

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 115

THE SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPETS (continued)

"And they had a *king* over them, which is the *angel* of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon*, but in the Greek tongue hath his name *Apollyon*" (Rev. 9:11).

In this cryptic passage of scripture we are told that the locusts, who come out of the smoke that comes out of the pit, have a king that is superior in authority to them. Natural locusts have no leader. But the locusts in John's vision have this one who rules over them. The unique thing about this king is that he is *not one of them*, but he is called "*the angel of the bottomless pit*." This particular expression does not occur anywhere else in scripture. Some hold that it refers to Satan, an angel whose home, they suppose, is in the bottomless pit where he is head and chief. The Bible nowhere indicates, however, that there is somewhere in the heart of the earth, or out in space, a literal "pit" where the devil lives, ruling over his imps, stoking fires, and doing all the other things religious people attribute to him.

The "king" in this text is not the devil — the king in this passage is the One who rules over all realms, the King of kings who was dead and is alive and has the *keys* of death and of hell! Christ, when He died, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He entered the darkest night of death, submitted to him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and was ushered through the somber gates and behind the fearful bars of Hades, the unseen, imperceptible realm of the dead. And then He arose the conquering Christ! He took control of the situation as with one exultant shout He grasped the keys of death and of hell from him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, stripped away the power of corruption, sin, and death, burst asunder the bars of hell, stalked boldly out in eternal triumph over all the dread powers of that dark realm, entered back into His body in the garden tomb, passed through the rock wall, showed Himself alive after many infallible proofs, and ascended up far above all heavens! Jesus has the keys; He proved that He has the keys of both death and hell, for He unlocked both and arose Victor. He holds the key to *everything*, for He has been given *all power and authority* in heaven and in earth! He alone is the one who opens and no man can shut, who shuts and no man can open. No one can open or shut any realm apart from our Lord Jesus Christ!

We often entertain such shallow thoughts about such profound realities! Satan does not hold the key to any realm! "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might *destroy him* that had the power of death, that is, *the devil...*" (Heb. 2:14). This should bring us release because we have been seeking death and cannot find it. We have been dying to self, dying out, dying out, a slow, painful, agonizing, tormenting death — and still we haven't given up the ghost! Only life can swallow up death! We don't die in order to live, we live in order to die! This whole book of Revelation is about how God is getting rid of *us*! The whole book is about a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the first heaven and the first earth are *passed away*. Isn't it wonderful! This book is not about all hell breaking loose on earth — it's about the revelation of Jesus Christ — the Christ of God breaking loose in that earth which *we are* and swallowing up all the torment, death, and hell in our old Adamic mind, human consciousness, and natural life! There's a trumpet sounding, beloved, declaring that you don't have to suffer any longer, you don't have to try to die anymore, you can find blessed and eternal

relief as you identify with *your new life* which is hid with Christ in God. That's ***who you really are!*** Forget old Adam — Christ has put him to death! Forget the devil — Christ has destroyed him! Forget about sin — Christ has made an end of sin and has given us *His righteousness!* Stop worrying about death — Christ has *abolished death* and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel! Until you *can* forget, God covers you with His grace! So *forget all of that!* Identify only with Christ. Embrace the truth as it is in Jesus. Then your up and down, in and out, victory and failure experience will cease, your torment will end, your scorpions will scamper, your horses will vanish, your smoke will clear, your pit will be filled in, and there will be a great calm. Hallelujah!

Let us remember that Satan is not the “angel” of the pit, nor does he hold the “key” to the pit, nor is he the “king” over the pit. All of this has been transferred to our Lord Jesus Christ who is Lord of all! Satan is a nobody and has no power at all. Someone says, “But, brother Eby, it says that the name of this angel of the bottomless pit, or this king over the locusts, is *Abaddon* and *Apollyon* — which mean DESTROYER! Surely that can't be *Christ!*” I will confess that my view of Abaddon and Apollyon is very different from most. I make no effort to connect these names with the devil, the antichrist, nor any other dark personage or power. Apollyon is the “angel” of the abyss or the one who has power and control over the abyss. Here he has the “key” to the abyss and authority to open it.

Now let us UNDERSTAND! “And I saw an *angel* come down *from heaven*, having the *key* to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is called the *Devil* and *Satan*, and bound him a thousand years. And he *cast him into the bottomless pit*, and *shut him up*, and *set a seal upon him*, that he should *deceive the nations no more...*” (Rev. 20:1-3). Now let us consider some pertinent questions. In this symbolic scene, who is it that has the key to the abyss? An *angel!* Where is the angel from? From *heaven!* Therefore, where did the key to the abyss come from? From *heaven!* What did the angel do? He *bound the devil, shut him up in the pit, and locked it with the key!* How, then, could Satan be the one who has the key? *Impossible!* Who is it that has bound, and does bind, the power of Satan? Our *Lord Jesus Christ!* Who is the symbolic “angel from heaven” all through the book of Revelation? *Christ is!* Ah, can we not see by this that the “destroyer,” that is, Abaddon and Apollyon, is the Christ of God! This is not some negative entity out of a realm of darkness — this is CHRIST!

The great truth and the deep mystery that the Holy Spirit would make known within our hearts in this great day of the Lord is that Christ is indeed the DESTROYER! Look at what He destroys! “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that *man of sin be revealed...*who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God...so that he as God *sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...*WHOM THE **LORD** SHALL CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH, AND SHALL **DESTROY** WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING” (II Thes. 2:3-8). This “man of sin,” who is the carnal mind, the natural man, and the old Adamic nature within each of us, doesn't suddenly one day “set himself up” in the temple and declare himself there to be God. Oh, no! Paul tells us that he “*sitteth*” in the temple of God “*showing himself*” that he IS GOD — a present and continuous activity. All who have spiritual understanding know that the “temple of God” is not a rebuilt “Jewish” temple over in the city of Jerusalem! I won't belabor the point by quoting a battery of scriptures which confirm that “*ye are the temple of the living God,*” “*...which temple ye are,*” etc.

God was known in the Old Testament times in the tabernacle and in the temple. That was His dwelling place! That was where God was revealed, where His glory was seen, where His voice was heard. This human heavenly temple of the New Covenant is the one not made with hands! The true temple is the body of Christ. The temple of the Lord is that vast family of God's sons who are coming to maturity in the image of Christ. It distresses me to hear preachers constantly proclaiming as fact the old wives' fables that the temple of God made with hands must be rebuilt in Jerusalem. I fearlessly proclaim the truth that God's temple is the body of Christ and no temple of God, made from stones or ornamented with silver and gold, will ever be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The notion of a rebuilt temple is a lie that would be humorous, were it not so blasphemous. The temple that God builds is the temple of which Jesus spoke to the poor, sinful woman at the well of Sychar. She was quibbling about where the true dwelling place of God was, and Jesus said, “Neither in this mountain, **nor in Jerusalem,** shall ye worship the Father...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit (in their own spirit) and in truth” (Jn. 4:21-24).

The man of sin sits in the temple of God, the temple not made with hands, even that temple which *we are*, usurping the throne, asserting that HE is the one in control! And it is not a future event, not something reserved for the end of the age, or during the great tribulation. It is a present reality! Your temptations, my brother, my sister, your weaknesses, stresses, emotions, lusts, problems, inner turmoil, fears, struggles, and battles are very real! In all these things that man of sin, that human reasoning, carnal thoughts and desires, the voice of the flesh sits in your temple and says, “I am God, I have authority in this house, you shall not break through into victory over sin, sorrow, limitation, and death — I am God here!” Ah, yes, the man of sin shows himself to be God in the temple of our being. He is not God anywhere else! All reality must be known and experienced *within the temple of God!* Just as the temple of our bodies is the habitation of God through the spirit, so the man of sin sits in the same temple to convince us that *he* is God!

The flaming words of the prophet Malachi are even now being fulfilled: “THE LORD WHOM YE SEEK SHALL SUDDENLY COME TO HIS TEMPLE...but who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a *refiner’s fire*, and like fuller’s soap: and He shall *purify the sons of Levi*, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” In the cleansing of the temple of old, our Lord Jesus made it perfectly plain that He was cleansing the temple to show them that He, who in the temple of His own body had come to redeem them, was so mighty that He would cleanse the whole temple of His corporate body. He told the religious priests and Levites that they had made His Father’s house a den of *thieves!* Is that not what the “man of sin” within us does to the temple of the body of Christ? He is a *thief!* He robs us of righteousness, He robs us of joy, He steals our peace, our progress, our faith, our hope! We are the temple of God! And in this day the mighty, cleansing, purging Christ is arising in His temple to do away with all sin, to do away with every vestige of the carnal mind, and every claim of the fleshly nature, to bring an end to all self-seeking, self-indulgence, and self-promotion, and all the foolishness of religion! Oh, yes! He has come to His temple in this new day of the Lord as a refiner’s fire and as fuller’s soap, to CONSUME this “man of sin” with the spirit of His mouth, and to DESTROY this “man of sin” with the brightness of His presence! Thank God, our glorious Christ is the DESTROYER!

Let us consider some more passages which speak of Christ the Destroyer. “That through death He might **destroy him** that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). “...the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy** the works of the devil!” (I Jn. 3:8). “And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest **destroy** them that destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18). “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will **destroy** the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (I Cor. 1:18-19). “For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. And the last enemy that shall be **destroyed** is death” (I Cor. 15:25-26). How my ransomed soul exults and shouts ten thousand hallelujahs that our mighty Christ within IS THE DESTROYER! Were it not so, then sin, corruption, death, this present evil world, the man of sin within, the works of the devil, Mystery Babylon, the locusts, the pit, and the devil himself would never BE DESTROYED! Oh, what a wonder! Christ is indeed Abaddon and Apollyon! He is the Destroyer within us, bringing an end to the old mind, the old man, the old creation. Truly this is *the revelation of Jesus Christ!*

THE ANTIDOTE FOR THE LOCUSTS’ STING

In nature we have antidotes, a medicine or substance to remedy, neutralize, or counteract the effects of poison, or of anything noxious taken into the body. For every natural law there is a corresponding law of the spiritual kingdom. Therefore, my beloved, even if you have been tormented by the painful sting of the locusts’ tail, I tell you today that there is an antidote for the sting! There are self-help books on the market today that tell people who have a lack of confidence how they can seek and develop more self-confidence. Do you think that you need more self-confidence? I want to tell you that you do not! You need less! That may startle you, but I want to say that self-confidence is a curse! “Cursed is the man that *trusteth in man*, that maketh *flesh* his arm.” What we need is more *Christ-confidence!* I am not saying that we should not have confidence, but I am saying that we should have confidence in something which is worthy of our confidence, and not trust in a bruised reed which will

easily break and pierce our hand. Confidence comes from the Latin words, *con* and *fides*, which means “with faith.” My question, dear one, is this: Faith in whom? Self confidence with faith in self? Oh, no!

Hear the blessed words of the inspired apostle as he testifies to this certainty: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!*” (Phil. 4:13). This is the divine cure for an inferiority complex. I used to have an inferiority complex in my younger years. It was very, very painful. I suffered with that complex for years until *Christ was raised up in my life!* I then found out who I really am! I discovered that I am a son of God, the offspring of my heavenly Father! I have been made for eternity! I will outlive the stars! I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world! I was before the stars! I was predestinated to placement as a son by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will! My life has a significance transcendent beyond anything in this world! And so does yours, dear reader of these words! Ah, there is a remedy for an inferiority complex! It is discovering the reality of Christ within ourselves, the mighty Christ, the all-conquering Christ, the omnipotent Christ, the all-knowing, all-wise, all-sufficient Christ of glory! Christ is the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His rays, therefore, He is the *antidote* for the sting of the locusts! Christ is truth, therefore, He is error’s *cure*! Christ is life, therefore, He is the *antidote* for death! Christ is love personified, therefore, He is the *cure* for everything of the negative realm in our lives!

Jesus told His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). The word *deny* actually bears the meaning of *disowning*. We can deny ourselves of many things, sleep, food, a new car, clothes, or companionship simply by never obtaining them. But to “disown” means to repudiate something that we perceive to be ours. If you are going to disown YOURSELF, you are disowning your very ego, your sense of life and being, your very identity. That is what it takes to follow Christ! To follow Christ does not mean merely to go along with Him, or follow along behind Him, but it signifies union with Him, a stepping into HIS SENSE OF LIFE, HIS SENSE OF BEING, AND HIS IDENTITY! Christ is becoming our realization. We can’t destroy life, because life is God. There is only one God and only one life — His life! “*In Him* we live and move and *have our being!*” What a mystery this is! You see, the old human sense of life, the old human sense of being, the old human identity is based on a lie. That is very obvious when we look at what happened in that long ago beginning in Eden. The death that came to Adam was the loss of the awareness of the life of God in his spirit. He was left with only a consciousness of the physical, corruptible, earthly, and mortal. There is no reality there! “The world passeth away and the lusts thereof; but he (the inner man) that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” Adam died to spiritual life and awoke to mortal existence. Now the Lord has called upon us to *disown* this thing we call life and think is life, and take up our cross and follow Him!

In the natural we think our life is dependent upon our body, and so we try to save our natural sense of life. There are brethren who think that they will not have the “eternal life” Jesus promised until they put on physical immortality, as though eternal life is physical. But we had life *before* we had an earth-body, before the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy! Yet men are so afraid that old age or death will take their consciousness and sense of being away from them. People do everything in their power to preserve their physical life. And there’s nothing wrong with that! But since our human identity is our sense of being, we don’t want to lose it. We want God to take it to heaven or to make it well; to make all things well so we can retain our humanness. Jesus knew better than this! Therefore He said that if you do not *disown yourself* and *reject who you think you are*, and *what you think life is*, you cannot keep it! The lesser must be swallowed up of the greater!

God is raising up a people in this day who know that they are *sons of God*, and that though they have a body on earth that is not the realm they were birthed from or came from, and that is not their reality. The Lord has made us willing to start as a child in the new kingdom, as a new creation, and let these new creation thoughts awaken within us a new image of God and of self, so that we can think, understand, see, live, and act out of our true identity as sons of God. Jesus came to awaken within us the consciousness and realization of our true, spiritual identity, to give us a new sense of being — His sense of being. Many people encourage others to “give their life to God.” So they pray and say, “Lord, I want to give my life to you.” I think God says within himself, “I don’t need your life, I have my own. In fact, I

have given *you* my life! Why would I want your life when you already have my life? I don't need your life, but I will awaken within you my life, which *is your life*, for Christ who *is our life* is now appearing. You can now disown your life!" This is *Christ-consciousness* and *Christ-confidence*! Oh, yes! I can do all things through this mighty *Christ within*!

We have the full power of overcoming life right within our spirit! Paul put it this way: "And if Christ be *in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell *in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*" (Rom. 8:10-11). Your spirit is much deeper than your mind, your emotion, or your will. Deep down on the inside of you, where your true life dwells, you are a spiritual being, a divine being, a truly God-being. That is where you are alive! "*The spirit is life.*" That is where you are pure and righteous! That is where you *do not* sin, neither *can* you sin! (I Jn. 3:9). That is where Christ *in you* is your hope of glory! Your body (outer man) is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of Christ's righteousness within it. Once you know where life really is, you have discovered the exceeding riches of Christ! LIFE IS IN YOUR SPIRIT! What is true in your spirit is who and what "you" truly are!

An experience of Jesus' offers a remarkable and telling demonstration of the difference between living out of the Christ identity or the human identity. The account is in the Gospel of John. A woman had been caught committing adultery. The traditional law mandated that adulterers be publicly stoned to death. Before carrying out this sentence, the scribes and Pharisees had brought her to Jesus, related what the law said, and challenged Him, "But what sayest Thou?" This they said tempting Him, that they might have occasion to accuse Him. Many malicious, destructive thoughts were poised and armed, the potential force behind multiple missile-stones. Jesus didn't launch a defensive barrage of bargaining, rationalizing, or pleading. Nor did He react with a counteroffensive of personal wisdom or withering criticism. At first He was silent. He did one strange thing, something which seems almost not relative to the occasion. He stooped down and *wrote with His finger on the ground*, as though He heard them not.

When He finally spoke, He spoke with a divine wisdom and authority that disarmed the ugly, apparently no-win situation. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." One by one, the hostile group slipped away, leaving the woman to Jesus' custody. "Hath no man condemned thee?" He asked. Then, He who was without sin and therefore eligible to cast a stone, reached out and uplifted her life with the healing impact of divine Life, Light, and Love. He freed her, saying, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." At that moment He raised her up from her sinful, sensual, physical, natural, earthly sense of being into His very own sense of being! "Go and sin no more." What a word that is! It was a prophecy, an impartation, an awakening within her of a higher realm of life which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. She arose empowered to walk in a new mind, a new reality, a new life! Oh, the wonder of it!

The question follows — Why did Jesus write with His finger in the dust of the ground when the answer He gave appears to be sufficient to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees? The fact that He did it, and that the apostle John was inspired to record it, surely imparts some special meaning or significance to it. It has to be relevant or the Holy Spirit would not have preserved it for us. Imagine this woman's feelings, her shame, fears and desperation knowing that according to the law she would shortly be stoned to death. The scribes and Pharisees were filled with fiendish delight supposing that at last they had set a trap from which this Jesus stood little chance of escaping. The tension is immense, a crowd looking on, some curious spectators, some bewildered, some angry, others excited by the challenge. Then, with a perfect calmness Jesus stoops and begins to write on the ground with His finger!

An unusual reaction, for sure, but very deliberate. Though strange it may seem, it was not the first time the finger of God had written something on earth! The first thing we need to remember in order to understand this great mystery is an event that transpired some fifteen hundred years before Jesus wrote with His finger in the dust. It is an event to which our Lord is pointing with this action. That event was the giving of the law of Moses from God to the nation of Israel at mount Sinai. The record states, "And He gave Moses, when He had made an end of speaking with him upon mount Sinai, the two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God*" (Ex. 31:18). The next mystery that we need to

understand in order to grasp the action of Jesus is the fact that just as Yahweh introduced a covenant to Israel *with His finger*, so now Jesus gives to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear a new covenant, written not, this time, in hard, implacable stone, but in the soft, pliable dust of the earth!

This is, of course, a beautiful parable! The prophet Ezekiel referred to it when he wrote, “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the **heart of stone** and give you a **heart of flesh**. And I will put **my spirit within you** and cause you to walk in my statutes and do my judgments” (Eze. 36:26-27). Deliverance out of the old into the new can only come by the realization of the utter weakness and hopelessness of the natural man. He must be fully exposed for what he is, that we may no longer delude ourselves into thinking we can change him, control him, reform him, and somehow make him righteous. The woman in our story discovered the depths of the corruption of the flesh man, and she was soon to reap the corruption that comes from sowing to the flesh. Now faced with death she discovers her salvation, faced with the wrath of the Old Covenant she receives a revelation of both the mercy and the power of the New, for rather than hurling stones at her Jesus stoops and with His finger begins to write in the earth!

There is a significant order in this wonderful revelation! Christ must first lower Himself before He can write in the earth or dust. This “stooping” witnesses with a testimony found concerning Him in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians. “Who although being...in the form of God, did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, but *stripped* Himself, so as to assume the guise of a servant, in that He became like men and was born *a human being*. And after He had appeared in human form, He *abased* and *humbled* Himself still further and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! Therefore because He **STOOPEd SO LOW** God has highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2:6-9), Amplified). Because He *stooped*! Can you not see the mystery? Jesus stooped or lowered Himself to become one of us, clothed in flesh, a man of the earth, a human being! He became as Adam of whom it is written that the Lord God made him from the *dust of the ground*. We cannot comprehend the full magnificence of this, but in so doing the **divine nature was written into dust or flesh**, revealing the life of sonship and opening the way for many sons to be brought to glory!

Jesus demonstrated the life of the spirit, the divine nature of God in the spirit of every man. In Jesus the true identity of His inner son was awakened, disclosed, revealed. Jesus knew that His outer flesh was not the REAL JESUS; He also knew that His flesh was no better or stronger than any other man’s flesh! The Christ, the Son within Him, was His true being. In the outer man He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin! He accomplished this out of the revelation of the life of His Father that dwelt in Him. He knew that all the mind, wisdom, understanding, peace, joy, righteousness, glory, and power of God was closer to Him than the air He breathed, closer even than the blood that coursed through His veins. In that life there is no limitation at all! Though Jesus could not change what His flesh was, even as we are unable to change what our flesh is, He **superimposed upon it** the character of God in His spirit! He stooped and wrote in the dust of His body and soul THE LAW OF GOD. Not the law of Moses written and engraven in stone, but a heart of flesh, the character of God written, superimposed upon flesh. His flesh was still flesh, but when men looked upon Him they read the law or character of God written upon it! That is the mystery!

Therefore the great truth that Jesus was seeking to reveal to the sinful woman, and to us today, is that He became the way into the New Covenant. We are the earth; we are the dust of the ground, and having become one of us, and having superimposed the character of God upon the fleshy tables of His heart, He is now able to write His laws and statutes upon our hearts. We are the dust into which He is writing, and He is writing with His *finger* which is the *Spirit of the living God*. Jesus said on one occasion that He cast out devils by the *finger* of God; but another gospel writer records the same statement as the *Spirit* of God. Therefore, Jesus is telling us that the finger is the spirit! Only the power of the *spirit* can write or superimpose the character of God on our flesh! Jesus gave to the adulterous woman an object lesson of just what He was about to do for her! It is our own regenerated, awakened, redeemed, born-again spirit that is the source of our new life; for it is our regenerated spirit that is the Son of God within us. There are not two spirits living within your body, my beloved, for “he that is joined to the Lord *is one spirit*.” The Spirit of Christ within you is your own spirit joined to His Spirit, and by this spirit Christ in you is stooping to write in the dust of your outer man the New Covenant of God!

To you who have failed and feel you cannot make the grade, be comforted by these words of your Lord, "*Let the sinless one of you first cast a stone.*" Christ only is sinless, and if He who has the authority by virtue of His sinless life will not cast a single stone at you then no one can; not even your own conscience. So please, don't *stone yourself!* Forgive yourself, even as the spirit of Christ in you says today, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more!" In other words, God is not going to judge you for failing, yet at the same time He is raising up in your dust the power to ignore the flesh and live the life of God in the flesh. Isn't it wonderful! This, dear child of God, is THE ANTIDOTE FOR THE STING OF THE LOCUSTS! Oh, yes!

There is an old fable called *The Story of the Magic Eyes*. According to this fable, in the village of Faken in innermost Friesland, there lived a long thin baker named Fouke, a righteous man, with a long thin chin and a long thin nose. Fouke was so upright that he seemed to spray righteousness from his thin lips over everyone who came near him; so the people of Faken preferred to stay away. Fouke's wife, Hilda, was short and round, her arms were round, her bosom was round, her rump was round. Hilda did not keep people at bay with righteousness; her soft roundness seemed to invite them instead to come close to her in order to share the warm cheer of her open heart. Hilda respected her righteous husband, and loved him too, as much as he allowed her; but her heart ached for something more from him than his worthy righteousness. And there, in the bed of her need, lay the seed of sadness.

One morning, having worked since dawn to knead his dough for the ovens, Fouke came home and found a stranger in his bedroom lying on Hilda's round bosom. Hilda's adultery soon became the talk of the tavern and the scandal of the Faken congregation. Everyone assumed that Fouke would cast Hilda out of his house, so righteous was he. But he surprised everyone by keeping Hilda as his wife, saying he forgave her as the Good Book said he should. In his heart of hearts, however, Fouke could not forgive Hilda for bringing shame to his name. Whenever he thought about her, his feelings toward her were angry and hard; he despised her as if she were a common whore. When it came right down to it, he hated her for betraying him after he had been so good and so faithful a husband to her. He only pretended to forgive Hilda so that he could punish her with his righteous mercy. But Fouke's fakery did not sit well in heaven.

So each time that Fouke would feel his secret hate toward Hilda, an angel came to him and dropped a small pebble, hardly the size of a shirt button, into Fouke's heart. Each time a pebble dropped, Fouke would feel a stab of pain like the pain he felt the moment he came on Hilda feeding her hungry heart from a stranger's larder. Then he hated her more; his hate brought him pain and his pain made him hate. The pebbles multiplied. And Fouke's heart grew very heavy with the weight of them, so heavy that the top half of his body bent forward so far that he had to strain his neck upward in order to see straight. Weary with hurt, Fouke began to wish he were dead.

The angel who dropped the pebbles into his heart came to Fouke one night and told him how he could be healed of his hurt. There was one remedy, he said, only one, for the hurt of a wounded heart. Fouke would need the miracle of the magic eyes. He would need eyes that could look back to the beginning of his hurt and see his Hilda, not as a wife who betrayed him, but as a weak woman who needed him. Only a new way of looking at things through the magic eyes could heal the hurt flowing from the wounds of yesterday. Fouke protested. "Nothing can change the past," he said. "Hilda is guilty, a fact that not even an angel can change." "Yes, poor hurting man, you are right," the angel said. "You cannot change the past, you can only heal the hurt that comes to you from the past. And you can heal it only with the vision of the magic eyes." "And how can I get your magic eyes," pouted Fouke. "Only ask, desiring as you ask, and they will be given you. And each time you see Hilda through your new eyes, one pebble will be lifted from your aching heart."

Fouke could not ask at once, for he had grown to love his hatred. But the pain of his heart finally drove him to want and to ask for the magic eyes that the angel had promised. So he asked. And the angel gave. Soon Hilda began to change in front of Fouke's eyes, wonderfully and mysteriously. He began to see her as a needy woman who loved him instead of a wicked woman who betrayed him. The angel kept his promise; he lifted the pebbles from Fouke's heart, one by one, though it took a long time to take them all away. Fouke gradually felt his heart grow lighter; he began to walk straight again, and somehow his

nose and his chin seemed less thin and sharp than before. He invited Hilda to come into his heart again, and she came, and together they began again a journey into their second season of humble joy. (From *Forgive and Forget*, by Lewis B. Smedes).

The realization that Jesus came not into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved*, is another way to express the same beautiful truth. Jesus does not *condemn* any man for his sin, but neither does He *condone* it! He knows what is in man, and He came not to condemn; but He did come to *deliver* and *give victory*! That is the message. Some people think that because we don't preach against sin and condemn sinners that we are somehow "soft on sin." Condemning people doesn't help at all! I wouldn't even kick a *dog* when he is down! Our mission is to encourage people, love people, help people, and draw out the Christ life within them.

Look how Jesus treated sinners. Did He call them sinners? No! Were they sinners? Yes! Did He know they were sinners? Absolutely! Did He insult them by calling them sinners? No! What did He do? He showed mercy. He loved unconditionally. He told stories like the story of the prodigal son! This gift called mercy is not understood by the world. Society does not forgive. Prosecutors do not forgive. Courts do not forgive. Governments do not forgive. Nature does not forgive. If I do a dumb thing and cut my hand off, nature doesn't forgive and grow another hand. Human beings, by nature, do not forget. They bury the hatchet, but they leave the handle above the ground. Everybody respects good people. But Jesus respected bad people! Time and again He befriended the "dregs" of society — Zaccheus, Simon, Mary Magdalene. He dined with rough, crude fishermen. He defended the harlots. He associated with corrupt people in power positions — again and again. And never once did He preach to them a thundering denouncement of sin! Why? To illustrate the power of mercy and redemption. As one has written, "*God becomes believable when you meet a person who is lovable.* And love becomes authentic when a person respects you even when you know you don't deserve the respect. That, in a nutshell, is the message of the gospel!" It is also the ANTIDOTE FOR THE STING OF THE SCORPION-TAILED LOCUSTS!

We make His love too narrow
With false limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness,
With a zeal He will not own.
For the love of God is wider
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal,
Is most wonderfully kind!

There are not many people to whom I can listen when they talk about sin, but I can always listen to Christ. For in Him two qualities are conjoined: on the one hand the highest expression of purity and righteousness, down to the very depths of the soul; and on the other hand the most marvelous outflow of His heart of understanding, mercy, and love ever seen by man. On the one hand He embodies the very highest standard of purity, holiness, and obedience to the Father, and on the other He displays the utmost tenderness, compassion, and grace in His treatment of sinners. For every son of God there is no more sacred or blessed way to learn the spirit of sonship than to be taught by Jesus' nature and by His life. And how we benefit by listening to Him speak about sin! "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more!" "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" That is His life and His nature. This marvelous expression of God's goodness is — *the Christ*! In Jesus we have the countenance of God turned toward us whence His unfathomable mercy and love radiate.

"That I may *know Him!*" the apostle Paul cried. And again, "For the excellency of the *knowledge of Christ Jesus* my Lord!" Ah, there lies the difference between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil can only impart to man the *knowledge of good and evil*. Nothing more. The sad fruit of that tree, then, is condemnation and death! The tree of life, however, imparts to men the *knowledge of Christ who is Life*! Let us exchange the knowledge of good and evil for the more excellent *knowledge of Christ*. As long as we try to enforce rules and lay upon

men regulations, laws, doctrines, dress codes, “dos and don’ts” etc. we are merely feeding them from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Over the past many years, in the fellowships we have been associated with, a number of people have been led to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some of these dear ones were cigarette smokers; others had other habits, problems, hang-ups, and weaknesses in their lives. Knowing that such habits are a hindrance in the lives of those who would truly be *overcomers* in the kingdom of God, we could have told these people, “You must stop smoking. You can’t flow or function in this fellowship as long as you are in that kind of bondage. Smoking is a sin and will destroy your spiritual life. You need to seek deliverance!” We could have counseled these dear ones thus, but we would have only been offering them some fruit off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! So instead, we offered them fruit from off the tree of LIFE! Rather than condemning them for their smoking, we *encouraged them in the Lord*. We received them with open arms. We loved them. Got them into the Word. Ministered the spirit of Truth to them. Shared sonship and the high calling of God with them. Unveiled the mysteries of the kingdom to them. And guess what happened! To my knowledge, nearly all of them were delivered from their tobacco within a very short time. Their deliverance was a *product of Life*, a working of the growth of divine life within them. Death became “swallowed up” of Life! The Son of God came that men might have life. He did not come to condemn. These two are opposites, incompatible, irreconcilable! You cannot condemn and minister life at the same time. The sons of God are arising for the very same purpose, in the very same ministry — LIFE. The world is condemned already. The whole creation is groaning and travailing, not for the law, but for the *manifestation of the sons of God* that they might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It is indeed wonderful!

Ah, God will not condemn any soul! I believe that with all my heart. God has a great and unconditional and unfathomable love for every man! His only desire is to help, to bless, to deliver, to transform and make beautiful every life! And He is not judging you for your failures, but will stay with you until His victory is raised up in you, His law written in your flesh! He seeks to save *everyone*! Threats of eternal damnation are incompatible with the heart of God. He sees every person through those eyes of love and intense yearning and desire for them. He plans better and greater things for every man, woman, and child in this world. Does that mean nobody is punished? Not at all! Every man still reaps what he sows — if a man smokes for fifty years and dies of lung cancer, that is the reaping of what he has sown — it is not the condemnation and vindictive wrath of God which not only kills him, but then sends him to the flames of hell! God does not condemn. He does not condemn us who are His children. He corrects us, purges us, and purifies us in love and everlasting faithfulness. But He does not *condemn*! That is the “gospel” because it is GOOD NEWS!

David Wilkerson once wrote: “You see, even after I repent, I feel I have to make it all up to the Lord. But like the Prodigal Son, I can have the Father hugging my neck, kissing my cheek, putting rings on my fingers and a robe on my back, telling me to forget the past and come into His house and enjoy the feast He has prepared for me. Yet inside I’m saying, ‘I can’t go in — I’m not worthy! I’ve sinned against You. Let me pay You back. Let me grieve and carry the guilt a little longer.’ It’s easy for me to believe God forgave Israel, Nineveh, the heathen, the dying thief. But I find it hard to understand how, the very moment I turn to Him, He so quickly and lovingly accepts me *as if I had not sinned!*”

Now, someone may think that this gospel of grace is going to give you the liberty to sin, for your flesh to go wild. Let me tell you something. People say that God cannot overlook or excuse sin. Well, maybe He can’t, but I’ll tell you what He has already done. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, **not imputing their trespasses unto them.**” God has forgiven us all our trespasses! But He has also *quicken*ed us and made us *alive in Christ*. I will not come to perfection, maturity, the image of Christ, and sonship by trying to make my Adamic life live more godly. Adam can’t do it! The adulterous woman found that out! But there is a Life, even Christ, flowing from the very essence of my being that has absolutely nothing to do with my natural character, the Adamic life. It is a power greater than all! It is Christ who must be raised up in me, to be my life, my righteousness, my reality. Christ isn’t formed in us in one day, one month, or one year. But Christ is growing up in all the elect who have received the call to sonship! Our Father does not condemn us while we are going from victory to victory, but still fall short

of His holiness. All our sins are covered until we have FULLY OVERCOME! No license to sin here, just *grace, mercy, and great faithfulness* UNTIL WE REACH PERFECTION. Once this deep mystery is unveiled within our hearts there will be NO MORE STING OF THE LOCUSTS! Aren't you glad!

Everything grows without trying, and, on the other hand, nothing can grow by trying! No man by taking thought has ever added a cubit to his stature, nor has any son or daughter of God ever approached nearer to the stature of the Lord Jesus by working at it! Jesus did not become the Son of God by working — He became the Son of God by **growing!** Any who thinks to reach this blessed height by anxious effort is really departing from it. Christ's life unfolded itself **from a divine seed**, planted centrally in His nature, which grew as naturally as a flower from a bud. Only *life* can do that! For a seed to germinate, sprout, grow, change, develop into a plant of beauty and grace requires the power of an **indwelling life**. Therefore the man who has within himself this great power — the life of Christ — contains within himself all that is needful to become a son of God! The man in whom this life has not been activated *cannot* be transformed, but the man in whom the life has been activated *must be*. The life must develop according to its type; and being a seed of the Christ life, it must unfold into A CHRIST. The end of the growth process is perfection, the mind of Christ, the character of Christ, the power of Christ!

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. For the LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the LAW OF SIN AND DEATH” (Rom. 8:1-2). The next thing we need to understand in order to understand this mystery is that sin and death operate by a precise LAW. That is what Paul tells us in the passage above. It is “the *law* of sin and death.” The next thing we must understand is that what makes me free from that *law*, that *power*, that *influence*, and that *principle* of sin and death is ANOTHER LAW! It is “the *law* of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus!” Do we not understand that life swallows up death just as light dispels darkness? HIS SPIRIT flowing through our lives accomplishes this! But haven't we always had it turned around in our thinking? How often have we told ourselves, “If I can get rid of my old nature, if only I can conquer this habit, this temper, this unruly tongue, this lust, this...this...this...then I will have the *life* of Christ manifested in me!” We have tried to get rid of the death in us so we would have life. We have worked at eradicating the darkness from our lives so we could walk in the light. Dearly beloved friends, we have had the cart before the horse! It's like saying, “I will stand in this dark room and rebuke the darkness, and when the darkness has departed I will have light.” Oh, no, it doesn't work that way! You can rebuke the darkness until someone carries your corpse to the mortuary, but the darkness will never leave UNTIL YOU TURN ON THE LIGHT! It is light that dispels darkness, and getting rid of darkness does not create light.

God works by divine law and He has given us not only the spirit of life in Christ Jesus but the LAW of that life. And just as the law of gravity is a natural law that does not fail, so the law of life in Christ Jesus is a definite law that will produce in us a result without our struggling to attain it. This law of life is a HIGHER LAW than the law of sin and death! This law is powerful enough to lift us up above sin and above all external pressures, above all situations, circumstances, and happenings, and above all the negative influences of the world. A great space craft is held on the launching pad by the force of gravity. But once the mighty rockets fire it is lifted up and propelled into space, defying the law of gravity. This is accomplished by a HIGHER LAW coming into operation — the law of rocket propulsion. Can we not see by this that the law of life in Christ Jesus is a HIGHER LAW than the law of sin and death! Stop struggling, precious friend of mine, with your weakness, your hang-ups, your problems — your *sins*. Instead, *seek Christ, seek Life!* Expose yourself to Him, to His presence, to His word. “Just as I am...oh Lamb of God, I come” is not just a word for the man outside of Christ; it is *the word* for any man who follows on the path of transformation into the image of the Son! Enter into His glorious presence until the **LAW of His life consciously and experientially makes you free from the LAW of sin and death!**

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY