habit of speaking things to each other that are edifying and helpful. You can get a lot of attention repeating gossip; but you will not edify a real child of God with such talk. But

on the other side of this; you start talking about the good things of God, the promises of His word, and the different instances you know of where those promises have been fulfilled in someone's life, and every true Christian that hears it will be edified and strengthened. That is what pleases God.

GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now we come to verse 30, a verse of scripture that has been used out of context, probably more than it has ever been used to express what Paul had in mind when he wrote it. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." First let me say that I am completely convinced by the scriptures, that when we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are sealed in the redeemed family of God; never to be lost again. But saints: That in no way means that everything in our lives is going to be clear sailing from then on. Some of the greatest conflicts of your life will be after you become a Christian; and in many of those conflicts the Holy Spirit in us is grieved; because of our reaction. The fact that God saves us, and puts His seal of approval on us, does not exempt us from Satan's attacks; nor guarantee that we will

always react as a child of God should. The Holy Spirit dwelling in you, is your enablement to overcome in every situation you are faced with; if you will submit your will to God's will, and let Him direct what you do and say. But even then, you are still going to be attacked from time to time; as you journey along life's pathway. God has to allow this, in order for us to be proved. He already knows how we will react in every situation of life. But nevertheless, we still have to be tested; and we ought to respect the fact that God has it so designed; that we may have opportunity to prove ourselves. Remember, the seal is on your spirit; your flesh will never inherit the kingdom of God; and your flesh will never be perfect; it will always need to be kept under subjection. That is why walking in the Spirit is not something we do blindfolded; as some seem to believe. To truly walk in the Spirit requires us to be fully alert at all times; lest the devil cast a stumbling stone before us unawares. I have thought much about this; and about the type of our spiritual deliverance that was set by Israel in the natural; when God brought them out of Egyptian bondage. When God led them out of Egypt, they entered into a journey they had never taken before. They had never walked through the wilderness before; and they never had to depend on God before; as they had to then. Nevertheless when God led them out of there, He never intended for them ever to return to that land again. But in

between their departing from Egypt and their entering into the land of their inheritance, there was much testing for them. Their trials were not all dumped upon them in one day's time either; therefore when they came through one, there was always another one a little further on; so there was no such thing as getting to a place where they could just coast on in; and neither can we reach such a place in our spiritual walk. God has led us out of the world of sin and damnation; and he has delivered us out of denominational bondage; therefore we can look back with gratitude in our hearts; and say, Thank you Lord, for being so good to me. But remember this, Our journey through life is not yet complete; so we will still be faced with many trials and tests; not for our destruction, but that we may prove ourselves to be true children of God, and able to overcome in every situation of life. We have an example that we can look to; in order to know how to overcome Satan's attacks and temptations by the word of God; and when we fail to conduct ourselves in the proper manner, many times the Holy Spirit is grieved; and we wonder why. We wonder why that precious anointing does not come at times; without even stopping to take account of our conduct prior to that time.

WALKING WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED

I want to go ahead and read verses 31 and 32, straight through, and then use an illustration, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, (if we have to put away these things, that in itself proves that they do not just automatically leave us, when we experience the new birth) with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." We have quite a few things in those two verses to look at, so let me just say this first, Any person who just assumes that because they are saved and filled with the Holy Ghost, they are free from Satan's attacks: will not go very far before they come face to face with reality. Actually that is when he really goes to work on you. As long as we are out here in the unbelieving world, running with the crowd, with no particular thoughts about serving God, the devil does not have to worry about us; but the very moment we turn to God, he sets his sights upon us; with one purpose in mind, trying to get us to renounce God, and go back to our former ways. Have you heard people testify of how they never had any troubles until they became Christians? Well the point is, If we just go down the road of life with our eyes closed, and our ears deaf to

what is taking place: we are very likely to walk right into something that will just literally tear us all to pieces; so to speak, and leave us badly wounded. Walking like that spiritually, is just like walking around your house with your eyes closed. You may do all right if your wife does not move any of the furniture. But if she moves a chair, or a table, you can just about tear a toe off. Of course when that happens, you can either do one of two things. You can blame your wife and get mad at her for moving the chair; or you can realize that if you had been watching where you were going, it would not have happened. I just use this little illustration to point to the fact that many times we are responsible for the condition we find ourselves in; and we need to be willing to face reality; and take the responsibility for whatever happens at times like that. We have already talked about how hurt feelings can turn into bitterness; and how even though we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, there is still enough of that old nature lingering, that we can become angry; and may I say this, When we allow ourselves to become angry, we can also display wrath. We do not like to admit it; but if we are honest with ourselves, we will. Furthermore when you do get hurt; do not just take it for granted that the hurt will automatically go away. Or maybe you blame the preacher, or some other saint in the church for the way you feel; and you allow a root of bitterness to take hold in you. That kind of thing will

contaminate your spirit; and once that is allowed to happen, what do you think that does to the Holy Spirit in you? He is grieved, and when he is grieved, you will not feel His anointing presence like you would otherwise. Brothers and Sisters: I hope you realize I am not saying these things just to take up time. We have got to let this book (the Bible) start talking to us; and start conducting ourselves in a manner that proves it is talking to us. There are people who claim never to get angry; yet when someone crosses them in some way; they are ready to let them have a head full; and then they will boast about how they got So and So straightened out. Saints: This is not Christlikeness. What Jesus did when He was dealing with those Scribes and Pharisees, and what we do as Christians, is two completely different things. He knew He was dealing with a bunch of hypocrites that wanted to kill Him. But what Paul was talking about here; is how we as believers are to work one with another; in order to grow to maturity; rather than just drifting along in life, conducting ourselves like spiritual babes.

KEEPING QUIET - OR **CLAMORING**

Alright, a person can be angry deep down inside and hide it; but Paul

speaks of another expression of anger that cannot be hidden; when he mentions clamor. This word speaks of the loud, noisy demonstration. We correct Junior for doing something wrong, and he takes offense for being corrected; and out of the house he goes. He slams the door shut, kicks the dog, and gets it to howling, picks up the cat and pinches it's ear, and then starts throwing rocks at the chickens; and gets them fluttering around and cackling. What is he doing? He is clamoring. In other words, creating a lot of noise, and getting attention. It is sad to say; but a lot of Christians are just like that; always creating a lot of noise and confusion; trying to let everyone know how badly they have been hurt. That is a trait of the old nature we were born with; just like all these other things that are mentioned; and if we are ever going to grow up spiritually, we have to put away all those carnal things and allow the Spirit of God to give us motivation; rather than the devil. People that are not yet yielded, and willing to be led by the Spirit of God, are sure to allow the devil to whet up their old carnal nature now and then; and when they do; any of what Paul mentioned here, is possible. Do not try to tell me a born again Christian cannot act like that; unless you want to contradict the Bible. Furthermore I have been around long enough to know a few things from what I have seen and heard myself. I am going to tell you a true story, of something that happened in this very

congregation years ago. We started this fellowship in 1955, in a little building on State Street, down in New Albany. At that time our regular congregation consisted of about a dozen adults; and our children. Some of the original ones are still with us today; and others of our present congregation, came in a little later on. Four years later in 1959, we had a meeting that really set the little group in motion; and in that process we realized that we were going to have to find a place where we had some parking space for cars. That is when we found the place in Clarksville, over behind the Roberts and Strack business, a veneer company. We rented that church building and moved there in the month of August 1959; and at that time we had a sister in the church; that from every outward appearance, you could not touch her life. She loved the Lord, and was very dedicated to serving Him; both in church, and wherever she was. I know that is true; I am not guessing about it. She had been in the congregation from the time it started; and every indication was that she would continue with us. But when we moved into the other building, certain changes were made in the areas of our fellowship; and before very long, I began to notice that this sister was starting to lose the expression of happiness and peace that had always before been evident on her face. Then I began to notice that there was something going on. Do you know what was happening? She was

beginning to get the idea that Faith Assembly was being maneuvered into a place where it would no longer move in the Spirit. There was a young man in the congregation at that time; and many times they would get together and talk about how Faith Assembly could not go on with God; if it continued on its present course. She did not like the type of songs that some were singing; nor the type of music that some of them wanted; so she just begins to find fault with this one and that one that had come into the fellowship. Finally I felt like I should go have a talk with her; so I took some of the men of the fellowship and went to her house. She expressed to us her personal feelings; that Faith Assembly had reached a crucial point; and could not possibly continue on with God; unless some changes were made. Now Saints, I have had to learn a lot through the years I have been pastoring. I sat and listened to her, and when we left there that night, I thought, Maybe she is right. So in the days that followed, I thought it all over and decided to go talk to a certain family; and just tell the brother it would be better if he did not come back any more; due to the confusion that was being created. I will not mention names; because of the fact that this tape will go out of this area. But I will tell you this, I never did make it over to that brother's house. I had a flat tire on the way, and while I was changing the flat, it just seemed like the Lord said, go home and keep your mouth shut. I got into my car and

went home; and said, Lord, it is all in your hands. A few nights later, I saw the Holy Spirit touch some hearts unexpectedly; in our church service; and each of them stood up and testified that they had carried ill feelings against certain ones; and each of them asked the other's forgiveness right before the whole congregation. That is when I truly began to realize that God was running this whole thing. He permits the devil to bring about a little stirring in the water hole; but if you are willing to walk with Him, and do things according to the way they are outlined in the scriptures, He will take care of the situation; and all who are committed to doing so, can walk on with Him. If your heart is right; that is exactly what you want to do more than anything else. A few nights later, I saw myself in a dream; talking to this first sister I mentioned; right in the church building we had moved into; at the alter railing. I said to her in this dream, I saw you playing the piano in the Branham Tabernacle; and later on, she did become their piano player; and it all turned out that way; simply because she failed to get her way. Now as I look back upon that, it was not because she was a mean person; nor a sinful person, that she acted like that; it was just that she had certain fixed ideas about how the spirit should move in a church service; and if it did not go that way, she just simply would not have any part of it. Well when Bro. Branham got killed and things went like they did after that; she wrote a letter expressing

her feelings; but do you know where that soul is today? Sitting at home with her husband; not even going to church. Saints: Do not ever become so proud; that you cannot admit it when you make a mistake; or your life will end up void of what you had thought it would. Nevertheless I am persuaded that God allowed that condition to develop as it did; partly to test me. Do not ever think the preacher will not be tested. He will be tested; to see if he will compromise by giving in to someone's flesh. The truth is, the preacher is probably tested more than anyone else in the congregation. But if he will walk with God and learn from those tests, he will never have to go through the same test twice; because the second time he will know how to handle it. In other words, you either do something that seems right to you to try to straighten out a problem; or you lay it in the hands of the Lord and wait for Him to work out the details according to what He desires to accomplish in the matter. You who have been coming here long enough, surely must have notice that I am not too quick to jump right in the middle of every little dispute that arises in the fellowship; for I have learned that God knows how to deal with his true children; when they get out of line; and as I have already stated, A tare will not usually submit to correction anyway; so it is better not to give them any room to express themselves openly. Therefore through the years since those early years when we were first

starting, I have seen other families come in here; that from all outward appearances seemed to be growing in leaps and bounds; and all of a sudden their feelings would become hurt; because of a little snag in their pathway; and away they would go. I tell you though: I would not be where some of them are today; for anything in the world. They have not grown one ounce spiritually, since they left here with their feelings hurt. Are you wondering why I am saying all of this? I want you to understand, that if God leads you to come here, it is not just so you can hear truth; but also that truth can mold your life into a proper vessel to carry that truth. Not without testing though. He will also allow enough human flesh in the picture to keep you on your spiritual toes; and it will not necessarily be tares that will put you to the test either; as we have been pointing out all along. For true children of God are sometimes careless about things they say or do; and Satan always magnifies every little unwise incident. That is why I say, If you cannot see the grace of God in the lives of other people; and you rely upon your little sentimental feelings to move you; the time will come something will pick you up; and throw you far far away from Faith Assembly Church; and you will never want to set foot in this place again. I am convinced that God has raised up this fellowship for a certain work in His plan of redemption; therefore He intends for us to be a congregation of people that will not

only say, Thank God for leading me here; but also, Thank God: He is still working on me.

GOD'S CHILDREN WILL BE WASHED

We are washed by the water of God's word; but what for? To remove spots, wrinkles and blemishes. What are these spots, wrinkles and blemishes? Anything that is of a contrary nature to the true Spirit of God. God will always put in His true children, a revelation of how to conduct themselves when there is opposition; or a situation that only He can work out. Those who are led in that way, will always come through a trial thanking God for His Spirit that is able to direct their footsteps and enable them to overcome; while other are saying, That church is in a mess. No. The Church is not in a mess; for the Church is not the sum total of all those who may come here. The Church, (at least this element of the Church) is those who are willing to walk with God; regardless of opposition, and the rest are just tagging along; and will drop off somewhere down the line. When the Israelites came out of Egyptian bondage they were a great, mixed multitude; and a great percentage of them were always creating a commotion; and singing a sad story: "Would to God we had died

by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." God did not like that kind of murmuring and complaining out of them; and neither does He like it out of you. If in your heart you say, I wish I had just stayed in the Methodist Church; or the Baptist, or wherever you came from: you may as well go on back there. This is not the place for you; if you feel that way; for all you will ever see is the negative side of everything. As for me, I thank God for His grace; that has allowed me to sit among some true saints through the years; that enjoyed the things of God; and had a true desire to walk with Him in truth. It makes me feel bad to see people run up against something they cannot handle; and then blame someone else and hit the road looking for another church. There used to be a woman sit right there on the second row; that would dance, speak in tongues, and say, Oh I believe Bro. Jackson is an apostle. But when a certain young man of the assembly rose up to do what he did, because this church was not run the way he thought it should be: she took his side; and away she went. Now tell me saints: Why do you suppose God allows things like that to go on? It gives the rest of us an opportunity to be tested; and then it rids the church of a number of pretenders; eventually. Do you think for one moment that those people are

walking in the Spirit? Absolutely not! Just like Cain: God gave them an opportunity to do so; and they eventually chose to follow their own natural spirits. They called what they had, the Holy Ghost; but that is not what I call it; for if the Holy Ghost had truly been in them; they would not have gone the way they went. The Holy Ghost will not inspire anyone to go against the word of God and try to destroy something that God has raised up by his word. Even if it was my own blood relatives conducting themselves like that, I would have to look at it the same way. For I realize that as we get closer to the coming of Jesus, this water is going to get deeper and deeper; and God is going to see that each and every one of us are either washed by it; or driven out from among the fellowship of the saints. Remember, it takes a hand to wash the body. You never see anyone pick up a washcloth between their toes and wash their back. Your entire body can be washed by the hand. Is that not right? Well God has a hand, to wash this body of Christ; and I assure you He knows how to use it; to obtain the desired results. All carnality of the fleshly nature will have to go. That is what the water of the word is for. Only that which is founded on the word will be able to withstand the washing process and come out clean. If you are here, and all you are interested in is to shout, dance, speak in tongues, and have a good time, let me tell you something. God's bath tub is being filled; and all

of that is going to be put to the test. I am not against any of that; but if we are true children of God, we will not be satisfied forever with just that; for there is no nourishment in that. The Spirit and the word are one; and they go on together; so the Spirit alone will not do all that must be done to perfect us.

THERE ARE MANY TRIALS **IN LIFE**

The woman I mentioned, that enjoyed the manifestations so much, wrote a very negative letter to a man out in Missouri who published a magazine, stating that the church had stopped moving in the Spirit. She wrote me a letter, telling me that she was going to do that, and then the man sent me a copy of the magazine with the letter published in it. Naturally that made me feel bad, but I just thought, time will tell who has left the spirit; for there is a lot more to this way of life; than just a good feeling. When the children of Israel were on that wilderness journey, some of their trials were very hard; but when it came time to cross over into the promised land; those who had the right spirit in them were ready to go across with Joshua and Caleb. Well I still have that old letter, and that old paper. The man who published the paper is dead now; the woman, as far

as I know, still has that same attitude and opinion; but Faith Assembly is still going on with the Lord. We are not endeavoring to run this church like any other church; except the one we will see in the book of Acts. It is our intention to have the Lord direct us in everything we do; and we realize that every so often, He is going to pick up an element of flesh and dump it in his tub, and even use some scouring powder; where it is necessary. Scouring powder is something you use when ordinary soap will not do the job. It is hard on the skin; but it will get down deep into the pores, and bring out that ground in dirt, or grease. We do whatever it takes to get our natural body clean for special occasions; and by the same token: God does whatever it takes, to get our inner self clean for this special occasion that is just ahead. Anything among us that does not please God, he is going to remove. That does not mean He is going to remove every person; but that substance of flesh that keeps his children from walking with Him, has got to go, regardless of what it takes. Different people have different ideas about this little church. Some think we are a cult. Others think we are just a little clique of people too dumb to be of any use to God or man; but we are really only interested in what God thinks about us; for our destiny is in His hands. We are not trying to make a name for ourselves. We have no desire to be like Pat Robertson, Jim Baker, or any of those big names out there; we

only desire to be washed, and dressed properly; so that when Jesus comes for His little bride: we will be ready to go with Him. Through the years; many little elements of people have risen up with a revelation that burned ever so brightly at first; but after so long, the light burned out, and the people who were left had nothing to turn to. Therefore unless your revelation eventually puts you back in the Bible, and causes you to understand God's word the way those early apostles taught it; you will end up the same way; for God will not settle for less than He started out with in the book of Acts. I look out over the congregation here; and I thank God for every one of you; but I want every one of you to know, we are not here to glorify flesh. You will not find an easy ticket to glory in this place. Furthermore let me say to you young people, Don't turn Faith Assembly into a love boat experience. Don't make this just a little trip to find yourself a mate; and then depart, and live the rest of your lives in the world. If that is your motive in coming here: God has a surprise for you; your life will not be a bed of roses. Let me say something else to you young folks, Do not think that just because you were born into a family that comes here, and you have been raised up in this church; that you have any special favors coming from God; unless you also have been born again by the Spirit of God. I would not be surprised, if one of these days some young people from the charismatic

move, come in here fed up with the merry-go-round they have been on, hungry for God, and ready to walk with Him in truth. When that happens you are going to see the Spirit of God work with them in a way that will cause some of you to say, Don't you think they are just showing off? No. They will not be showing off. They will be allowing God to move them to enjoy the fullness of his benefits; both in the Spirit and in his word.

TENDERHEARTEDNESS IS AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD

We have one more verse of scripture here in Ephesians 4, which really sums the whole thing up; for remember, this was written to Christian people who desired to walk with God. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." As children of God, that ought to be one of our greatest desires: to be kind to each other, and always ready to forgive one another, instead of holding grudges against each other, or even just little petty hurt feelings toward one another. Remember, What the world sees through the lives of God's children is all they are ever going to see of Jesus Christ; for He is not here

in physical flesh for them to see. He told His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth;" therefore he expects His disciples (those who follow Him) to be salty, in this old world we live in. How does salt figure into the picture? Well salt is a seasoning element, it is also a preserving element, and it makes one thirsty; so surely we ought to be salty wherever we are; so that we can be an instrument in the hands of God whenever he chooses. Remember, Every joint supplies something in the total working of this great spiritual body of believers; no matter how insignificant we may feel. You do not look around and try to determine what someone else is supplying; before you yield yourself to God to supply your part. The truth is, You may even be looking at a tare which will never supply anything to the body; because he is not of the body. God does not even bother to wash a tare; for there would be no purpose in it. But speaking of washing: Have you ever noticed how some children react when it comes bath time? Even little babies will sometimes go into a tantrum; when Mommy starts to put them in the bath water. Well that is the way a lot of God's children act up, when he starts to put them in the tub for the spiritual washing; but if we are true children of His, we are going into that bath water one way or another. Naturally we are talking about being washed with the water of his word; and it is easy to see why a lot of people are afraid of it, because there is still too much of the

world hanging on to their flesh. That is why it takes some washing, before we can even be kind one to another, as Paul meant here in this verse 32. This tenderheartedness is not an attribute of our human nature; it is an attribute of God. It takes the grace of God to make your heart tender like that. It means, Be sensitive to God, easy for the Holy Spirit to move you. In the natural, some people are more tenderhearted than others. A little something that will cut one person to the quick, will just be ignored by someone else. But spiritually, God wants to cultivate something in all His children; that will make them sensitive to His Spirit, and always ready to respond. Then we will be tenderhearted toward God, and also toward our brothers and sisters of the faith. Then if we have that kind of tenderheartedness: it will be easy for us to forgive one another; even as God has already forgiven us; because the ability to forgive is also an attribute of God. Brothers and Sisters: We are living in a terrible hour of time; for the devil is taking human beings, and involving them in every kind of situation and problem, and no one is being spared. Therefore it will only be by the grace and mercy of almighty God that we get out of here with anything that will really make us look like a Christian reflecting the Lord Jesus Christ. More and more we are being made aware of what Lot had to put up with; living down there in Sodom, with nothing but filth and perversion on every hand. As you walk

or drive down the streets, you are constantly looking at a mass of humanity that has give themselves over to a reprobate mind. They do not care what they look like, smell like, talk like, nor do they seem to give any thought to what the8ir way of life is leading them to. According to the word of God: they are headed for destruction; and to try to testify to them of the love of Jesus Christ is just as useless as Lot trying to persuade some of his family member to flee Sodom before judgment struck. As a matter of fact: they will treat you like some kind of nut that needs to be locked up some place. But, Saints: even when someone like that offends you, it is the will of God for you to have in you the ability and willingness to forgive them. It is one thing to be hurt because of someone doing or saying something against you; but it is wrong for you, as a child of God; to carry those hurt feelings forever; when the very Spirit of Christ in you is a forgiving Spirit. As children of God, we simply cannot hold a club over the heads of those who hurt us, and expect them to eat dirt before we are willing to forgive them.

REWARDING **EXPERIENCES**

I have had people say, Bro. Jackson: Haven't you been hurt by some of the

things people have said about you, because of the things you stand for? Yes, I have. But I refuse to allow myself to cultivate those hurt feelings. For I know the devil is behind it all; and I do not expect him to repent and let up on me. However there have been times through the years that God would allow me to be refreshed by a good report coming out of all of that. I have had men call me up on the telephone and apologize to me for something I knew nothing about. It is usually someone that has been listening to that element of "Message men," who are out to destroy my image and influence, and then somehow they would come into contact with someone, or get hold of a Contender or something that would cause them to get their eyes opened. That is when various ones would phone me and say, Bro. Jackson: You do not know me: I live in such and such a place, and I want to apologize to you and ask you to forgive me; for some of the things I have believed about you, or said about you. I just say to them, Well brother, I do not know what you have said, nor what you have believed; but I want you to know, you do not have to talk for an hour; before you are forgiven. If you feel in your heart that you should ask me to forgive you, who am I that I should not forgive you? Then if I ever meet such an individual, I am able to shake their hand, and have fellowship with them; without any of that pressure between us. Now since we are back on hurt feelings, let me say this, if

someone gets their feelings hurt toward you, because of a truth you stand for in the word of God: you do not need to apologize to them for it. That is strictly between that person and God Himself. The devil tries to get every true child of God to weaken, and give in to the demands of human flesh; but in those times, we need to set our heels firmly, and refuse to budge one inch from the truth. But like we said in the beginning, we often do or say things in an unwise way; even while standing for something God has called us to stand for; and for that, we need to be ready and willing to apologize when we become aware of it. God will enable you to know the difference; if your heart is right. It is sometimes very hard to walk up to a brother, or a sister, and say, Let's sit down and have a good talk; if we are not tenderhearted in the way Paul speaks of here. Now I am sure some of you are wondering, why are we spending so much time on hurt feelings. But how many of you have actually stopped to really think about where the devil really does most of his dirty work among the children of God? Is it not in their minds, and is it not because of oversensitive fleshly feelings? You know it is. Well God has already prepared an ointment for those hurt feelings, but we have to be walking in the light of truth for it to be effective. If the scripture says, God do something about this or that, then go do what the scripture says; instead of telling some other brother or sister about it. We do not supply one thing to

the body, unless we do what the Bible tells us to do in every situation we are faced with. Our example hung on an old rugged cross almost two thousand years ago. If we were on trial and our best friend denied that he even knew us, as Peter did Jesus that night, I wonder how we would react? Jesus set a perfect example of forgiveness; when He arose from the dead and said to Mary and the other women, Go tell my disciples and Peter (actually it was an angel conveying that message) that He had gone into Galilee, as He said He would: there they would see Him. They all soon found out that He did not hold one thing against any of them, and not one promise He ever made to them had changed. That is a perfect example for us to look to. We need to stop measuring ourselves by each other and look to Him to find out whether we are growing or not.

WHY WE OBEY THE SCRIPTURES

We find Paul continuing right on into chapter 5, with the same kind of admonition and instructions to believers that we have been looking at in chapter 4. Like I mentioned earlier, when Paul wrote this, it was just a letter, not divided into chapters and verses the way we now have it. Therefore after saying, Be kind one to

another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another: he said, (chapter 5, verse 1) “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” As followers of God we have no business carrying grudges. Not even against people out here in the world, for that is not an attribute of God. That is an attribute of the old self; that we grew up with from childhood. God wants all of those old habits we have picked up in life to be crucified, (put to death) so that we can walk in love as Christ hath loved us. He truly is a sweet-smelling savor in the nostrils of God, if we can see it like that, for He never did one thing in life that would make Him otherwise. The incense burned by the priest, in the Old Testament times, did not smell like charcoal we use to cook steaks. They blended together certain spices from nature itself, and when they burned them: oh what a sweet aroma ascended up. That sweet-smelling aroma ascending up to God, typed prayer from a pure heart, ascending to the throne of God. Therefore Jesus was not only the sacrifice for our sins, he was also that sweet-smelling aroma being offered up to the Father on our behalf. We could not approach the throne of God in our fallen state; we needed an intercessor; and that is exactly what Jesus became; for all who believe and trust in Him. He Himself because everything God required, in order for

His lost sons and daughters to be reconciled back to Him, and have sweet communion and fellowship with their heavenly Father, and Jesus the perfect Son of God offered Himself to the Father in place of every bit of that; on behalf of all who believe and obey the gospel. But those who reject the gospel are without hope of being reconciled to God, for this is His only provision. Now that the perfect sacrifice those others pointed to has been offered up, God will no longer accept any of that. The keeping of those ordinances under the law did not cancel out man's sin debt; it only extended their credit with the heavenly Father until the debt was paid in full, and when that debt was paid there at Calvary, it was paid not only for the Jews that kept the law, but also for Gentiles from every nation under heaven; who would believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The debt was paid in full for every lost person in the world, of all ages, but it only becomes effective for us when we come to realize that it is paid and accept the pardon. But that knowledge itself, fills our heart with love and gratitude, and causes us to desire to please with our lives, the one who loved us enough to do this for us; and that brings us to these New Testament epistles; for without them, we would not know how to please God. We do not obey the word of God, trying to earn our salvation. We obey it because we have salvation already, and that salvation has placed us in a love

relationship with the very God of heaven and earth; and when you are in love, you want to please the one you are in love with. We are often guilty of presenting the word of God as something we obey in order to obtain something for ourselves; which makes it more like keeping a law; than walking in complete liberty fulfilling a law of love. Therefore as we continue on here, just remember, Paul is not saying, do this, and Do that, in order that you may obtain eternal life; but if that life of God is truly in you, this is how you will want to conduct yourselves.

AN AGE OF PERVERSION

In verse 3, we read, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, AS BECOMETH SAINTS." Gentiles of that hour were hearing for the first time, that they could be sons and daughters of the living God also; and when they were converted to Christianity, they were fresh out of raw paganism; with no concept of what God wanted from their lives; so they had to be taught what God expected from them in order to fulfill their part. We have come through a time when people who were not even Christians, knew more or less what Christians were expected to live like; but we are

fast returning to a heathenistic society; where only the true children of God seem to have any concept of moral decency. The world at large seems to feel like, anything man imagines to do is alright, just as long as he does not interfere with anyone else's right to do whatever he desires to do. With one exception of course: you are not allowed to bring God into the picture; for to teach anything about God, is to violate someone else's freedom of religion. Oh what a sick society we live in. I pray to God that Jesus Christ will soon come. If time is allowed to go on another 10 years, only God Himself knows the shape this old world will be in. It is already worse than a hog pen, and getting worse every day. Good is being called evil; and evil is being called good, just like the prophet Isaiah wrote. I want to turn to Isaiah 5:20, and read a few verses, and just see if those things he mentions sounds like anything that is going on in our day. People change; but God never changes. However He looked upon things people did back then, He still looks upon them the same today: so judgment is awaiting those who allow Satan to rule their lives. "Woe unto them that call evil good; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" That is a picture of perversions as sure as the world. If you do not agree, just write a letter expressing what you see concerning Aids, and a lot of this other mess that society at large is facing, and send it to

one of these editorial outlets, and watch what they do with it. If you hold up any kind of godly principles that are being violated by their way of life; it will eventually be turned around and presented in such a way that you will appear as the bad guy. Your letter will be looked upon as though it came from the pit of hell, and will be presented as evil; when it is really good. Well that is how our modern day society is, and as long as God leaves us here, we are going to have to cope with it; for it is not going to get any better. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Brother, we are living in a day when just about everyone looks upon themselves as being able to counsel someone else; and tell them how to manage their affairs. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. (Do you see any of that kind of thing going on in our day?) Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consummeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." I will stop there; I just wanted to read a few verses there because it sounds so much like what we are experiencing every day. But regardless of what the world does, this is the word of the Lord for those that are the

children of God. These works of darkness have no place in the lives of Christians. “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: (That means fitting or proper) but rather giving of thanks.” A lot of people are guilty of foolish talking, but this thing of jesting really gets out of hand at times. It refers to joking, and also of taking a wrong of some kind and making a joke out of it, and even of using it to hurt someone. Gentile people are professionals at mastering these techniques. We see such things on TV all the time; but in the eyes of God, that is not a virtue that His children should pattern their lives after. Instead of so much of that, we need to spend more time giving thanks to God for delivering our sin cursed souls from that kingdom of darkness where such things are fitting of their way of life. Verse 5, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Paul said in another place, talking about our lost state, before we were brought into the fold of God, “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes (or at that time) were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” We have been brought from a state of hopelessness, to a place where we have a full

inheritance with Jesus Christ as heirs of God. That brings Paul to say, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Thinking about those evil traits of unregenerate mankind, and how the grace and mercy of God has lifted us up out of them, so that they now have no place in our lives, Paul says this, “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” People will try to do that, you know. They will say, Oh come on, Surely you do not believe God would send you to hell for doing, this or that; for everybody is doing it. Furthermore none of us are perfect, you know. Saints, That is fast becoming a modern slogan, and if we as children of God are not careful, we will be deceived into walking right into one of Satan’s traps. The fact that almost everyone you know is doing some certain something, does not mean that it is pleasing to God; nor does it mean that you could do the same thing, and get by with it. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” so who are you going to obey? The person who is trying to get you to do something you know is wrong, or the one who gave His own life on that old cross, that you might have the privilege of being able to make that choice? It is true, our old flesh will never be perfect and if we yield to its demands, our spirit will never be perfect either. But if we will mortify (put to death) those fleshly

traits of our old nature, and do what we know is right to do according to the scriptures: God looks upon us in that way, as perfect. Furthermore if you yield your members to these works of darkness, you have the wrath of your heavenly Father coming down upon you. "For because of these things (these things that Christians ought not do) cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." God is not just trying to keep us out of hell; His purpose is to make new creatures out of us, so that these unfruitful works of darkness have no place in our lives.

HOW GOD WORKS HIS WILL IN OUR LIVES

When Paul wrote the 2nd epistle to the Corinthian church, he spoke about how we ought not just live for ourselves, but live unto Him (Christ Jesus) who died for us and rose again, and in 5:17, he said this, "Therefore if any man (ANY PERSON) BE IN Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away: behold all things are become new." Of course we are not completely renewed instantly in our old flesh; but our spirit is made new, and these world traits have to go. So Paul said to them, verse 7, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes (at one time) darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: Walk as children of

light." When I look back over my past life, I never went to beer joints, I never gambled, and I never learned to curse; but nevertheless, unbelief ruled my life just as much as others who did all those things. Pride will keep you from God, and the Bible says, Pride goeth before destruction; so the kind of pride I am talking about, God hates, because it denies Him His rightful place. In the eyes of God, pride can be just as stinking and ornery as a drunk man staggering down the sidewalk. I still remember how I was, when God first began to speak to my heart. The first Sunday I went to the church after I got out of the army, it was just like the finger of God pointed straight at me, and he said, I want you. It was like that every time I stepped inside a church house; and I kept saying, No. Not now. Well I am convinced of one thing; God knows your address. He knows what country you live in, He knows what city you live in, what street you live on, and your house number, and He knows exactly when and how to make that most essential call. I think many times how the Spirit of God has moved upon drunks and people of ill fame, as they pursued their every day pattern of life, and how all of a sudden they would just kneel down somewhere and give their hearts to Him, and how his grace would clean their lives up, and give them new purpose in life; and then I think how He had to half kill me in order to get me to realize that my life belonged to Him. Brothers and Sisters: God is real! He is sovereign, and He

knows how to get what He wants. Just like the little song says, He will not violate our will; He just makes us willing. How does he do that? By circumstances that He is able to work in our lives. It is not because of our goodness that He calls us to His great plan of salvation; it is altogether regulated by whether we were foreknown of Him or not, before the foundation of the world. You may wonder why your life was spared in situations where you could have been killed; and from all outward appearances, you should have been. Well that was the reason; you had not yet surrendered your heart to His call. You had not, at that time, been willing to say, Yes Lord, I realize I am a sinner, and need to be saved. I am talking about the times when you were still out in the world, a lost sinner, and you experienced a miracle, that kept you from being killed. You wondered why; but even that did not turn you to God. Nevertheless He did bring you to a time and a place, where you did acknowledge Him, after you heard the gospel of your salvation. In the epistle to the Romans, Paul said this, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." We do not seek after God, before He somehow deals with our lives to make us conscious of Him. That happens when we are still living in a state of spiritual darkness. That is the first step of our being delivered from the world of darkness

into His wonderful light. I lived in darkness; not knowing how great God is, until He made the first move toward getting me out of darkness, and into His light. It is only after that happens; that we really begin to recognize what life is. This light we are talking about is truth. The world is full of people who profess to be Christians, but are actually still walking in spiritual darkness. Why is that so? Simply because all they have is religion based upon the traditions of man. They have not received the truth of God's word, that delivers one from the kingdom of darkness into that glorious kingdom of light. Strict adherence to those traditions of men can bring about a condition that appears to the natural to be Christianity, but the true children of God will recognize the difference by the fruit such a life bears. Not at first glance, but by close observation over a period of time. Verse 9. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Only as we surrender our lives to the Lord, to live according to His righteous principles, and allow His truth to work in us, will we be able to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. Anything apart from a revelation of truth is only a guess. Your life may be as chaste as anyone you know; but without that revelation of truth, you cannot prove what is acceptable to the Lord.

REPROVING WRONG DOING

Alright in verse 11, Paul says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Saints: we must look at this very carefully; for it has a message for you and me. You do not go down town, and reprove the drunks in the saloons. Did you hear what I said: This does not authorize you to go out and reprove the people of the world! What would be the use? How would the kingdom of God be served in that? Furthermore they are likely to pick you up and throw you out on your ear; and they have every right to; because that is their territory. I will never forget an experience I had back in the 50's. A preacher came through this area that had been out in California, and took a course in one of those “Soul Clinics,” if you please. He introduced himself, and then came down home. Now their method of soulwinning is to take a pocket full of tracts, and walk down the street screaming, Jesus is coming, and you are going to hell, if you don't know Him! Well like I said earlier, I used to think I should give place to everything that carried a Bible and called himself a preacher; so like a little pup, I took off after him. He was going to show me how to be a soul winner. (I have learned a lot of what I know, the hard way.) He wanted me to bring him up to New Albany, so away

we went, with a supply of tracts to pass out. We started out down here on the lower end of Market Street. It was in the evening, just about the time when men were getting off from work; and stopping for a beer on their way home. Into every saloon he walked and said to those men sitting at the bar. Jesus is coming soon! Don't you know you are going to hell if you don't give that up? I heard one of the managers say, Get that devil out of here! I did not grow up in life where that kind of tactics were used in an effort to get people saved; but there I was, following that character around, trying to learn how to serve God. I will have to say this, In my ignorance, God was gracious to me. I went into two or three places, said the same thing he did, passed out a few tracts, and got out, without getting my head cracked open; and that was enough for me. He wanted to go back the next day, so I took him to town and brought him back home, (he was staying with us,) but that method of witnessing was not for me. While he was staying there, he ran up a phone bill of quite a few dollars, and when he did leave, I said, Never again will I fall for anything like that. It came out in the newspapers that the man who started that soul clinic and was training those fellows was in trouble; because he had separated from his wife, and married his secretary, and the soul clinic had gone under. Well I am not telling you that God would never be in anything like that; but I do know that the apostle Paul did not use such tactics; as he

traveled from place to place preaching the gospel. In order for God to be in something like that, there would have to be a definite leading by the Holy Ghost, and it will not be in vain. In other words, God can work in anything; but I do not believe He has called anyone to a continuous ministry of that nature, nor to set up a school to train men to do that. We cannot be dogmatic about what God will, or will not do with a lone individual here and there; but I can tell you for sure: That is not the way God has dealt with me; and I do not see it as a pattern anyone should endeavor to follow in this day and hour. But as we get back to the verse that caused me to tell you of this experience: I believe we can pin it down to exactly what Paul meant. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, was spoken to Christians; telling them not to fellowship with people doing these things; and not to be guilty of trying to cover up for anyone else doing wrong within the fellowship of believers, but rather to reprove them for their un-Christlike deeds. We are talking about things that Christians can sometimes get caught up in, that can be detrimental to the body as a whole. Things that do not produce a true picture of how Christians should conduct themselves. I know you who have been around a while, having known of certain ones doing wrong, and immediately someone else would want to try to cover it over. They use a verse of scripture out of context, (1st

Pet. 4:8) which says, "Love (or charity) covers a multitude of sins." That is true of course; but it does not push peoples sins under a carpet, and hide them. Love will forgive, and love will help a person who is weak, but it will not cover over the unfruitful works that belong only out in the world of unbelief; and pretend that everything is all right. If I steal a hundred dollars from you: your love for me should not try to cover it up; it needs to be dealt with. The kingdom of God is not built upon anything like that. Do you understand what I am saying to you? Love does not cover up peoples wrong-doing. Human love might; but the kind of love God's word speaks of, will not. Now the true thought is this, Instead of pronouncing me doomed for hell; true love will cause my brothers and sisters to deal with the problem, to get me delivered from it, and if I am truly a child of God, I will cooperate with them, and do my part.

JUDGING ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

I never will forget something Bro. Branham told me on time. There was a church over in Louisville, a congregation of black people, that he would fellowship with from time to time; in his younger days. The church

no longer exists, but according to what Bro. Branham told me, they really applied the scriptures, in dealing with wrongs committed by members of their congregation. In the vestibule, as you would come into the building, they had a blackboard; and if anyone said or did something against someone else, and it became a known fact, that persons name was placed on the board, with this notation, There will be no fellowship with this person whose name appears here, until that person has appeared before the church to answer for such and such. Brother! That would be enough to make you walk softly. Can you just imagine how you would feel, if you walked into the church building, and saw your name on that board? I guarantee you this, If you were a true child of God, and the fellowship of the rest of the assembly meant anything to you, you would want to get that things settled as soon as possible. No doubt the time will come that God will cause certain things to be handled in a similar manner. In the past a lot of things in the church have been handled about like political interests have been handled, in Washington, D.C. You know how they always have lobbyists around, working for special interest groups that would benefit if a bill was passed with certain amendments included, and so forth. Well a lot of Christian people get caught up in that same spirit; they play with issues for one advantage or another; not seeming to realize that somewhere they are going to have to

face God, and pay the bill for sowing to their flesh. But regardless of what some may think this verse 11, pertains to: I assure you, it is not telling us to reprove people of the world. The gospel for the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing that can help lost mankind; and that is not a threat. It is a message that tells that lost person what was accomplished at Calvary on his, or her behalf; if they will only believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Giving up drinking, smoking, cursing and whatever other bad habits they have, will not keep them out of hell, without that personal relationship with the Savior Himself, called the new birth, or the born again experience. Therefore the point is, If you are aware of someone in the congregation conducting themselves in a way that could be harmful to the body of Christ; it is your responsibility before God, to handle it according to the scriptures, and if you are told of some situation that is not right, ask the person who tells you, Where did you hear that? Or, how do you know this? Many times people will tell you something they have heard; not even knowing themselves whether the story has any foundation or not, and they will tell it to you as fact. Saints: This kind of thing has got to stop; if we are really serious about being molded into the image and likeness of God's only begotten Son Jesus Christ. The devil is a multiplier. He loves to get a story started, and passed from one to another, in such a way that it seems

like everyone knows it; and many times, if it could actually be traced down to its origin, only one person said it; and a lot of times what that one person tells is only what they suspect. But by the time the devil gets through multiplying it, with all of the, They say's, it appears in an altogether different light than what it really is. Therefore let me say this just as plain as I know how to say it. If a brother, or a sister starts telling you something about some other brother or sister: say, Do not tell me any more, but if you do know this to be a fact, why not go to the brother or sister, which ever the case may be, and tell them their wrong? That is what the Bible tells us to do; but most Christians do not have the nerve to do it God's way. They choose rather to yield themselves as instruments of the devil; and just simply spread the news around, somehow hoping that God will overlook their own error in the matter. Brothers and Sisters: When we start doing things God's way, we will not have to sleep with so many cockleburs in bed with us. Think about this, for just a moment. Just suppose you have eight children, and in comes on of them crying, Johnny hit me! What is going to be your first responsibility in the matter? Will you just run out and grab Johnny and give him a good whipping? Or will you first do everything you can to try to find out who started the trouble, and if Johnny really did deliberately hit him? Is that not the proper way for a good parent to

handle such a situation? I believe you will all say so. Therefore I must ask you another question. Why will some of you, as children of God, justify, and take part in tactics that come so short of even being good natural sense practice? Then many times when people are forced to judge a situation, they will reach way back 40 years or so, and bring up things that no civil court would even allow to be used, because they are not relevant to the matter being dealt with. In the courts of our land, only issues and facts that are relative to the case being dealt with, will even be considered as evidence, so why should we, as instruments of righteousness, be so carnal? If we are compelled to deal with an issue involving un-Christlike conduct on the part of another believer, it is our obligation and responsibility before God, to investigate every aspect of the situation, and judge it according to the scriptures.

BE NOT UNWISE

Now notice verse 12, if you still need convincing on how God looks upon certain things we do. "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." That is not talking about those things done out in the world of unbelief; it is talking about that which the man or woman in

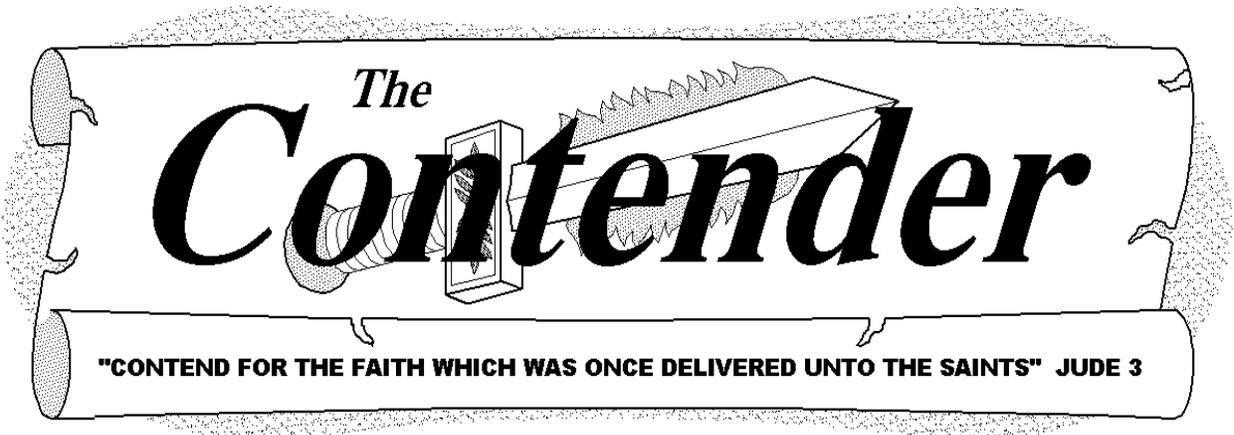
the body of Christ has done; that was not right. "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." That of course is talking about the light of truth, which God has ordained that all his children walk in. The light of truth exposes and reprov's the unfruitful works of darkness that children of God sometimes get tangled up in. Therefore light in this sense, is how truth is applied. "Wherefore He saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (You see? He is not talking to the world. We know how foolish they are because they are children of darkness, and cannot be wise. But we are children of light, and are expected to walk as wise people, instead of like fools.) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." If the days were evil back then, they are very, very evil in this hour. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Why would Paul say to them, be ye not unwise? It is like we have already stated, That generation of Christians that he was writing to, had been pagans before receiving the gospel. Living out there in the world, apart from any concept of a true and living God, and what He desired, had their lives molded according to what their pagan mothers and fathers had passed down to them. Their moral values were very low, and their social image was nothing;

therefore it would have been altogether unreasonable for anyone to think that they would just automatically know how to conduct themselves as children of God; the moment they got saved. There were a lot of things they were going to have to learn before they could present a true Christian image, and be looked upon as wise, and the devil was going to be stalking their pathway every moment, trying to get them back. So for them to be unwise, would have been that they were careless about receiving and guarding the truth of God's word, that could enable them to know what the will of God for their lives was; in conduct and service. When we truly respect light, sincerely enough that we value it as eternal life, we will stop playing with things, and look at them the way God sees them, and the way he wants us to. What is all this actually pointing to? Some will say. It eventually comes down to Ephesians 5:27, "That he might present it (the Church) to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.." The Church can only be made like that through the washing of water by the word of God. But I say to you today, you have already been in the water, if you have been receiving from what we have looked at up to this point. This word of God is the very substance that will clean us up, and make our robes of righteousness as white as snow, and without spot or wrinkle, or blemish, in the eyes of God

Himself. I am a human being; saved by the grace and mercy of God, just like you are; but I have made up my mind; that whether I live another year, two years, or five years: the length of time matters not; I, by the help of God, am going to walk in the Spirit from here on out; regardless of what anyone else may do. In whatever time I have left I want to walk with the Lord in such a way when I do stand before Him, I will not be standing there with a lot of unpaid bills; spiritually speaking. As a member of the body of Christ, I want to be sure I supply my part in the overall function of that body, as it is washed, and made ready to meet the Lord in the air. Let us not forget the two verses we used when we started this message. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in ALL things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted (How?) By that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." This is a picture where each part is made to fit, without force or modification. When natural man puts an invention together, and under stress, a certain part breaks down, causing them to have to make some changes in it, the new model is referred to as the modified version. But when you are talking about this body of Christ that is being put together by the word of almighty God there will never be a modified version, because

every part is made to fit perfectly the first time. That very truth itself proves predestination, for in order to design a body where every part, or member of that body fits perfectly in it's place: God has to know ahead of time how many parts that body would have, and what their individual function would be. It is His purpose to perfect us as a body instead of just concentrating on individuals. We are accountable to God as individuals; for our soul's salvation is an individual matter, but when we are placed in that great mystical body of believers, we are just a part of the total makeup of that body, and the whole body has to be perfected before it is taken to glory; therefore we have every reason to be just as concerned about the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters of the faith, as we are of our own selves. It is a beautiful picture, once you see it in its full scope, but as long as you are only concerned with your own trials and tests, and fail to recognize the grace of God in the lives of your brothers and sisters of the faith, you will not be able to see it like that. You never even got a little vision of that body, while you were still out there in denominations, for the main emphasis was placed on escaping hell, and going to heaven, as if that was all God was concerned about. Well you are now out of denominations, but many of you still have too much of that denomination in you; to be able to completely supply your part in the function of this great universal body of Christ. But do not

despair; God knows what He wants, and praise His great name, he's still working on me, and on you, to make us what we ought to be. We can rely on that.



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