

The Perfect Work of God #1

Fred R. Coulter—June 6, 2009

The *perfect work of God*, which He is doing with us, is really quite an amazing thing when you understand what human nature really is, and then what God is going to do to change that human nature. Now that's quite a work, indeed, when we get into it and look at it.

Let's begin here in Jeremiah 17:9, because this tells us the root and core of human nature, plus also we can plug in the other things of:

- vanity,
- we are temporary,
- we have the law of sin and death in us,
- as we have been born, so are we going to die,
- the age will depend on how we live our lives, etc.

But how is God going to take this? Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Now how is God going to take the heart and mind and attitude like that, which all human beings have this; and, of course, there are varying degrees of going against God, and hardness of heart, and depth of sin, and all of that added on to it. But how is God going to take a nature like this and change it?

The next verse tells us a little about what God is going to do, and we'll expand on that. "I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins... [and we'll talk a little bit about what the reins are and what they do and how God uses that.] ...even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.... [Then He gives a little warning:] ...As the quail that hatches eggs it has not laid; in the same way he who gets riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the middle of his days, and in his end he shall be a fool" (vs 10-11).

So how is God going to take this kind of nature and what is He going to do to change it?—because God says that's His work? (We'll see that in several places as we go along.) As we go through this sermon, there will be some verses we've gone over many times and other verses we haven't. So let's put it together and let's come to Ephesians, the second chapter, and let's see what God does to us and for us, after we have been rescued from Satan the devil. And a little later, not in this sermon, but later, we can talk about how God is going to take care of Satan the devil; how he came about, etc., etc.

So after we have been saved by grace, through repentance and baptism, then God begins to do something—doesn't He? And He does it with His Spirit, because we need repentance and baptism to

receive the Holy Spirit of God. Once we receive the Holy Spirit of God, then we do the things that God tells us to do, so those are not our works. We begin to think the thoughts that God wants us to think, because of His Spirit and His Word.

So this is why He says, Ephesians 2:8 (pg 1,190): "For by grace you have been saved through faith... [So it is God's special intervention in your life. This is what is also important to understand: *the ones that God calls and the ones that are converted, it's not by happenstance*—it's by choice and repentance. 'Many are called, few are chosen, because few repent.' But it's not by happenstance.] (Now he shows this): ...through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves... [Because being sinful as we are, and deceitful as are, even with the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are in the process of overcoming human nature. It is not that we have totally overcome human nature, because we're to grow in grace and knowledge. So not of works that we devise of ourselves. You can read the whole account about Job. Even though he was following the letter of the law of God's way, he was doing it all of his own. So God's work is a spiritual work which He is going to do.] ...it is the gift of God. Not of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works..." (vs 8-10).

Now let's look at two words there. 'We are His *workmanship*.' So once we receive the Holy Spirit, God is doing something with His Spirit in us:

- to mold us
- to help us
- to change us
- to convert us

So *it is His workmanship*. Now the next word is *created*. So what God is doing is still a process of ongoing creation, a special creation that comes from God the Father; but we are *created in Christ Jesus* unto the good works. Those good works are the things that God wants us to do. We will see what that is in just a little bit.

Notice that God ordained beforehand in order that might walk in them. We can also expand this out a little bit further. This is part of God's predestinated plan for us, correct—to *take the nature of Jer.17:9 and change it*. You can add all the other things of human nature under Jer. 17:9, because that's all part of it.

Now notice: ...that we might walk in them" (v 10). Which then is a way of life to live, which is called *to walk in*.

- it is the way of the Lord
- it is the way of truth
- it is the way of righteousness
- it is the way of love
- it is the way of faith, and hope

and all of those things that we find in the Bible that we need to do and grow in. So let's see how God does this, and then we will look at some interesting things concerning the Holy Spirit.

Let's come to the John 14:6, because this helps expand several things. What does it mean to be created in Christ Jesus? What does it mean to have the good works that were foreordained for us to walk in them? We find right here all combined together in John 14:6: "Jesus said to him... [When he said, 'I don't know where you're going,' that is Thomas.] ... 'I am **the way**, and **the truth**, and **the life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

So this is a deliberate, knowledgeable, and a choice that God makes, but it also it is a reciprocal choice on our part back to God. Now this tells us something that the world doesn't know. It thinks there are many ways to God, but it's not to the Father. And no one is going to come to the Father, except through Jesus Christ, and that is true all the way down through everything that God is doing.

Let's come down to v 15: "If you love Me... [So we're seeing everything that God does is based upon love. Love, and truth, and faith, and hope, but:

- love is the greatest,
- love is supreme,
- love tells us how we need to conduct our lives.

...If you love Me keep the commandments—namely My commandments.'" And John later wrote in 1-John 5:3 that 'this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.'

Here's how God does it, v 16: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age... [That's from the time of Christ, until His return, and also throughout our entire lifetimes. So that when we come to the end of our lives and have been perfected, and we'll talk about this a little bit later on, then God has a greater work yet to perform upon us, which then is the finality of the work that He is currently performing upon those whom He has called and are living. That greater work, we know, is the resurrection.] ...*Even* the Spirit of the Truth..." (vs 16-17).

Now that's what God uses to get rid of the deceitful mind: **the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Truth**. Let me ask you a question: Was there a time

in your life that you didn't particularly care about anything except your own way? *Yes, indeed*. And you would not accept truth if it didn't agree with what you wanted, even truth of facts related to incidences that occurred in your life, or disputes between people. We can see it today in the political set; they are polarized and hostile toward each other. So likewise are we, as human beings, with a deceitful mind. We are polarized and hostile to the Truth of God.

But something happens in each one's life, which then ends up being the first step in God calling someone—that you want to know about God and you want to know about the Truth. Not *a* truth, but **the Truth**. Now we'll just project ahead a little bit here. What is it that when you are converted that you're constantly seeking after? *The love of God and the Truth*—is that not correct? So you can what? *Live your life in the way that God wants you to*. And as you do that, God is **creating in you**, through His Spirit, to change you from being desperately wicked and deceitful, to being righteous and Holy and blameless. That's quite a work.

Let's draw another analogy. What if you had a house that was totally obliterated by a tornado, and someone said, 'I want you to rebuild this with what is left. And as you go along, I will allow you to add new material.' That's much like what God is doing with us, because when we come to repentance, our lives really, as we look at it as God is leading us to repentance, is in a shambles; much like in an analogy compared to a house hit by a tornado—because the reality of human nature comes home, BANG! all at once.

So He's going to give His Spirit, and it is the Spirit of Truth. "...which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not... [Why can't the world perceive it? *Because the world does not want to give up its lies, its politics, its way*, and it wants to continue serving Satan the devil and yet claim the blessings of God. That is totally deceitful—isn't it? So, 'cannot receive it.' Another reason why it can't receive it is because there's no repentance. So if you go back to the sermon that I did, *It's Not the Economy Stupid—It's God*; and what I said there would have to happen in order to turn things around; mass repentance on a vast scale unheard of in America. So that's why they can't receive it.] ...nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you'" (v 17).

That's how God begins to call a person. He sends one of the seven spirits and the 'seven spirits are the eyes of God to go to and fro on the whole earth seeking those who are seeking Him.' And then one of the seven spirits works with that individual so that if they continue searching for God, then the Holy Spirit of God will come and be with them, and

we'll see a little later, lead them. We'll also see that it leads them to repentance. So that's all the work of God, and that is a spiritual work that is unseen by people in the world. That's why it says 'it perceives it not'—cannot see it.

Verse 18: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world shall see Me no longer; but you shall see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. In that day, you shall know that I am in My Father, and you *are* in Me, and I am in you” (vs 18-20). That happened when they saw Jesus after the resurrection.

Here's the special way that God does His work. And as I mentioned on Pentecost, the unseen work of the Holy Spirit, the good quality of the parable of the Kingdom of God is likened to leaven, which is put in three measures of flour. The work of the Holy Spirit within you will have behavioral manifestations in the changes of your life; but no one knows the work and the change that is going on except you and God. Now that is a tremendous miracle in itself—isn't it? So the ***workmanship of God creating in us, in Christ, is a tremendous, ongoing miracle.***

Now here's the key to it, v 21: “The one who has My commandments and is keeping them... [That means on an ongoing basis.] ...that is the one who loves Me...” That is also a test, if you don't keep the commandments of God, or Christ, you don't love Him. Just like in a marriage, when you say, 'I do, I will be faithful unto death.' All of your actions through your marriage prove whether you are continuing in that or not. And all of those things demonstrate your love to your husband or to your wife—is that not correct? And when that is broken, all havoc breaks loose—doesn't it? All emotions are torn apart—doesn't it? All feelings are destroyed—aren't they? ***Betrayal!***

“The one who has My commandments... [you understand them.] ...and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me... [Now notice: here comes the return from God and His work that He is doing so that ***the perfect work of God can be completed in you.***] ...and ***the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father***... [That's pretty special—isn't it ***God's work is so important that the Ruler of the universe is concerned personally about you.*** Not only concerned about you, but loves you. Now let's see how this becomes a double love.] ...and ***I will love him***... [So you have God the Father and Jesus Christ. Now we will see that this is talking about not only Them personally, but also two aspects of the Spirit of God. Let's read on.] ...and will manifest Myself to him.' Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'” (vs 21-22). Now how are You going to do that? And we

can add, especially after the forty days and You ascend into heaven, how are You going to do that? *By the spiritual operation that we talked about earlier, through the seven spirits of God and the Spirit of God.* He's not going to come and literally appear to you and say, 'I am Jesus,' unless He's got a special mission for you, like the Apostle Paul. So all of those who say, 'God spoke to me'—God didn't speak to you.

So here's the answer: “Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... [Now it's very interesting in the Greek. When it's singular *word*—'logos'—it means *the whole message*; everything that He has said. Now notice what happens, because you do that. This is why, where we started, you must come through Jesus. There is no way you can get to the Father.] ...and My Father will love him, and We... [Now He's said it twice—right? The one who loves Me and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father (v 21)] (so he says here): ...'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him... [Now notice this next sentence, because this becomes very important in the spiritual work of God.] ...and ***We***...[He didn't say I; He didn't say the Father, He said]: ...and ***We*** will come to him and make Our abode with him'” (v 23).

Now then this brings out another whole aspect of why God made us after His own image. And the truth is that where it is 'We will make our abode with him,' ***you become a temporary dwelling place with God's Spirit for God.*** That's why God doesn't need a temple. Isn't it interesting, we'll just project forward, that in New Jerusalem there is no temple. Remember this: Whenever they built the temple, they always got in trouble—right? Beginning with the one who built the first one, Solomon. So God wants to, with His Spirit, dwell in you.

Let's come to 1-Corinthians, the third chapter, (hold your place here, because we'll come back) so we can see how is God going to perfect us? Think about all of the stubbornness and hardness of heart and evil of human nature that God has to change. That's why we have the example of the Apostle Paul. You cannot get any more hardhearted than in the name of God persecuting the Church, dragging people off to jail in chains, and killing them. That's why Jesus had to be crucified, to demonstrate the hostility of human nature against God; and also to demonstrate God's love for the world even in that condition that He is going to provide a means of salvation for them in His plan, at His time.

So right now what we're concentrating on is: How is God doing the work in us? 1-Corinthians 3:16 (pg 1,163): “Don't you understand that ***you are***

God's temple, and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?.... [And it says that the Father and Jesus will make Their abode in us.] ...If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are.... [Now the next verse shows the process of overcoming the deceitfulness of the human mind and how we need to do it.] ...Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God's sight*" (vs 16-18). That is through the work and power of God.

Now let's come back here to John 14:23: "...and We will come to him and made Our abode... [or dwelling place] ...with him.... [That's through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now notice v 24, again, here is an absolute dividing line. You can't be half way. That's the problem with the Laodiceans, they're neither hot, they're neither cold, they're just cool, lukewarm.] ...The one who does not love Me does not keep My words... [Or you can work it the other way around: the one who does not keep My words, does not love Me. And we can say that is regardless of what? A profession—right? Just like someone who's unfaithful in marriage says, 'Oh, I love you, I love you, I love you,' but at the first opportunity going out and continuing an affair with another man or another woman, which really means the profession of your lips is not true, because your actions say otherwise. So that's what He's saying here.] ...and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, Who sent Me'" (vs 23-24).

Now this is also very important for all Protestants who believe in ultra-liberalism. Ultra-liberalism is this: 'Paul brought a greater gospel than Jesus Christ, and what Jesus said was only for the Jews and we don't have to follow that. And baptism was only for the Jews and all we have to do is believe and let God into our hearts.; and then we decide what is right and good. All of the good, lovely Scriptures, we believe; but all of the harsh Scriptures and commandment-keeping, we don't believe.'](Notice): ...The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word ... [Everything that Jesus said.] ...that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, Who sent Me'" (v 24).

So, you see, there is no way of getting around Jesus Christ—absolutely none! You cannot appropriate Him to yourself, because then you are doing the calling to God—is that not correct? So, let's just do a little quick test. How many times have we said recently the three most important things and the three counterfeit things? The three counterfeit things:

- Sunday
- Easter/Eucharist

- holidays

The three important, truthful things, and remember it's the way of Truth, the words of God, and does God lie? *No*.

- Sabbath
- Passover
- Holy Days

And all of those, then, give us the umbrella and the structure of how to live our lives in grace through the Spirit of God. So that's the test.

Now let's look at something else concerning the Holy Spirit, which is also very interesting how He words it. Verse 26: "'But *when* the Comforter comes, *even* the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one shall teach you all things, and shall bring to your remembrance everything that I have told you.'" Now notice what's interesting here. The Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, so it comes from God the Father—correct? *Yes*.

Now let's notice something else. Let's come down here to John 15:26: "'But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of the Truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one shall bear witness of Me.'" So it's a joint operation: from the Father, the Father sends it; and also Christ sends it. And we will see the part that Christ sends is also called the Spirit of Christ. So that's quite something—isn't it?

Now one more—John 16:13. Here's the process by which God, then, does His inner working within us. *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus*. Now notice: "'However, when that one has come, even the Spirit of the Truth... [That's how God purges out all the deceitfulness in human nature, but it's a process and it takes time.] ...**it will lead you into all Truth**... [Now that is, all Truth necessary for salvation.] ...because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak.... [Now we know with modern technology how that can work. We're doing it right here. This message, whether it comes in cassette or on a CD, will only speak what I've spoken in it and nothing else—correct? Well, that's how the Holy Spirit works in coming to us. It will only bring us the things of God and nothing else. It is the Spirit of Truth **and will lead you into all Truth**. Now the last sentence.] ...And it shall disclose to you the things to come.'"

Now living in this age, think about that in relationship to Daniel 12, which says, 'And at the time of the end, the wicked shall do wickedly and shall not understand; but **the wise shall understand**.' Who are the wise? *The ones who are in Christ and keep the Spirit of God*.

Now let's look another aspect of the dual aspect of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit of God. Let's come to Romans 8. We've had a little discussion here concerning how the Holy Spirit's going to lead you into all things and disclose to you things to come. In the case of the Apostle John and the book of Revelation, is that not a great fulfillment of that? *Yes!* So then, the Holy Spirit then has to lead us as we properly divide the Word of God to see then how the prophecies of the Old Testament and New Testament fit in to what the book of Revelation shows us. ***It also will lead us into everything we need to know for conversion.*** That's the key important thing.

Let's look at the two aspects of God's Holy Spirit as defined here in Romans 8:1 (pg 1,152), because we need to tie all of this together. "Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit... [What is leading us, what is guiding us, is the Holy Spirit of God.] ...because the law... [And you can also say, not only the law of the spirit of life, but the operation] ...of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus ... [That ties right in with Eph. 2:10.] ...has delivered me from the law of sin and death" (vs 1-2). It means you don't have the law of sin and death eliminated from you, but you have been delivered from its dominance, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because back here Romans 6:12, it says: "Therefore, **do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof.**" So being delivered from the law of sin and death does not mean it's been totally eliminated, and now in the flesh we are perfect, because no one is perfect in the flesh.

Let's stop and think about that for a minute. You look at a brand new baby, perfectly formed, everything is fine, everything works, and you look at it and say, 'That's perfect.' But that's only perfect in the flesh; that has nothing to do with the spirit. Because even those who are the healthiest, the strongest, the most intellectual in the world, they die, like everyone else. Because all die in Adam; even we do. But through Christ we are delivered from the law of death—how? *By the resurrection*, that's the ultimate deliverance—right? And we are delivered from human nature by God's Spirit *within* us, so we can overcome human nature. We have the strength and power of God's Spirit to overcome human nature.

Now let's see what this requires of us. Romans 8:3: "For what *was* impossible for the law to do..." Let's understand something about the law. The law of itself cannot make you do a single, solitary thing. The law is a definition of the spiritual

reality of the laws of God, and the consequences for breaking them. But, the law cannot make you do anything. It says, 'You shall not--take any one of the Ten Commandments--have any other gods before Me.' Well, people don't believe that; they want to have their other gods. 'Don't make idols.' People don't believe that; they want to make their idols. The law, because it's there—even written in stone as it originally was, and put in the Ark of the Covenant, or written on your doorposts, or written on a placard hanging on the wall, the law—is not going to reach down and grab you by the neck and say, 'I am the law, you will do this.' ***The law is powerless to make you do anything.***

"...in that it was weak through the flesh... [Because why? '*Human nature is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things.*' So again, we see the contrast in where we started.] (So because of this) ...God, having sent His own Son in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (v 3). So that now there is:

- a way out of sin
- forgiveness from sin
- overcoming sin
- overcoming Satan
- serving God through His Spirit.

Now here's part of the work that God is doing, v 4: "In order that the righteousness of the law... [Now we'll see this a little bit later when we have some other Scriptures to add to that.] ...might be fulfilled in us, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit: For those who walk according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh..." (vs 4-5). That's what their minds are on.

Look at the difference being converted and being led of the Holy Spirit of God. What are your minds on all the time?

- how to serve God
- how to love God
- how to overcome sin
- knowing the Word of God
- studying the Word of God.

"For those who walk according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh... [That's all they're interested in: their way, their thrills, their pleasures, their lives, according as they want to do it.] ...but those who are walking according to *the* Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace" (vs 5-6).

- Life through Christ, Who is ***the way, the truth and the life.***
- Peace with God, because we're no longer at war with God.

- Peace of mind which comes from *faith and hope and belief and the love of God*, and all of that combined together.

Verse 7: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God... [Now, ‘enm’ is the root for *enemy*; and an enemy is at enmity against his adversary. So here again we have Jer. 17:9.] ...for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it be.” Because in order to be subject to the law of God, which is something you choose to do, you really need the Holy Spirit of God to do that. You can’t do it otherwise. Some people try, and they have parts of the laws of God that they keep, but it’s not subject to the law of God otherwise.

A good example: can you find in India—one of the most lawless nations in the world on religion that you can think of; every religion under the sun is there—can you find Indian people who are decent, who are nice, who are kind, because they follow some of the law of God? But you ask them, ‘Get rid of your idols, get rid of your holidays, repent and serve God.’ Now then, you see the hostility of the human nature. So *never be deceived by what appears to be the goodness and sincerity of human nature*, because there are a lot of people who like to do good. And the ones that Satan loves the most are the do-gooders of this world.

(go to track #2)

We have again the contrast between deceitfulness of human nature and the work of God within us to change it. Now let’s see how this operates.

Romans 8:8: “But those who are in *the flesh* cannot please God.... [But those who are in the Spirit can please God—correct? *Yes*, says so 1-John 3.] ...However, you are not in *the flesh*, but in *the Spirit*... [Now that doesn’t mean that you don’t have a fleshly body. It means that you are not living according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. That’s what’s it’s talking about up above here.] ...if... [There’s that two-letter word, needs to be circled.] ...if *the Spirit of God* is indeed dwelling within you.... [Just as Jesus said it would in John 14—correct? Now also what we are learning as we go through this is what? *The unity of Scripture and how all Scripture agrees in every aspect with the Word of God.*] ...But if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*...” (vs 8-9)

Now that’s an interesting phrase—isn’t it? Here we have the Spirit of God, now we have the Spirit of Christ. What did we learn back in John 14 and 15? *The Spirit comes from the Father*, He will send it. And Jesus said, ‘I will send the Spirit from the Father.’ So there are two aspects of the Spirit of God, when we receive the Spirit of God. And the aspect of Christ coming to us, and part of the Spirit

of God that Christ is directly involved in, is called the Spirit of Christ. So hold on, remember we said, and we read where Jesus said, ‘We will make Our abode with them.’ *We*. Let’s look at the other part of it here as we go along.] ...But if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you... [And you can put there Col. 1:27, ‘Christ in you is the hope of glory.’] ...the body is indeed dead because of sin; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness” (vs 9-10). Because now you are not living according to the flesh, but you’re living according to the Spirit, and that gives you life—*the Spirit is life because of righteousness*.

Notice v 11: “Now if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the dead*... [Which was what? *From the Father*. Here’s the aspect of the Spirit of the Father, so this shows us very clearly that we have, of the Holy Spirit, two aspects of it: one from Christ; one from the Father.

- **from Christ:** to develop the mind of God, because we’re created in Christ Jesus—is that not correct? *Yes*.
- **from the Father:** because we have been begotten to be His sons and daughters—is that not correct? *Yes*.

So there are the two aspects of the Spirit of God that we find right here in Romans 8.] ...Now if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the dead* is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the dead* will also quicken your mortal bodies... [That is, make alive your mortal bodies. We’ll talk about this a little later, because that is the finality of the work that God is doing in us.] ...because of His Spirit that dwells within you. So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to *the flesh*; Because if you are living according to *the flesh*, you shall die; but if by *the Spirit* you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live” (11-13). Which shows the overcoming that the Spirit gives us to overcome the sins of the flesh, etc., etc.

Verse 14: “For as many as are led by *the Spirit of God*, these are *the sons of God*. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage... [Now that’s the spirit that’s in the world: the spirit of fear, the spirit of bondage.] ...unto fear... [That comes from Satan the devil.] ...but you have received *the Spirit of sonship*, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father’” (vs 14-15). Which means: in the same sense as daddy, you’ve probably heard that before. That’s the closeness of the relationship that God the Father and Jesus Christ want to have with us.

What does the Spirit of God lead us to do? Come to Romans, the second chapter; let’s see the first thing that it leads us to do. The Holy Spirit does many things for us: it convicts us of sin. That’s all

part of leading us—leading us to the way of God; leading us to the way of God begins right here. Romans 2:4: “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance?” So even everything concerning the salvation of God comes from God, as we started out. It’s not of the self; it is a gift of God. Even repentance is a gift—isn’t it? *Yes*. You have your part; you have to seek God. Then He convicts you in heart and mind, that’s being led of the Holy Spirit, of what sin is. And you begin to see what? *How deceitful and evil that the human mind is*, though on the outside, people may think that you’re a wonderful, wonderful person. ***Leads you to repentance!***

This is interesting: all the way through the book of Romans we have God’s way/human’s way; whether it be individually or whether it by groups, or whether it by whole civilizations as Rom. 1 talks about.

Let’s see, as we covered on Pentecost, but let’s go back there and just review it and add a little bit more to you, because every Scripture there is, in the Bible has precept upon precept; and line upon line; here a little, there a little; and you add it all together—and you put all of the Scriptures together, and then you get the full picture of what God is talking about.

Acts 2:36: “Therefore, let all *the* house of Israel know with full assurance that God has made this *same* Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.... [Now notice what happened.] ...Now after hearing *this*, they were cut to the heart... [Or as *King James* says: *pricked in the heart*, convicted. Why? *Because God’s Spirit was there among them*—correct? And what did God’s Spirit do with these who were cut to the heart? *Led them to repentance*, just like we read of there in Rom. 2.] ...and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (vs 36-38).

So the work that God is doing is a *spiritual work* and ***He is the one Who leads us*** in all of these things. And He wants us to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in our lives; in every aspect of it.

Let’s see another operation of this. Come back to Psalm 73:1 (pg 736). This is one of my favorite Psalms. I come here quite often, because it tells us how we can function in the world even though we see all of the things that are going on. I love the way the Psalm starts out. Psalm 73:1: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to those who are pure of heart.... [So he starts out by honoring God,

which is fine. What he’s saying here, he’s reminding God of it, and he’s actually kind of thinking that it should be that way with him because he has a pure heart, but he found out he really didn’t, because v 2 says:] ...But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped, for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... [He didn’t understand. And lots of times when we’re going through trials and difficulties, we say, ‘God, why us?’ or we say, ‘God, why me? God, why this trial?’ You look at other people, you see people in the world; they don’t seem to be having any problems. Everything’s going fine. Look at the rich of the world.] ...for there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm” (vs 1-4). I can tell you this financially: it doesn’t matter what happens to the finances of the world, the rich are still going to be rich.

“They are not in trouble like other men; neither are they plagued like *other men*.... [That is, and he’s referring to myself, ‘Oh, God, why am I having all these problems? Why am I having to fight my human nature? Why do I have these difficult things come up in my life?’ So this is kind of an argument back and forth between him and God. We’ll see what the solution is here in just a minute.] ...Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck. Violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness... [That is, they have so much they don’t know what to do.] ...they have more than the heart could wish for” (vs 5-7).

Kind of like Lazarus and the rich man. He had everything and Lazarus was coming and getting the crumbs that were left under the table. In other words, he was eating out the garbage can—right? *Yes*. And his health was so bad, no one to tend to him. The only one that cared for him was a dog, come and lick the pus out of his, whatever it was his wound was. Can you imagine that, your only friend is an unclean, licking dog. Nobody in the world cares for you. Well, God does. Hold on! Hold on!

“They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression; loftily they threaten.... [Sounds like someone we recently have received as president—doesn’t it, and the Congress as well. How about the two stooges with him, the one who leads the Congress in the Senate and in the House of Representatives? *Yes!*] ...They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.... [They have everything their own way! ‘God, why don’t you strike them down with lightning? Why don’t you do like Elijah?’ Remember John and James, they came back and said, ‘They’re casting demons out in Your name, let us call fire down from heaven upon them like Elijah.’ Jesus said, ‘You don’t know what spirit you’re in.’] ...Therefore His people return here, and

waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’.... [Shake their fist at God; go against God. Yet, they’re successful in the world.] ...Behold, these are the wicked, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.... [And it just keeps coming in, more and more and more and more. So now he reveals the problem that he had that started in v 1. He looks at all of that and he looks at himself in his poor condition and is probably penurious or poverty condition.] ...Surely I have made my heart pure in vain and washed my hands in innocence, for all the day long I have been plagued and chastened every morning” (vs 8-14).

Kind of like a Christian that says, ‘Boy, I didn’t count on all of this,’ but you forget what God is doing with you and in you. There’s a reason for all of it. At the resurrection, we’ll just interject here for a little encouragement, are you not going to share the wealth of God? Are you not going to live in the greatest place you possibly can? *New Jerusalem*,

- composed of spirit
- streets of gold
- garments that glitter and shine made of spirit
- and live forever?

Yes, so when you get in a complaining mood, like this man was in, don’t forget this.

But notice how it gripped him, v 15: “If I say, ‘I will speak thus;’ behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. When I thought to understand this, it was too painful for me... [He had a migraine headache he couldn’t handle—hard to handle.] (Notice the solution): ...until I went into the sanctuary of God...” (vs 15-17). So Asaph was a priest, finally went into the sanctuary of God, got his mind off of all the stupidity he was thinking about, and all the envy and jealousy and lust that he displayed in his thinking here in these verses at the beginning of it. Now we can go into the sanctuary of God, can’t we? How do we do that? *Through prayer; through Jesus Christ*. And that’s how we get the understanding that we need to handle the situations.

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end” (v 17). You have to look at the end, not the beginning or the process, or how it’s going, but the end. Then maybe he remembered what the Proverb—of course, the Proverb wasn’t written then, but I’m sure they understood it. ‘There’s a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death’—understood their end.

“Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction.... [Look at all of these great financiers who were doing all of these

things and making all kinds of money, living lies and getting away with it. I think we’re going to have the name Bernie Madoff burned in our minds forever, because he bilked people out 50-billion dollars. He fit the perfect description of Psa. 73 here that he was complaining about: a liar, a cheater, a stealer, but he schmoozed everybody, and he lived high on the hog. So much so just before the demise of everything, his wife got 143-million dollars in a bank account. I think the authorities are going to say, ‘Oh, oh, Mrs. Madoff, where did you get this?’] ...You set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction. How have they been brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors... [Fear. ‘What’s going to happen now?’] ...Like a dream when one awakens; so, O LORD, when You awake, You shall despise their image, for thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins” (vs 18-21).

Notice, ‘pricked in my reins.’ We’ll talk about *reins* here in a little bit. But what happens when your conscience is *pricked*? Who’s doing it? What brings that about? *The Spirit of God, the knowledge of the law of God*, and this is talking about being led to repentance. “For thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins” (v 21).

Let’s see another example of this. Let’s come to Luke 15. We’ll come back here to Psalm 73, so hold your place. Let’s understand this: repentance on our part is an ongoing necessity for the work of God to be completed in us. Now let’s pick it up here Luke 15:11 (pg 1,040)—here’s the parable of the two sons: “Then He said, ‘A certain man had two sons; And the younger of them said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me that portion of the property which falls to me.’ And he divided to them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered everything together *and* departed into a distant country. And there he wasted *all* his substance, living *in* debauchery. But after he had spent everything, there arose a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to be in need. Then he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.... [What a wonderful occupation for a Jew. No! The worst thing you could think of.] ...And he was longing to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine were eating, but no one gave *anything* to him” (vs 11-16). Probably he had a taskmaster there watching to make sure he didn’t snitch any of the swine food.

Now v 17: ““And **when he came to himself**... [That’s the key. That’s when you are **pricked in your heart, pricked in your conscience or pricked in your reins**, as was said back there in Psa. 73.] ...he said, “How many of my father’s hired servants have *an* abundance of bread, and I am dying

of hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; and I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.’” (vs 17-19).

Now you talk about a humbling of attitude, correct? Just like back in Psa. 73. He had to come to himself, and that was back there when he went into the sanctuary of God, then he understood. Because, see, it is the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, that *leads you in these things to understand*. So what do we have? *Complete change—right? Complete repentance—right? Yes!* He said in the beginning, ‘Oh, Father, I’m young, I’m tough, I want to go out on my own. Now give me everything that belongs to me.’ Nothing like a little vanity and demanding, but he gave it to him. Then he went out, no judgment, no thought, no nothing, wasted everything; had no recourse, and then circumstances hit him that was too hard for him to bear. So finally, in the abject, lowest pit of his trial, can you imagine that out there feeding the swine? Have you ever been around a lot of swine? Boy, does it stink! and the manure is everywhere, and they have their wallowing holes, and they grunt and they squeal, and they fight—right? *Yes!* It’s dangerous to feed the swine because if some of them get mad at you, they can attack you, throw you to the ground, and all the rest will come and gobble you up, because you’re good food. Unclean flesh, just like them, they love it! So quite a change, huh? But you see, *he had to come to himself*. Now the father was merciful and you know the rest of the story there, so we won’t read all of that.

Let’s come back here to Psalm 73:21 again: “For thus my heart was grieved... [he really understood what he had done] ...and I was pricked in my reins.... [Now notice, he had a talk with himself. You ever do that?] ...So foolish was I, and ignorant... [you dumb do-do.] ...I was like a beast before You.... [He saw himself for what he really was and he quit blaming God. That’s the whole point of it.] ...Nevertheless I am always with You; You have held me by my right hand.... [He began to see the reality of things spiritually, because God was with him and leading him.] ...You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.... [Now then he began to understand the difference—right? *Yes.*] ...Whom have I in heaven but You?...” (vs 21-25).

So remember this: *If you’re on God’s side, no one can be against you.* You always have God in heaven; Christ at the right hand—correct? The Holy Spirit to lead you and guide you; and how that repentance is an ongoing thing that we do daily—right? Isn’t the daily prayer, ‘forgive us our sins as we forgive others?’ *Yes.* So repentance is an

important part of it, and as we will see next time, how God uses the *reins* and what that means, is important in God dealing with us to lead us in these things. But let’s finish this Psalm and we’ll end here.

“My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever, for lo, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all who go a whoring from You. And me, it is good for me to draw near to God... [Now notice the whole change of attitude all the way through here *because he repented; because he came into the sanctuary of God, and he got his mind off himself*, and he got his mind off his jealousy, lust, and greed that other people had this and that and the other, and ‘I am suffering and they’re not,’ and ‘God you’re not fair and why do You do this?’ And here I am with all of these difficulties, and how am I supposed to really understand You, God?’ *Well, you come before God in repentance and prayer.*] ...And me, it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the LORD God, that I may declare all Your works” (vs 26-28).

In other words, the works that God is doing within him and we can apply this to us, that God is doing in us. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. So we’ll continue the next sermon.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Jeremiah 17:9-11
- 2) Ephesians 2:8-10
- 3) John 14:6,15-23
- 4) 1-Corinthians 3:16-18
- 5) John 14:23-26
- 6) John 15:26
- 7) John 16:13
- 8) Romans 8:1-2
- 9) Romans 6:12
- 10) Romans 8:3-15
- 11) Romans 2:4
- 12) Acts 2:36-38
- 13) Psalm 73:1-21
- 14) Luke 15:11-19
- 15) Psalm 73:21-28

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1-John 5:3
- Daniel 12
- Romans 1
- 1-John 5:3
- Romans 1
- Daniel 12
- 1 John 3
- Colossians 1:27

Also referenced:

Sermon: *It’s Not the Economy Stupid—It’s God*

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