



"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."

—C.S. Lewis

26-May-17

Patterns of Resistance (Part Two)

In Part One, we learned that among the patterns woven through God's Word is a typical pattern of resistance against [God](#), one that resides at the heart of every human [sin](#):

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.

We also saw how [Romans 8:7](#) and [Jeremiah 17:9](#) teach principles that support this all-too-human template for keeping God at arm's length and perpetuating sinful ways of living. Eve's encounter with the serpent in Genesis 3 provides the archetype of how this works when individuals face temptation and allow themselves to succumb to sin rather than reject it.

In these patterns of resistance, the perfect vicious circle occurs. It begins with elevating ourselves in relation to God, which leads to our failure to submit. Separated from God by these sins, we then proceed to lie to ourselves about it, neglecting any opportunity for [repentance](#). So we continue on, our sinful patterns of resistance unabated.

And it is not just our sins, but also those of millions of others doing the exact same thing. Adam and Eve's progeny followed a path of sin that led to the [great Flood](#) and the destruction of humanity, save for one family. Directly afterward, the men of Babel continued down the same path, desiring to build a high tower to heaven to supplant God altogether.

The Israelites, despite being chosen by God, did no better. During their wilderness journey, they constantly demonstrated patterns of resistance. God Himself called them "stiff-necked." They complained incessantly, questioning God's will and judgment. Nadab and Abihu failed to take God seriously enough, elevating themselves by trying to bring Him to their level ([Leviticus 10:1-3](#)). Korah questioned God's judgment and His appointed leadership (Numbers 16). Even Miriam and Aaron rebelliously questioned God's choice of [Moses](#) (Numbers 12).

All these examples show the same pattern of self-elevation, followed by a failure to submit, while lying to themselves that they were justified in doing so. It resulted in the scattering of over a million dead bodies throughout the wilderness over the next 40 years.

Even Moses, described in [Numbers 12:3](#) as the most humble man on earth, fell prey to the pattern of self-elevation and failure to submit when he struck the rock at Kadesh ([Numbers 20:1-13](#)). Because of his God-appointed role as a shepherd to millions, he had to be judged more sternly, being denied the reward of setting foot in the Promised Land.

The New Testament is loaded with examples of the Pharisees and the Sadducees elevating themselves in relation to God and failing to submit to Him as He walked among them. They lied to themselves that they could improve on the Word of God by "enhancing" His sacred law. Their patterns of resistance led to the most heinous sin of all, [the crucifixion](#) and murder of their very own Creator.

We can be certain that every one of these persons or groups was convinced that their actions were easily justified. They probably thought they were acting in a good and reasonable fashion.

These patterns were not confined to the past, nor are the elect immune to them. Today, the many assemblies of God's church continue to fragment into increasingly smaller pieces. Independent Christians continue to elevate their own personal agendas over the "the [faith](#) which was once for all delivered to the saints" ([Jude 3](#)). Some are resisting God's call to assemble each [Sabbath](#) and to respect and support those whom God has appointed to lead His flock. [Satan](#) is licking his chops.

As they did in the first century, false ministers are creeping in. They, too, are following the predictable patterns of resistance to God by elevating or preaching [the gospel](#) of men, for as John Ritenbaugh says in "The Covenants, Grace, and Law (Part 24)," "Gospels that are 'of men' always elevate man at the expense of God." We can expect these [false teachers](#) to encourage these patterns of defiance toward God in others.

Satan the Devil is nothing if not brilliant and cunning. Since we are each carrying around our natural enmity against God within our incurably sick and deceitful minds ([Romans 8:7](#); [Jeremiah 17:9](#)), and since we are each traveling at a slightly different pace on a unique path toward God's Kingdom, it is easy for the [Adversary](#) to fool us into believing that we should place more emphasis on following our personal agendas, thinking we are following Christ.

Once we decide that our agendas, our own patterns of worship, are worthy of elevation, and we unknowingly become separated from and resistant to Christ's help through His Holy Spirit, then one of our defensive mainstays, our self-examinations, become mere exercises in vanity—it is like the fox guarding the henhouse. But, as daunting as it sounds—and it is daunting—there is always [hope](#). The solution is simple but difficult—in fact, the hardest thing we will ever have to do. And it is supposed to be.

First, we must recognize our limitations, and second, we must submit. We have to surrender willingly to the perfect patterns designed and lived by our Creator—"the way, the truth, and the life" ([John 14:6](#))—knowing that such a life will at times bring us embarrassment, humiliation, loss, sorrow, pain, and suffering.

In addition, we must recognize that our personal agendas must radically change if we are to please God. Comparing our ongoing sanctification to an old house, a minister once said that we are getting, not just a renovation, but being torn down, brick by brick, board by board, nail by nail, and completely rebuilt on a brand-new foundation.

Moreover, we must develop a greater sense of urgency. We must assume that just as we near the end of this year's Pentecost count, we could also be nearing the end of our physical lives. There is no time to waste!

These patterns of resistance do not have to lead us to our doom. If we learn to recognize them, they can actually help to point us away from ourselves and toward the Kingdom. Remember, we were designed and created by a perfect and all-powerful God who is and always has been completely in control. His perfect love has and will continue to direct all of His little flock, conforming us to *His perfect pattern* if we will but submit and follow.

This may be restating the obvious, but those who truly love God never tire of hearing it.

- Joseph B. Baity

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Way, The Truth, and the Life](#)

by Clyde Finklea

Clyde Finklea, focusing upon Exodus 13:3-9, suggests that this day of unleavened bread is to be a remembrance of the release from bondage. We are commanded to eat unleavened bread as a sign that the Lord's Law may be in our mouths, all tied together by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God bestowed His grace on us before we repented. We are turned from slaves to sin, to slaves of righteousness. We have been given an awesome gift; only a fraction of people who have ever lived have the truth. Spiritual Israel will consist of a kingdom of priests who will reign, teaching God's law to the world.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Peter's Trumpets Message—on Pentecost](#)

by Charles Whitaker

Peter's first sermon took place on the Day of Pentecost, yet his subject seems to 'fit' the Day of Trumpets. Charles Whitaker explains that the fulfillment of Pentecost begins what will be completed in the fulfillment of Trumpets.

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