



"Some minds are like concrete: thoroughly mixed up and permanently set."

—Anonymous

**19-May-17**

## **Patterns of Resistance (Part One)**

English novelist and essayist, George Orwell wrote, "Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men is the restatement of the obvious." The claim of intelligence notwithstanding, sometimes it helps to state or restate the obvious. This is important to keep in mind as we explore a few truths about us that perhaps seem obvious but may have hidden themselves right before our eyes.

Many exciting and interesting patterns are woven into the very fabric of God's amazing creation. In fact, from creation week in Genesis through the centuries of Israel's history to the mysterious imagery of Daniel and Revelation and the actual footsteps of [God](#) in [the Gospel](#) accounts, we can learn so much about our Creator God by studying the patterns of His great works and words. But as fascinating as it is to study His patterns, we should not avoid taking a closer look at our own patterns—the patterns of human beings.

God obviously works in patterns, so it is only logical that a study of His creation, mankind, would also reveal some easily distinguishable patterns of behavior. His patterns are obviously beautiful and perfect, reflecting the

special [love](#) that only God can truly express. Man's patterns, though modeled after those of our Creator, have become corrupted through [sin](#), along with our very nature. That makes a huge difference.

As we are nearing the end of the fifty-day Pentecost count this year, many of us are also considering the end of our own walk, as mortality begins to sneak up on us. It is natural, as age increases, for a person to feel the end creeping up on him or her, and we begin asking how, when, where, and what is to be our end. What are we doing here? Why did God call us? How soon will this age, this present evil world, come to its end? How much time do we have left?

These are all important questions that should spur us toward a deeper examination of ourselves, "considering our ways" ([Haggai 1:5](#), 7), of our relationships with God and each other, and of the very Word of God—the Holy Bible—written for our guidance and admonition.

In this context, we will consider a few ideas on two patterns of human life—the less-than-admirable ones—patterns of resistance to God. By identifying these dangerous, carnal templates, we can place a bit more emphasis on them in our daily lives, and with God's help, begin to eliminate their wicked impact on our journey of sanctification into the image of [Jesus Christ](#).

There are two major patterns of resistance that work interactively, and they can be said to be a root cause of every sinful act man has ever committed:

1. Man elevates his standing in relation to God, so that he fails to submit to His will.
2. Man lies to himself about pattern number 1.

Two scriptures, [Romans 8:7](#) and [Jeremiah 17:9](#), provide biblical principles that undergird these patterns of resistance. They are truths that apply to every man and woman on the planet, and almost all of the billions who have ever lived have not realized that these verses apply to them. Even for true Christians with years of conversion behind us, because of the constant drag of human nature, we still feel their terrible accuracy.

[Romans 8:7](#), written by the apostle Paul, remains one of the finest lines ever inspired by our Creator: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the [law of God](#), nor indeed can be." Consider that final phrase, "nor indeed can be." As long as we are in the flesh, made of physical matter, we have a carnal mind—a carnal spirit that is absolutely unable to be subject to the law of God.

We have heard this repeatedly over the years, but have we ever really stopped to consider its ultimate implications? It is no fun to meditate or dwell on our negatives, but this verse implies that, even with God's Holy Spirit working within us, we are fighting a losing battle if we choose to ignore this fact. What a sobering thought! Our human spirit was not designed to be impervious to evil, for that would have precluded our need to develop righteous character as God requires of all of those who are to experience eternal life with Him.

But, even with its designed limitations, our nature still was not created to be evil—in fact, just the opposite (see [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#))! We realize that along with the remainder of creation, our human spirit was judged by our Creator to be good, even very good ([Genesis 1:31](#)). But it did not remain as it was created; it was corrupted by sin.

In Genesis 3, in the account of humanity's first transgression, the first pattern of resistance is revealed. [Satan](#) manages to convince Eve that eating of the fruit would make her as wise as God ([Genesis 3:5](#)). In verse 6, Eve succumbs to the temptation: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate." Quite simply, she was attempting to elevate herself in relation to God, and in doing so, she "achieved" the first pattern of resistance, becoming the first to fail to submit to the will of God.

Immediately afterward, she lied about that first pattern, declaring in verse 13, "The serpent deceived me," trying to blame her sin on Satan's lie. But the truth is that she was allured and charmed by the notion that by ignoring His command, she could elevate herself and become like God. Satan did not *make* her sin. Deceived—by Satan and herself—she *chose* to. How did Satan know what to do, and why was it seemingly so easy?

On to [Jeremiah 17:9](#), the companion scripture to [Romans 8:7](#): "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" *God's Word Translation* catches its essence: "The human mind is the most deceitful of all things. It is incurable. No one can understand how deceitful it is." Consider the phrase, "most deceitful of all things." and all the evil, terrible, wicked things in our world. Yet God says that the human heart—the carnal mind—is more deceitful than *any* of those other things. And it cannot be cured.

Do we ever really take the time to consider that? We certainly do not bear it in mind every day, as we should. Again, even with God's Holy Spirit working within us, we are still fighting a losing battle if we fail to consider its full implication.

Eve's mind was pure when Satan first approached her in the Garden, but he knew just how to corrupt it instantaneously—with a lie it would want to hear, one her mind would want to believe. And so it did. If we are not careful, we, too, can still be deceived into believing a similar lie.

Next time, we will look further into these very human patterns of resistance.

- Joseph B. Baity

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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