

Could We be in Opposition to God?

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Well, as we're rapidly approaching the Spring Holy Days, it is no secret if you look at the state of the world and the Church that certain things are going on right now. There's all manner of conflicts and disagreements in the world. The Arab-Israeli conflict is heating up. The situation in Lebanon [Libya] between Kadafi, the government, and the people who would like a little bit of freedom and a little opportunity to live a life of something other than poverty. And then you have, with this budget crisis, you see the Republicans and the Democrats just going at each other hook and tong. And then the Tea Partyers are on the sidelines throwing rocks at both of them—all kinds of conflict! You have the Muslims and the "Infidels." They want to kill everybody who doesn't believe the way they do. And then you have the Catholics and the Protestants. And it just seems like the world is rapidly marching down the road where everybody is at everybody else's throat. There are all kinds of disagreements and conflicts throughout the whole world, every facet of society.

And, of course, as we all know, it has spread into the Church. There are disagreements and conflicts in the Church. And since the demise of Worldwide, there's four hundred plus groups that have gone off. Then the biggest group recently had a big conflict and is going through disagreements. And then, as a result of all that, there are some Brethren who won't talk to other Brethren. There are some Brethren who won't even come in the same room with other Brethren, again, because of disagreements and conflicts.

And then, of course, there are disagreements and conflicts between individuals. Marriages end in divorce. People don't talk to each other anymore, don't associate anymore. Family members—we all probably know a family member, you know the Clantons and the McCoys, and nobody's talking and won't go to a gathering together because of conflict within the family.

And many of us have personally experienced that in the Church, on the job, in society, in our family. Now stop for a moment. Let's think about this because it's important as we approach Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Let's stop for a second and ask a question. Now we were talking about everybody else's disagreements, everybody else's conflicts. Let's ask the question: Have you ever thought about the possibility of you or me being in disagreement with God? Having a conflict with God? Or being opposed to God?

Of course, our knee-jerk reaction, we would say, "Well, no. I didn't do that. I don't have any conflicts with God. I'm not in disagreement with God. I'm not opposed to God. I would never be opposed to God!" Well, don't be so sure because we want to investigate that today.

So, as we approach the Passover, this is one area we really need to look at and ask ourselves: *Could we be in opposition to God?* That's the title of the sermon. *Could we be in opposition to God?* Because we want to examine ourselves, look into our hearts very deeply and just make sure that we are not in opposition to God. And, if we look carefully, we might find out in certain parts of our lives we are. Maybe not intentionally, but maybe we are. Maybe we have a blind spot.

Well, the first thing we want to do is let's look at the source of opposition to God. Where did that start among the human race, humankind? Where did it start? Well, we have to go back to the beginning. Mr. Armstrong often did that. And let's go back to Genesis chapter 3 and I'm going to be reading out of the New King James. And to start, we're going to read the first three verses. Genesis 3 and verse 1, God is telling us something.

Genesis 3:1. *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. (NKJ)*

And we know that. Satan is very shrewd and very intelligent and is very skilled at manipulation. Now notice what happens.

Genesis 3:1b. *And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (NKJ)*

Well, he knows what he's doing. He's setting her up.

Genesis 3:2. *And the woman said to the serpent, "We [can] eat [of any] fruit of the trees of the garden;
3) "[except] the fruit of the tree which is in the [middle] of the garden, [and that tree] God said, 'You shall not eat it, [you can't even] touch it, lest you die.'" (NKJ)*

Now as Mr. Armstrong often pointed out, these two trees symbolize two different ways or two different paths of life. The Tree of Life is symbolic of a lot of things, but one of the things it's symbolic of is that God reveals His way to mankind. That if we take of the Tree of Life a lot of things will happen, but one of the premises is that we look to God to reveal to us what we should do. Not of ourselves, but from God. But the other Tree—the one that God said "Don't even touch it"—that other Tree symbolizes man choosing his own way. "I will choose my path. Nobody's going to tell me what path to go, what path to take. I'm going to choose my own path." And so, we come, very early in human existence, we come to a fork in the road where we look to God to reveal the way we should go or we look to ourselves and we choose the way that we should go.

Now we know the choice that they made. So, let's continue in verse 4.

Genesis 3:4. *Then the serpent said to the woman, "[You're] not [going to] die. (NKJ)*

Obviously a lie!

Genesis 3:5. *"For God knows that in the day you eat of [this Tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
(NKJ)*

"You get something out of this. You're going to elevate yourself if you choose this Tree that's forbidden. If you chose that, you're going to be like God. You're going to be up at His level. And God knows that and that's why He doesn't want you to do this."

Verse 6:

Genesis 3:6. *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and [she] ate. She also gave [it] to her husband [and he did the same thing]. (NKJ)*

But notice what happened in verse 7.

Genesis 3:7. *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and [then] they sewed fig leaves [to cover their nakedness]. (NKJ)*

Now something changed when they made that choice. Something changed in their minds when they made that choice.

Now just keep your finger here and you don't even have to turn there. You know it by memory, Isaiah 59 and verse 2, because Isaiah establishes a principle that we all know. It says:

Isaiah 59:2. *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, (KJV)*

And he goes on to say

Isaiah 59:2b. *...your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)*

And so, now back in Genesis, understanding this principle, what changed is that before they took the fruit they were like little innocent kids or little children. Little children are so innocent if they're raised properly and if they're kept away from the world. They don't understand; they aren't exposed to violence and sex and evil and all of that. And they're just sweet, little innocent kids. And that's the way Adam and Eve were before they took the fruit.

But once they took the fruit, I guess a good analogy would be is like they then were like teenagers who were exposed to violence, who were exposed to perverted sex, who were exposed to demonic influences that we see all around us today in our movies and television and all of that. And so, their minds became opened—like teenagers minds become open—but in a perverted way. They're exposed to things that are wrong and that are evil and their mind changes.

So you look at a teenager's mind who's been exposed to all of that and compare it to a little four-year old mind who hasn't and there's an enormous difference between those two minds. And that's exactly what happened to Adam and Eve. Within just a matter of seconds, their minds were changed from innocence and sweetness into a perverted mind that was exposed to things that they should not have been exposed to because their mind was opened.

And Satan had rightly said, "Your mind will be open," but guess what jumped into their mind? Satan's mind jumped into their mind. I'm not saying they were possessed by Satan. I don't mean that, but his influence came into their mind.

So, as a result of their change, their relationship with God changed. I don't know if you've thought about that, but because of their choice and the change in their mind, of necessity, then, the relationship between them and God changed. And it was never the same after that for them. And it was never the same after that for all humankind down to this day.

Now let's go down to verse 7. We just read that a second ago.

Genesis 3:7. *Then the eyes of both of them were opened ... and [then] they [covered] themselves. (NKJ)*

Verse 8:

Genesis 3:8. *And they heard the sound of the [Eternal] God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, (NKJ)*

And guess what the first thing they did? They hid themselves from God. They hid from His presence and they hid among the trees and the bushes in the garden.

Now what did Isaiah say? "Your iniquities separate you from God." God didn't change. God didn't move. They moved. They moved away from God and they wanted to hide themselves from God. Now understand and part of it was guilt, yes, but there's a different mind now. There's an incompatibility.

Verse 9:

Genesis 3:9. *Then ... God called to Adam and said... "Where are you?" (NKJ)*

Now God knew what was going on, obviously.

Genesis 3:10. *So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (NKJ)*

That fear you see, they had never experienced fear before. Now think about that. They were innocent and sweet. They had never been afraid before. This is part of the opening of the mind. They were afraid. Afraid of the God that created

them and gave them this wonderful garden, why would they be afraid? Because of the change in their mind.

Verse 11:

Genesis 3:11. *And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? (NKJ)*

"How did you come to realize this?" And, of course, then God threw out the suggestion:

Genesis 3:11b. *Have you eaten from the tree of [that] I commanded you that you should not eat?" (NKJ)*

God knew that's the only way they would be feeling afraid or wanting to hide themselves.

Now jump to verse 24. Notice the result.

Genesis 3:24. *So [God] drove out the man; (NKJ)*

They didn't leave. They were shoved out!

Genesis 3:24. *So He drove out the man; and He placed a [cherub] at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way [of] the tree of life. (NKJ)*

So they could not with this new knowledge go back and then take eternal life. God prevented that from happening.

But the fact is they were cast out and now, there is a gulf, a separation between man and God based on their choice. So, you see God let them seek their own will. He let them choose. And they could either seek His will or they could seek their own will. And they chose to go their own way to seek their own will.

Let's go to Proverbs chapter 1 and we're going to read verses 29 through 31. Solomon knew this and is amplifying this. And this is all under our First Point about looking at the source of opposition with God, because now Adam and Eve were in opposition with God. They weren't in harmony with God. They were in opposition to Him. Proverbs 1 verse 29, he says:

Proverbs 1:29. *For that they hated knowledge, (KJV)*

Adam and Eve rejected revealed knowledge from God and they chose to get knowledge for themselves. So, Solomon is just saying this very plainly. "They hated knowledge." He's referring to all mankind.

Proverbs 1:29. *...they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the [Eternal]: (KJV)*

They didn't choose to honor and respect God and say, "God, we don't know. Teach us Your way." They chose to decide for themselves.

Verse 30:

Proverbs 1:30. *They would [have] none of my counsel: (KJV)*

They didn't want God's inspiration or His counsel or His advice. They wanted their own.

Proverbs 1:30b. *...they despised all my reproof. (KJV)*

This is true for all mankind.

Verse 31, "Therefore." Because they wouldn't listen to God, wouldn't choose His revealed knowledge, he says:

Proverbs 1:31. *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, (KJV)*

We reap what we sow. And he says"

Proverbs 1:31b. *...they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (KJV)*

The King James says. Now, that is translated eight times, that Hebrew word, eight times in the Old Testament and this is the only time it's translated "devices." The other seven times, it's translated "counsel." And God said in verse 30 through Solomon, "They would have none of My counsel, but they are filled with their own counsel." And, just like with Adam and Eve, human nature wants its own counsel. Human nature wants to decide for itself what is right and what is wrong.

And we have to understand as God's people as we approach the Passover that we have that same nature inside each and every one of us—that same nature! That's something we're going to see in a little bit that we're going to have to fight. So, let's understand that we, inside of us, have the same nature that Adam and Eve had that caused them to be in opposition to God, to separate from God.

Let's go to 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 3. Paul is telling the people—now, this is a letter written to people in the Church. This isn't written to the world. 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 3, notice what he says to this very dysfunctional Corinthian Church. They had lots of problems and those problems continue down to this day. 1 Corinthians 3 verse 3, he says:

1 Corinthians 3:3. *For [you] are yet carnal: (KJV)*

Now that's a heavy condemnation to a Church of God! He says:

1 Corinthians 3:3b. *...for whereas there is among you envying, (KJV)*

Do we have that in the Church today? Yes.

1 Corinthians 3:3 continued. ...and strife, (KJV)

Do we have that in the Church today? Yes.

1 Corinthians 3:3 continued. ...and divisions, (KJV)

Do we have that in the Church today? Yes. And he says:

1 Corinthians 3:3 continued. ...are [you] not carnal, and walk as men?
(KJV)

Meaning: "You don't walk as the children of God. You're walking as carnal human beings," he's telling them. And, of course, he's telling us that today.

See the first thing we've established here is that the source of opposition to God occurred in the Garden with Adam and Eve and Satan. And since that day, humankind has been in opposition to God. And we have that nature inside of us.

Now that leads us to the Second Basic Point and that is:

II. The basic problem of the mind of man is that man wants his own way.

We have to understand that. And as we come to the Passover, we have to understand inside of us, there is this drive that comes from Satan that went into Adam and Eve and is with us today. That is, we want what we want. We want our own way.

And the history of man before the flood is well documented that since the days of Adam and Eve, since that time, I'm here to tell you and you can see it in your Bible, that before the flood, man was opposed to God. Look at Cain and Abel. We won't for time's sake go to that specific example, but Cain wanted to sacrifice to God his way. He didn't want to sacrifice to God the way God wanted him to. And then, it just continued and continued and continued right up to the flood.

Let's go to Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5. Again, I'll read it out of the New King James. Notice what God saw. Man chose his own path. And in a very short period of time, relatively speaking, look what the state of the world is. Genesis 6 verse 5:

Genesis 6:5. Then the [Eternal] saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, [Notice this!] and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (NKJ)

Now in the New King James in the margin, it says, "the purpose and desire of the heart was only evil continually." The purpose and the desire of the human heart tended toward evil, tended toward being in opposition to God.

Then notice what happened shortly after the flood. Let's go to Genesis chapter 10 now. We'll read verses 8 and 9. Again, the mind of man in opposition to God resurfaced right after the flood.

Genesis 10:8. *Cush begot Nimrod; he [referring to Nimrod] began to be a mighty one in the earth. (NKJ)*

And if you look at that history—it's fascinating—he was very mighty, but notice verse 9.

Genesis 10:9. *He was a mighty hunter before the [Eternal]; (KJV)*

This is in the King James.

Genesis 10:9b. *...[whereas] it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

And if you look up that Hebrew word "before," it has many meanings, but one of the meanings is Strong's 6440. It can mean "against."

And if you understand the history of Nimrod, Nimrod put himself in a position to be against God. He was a mighty hunter against God. Not in cooperation with God. So we can quickly see that with Nimrod and Ishtar or Semiramis, his wife, and all of that mess that happened back then, out of that came the Babylonian Mystery Religion which was later to dominate Christianity. That Mystery Religion existed for centuries and then was injected into the Christian Church starting not long after the death of John. In fact, there are remnants of it that started before that. And then 200 AD and 300 AD, the Babylonian Mystery Religion took over Christianity—again, in opposition to God.

Then we see that ancient Israel rejected God and wanted to decide for themselves. We won't turn there but in Judges 21:25 or Judges 17:6, both of them say the same thing. "In those days there was no king over Israel:" and what did every man and every woman do? It says, "Every man did what was right," what—in God's eyes? No. They did what was right in their own eyes. This was ancient Israel, God's people.

So you see this thread starting with Adam and Eve, going through the flood, and then into ancient Israel. People made their own choices of what was right. And they did what was right in their own eyes. And the same thing was true later.

We won't turn there again because of time, but in 1 Samuel chapter 8. We know the story. Samuel was judge over Israel and he had two sons. They were basically reprobates, set a bad example, and turned people away from God. They had perverted judgment. They accepted bribes and were lustful of money and all of that.

And the elders of Israel came together and said, "This isn't working. Your sons are perverting God's way. We want a king." And what they were really saying is,

"We want men to rule over us and not God to rule over us." And they said, "Make us a king, Samuel, to judge us like all the nations around us." They wanted to be like the rest of the world, which was in opposition to God!

And, of course, Samuel was mightily upset and displeased. And he took the matter to God. And do you remember what God said? He says, "They haven't rejected you, Samuel, but they have rejected Me that I should not rule over them."

So this characteristic of human nature carried on through Ancient Israel starting with Adam and Eve. It's "We will decide what we're going to do. You're not going to decide for us what we're going to do. We're not going to accept your way. We will choose for ourselves." And that was true back then because they did not want to submit to God and they wanted to choose for themselves.

Now you come down to early Christianity. Same method applies. The same mindset applies. Let's go to Philippians 2 and we're going to read verses 19 through 21. Philippians 2 beginning in verse 19, and see that Paul was lamenting to Timothy because they did not have the mind of the apostles—the people. Philippians 2 verse 19, Paul says:

Philippians 2:19. *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send [Timothy] shortly unto you, (KJV)*

He's writing to the Church in Philippi.

Philippians 2:19b. *...that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. (KJV)*

"That I can get a report back that you're doing well," but he says—Notice verse 20!

Philippians 2:20. *For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. (KJV)*

He says, "Timothy is the only one left that gives a hoot about you. I have nobody else with that kind of mind." Well, what does that say? That says they're concerned about themselves. They're concerned about doing what they want to do.

Verse 21:

Philippians 2:21. *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. (KJV)*

And so, just like Adam and Eve, in the New Testament Church many deserted Paul and left Paul because they wanted their own way. They wanted to decide for themselves and God was not going to tell them what to do. They rejected that at that time. And people do that today. Solomon said, "There's nothing new

under the sun. What's happened before, it's happening now and it will happen in the future because of the mind of man."

Now why is there this opposition to God and His way? What is it about human nature that just does not want to follow God and is opposed to God? Let's go to Romans 8 and verse 7. Paul says it about as plainly as it can be said. We know this Scripture, and remember this is all under the point that the mind of man wants his own way. Romans 8 verse 7, Paul says—he's writing to the Church in Rome, but he could be writing to any Church today or he could be writing to the Church in Ephesus or Corinth—he says:

Romans 8:7. Because the carnal mind [the human, the fleshly mind] is enmity against God: (KJV)

I'm reading out of the King James.

Roman 8:7b. ...for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (KJV)

The human mind that Adam and Eve had is not subject to God's Law. They didn't want to say, "God, we don't know. Please show us the way." No. Their mind is in opposition to God. And so, they said, "Hey! We know better. We're going to decide for ourselves."

Now the Greek word for "enmity" in the King James is Strong's 2189. And it's the Greek word *echthra* (*ekh'-thrah*). And it can mean hostility. It can mean hatred or it can mean, by implication, a reason for opposition.

Now think about that. The human mind has inside it a reason for opposing God. There is something in human nature that just wants to reject God and wants to be in opposition to God. And so what Paul is telling us here is that the carnal mind opposes God's Law. It is not subject to God's Law, neither indeed can be.

Let's understand at this time of the year guess what we have inside of us? That same nature! There is a part of us that does not want to follow God's Law and that is actually in opposition to God. As much as we don't want to admit it, there's a part of us that wants to break free and do whatever we want to do and nobody's going to tell us what to do. That's buried down in there. Hopefully, it's buried very deep. And, as we're going to see hopefully, it will be eliminated totally.

But notice now, let's jump. We're talking about under the Second Point "What causes this opposition to God?" And it's the carnal mind. But notice Ephesians 2 and verse 3. This says the same thing but in a different way. It's, frankly, even more graphic. Ephesians 2 and verse 3, Paul is talking about our nature before we became converted. He says in Ephesians 2 and verse 3:

Ephesians 2:3. Among whom also we all had our [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; (KJV)

This mind that we've been talking about that's in opposition to God, and notice because of that:

Ephesians 2:3b. ...and were [Notice this!] by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (KJV)

We, because of this nature, if we're not careful and we were before we were converted, we're the children of wrath toward God. Because we want our way and we don't want anybody to tell us what to do. We will choose for ourselves. Human nature wants its own way. And it rears its ugly head in things big and small.

I can remember back in the Worldwide Days we had a Church in Yakima. At its peak, it was probably fifty-five or sixty people. And it was in a Masonic Hall like we're here today. And it was a big one. So, we had to rope off—with this little yellow tape—certain areas so everybody would sit up close and the speaker didn't have to yell a football field and lose his voice. And there was one guy—I don't care where you put the tape—he went behind it and that's where he sat. And he wasn't going to be told by anybody—deacons, ministers, otherwise—where he was going to sit.

And then we had the Feast in Spokane about that same time. And some of our guys were on the parking crew. And you know the Feast! Guys telling you where to go. "Go over here and park over here." And certain places were off limits. And this guy just ignored it and he was going to park where he was going to park. It was just going to happen. Nobody was going to tell him where to sit, where to park, what to do!

And I'm here to tell you that the Lake of Fire will be populated by those who have that mindset. And what did Christ say? He says, "Bring him here before me that I can watch them die—those that will not allow Me to rule over them."

And I personally feel it's not the Hitlers; it's not the Stalins or the Genghis Khans that are going to go in the Lake of Fire. It's people like this individual who just "I'm not going to have anybody tell me what to do!" They're not raping and pillaging. They're just stubborn and they're going to do what they're going to do. And there are people that are going to say, "I would rather go in the Lake of Fire and never exist forever rather than live under somebody else's authority." And they'll jump into the Lake of Fire because they're not going to submit to what God wants them to do just like Adam and Eve.

So, let's understand this Second Point is that the mind of man wants its own way. And by nature, then, we become the children of wrath toward God because the mind of man is not subject to the Laws of God, cannot be unless a miracle occurs.

Now let's go to the Third Point. We're going to amplify this mind in man. The main characteristic of the mind in man, I believe and I think I can justify it through the Bible and through personal experience:

III. The main characteristic of the mind of man is pride, man's pride in himself.

"I know what is best. I will do what I will do. Nobody is going to tell me what to do!" We won't turn there. You know it by heart. You don't have to go any farther than Revelation 3 and verse 17. "I have need of nothing." Why? "Because I'm self-sufficient. I have all the answers. I know the direction. Nobody's going to tell me—even God Almighty—nobody's going to tell me what to do." That is the mind of the children of wrath.

And pride, you see, is going to be the downfall of man. Let's go to Proverbs 29 and verse 23. It continues to this day and it will result in the downfall of many. Proverbs 29 and verse 23, it says:

Proverbs 29:23. [Man's] pride shall... (KJV)

Do what? Elevate him? Put him on high? No.

Proverbs 29:23. [Man's] pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. (KJV)

In the parking lot, the humble mind would say, "Tell me where to park and I'll park. Tell me where to sit and I'll sit. Tell me what to do, God, and that's what I'll do."

But the prideful mind, ultimately if carried to the ultimate extreme, is going to be low in the sense of the Lake of Fire.

You see pride prevents us from seeking God and seeking God's will. And if we allow pride to creep into our life, we are on thin ice, very dangerous ground because it will take us away from the Kingdom of God. Let's go to Psalm chapter 10. I'll read that out of the NIV. Pride prevents us from seeking God's will. And we can think we seek God's will, but because of our pride, we become blind and we go in a different direction. Psalm 10 verse 4 out of the NIV, it says:

Psalm 10:4. In his pride the wicked does not seek him [meaning God]; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. (NIV)

Now stop and think about that. It tells us that if we allow pride to come into our lives that means it will take control of our lives and we will not seek God. And pride then will dominate our thinking to the point there is no room for God in our mind because our mind is filled with ourselves and filled with our own selfish thoughts.

And I have seen it in the Church. I've seen it recently. I've seen it back in the days of Worldwide that in their pride some people think they're seeking God, but they do their own will instead of God's will thinking it's God's will. But behind it all is human pride justifying decisions and selectively reading the Bible, selectively

applying the Bible. Then they justify a carnal decision or a carnal way of doing things that satisfies their own pride and not following God.

Let's go to 1 John chapter 2. John says, "Boy, if we allow this pride to come into our lives, this pride that is an enemy of God that is hostile to the Laws of God that leads to us becoming the children of wrath, we've got to be careful!" 1 John 2 verse 15, this is where it starts.

1 John 2:15. Love not the world, [and] neither the things that are in the world. (KJV)

Some people are after money. Some people are after prestige. Some people are after titles. Some people are after power and control. This is all from the world. This is the way the world works.

And it goes on. John says:

1 John 2:15b. If any man [loves] the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (KJV)

If we try to bring the world's way into the Church, what we're being told here is "That's not of God and you don't love God." And I've seen it in the Church where people that may be converted, may be not converted bring the world's way into the Church. The world's viewpoints, the world's administration, the world's way of getting along, the world's spirit of competition, the world's spirit of strife—all come into the Church, brought into the Church from the world. And, yet, they think they're doing God's will! And we can be caught up in that if we're not careful.

Verse 16:

1 John 2:16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, (KJV)

It applies to Adam and Eve. "This thing's good for food. Oh, it's going to taste so good!"

1 John 2:16b. ...and the lust of the eyes, (KJV)

"Oh, it looks beautiful to eat!" But notice this; this is what we're focusing on.

1 John 2:17. ...and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but [it's] of the world. (KJV)

Now, what is the pride of life? When I first came into the Church, I didn't really understand that phrase—pride of life. I didn't grasp it. And I think it only comes maybe as you get a little older and maybe as you mature a little bit, because when you're young and feisty and full of vim and vinegar, you often don't see that because you're filled with the pride of life!

You know teenagers! They never think of getting sick. They never think of breaking bones. They go out and do crazy things. I did. You did. You know, "I'm going to live forever. I'm never going to hurt. I'm never going to ache. Have no pain. Never get in an automobile accident. Always have this boundless energy that I have right now." And that's a pride in me—pride in a human being—that life is always going to be this way. "I'll never get tired. I'll never get sick. I'll never make a wrong decision. Everything's going to be good. Whatever I decide to do, it'll all work out."

But then as we get older, we see that that isn't the way life works. And most of us in God's Church today, probably the average age is in the sixties. And for those of us in that age or even more, you realize that, yeah, you can hurt. You can hurt every day. It hurts to walk. It hurts to bend over. It hurts to lift the spoon up to your mouth sometimes. You know, life hurts!

And you learn that "I don't have energy that's boundless and I can just go out and work eight hours a day and then come home and work three or four hours at home and everything's okay; I've still got energy." You learn that your body fails you, whereas a teenager has this pride of life. So that's good. That's one of the lessons of getting old is that you learn that maybe you're not as adept or have as much strength as you think you do when you're a teenager.

I can remember when Dorothy and I owned our business. We went to—well, before that when I was in retail. We were one of the larger dealers of the largest car stereo manufacturer in the county. It was named Alpine at the time. And we were one of their star dealers. And so, they invited us to this convention in Scottsdale, Arizona. They rented a big resort and had dealers from all over the country.

And I can remember Dorothy and I were up standing in line to get checked in. And in front of us were a young woman and her husband. They were in their twenties, maybe late twenties. And she was demanding that they be assigned a room on what is called the "Concierge Floor."

And this is the floor at the top, the very top. You have to have a different swipe card to get up to the floor. And when the door opens, there is a concierge right in front of you at a desk and they take care of you from morning till night. And they turn down your bed and they give you little chocolates. And if you want this, they'll go get it. Or if you need that, they'll go do this.

And she was demanding that they be put up there. And they're just a husband and wife, a part of the dealership. And she was not going to be denied. And, finally, the manager came out, and, finally, reluctantly acceded to her wishes because she was making such a scene. And her husband was a little bit embarrassed, but she had to be on this top floor and she had to let everybody know she was on the top floor. And that is part of the pride of life.

Now, my old friend who was president of Alpine at the time—his name is Reese Haggott—he's just totally unconverted. He's just a neat guy, just a nice guy.

I was standing next to him and one of his assistants came up to him and said, "There's this lady yesterday that made this demand and now they're on the Concierge Floor. And she's just driving them crazy about she wants this and she wants that and she's got to have this service and that!"

And Reese listened to him for a while. He was an ex-cowboy and just a no nonsense kind of guy. He looked at him and says, "Get her out of her!"

He says, "You mean you want me to move her to another floor?"

He said, "No. I want her gone." He says, "You tell her she is not welcome at this convention. You shut them down and get them out of this facility." The guy kind of blanched and didn't smile and went off and took care of business.

And you see what we just read—"The pride of men will bring you low"—well, that's just a little example that this woman and her husband were embarrassed in front of everybody! They were sent home. It was like being sent home from the Feast. They were sent home. Only this was a carnal thing.

Again, the pride of life! And you learn what that pride of life is. We see it. Those with knowledge can become prideful. What is it? "Knowledge puffs up," Paul tells us—become prideful.

When I was in graduate school—later I went into the Air Force and you rub elbows with fighter jocks. And they're some of the cockiest guys in the world—fighter jocks—because they know they're invincible. They're young. They're talented. They're smart. They have this high performance jet strapped in under their seat and nobody can lick them. And they're cocky as all get out.

But, I'm here to tell you, they can't hold a candle to an academic or a scholar that thinks their mind is greater than anybody else's mind. That, to me, is—they can't hold a candle to people in academia—professors, scholars—because they know something you don't know. And their mind is sharper than your mind. And they know more than you know.

And I've seen it firsthand in graduate school. And I'm telling you again that is the greatest pride I've ever seen in human beings. Greater than politicians, athletes, all of that! They have pride in their mind. And what mind is that? Hostility toward God! And, as you know, most of them believe in evolution. They don't want to believe in God because of the pride of life. Because evolutionists say the human mind is the pinnacle of evolution. It is the greatest thing that has ever been. "And by the way, my mind is better than yours." That is the pride of life.

And it can come into God's people today. We see pseudo-scholars in the Church that they know more than anybody else. I get white papers all the time from people that have a new revelation from God. And you read it and it is the biggest hocus-pocus you've ever seen! And, yet, they are convinced that they have a lock on a certain area of God's Truth and they believe that salvation hinges on whether you know the exact identity of the one hundred and forty-four thousand.

It has nothing to do with salvation. Yes, it's nice to know, but would you rather understand the identity of the hundred and forty-four thousand, or as John pointed out in his sermonette, would you rather understand Christ? Which is more important? Well, I think we know what's more important.

And, yet, it infects the children of God today—"I know something you don't! Therefore, my mind is superior to your mind. My revelation from God is superior to yours. Therefore, I'm closer to God than you are! And we are more advanced in our understanding than you are." Or, we have the modern day Pharisees that pile heaps of dos and don'ts because we are more righteous than you.

We have people now who don't keep the Night to be Much Observed because that's not righteous. That's part of the world. And you go into that and it just boggles the mind. And you think, "Where on earth are people's minds?" Well, we just read where people's minds are today. It's the mind that was in Adam and Eve. It's the mind that's hostile to God and not subject to the Law of God and can't be.

Notice what God says about pride. We're summing up the Third Point that pride is the main characteristic of the carnal mind. Let's go to Proverbs 8 and verse 13. We'll read it out of the NIV. Proverbs 8 and verse 13, we want to be very careful about allowing pride to come into our mind. Proverbs 8 and verse 13, a basic understanding:

Proverbs 8:13. *To fear the [Eternal] is to hate evil; (NIV)*

And then, as Proverbs often do, there is a flip of this. Proverbs 8 and verse 13, notice the last sentence.

Proverbs 8:13b. *I hate pride and arrogance, (NKJ)*

God says, "I absolutely hate it!" And I think if we're all honest with ourselves, we have seen pride in God's Church. We have seen arrogance in God's Church, but more importantly we've seen pride and arrogance in ourselves! And, as we come to the Passover, we need to make sure that we rid our mind and our heart from pride and arrogance.

That leads us now to the Fourth Point. We've established in the very beginning pride and this opposition to God crept in in the Garden of Eden and has continued down. And we've established that man's mind wants its own way and pride is the main characteristic of that and it is part of human nature. So, it leads us to the Fourth Point, because of all this:

IV. We, as converted Christians, have a battle going on within ourselves because we have that same mind.

Don't we? We are susceptible to pride. We are susceptible to arrogance and because of that we are susceptible to being in opposition to God, to being opposed to God. We don't want God to rule over us. We don't want somebody

to tell us what to do. We don't want God's Word to tell us what to do. We have this battle going on.

Now the battle is because, when we were baptized and we had God's holy spirit given to us as just a little grain of a mustard seed, now, we have in essence two natures inside of our minds. We have the nature that is in opposition to God, and, yet, we have God's very spirit in us. Now, you talk about two opposing forces in the mind of a person. That's exactly what we have.

Let's go to Ephesians 4 and we're going to read verses 22 through 24 and see that there is now a process that goes on once we become converted. We know what this is, but we're emphasizing this particularly as we get close to the Passover. Ephesians 4 and verse 22, Paul is telling the people they have to put off one mind and put on another mind. Ephesians 4 verse 22, Paul says:

Ephesians 4:22. *That [you] put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, [the old way, the old motives,] which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (KJV)*

What? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. Verse 23:

Ephesians 4:23. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24) And that [you] put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (KJV)*

We have the old man that is shaped in the mind of Adam and Eve and shaped in the mind of Genghis Khan and shaped in the mind of Stalin and shaped in the mind of all human beings and then we have the new man that is motivated and powered by God's holy spirit, both inside our own mind. So, we have a battle going on. And God is watching us to see who wins the battle.

As the old Indian legend, a little boy came up to his grandfather and his grandfather was explaining the nature of man. And he says, "There are two wolves inside each man. There's an evil wolf and there is a good wolf." And he described the characteristics of the evil wolf and the good wolf and described the conduct of man. And the little boy said, wide-eyed after he'd heard all that, he says, "Well, which one wins?" And his grandfather said, "The one that you feed is the one that's going to win."

And, so, God is watching us to see which one we're going to feed in our lives. But you see this is a battle that is not an easy battle. Let's go to Romans chapter 7. I think you know where we're going. Paul talks about this and he is explaining this battle that goes on in our mind. Romans 7 verse 14, he says:

Romans 7:14. *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (NKJ)*

"The carnal mind is enmity toward God," we read. He says:

Romans 7:15. *For what I am doing, I [don't understand. For what I [want] to do, [I don't practice that]; [and for] what I hate, [that's the thing] I do. (NKJ)*

Verse 16:

Romans 7:16. *If, then, I do what I [don't want] to do, I agree with the law that [it's good.
17) But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (NKJ)*

Verse 18:

Romans 7:18. *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; (NKJ)*

That nature that is hostile toward God, that's in opposition to God.

Romans 7:18b. *...for to will [meaning: to desire] is present with me, but how to perform what is good [he says,] I ... find [it hard]. (NKJ)*

Verse 19:

Romans 7:19. *For the good that I will do, I do not do; but the evil [that] I [don't want to do], [that's what] I practice. (NKJ)*

Now God is telling us through Paul that we have this war. And which are we going to feed? There is a battle daily in our minds. Are we going to yield to the side that is in opposition to God? Or are we going to yield to God? And say, "God, show me what You want because I don't know the way"?

And at this time of year, we need to recognize this battle. And we need to recognize God's spirit and we need to recognize this other spirit that's hostile toward God.

That leads us to the Fifth and Final Point. This is something that you only learn over time, I think. If you can learn it earlier, then you are most blessed! The Fifth Point is that:

V. God is teaching us over time that only His way works.

God is teaching us over time that only His way works! And let's understand that just as with Adam and Eve, they found out—hopefully, before the end of their days—that their way didn't work. When they were thrust out of the Garden, when all of a sudden they had curses pronounced on them that the land wasn't going to yield it's fruit without a whole lot of work—Adam was going to have to work by the sweat of his brow and that Eve's curse is that "You're going to raise children in a horrible world. And you're going to be cursed from that standpoint."—hopefully, they came to see that that their choice was a wrong choice. But we face the same choices. We face exactly the same choices.

Man is so sure that his way is right. Look at the current budget debates. I get sick watching it. The Democrats stand up and they say, "This is the way. We've got to do it this way. We can't cut here and we can't cut very much. And we've got to do this." And the Republicans say, "No, no, no! Our way is better. These guys are nuts over here. We've got to do it this way and we've got to make these cuts. And if you don't like it, then there's the highway." And then the Tea Partyers say, "Both of you guys are wrong and this is the way to do it." And everybody is so cocksure that their way is right. "It's our way or the highway!"

And it's a perfect example for us in the Church. We can't allow that kind of mentality to creep into the Church. Proverbs 14 and verse 12, we don't need to turn there. You know it. It says: "There is a way that seems right to a man." Now, what's the result of that? "But the end thereof" is what? "Death." Adam and Eve died. They didn't have to die. They could have taken hold of the Tree of Eternal Life, but their way ends in death.

The Republicans and the Democrats and the Tea Partyers, their way ends in the death of this country. They don't know it. God is not a Republican. God is not a Tea Partyer. All of man's ways are wrong. All of man's ways lead to death.

And we have to learn, as the whole world is going to learn someday, but we have to learn right now because our time is now—judgment is on the house of God—that we don't know the way of ourselves. It is not in us to know the way. Let's go to Jeremiah chapter 10, one of my favorite Scriptures, verses 23 and 24. We must apply this in our minds. We must be aware of it every day of our lives when we make decisions, when we come to crossroads as Adam and Eve did. Jeremiah 10 beginning in verse 23, this is one of the biggest truisms in the Bible.

Jeremiah 10:23. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: (KJV)

What he's saying is, "Man does not know the path to walk if it is coming from himself."

Jeremiah 10:23b. ...it is not in man that [walks] to direct his steps. (NKJ)

Man cannot of his own nature put one foot in front of the other and head in the right direction. He will head in the wrong direction if he is motivated by his own thoughts, his own way, and this nature that is hostile to God.

Verse 24, that's why Jeremiah says:

Jeremiah 10:24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in [your] anger, lest [you] bring me to nothing. (KJV)

And so, a true Christian who is motivated by God's spirit says, "God, I don't know the answer. I don't know where to go. Please reveal it to me. Please show me through Your word, through counsel, through prayer, through fasting and meditation, show me the way that You want me to go, because I don't want my way. I want Your way."

We have to learn that we don't know the way. And God is allowing us through experience—often, frankly, by severe pain—that our way leads to suffering and failure. And that's a big lesson that I've learned dramatically over the last three or four years. We have to get to the point where we don't want our way because we know our way is not necessarily God's way. It has to be God's way or it will end in failure.

And you just have to go to God and say, "God, I'm a kid. I'm a little kid. I don't know the way. I don't know what You want. And so please show me what You want because I don't trust my own judgment. I don't trust myself because the part of me that maybe comes up with this or that might be the part of me that's in opposition to You. And I don't want to be in opposition to You. I want to do what You want me to do."

We often have to re-learn this principle. We think maybe we've got it down, but then a few years later we realize we've gone off on our own. We've made our own decisions and it ends up in pain and suffering and failure. And I've had to re-learn this several times in my forty-five years in the Church that we can get on a wild hair, goose chase, whatever it might be. We think we're doing God's will. And we aren't even close because we're trusting in ourselves and not God.

And, frankly, today, it is painful for me to watch Brethren hurting and going through tremendous trials and hurting just because they refuse to change. They just for whatever—it's in their head—they refuse to admit that maybe their way is not the right way. And so, they go off and they do their own way, perform, follow their own thoughts and follow their own motivations. And it ends up in pain and suffering and disaster. And you watch. You know when they head out in that direction because you see in the Bible it's not God's way. And you see this train heading down the track and you know that there's another train coming in the opposite direction. You don't know when they're going to hit, but there's going to be train wreck pretty soon. And you just have to sit and shake your head and watch because they are making decisions based not on God's spirit but on their own desires. And it's painful, but sometimes, as I've said before, the only way we learn is through pain.

We must learn that what we want is not necessarily what God wants. We have to understand that. When we get up a head of steam about something, we need to pull the reins up and get down on our knees and pray to God because what we want isn't necessarily what God wants. We have to understand that. And we learn it again and again. And it's like whipping yourself with a scourge just over your back, just beat yourself up because "When am I going to learn to do it God's way?" And we have to understand that we must allow God to reveal His way to us. And not decide for ourselves what His way is.

Let's go to Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 23. Let's understand this. Jeremiah 10 tells us we can't put one foot in front of the other. Proverbs 6 and verse 23 gives us the answer. It gives us the answer! It says:

Proverbs 6:23. *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: (KJV)*

God's Law leads us. Not ourselves. It's not our vision. It's God's vision and God's Law is the lamp that lights our way.

And so as with Adam and Eve, we all have choices to make. And as a general direction in our lives and also on a daily basis and we must make sure that we allow God's Law and God to guide us. And we don't, through the pride of man, choose a way that satisfies us but is not God's will.

So, what is the conclusion to the whole matter? What is the conclusion of asking this question: Can we be in opposition to God?

Well, I think we've seen that the mind of man is in opposition to God. And if that mind of man in us predominates, then we are in opposition to God if we allow human nature to be the driving force in our lives rather than God's holy spirit.

But we have to come to the point—this is the conclusion—we have to come to the point that we surrender to God and that we only seek His will. That is the conclusion.

That is the solution because otherwise if we don't surrender to God and we don't seek His will, then we're in opposition to God. Anything that's other than God's will is opposing God's will. So let's understand that. If we don't follow God's will, we're in opposition to God. Anything that is not part of God's will is by definition opposed to God. And we have to be very, very careful.

In all too many cases, we see men strive for their own selfish desires. We see it in business. We see it out in the world. We see it in our neighborhoods. We see it on our jobs. And, frankly, we see it in the Church.

People seek office to be the boss. Not to serve and help, but to be the boss. People seek office to receive aggrandizement from men. Not as a servant but to seek aggrandizement. We see people putting down others. It could be groups or individuals. If you kill everybody around you, you're the only one left standing. And so, you're standing there and everybody else is down on their knees bleeding to death. And so, in that sense, one elevates the self by cutting everybody else down around them.

Or people want to be part of an exclusive group. That seeks to elevate the self or elevate the group. And if you elevate the group, then "I'm part of the group; so therefore, I'm elevated." That's all pride! That is all human nature in opposition to God.

Christ taught us at this time of year—and this is something as we read about, John was talking about in the sermonette. We read about who Christ is and what He did at this time of year. This is what we see. This is something that should stand out to each and every one of us. It's in Luke 22 verse 42. This was right before He was taken. He knew exactly what He was facing. He knew that

agony, suffering and death were going to be His partner over the next several hours and ultimately He would die. In Luke 22 verse 42, Christ said:

Luke 22:42. *Father, if [You] be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but [Yours], be done. (KJV)*

We have to get to the point that we surrender to God as Christ did. He said, "This is what I want to do. I don't want to go through this! But nevertheless I'm surrendering My will, My desires to do Your will." We have to get to that point every day, every minute of every day.

But Christ not only taught it, but He did it! And that's what we have to do. Look at Philippians 2. We're going to read parts of verses 5 through 8. I'll cut out—Paul can have phrases in there that digress. And so, we're going to just cut to the chase here. Philippians 2 verse 5:

Philippians 2:5. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (KJV)*

Not the human mind that was in Adam and Eve. Not the mind that is in opposition to God.

But notice what Christ did. Verse 6:

Philippians 2:6. *Who, (KJV)*

Now jump to the middle of verse 7.

Philippians 2:7b. *...[who] took upon him the form of a servant, and (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 8 in the middle of the verse:

Philippians 2:8b. *...[and] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (KJV)*

So you see, Christ not only taught it, but He did it. And we're called to do what? We're called to follow in His footsteps. Aren't we? And if we follow in His footsteps, we get down on our knees and say, "God, not my will, but Yours be done." And every one of us has to do that. We will not be in the Kingdom of God if we don't fall down on our knees and say, "God, I give up! I've learned my way doesn't work. My mind, my human mind doesn't work. It is only Your spirit in me that works. And it is only Your will that works. So, please show me what You want me to say and what You want me to do." And that's a lifelong study. It's a lifelong practice every day of our lives.

And, frankly, after enough failure and pain—and I think we all can look back on our lives at this time of year as we examine ourselves—we see that every time we depart from that it results in a train wreck. There is pain. There is suffering. There is agony when we do what we want to do and we ignore God's will.

So let's turn to one final Scripture, 1 John chapter 3 and verse 22. This is what we must do. We must make sure everything we think, everything we do results in what we're going to read here in 1 John 3 and verse 22. John says:

***1 John 3:22.** And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and [we] do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (KJV)*

Now Adam and Eve, what they did, the choice they made was not pleasing in God's sight. And look at the carnage and pain and suffering that has resulted from that. And we can look back. I can look back in my life and I see choices that I made that were not pleasing in God's sight and they resulted in pain and suffering for me and those around me. And it doesn't work! It just didn't work because of the pride of life. I knew better. I knew what I was going to do and didn't consider that, as I said earlier, that my will might not be God's will.

So, as we approach the Passover, let's make sure that our mind is not in opposition to God because, as we've proved here today, there is a certain part of our mind that *is* in opposition to God. And if we feed that mind, if we feed that portion of our mind, we will ultimately be in opposition to God in our thoughts and in our actions and in our deeds.

On the other hand, if we feed God's spirit in us, if we fill our minds with God's Word, we pray, we study, we fast, what we put into our mind is godly, then we feed God's spirit. That spirit will grow and then what we will do will not be in opposition to God, but rather will be pleasing to God.

So, let's make sure we evaluate ourselves at this time of the year. And let's make sure that we avoid the pride of life and that we fill our minds with God's spirit and therefore, please God in all that we do.

We just want to wish everyone who will be getting these CDs and DVDs and obviously here in the hall, everyone a wonderful Passover, a wonderful Night to be, a wonderful Spring Holy Days.

Let's draw closer to God and let's make sure we do His will and not our own.