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GUARD YOUR HEART - PART 2

(Continuation of a message from January newsletter)

Now I want to share a teaching from a long time ago that has helped me to understand the Christian life as much as any other teaching. It is from a sermon by Henry Drummond, a preacher from Scotland who lived in the 1800's. This is a sermon he preached in about 1890, when I was just a little boy.

2 Corinthians 3:12 tells about Moses spending 40 days on Mt. Sinai in the presence of God, and when he came down from the mountain his face was shining. The glow gradually started fading away, so Moses covered his face with a veil so the children of Israel couldn't see the glow leaving his face. Starting at Vs. 14: *But their minds were blinded, for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

When the Old Testament is read, a veil covers their hearts, like this: (At this point I covered my head and body with a flimsy, black veil.) This veil prevents them from seeing God as they read the Bible. Many people are like that, as if their eyes are covered with a veil, and they can't see God. "Is there really a God? Is the God of the Bible the only God? Isn't it reasonable that all religions have some truth about God, if there really is a God? Is God a God of love? It sure doesn't seem that way as I look at the world and at the things that have happened in my life. Was Jesus the son of God? Is He the only way to God? I'm just not sure." And then when they turn to Christ, THE VEIL IS REMOVED! (At this point I threw the veil off of myself.) "Ah, now I can see God!" Isn't that your testimony?

The mention of a veil reminds us of another veil in the Bible, the veil that was in front of the Holy of Holies in the temple. The temple was divided into three parts: the outer porch, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Inside the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, about the size of a cedar chest, and covered with gold. Inside the ark were the ten commandments, and on top of it were two carved angels. Between the angels dwelt the presence of God. Separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was a thick curtain called the veil. It was not a flimsy veil, but according to Josephus the historian it was five inches thick and so strong two horses could not pull it apart. This veil separated the presence of God from the people, in order to protect them, for the people would have instantly died if they had viewed the holiness of God.

Mark 15:37-38 says, *And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* Hallelujah! What a revelation! (At this point we showed a clip from the movie, The Passion of

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the Christ, that moving scene when the very moment Christ cried out, "It is finished!" and died, there was an earthquake and the veil inside the temple was torn from top to bottom, the veil which previously had separated God's presence from His people.) Hebrews 10:19-20 explains it this way: *Therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.*

Return to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

About 120 years ago, Henry Drummond related the following experience, and of course this was before the time of electricity or electronics. Henry had a friend who was an astronomer that invited him to go to the top of the mountain to his observatory so that Henry could watch him photograph a star. The astronomer adjusted the giant telescope, and then they waited until midnight so the sky would be pitch black. The astronomer lit a candle, made the final adjustments on the telescope, blew out the candle, took a negative out of its case and slid it into place. Then the astronomer sat down and kept the star focused in the center of the telescope for almost three hours. Of course, the earth was constantly turning, and since there were no electronics, he had to remain attentive and minutely and constantly adjust a little wheel so that the star would remain centered in order for the star to take its own photograph on the negative. When sufficient time had elapsed, he slid the negative out in the dark, placed it in its case, lit a candle, and closed down the telescope.

This, said Henry Drummond, is how God accomplishes His work in our heart, it is how we regain the image of God in which God originally created man, it is how we become Christlike. There is no light in us. We are like the moon - its light is a reflected light from the sun. **Christ is the light of the world.** We take time to sit in His presence, to read the word of God, to pray, to meditate about Christ, to focus on Him. Our world turns, our life turns, our circumstances and mood turn, it is like a kaleidoscope of confusing images, but we go apart, sit in His presence, spend time with Him, and verse 18 says: *As we behold the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into His image, as by the Spirit of the Lord.* That is in the passive tense. We don't transform ourselves into Christlikeness, we can't change ourselves. He changes us, *as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

This is the catch: we must spend time with Him, in the Word, in prayer, in His presence. The veil has been removed, we can now come into His presence when we choose to do so. We must sacrifice the time and energy to stay focused on Him. Are you doing it? Will you choose today to do it?

Psalm 139 says, *Search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there be any wicked way in me.* Search us, Lord, show us our hearts. Show us if there is something wicked hidden there.

It is time to get those arrows out of your heart. Do you need to forgive a father, mother, husband/wife, child, ex-spouse, someone who abused you, someone in the church? Do you need to repent of bitterness, of judging. Do you need to renounce any lies in your heart? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you. Transform us, Lord, into your image.



The Sweetness of Sin

"What? You are calling sin sweet? Whose side are you on, anyway?"

Yes, during times of severe temptation sin appears as the sweetest, most desirable thing in the world. For someone filled with resentment, thinking about revenge is sweet. Self-condemnation and self-pity are, in a perverse way, sweet. I recently met with a lady who is in the clutches of alcohol. Our team prayed and ministered to her for two and a half hours. At the end of that time we cast demons out of her. She experienced the presence and the love of Christ. She truly looked like a different person. Before she left, I asked how she felt about drinking. She said, "To be honest, I can feel it pulling on me like a magnet." Alcohol still appears sweet, although it is destroying her. We are trying to set up a controlled ministry environment for her, because like so many she may not be able to break through to freedom without oversight and monitoring.

Many times in Scripture resisting temptation is stated to cause suffering. For instance, Hebrews 2:8 says, *For in that He (Christ) Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.* Suffering was an exceedingly painful experience for the sinless Son of God; therefore, He can empathize with you and me. 1 Peter 4:1 refers to Christ's suffering because of temptation, and then says to us, *For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* To resist temptation is painful to our flesh. That's why it is called "crucifixion," as in, "Crucify your flesh." During the onslaught of temptation, it is as if we go insane and space out common sense, God, family, values, health, and the future. Following is a story a pastor shared a number of years ago.

In the church this pastor had served in a small town there was a large, extended family that were pioneers and faithful members of his church. Two brothers had taken over a family business. The younger brother began to be attracted to the older brother's wife. He began to flirt with her in subtle ways, and she was flattered at his attention. In due course, they fell into adultery. Inevitably their affair was exposed. Their mates found out about it. Their parents found out about it. Their teen-aged children found out about it. Their friends, fellow church members, friends of their children, customers of their business, neighbors, everybody found out about it.

Think about the consequences of their sin. What is going to happen? Is there going to be a divorce, two divorces? Are the offended mates going to forgive? If they do forgive, what will it be like for the two brothers to work together, to have family get-togethers, to go to church together? (Nearly always when something embarrassing like this happens, or when someone gets arrested and gets his name in the paper, the family either stops attending church or transfers to another church. I have seen it happen numerous times.) How is it going to affect the teen-agers? What are their friends going to say? Think of the wound and heart-break for their aged parents, even for their fellow church members and pastor. The ramifications are endless! Things will never be the same again. Yes, God is forgiving, and if the couple repents, He will forgive them. (I emphasize, if they repent.) But think about the life-long consequences to them and their spouses and their children.

The Bible says that God's commandments are good and holy and for our good. Temptation is very real for every one of us. There is a devil, and he is the tempter. But the Bible tells us that we can't really blame the devil. God says (James 1:14-16): ***But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.***

The way it works is that people don't instantly "fall into" some sin, like they would fall into a swamp. The temptation comes into their minds, and instead of resisting the temptation (See James 4:1-10) they start thinking about it, and thinking about it, and thinking about it. Finally, they decide to go ahead and do it. After all, they reason, "Jesus taught that it is a sin to lust in your mind, so I may as well go ahead and do it." Total deception and foolishness! The Bible tells us to resist temptation. If you weren't thinking about it you wouldn't be tempted, but that is not the same as doing it, Mr. Einstein. Wishing that someone would die, or wishing that you were out of here, is not the same as shooting him or hanging yourself.

Someone out there in newsletter-land may be "suffering" with a big temptation right now. You have drawn nearer and nearer to the precipice. The Holy Spirit is warning you right now: **"Don't do it!" Resist the devil and he will flee from you, draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**

Surrounded by Other gods!

Forever and ever Christians have been concerned that Christmas and Easter have become secularized, too pagan, and we have turned a "holy day" into a "holiday." Actually, worldly folks should complain that Christians have kidnapped two of their pagan celebrations. Neither Christmas nor Easter is mentioned in the Bible. The Christmas tree was a pagan symbol long before Santa and Rudolph came on the scene. Easter was the pagan vernal festival, and its name came from Ishtar, the Babylonian and Assyrian goddess of love and fertility. Whoa! Easter eggs are connected to fertility and new life.

That doesn't mean that there is anything wrong in celebrating Christ's birth and resurrection on those two occasions. We are to transform the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Right? We are also

to transform our times, our days and months, because they, too, are identified with pagan names; that is, with Roman, German, and Norse gods and goddesses. Following is a partial list:

Sunday - day of the sun. Monday - day of the moon. Tuesday - Tiu's day. Tiu was another name for Zeus, the god of the sky. Wednesday - Woden's day or Oden's day, which was the day of Mercury. Thursday - Thor's day, the god of thunder and war. Friday - Frigg's day - Frigg was the wife of Oden, and she was the goddess of heaven, of marriage, and the home. Saturday - Saturn's day - the god of agriculture, connected with Saturnalia, the ancient Roman festival of Saturn. January - from Janus, the two-headed god that looked back toward the past year and forward to the new year. March - honoring Mars, the god of war.

Just thought I would give you something else to worry about. And have a good Frigg's day.

Him (From the book, *Global Passion*)

The beginning and the end of worship is the Alpha and Omega himself, the Lord of the Universe, an awesome God worthy of our total devotion and adoration. The root of the word worship, is worth-ship. When we worship Him, we declare Him worthy. I read about an elderly Christian woman who declared his worthiness to the very end. As she began to lose her memory she could recite just one verse from the New Testament. Even that one verse started slipping from memory until in her final days all she could remember was 'Him, Him, Him!' She had lost the whole Bible, except for that one powerful word. But yet she *had* the whole Bible in that one word: Him!

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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Ministry

I am going to drive out to Los Angeles the last week in February and minister for a week at Clayton Gollither's ministry, Hope for Homeless Youth, at the Dream Center in Hollywood, and also spend some time with my daughter, Jeannine, and her family. In view of my recent driving experiences, please pray for me and for everyone on I-70 and I-15. My friend Fred will drive with me, and Lynne will meet us there. Please pray for us as we teach and minister to the young men and women who have come off the streets and out of a life of rebellion, crime, drugs, prostitution, etc.

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