

God Works In Marvelous Ways (Part Four)

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All three of my major sermons during the Feast were drawn from the same theme—they were all on the justifications heard from the public at large regarding God and the Bible. They were the kind of complaints anybody could have about any number of subjects. They were also the kind of complaints that just do not disappear because a person becomes converted. They do not just disappear because they are usually engraved in our character from habitual use regarding other responsibilities besides God and the Bible; one may grow weary of and does not perceive any profitable use for at that time.

Well, I will confess to you, that I have had these complaints. I cannot recall ever having one about God and the Bible the way I was reporting to you in those sermons, but I have had them and usually they have been in regard to work related duties, because, you know, I worked in a steel mill and sometimes these duties in the steel mill were really impossible it seems to put up with, but somehow I did. I had my complaints pour out of my mouth, “What are they trying to do with us, here?” kind of thing. So I have had them.

In other words, what I am saying, is that what I was speaking about at the Feast is a common human failing—a failing that could be overcome in many cases simply by a change of attitude within the person; a change that in many cases easily within anybody's reach. Maybe even constant complainers could overcome this just with a change of attitude.

I am reminded of a story of a wealthy man who was having a building built. He decided that he wanted to go to the project for a while and watch the construction in progress. And, he happened to choose to watch several men laying bricks. (I understand that this really did happen. It was not just something made up, but it really happened.) It is not terrible in any way, shape, or form. He asked one man what he was doing. The man replied that he was laying bricks. He probably thought this wealthy man was idiotic, to even ask the question, because it was pretty plain what the guy was doing. But he responded anyway, and he said that he was laying bricks.

Well, the wealthy man then asked a second man in the same crew what he was doing and he replied he was building a building. You will notice a difference between the two men—one had an entirely different attitude than the other. The one man was focused simply on what was right in front of him. At that time, neither answer was wrong. One answer was more specific; the other was broader, and kept the end goal in mind, as well as what he was doing at the moment.

In a way, that ties to part of the solution to the problem that I am talking about here. If we, too, kept the end goal in mind—where we are headed—are we going to the Kingdom of God, are we going to be in God's Family, or are we having this work piled on us that I am tired of, and I do not want to do anymore?

While the wealthy man considered the two answers that were given, the one answer was more specific; the other was broader and kept the end goal in mind. The wealthy man decided that the second man was the better employee because he could keep both positions in mind at the same time

in order to switch back and forth as needed as his workload varied throughout the day. He concluded that a change of mind is helpful throughout the day so that a worker does not become bogged down with the heaviness of one responsibility.

I know when I first heard this twenty or thirty years ago, it came in a sermon that was given, probably in the Pittsburgh congregation, I started trying to apply this from time to time, just to have a change of mind, a change of routine throughout the day; do something else; clear my mind a bit; and then I could go back to the job somewhat refreshed as a result of a simple change.

Well that is occasionally what happens with people regarding the Bible and God. They are impatient; it is a thick book which they are usually very unfamiliar with, stumbling over the names and terms and items like the mysteries (that we got into just a little bit last Thursday), and they give up; making excuses; ultimately blaming God.

Ultimately they justify saying, "If there is a God, and He's supposed to be so intelligent and powerful, why did He do things this way in which events are, it seems, always in flux, and in many cases nothing is ever accomplished or resolved?"

Let us go to Romans 9. This is a section in which there are some upset people, some of them are Gentiles, some of them are Israelites, but Paul is instructing both of them at the same time. He says:

Romans 9:1-5 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

I began here, though it does not tell you very much at this point, because I want you to look at this package of the many spiritual gifts that God has given the Israelitish people. As we go through here, you will see that they are almost totally unappreciated. By the time this chapter takes place they have lost it, because of their constant complaining, because of their feeling as though they are being taken advantage of, because they are feeling that they do not deserve the lot that they have been given.

But now, look right here in terms of God's purpose that He is working out: Paul's feelings toward the Israelites were ones I am sure that he wished they were not in the attitude that they were in. Look at this list of things that were given to the Israelitish people, no other people on earth received these gifts from God, and yet they were in a bad attitude.

Romans 9:4-5 Who are Israelites to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Now by reading that you, having enough of a background in the Scriptures to be able to understand at least some of the significance of what the Israelites had given to them by God, and they did not feel very good about it—already in a bad attitude toward God.

Romans 9:6-9 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. [There was some good effect.] For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

What Paul is doing is that he is continuing to remind these people of the blessings they are receiving as a result of being Israelites, and what he is saying here, is that God has not stopped the work that He is working out despite the bad attitude that the Israelitish people are in, "Even though I gave them all of these gifts and yet they are wasting it." And so, Paul appeals to those who complained to him, that God indeed is continuing to work, but *it takes time*. The Israelites were not kind in terms of considering God and the time that He was putting in in the way of labor in order to get this going. He is chiding them for being so impatient. They want what they want yesterday. So that was why they got angry at God.

Did God deserve this? Of course not! Could they have changed things if they change their mind about a few things? Absolutely! We can change.

Romans 9:14-15 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Though it may seem to us, "I could never get angry at God," this shows you that people who have some knowledge of God, some knowledge of what is God is doing, that they can get angry at God. They have no idea of how merciful He has been, even though He tells them they have no idea of what an awesome future lies before them, because you can tell by their anger. Because they are angry at God, they do not really care. That is a common factor all the way through this chapter. People, who get angry at God, really do not care, because they do not get it.

Romans 9:16-18 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

What is the issue here? Paul is defending the fact that, "Hey fellow Israelites! I have compassion toward you, and so does God have compassion for you as well. But hey! Wait a minute! This is His creation! This is the work He is doing!"

If only they would just stop to think about the relatively huge gap between God and themselves. But they will not. In their anger they remain angry with God, because He is not favoring them anymore than He already has. That tells you a great deal about human nature.

Romans 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

Were they blind, or what? They could not see that they were wrong in the position that they were taking. They are still blaming God.

Now one of the things that I am getting at, here—what I was talking about at the Feast in those sermons was the unconverted people, not Israelites, who had a measure of truth from God's Word. And yet, either one, how quickly the Israelites forgot, overlooked, and did not consider what He gave to them freely as being worthwhile. You can understand why those totally unconverted complain so much, when here are Israelites who have been born, as it were, with a silver spoon in their mouth by comparison to other people, and yet they complained too.

Well, this is just partly what I meant when I said we do not lose this ability to complain when we come into the church when were converted; it is still there because humanly, we have been doing it all our life. We are really practiced at it.

Romans 9:20-24 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

He has aimed that, brethren, right at us. He is talking there about those who have been called of God, even us whom He called. Are we going to act like the Israelites, like spoiled brats?

“Not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” Now he includes them in that because there are now some Gentiles in these congregations, and he knows that they have the same basic nature as the Israelitish people, and down the road they might start complaining like the Israelites do.

As he says also in Hosea, “I will call them My people who are not My people; and her beloved who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, you are not My people, there they shall be called sons of the living God.” That is a warning God is telling these people, both Gentiles and Israelites, to whom he is writing, that God can change His mind any time He wants and call others. In other words, *He does not need you.*

Now, we have to understand, here, where Paul is coming from. And that is from the fact that what is being worked out by the Creator is *His* purpose, not theirs. And He has every right to carry it out at His pace, and in His way. Typical of we humans, though we get angry at him, Paul makes it clear—Israel has stumbled spiritually, badly; they are actually in the worst of the two positions, here, that Paul is writing about.

Now, let us ask the question, “Why did God do things this way?”

I think that we would have to admit that it is, if we are familiar at all with the scripture, that the way He is doing things is, I think we would consider it, irregular. What is it that happened that caused these Israelites to become so upset? Well actually, this is easy to understand. And it did anger them. But they really had no right to misunderstand. It is, that when God sent Jesus Christ into the world, where did He send Jesus Christ into the world? He sent Jesus Christ to the Israelitish people. The Israelites rejected Him and put Him to death. God, then, turned to the Gentile world preaching the gospel to them, and began calling them into His church. Well, this upset the Israelites to no end, because they considered God as their own private possession, which they had no right to do.

God is the Creator! God is the One who gave life. God is the One who gave the Israelites everything they had in regard to truth. He did not deal with the Gentiles in that way, and so they were turning out to be better, we might say at this point, than the Israelitish people. So in this three chapter set, which begins in chapter nine, and on through eleven, Paul is explaining the technical and prophetic issues involved in what these people are witness to, and many of them do not like it.

If you were creating man in your image, would you manage things the way God does? Now, despite the confusion existing in the public, we shall see that what Paul thought is that God is conducting things precisely as it should be done. And that is exactly the way it should be Paul's decision regarding this. Does God make crazy mistakes? Of course not! He does not. But it shows the level of the faith that these people had.

Now we can say this confidently, because we are converted, and because we understand a great deal about the purpose that God is working out. And we can begin to see His mastery at using the facilities that He has available to Him through the apostles and so forth. But nonetheless they should have been able to do that—I am talking about the Israelites—they should have had enough knowledge to be able to grasp that the way God was doing things was the very best.

In one of those sermons, if you heard any of them at all, you will know that there was one man who was a leader in Israel—Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin; he was very highly placed in their government, as well as being a religious man. He surprised Jesus because he did not know something very plainly. That is in John 3. He did not get it, and he had to be taught about it. Now Nicodemus lived at the same time that Jesus did. Nicodemus survived Jesus, and according to English histories that are available over in England (I guess some of them are here too), Nicodemus eventually ended up in England after Jesus' death. So he was still living, and he recovered from that rebuke that he got from Jesus regarding that.

We are going to go jump a whole chapter to Romans 11. Paul, still writing, says,

Romans 11:11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? . . .

This shows God's mercy in this. They really called God into account for the way that He was handling the salvation issues, the way He was handling issues regarding dealing with the Gentiles. And he says here:

Romans 11:11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! . . .

That is how confident Paul was that in spite of the way they believed at that present time God was going to forgive them.

Romans 11:11 . . . But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

God turned away from the Israelites for enough of a period of time that He could call Gentiles out of the world and begin to convert them, so that when Jesus Christ returned, there would be Gentiles that were converted, and become spirit beings as a result of their growth and overcoming in the church.

Romans 11:12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

What a different attitude that the apostle had than they did! What he is basically saying is, “Now you say, this is going to work out even better.” When God restores the Israelitish people there is going to come a wealth of gifts to those people who are converted as a result of the Israelites being converted too.

Romans 11:13-15 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

So, we know for sure, now, that the Israelitish nations are going to be granted repentance. It is not going to take place until Jesus Christ returns, but the way is going to be opened up for them, and we even know that there is going to be some conversion before this period of time is over.

I want you to think about this—about God's mercy, and the kindness, compassion, and mercy that He has toward His children. How many times will He forgive us? I do not know. How hard our heart has to be set before he turns away? I do not know! But there is a promise, right there in Romans 11 that God is going to work with the Israelitish people again.

Romans 11:25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Here is an answer that we need for our understanding, and that is that God has actually blinded the eyes of the Israelitish people; that once they made their choice, and turned away from the purpose that God was working out through what is discussed here in Romans 11, He turned away with some force, and fervor. That He, in a sense, put their eyes to sleep, in terms of conversion until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved. . .

Now, I do not think that he means that all of Israel—every single person—will be saved, but the overwhelming majority are going to be saved.

Romans 11:26-29 . . . “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your [Gentiles] sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

He will not change His mind regarding what He has already done with Israel, and the fact that He is going to turn to Israel once again and give them renewed life.

Romans 11:29-36 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has

known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

God's wisdom—verses 25 through 36—is quite a powerful and merciful statement.

I want you to notice three things in there—three declarations that Paul makes in these verses in order to praise Him, that is, praise God.

1. How unsearchable are His judgments!
2. Who has known the mind of the Lord?
3. Who has been His counselor so that God now owes that counsel or something—that is, indebted for the way that He manages things?

Here is the answer to why Paul explains as strongly as he does in these verses about the way that God is doing what He is doing: God's wisdom, in this context, explaining specifics of His salvation to those called, is His ability to select and use the best means for the attainment of the highest goal. God is doing it.

I will shorten that down, and just give it to you plain. God is doing it in this way, which mankind considers to be confusing, because He has the ability to select and use the best means for the attainment of the highest goal. That is for everybody!

I will tell you at this point that God's highest goal is not our salvation. Salvation is included within it, but I do not know whether I am going to get to that part of my sermon.

Now, we are going to take a look at some places in the Old Testament where we can find where Paul drew those exclamations there in Romans 11:25-36 from.

We are going to go back to Isaiah 55:1-3, and then 6-13, and I will then give you a brief summary of what those verses say, so that you understand maybe why Paul chose those particular ones.

Isaiah 55:1-2 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters [He is talking about being thirsty for salvation]; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good." . . .

He is talking about spiritual metaphors here, and this is one of those places in the Bible where you have got to stop and really think about this. I am pointing this out to you, now, so that later on, you can go back there, and do some deep meditating on what he is talking about, here.

Isaiah 55:2-3 . . . "And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David."

The sure mercies of David are the covenant that God made with David. Notice He says they are sure. They are absolute. They will be carried out. And, of course, what it is really pointing to is Jesus Christ. He is not here yet, but He is saying this is an *absolute*; I will not go back on this; I will send Jesus Christ. And with Him, all of the good things that I have promised to David, and to Jesus Christ, He will get them.

It is no wonder Paul was excited about what these verses are saying.

Isaiah 55:6-8 “Seek the LORD while He may be found [Why jump on Him, that this thing that He is doing is so difficult?], call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts.”

That is obvious! They pick away at God when He is trying to give them, what shall we say, three things worth billions of dollars!

Isaiah 55:8-10 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater.”

This is taken, Isaiah 55, from within an appeal from our God that we wholeheartedly take Him up on His very generous offer. That is what people who complain about Him do not do. Because, I guess, they just do not have the faith.

What does this tell us? It is that if we will cooperate with Him—this Creator God who *cannot* lie, has every good intention to generously give us good things to share life with Him.

There is a little caveat to this. You might have to stop to think about this, but it is this: Like Adam and Eve—I want you to think of their creation—we must be prepared for the environment to come. God did not give them life until they were ready to live in the environment that He created them for.

Pick up on that and understand—God is following the same general pattern with us. He has followed that pattern with the Israelites; He followed that pattern with the Gentiles as well. In order to live rightly and serve as He wants people to serve in the World Tomorrow, they have to be prepared to live there. That is what is taking the time. He just cannot put all the parts together and put us into the Kingdom of God. We would be fish out of water, absolutely.

We have to be prepared, and that means facing the difficulties of life with the Spirit of God in us, and having to make our way through the growth patterns that God wants us to go through, because our preparation for the Kingdom of God is our life from the time that He called us. That has begun. He cannot rush that. He has to take us through the hoops, as it were, so that we are prepared for the job that He wants us to do in the Kingdom of God. It is that simple. That is what Isaiah 55 is giving us, just a little bit of an understanding in that area.

Now we are going to go to Isaiah 40, another place that Paul got that glorious saying for God.

Isaiah 40:21-25 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, when He will also blow on them, and they will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away like stubble. "To whom then will you liken Me?" . . .

God says. After these wonderful words describing Him—"Have you not known? Have you not heard?"

Isaiah 40:25-26 "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see [consider, look at, search into] who has created these things . . .

Because those things display His mind and His character and His personality. If you want to know what God is like, you look at the creation because in the creation He gives us things to look at so that we understand Him, not fully of course, but we get a better understanding.

Isaiah 40:26-30 Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my just claim is passed over by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

God has thrown out a lot of challenges, here, for us to consider. This is the main one: if you are discontented with God for some reason, find someone who can *exceed* God's claims as Creator. Who can find anyone near the power He has already displayed for all to see? God is saying here, that if we choose to follow Him, do not worry, "I will bring you through the difficulties. I have more than enough power to do that."

That is what He is saying. So why worry. Well, because we are human.

The next one that Paul used is in Isaiah 40.

Isaiah 40:10-18 Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the

isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

Paul was asking us using these scriptures, “Who was it, since you are so discontented with God, that God needed advice from in order to promise the salvation that He so confidently offers, and follows through on doing as He accomplishes each stage of His creative activities? Is there anybody that can cede His understanding and wisdom to offer help?”

God is appealing to us to exercise our faith by trusting Him based upon what He has already done in the past, and nobody exceeds His wisdom. And so here, God is appealing to our intelligence to persuade us that He knows what He is doing. Trust Him, because He, indeed, is fully quite qualified.

Now, the first sermon in this series that I gave there in Nashville, affirm that as far as the world in general is concerned, any organized purpose and plan that God may have is at best vague, or highly generalized. I got this from the public. The majority of seekers or observers, title, they believe, that what God is doing is merely saving people. They are, in effect, shifting the blame to God.

Now it is a surety that some astute observers or believers do indeed exist apart from the true church, but mankind in general is simply stubbornly bullheadedly ignoring some information that is even relatively clear.

We are going to take a look at something that really came up frequently at the Feast this year for some reason, and I thought, “You know what? I’m going to write on that, and I’m going to give it to the people down in Fort Mill.” I think it is a clear explanation. I think it is a true understanding, and it is clear.

So we are going to take a look at carnality to see whether there is a possibility that it might be hindering our understanding.

If it is, that I might hazard a guess, it is the major cause on man's part of the separation between God and mankind. It is right up there with Satan. And you are going to see why that is so, because it does have an effect on the way we think about God, and a way we think in general.

We are going to look at an often-read statement in God's Word, but its significance is also very often overlooked. It is helpful for us to understand this teaching, and I think that there are many times that we overlook it. It is habitual, perhaps, because it is not considered important, or perhaps we are in a rush to get elsewhere. But we are to live by every word of God, are we not? And as a result, we may not use the time God has granted us to be formed into the image of Jesus Christ as seriously as we should, by not training our mind to do what we must do in order to grow and overcome as greatly as we should. And this, brethren, is really very simple.

Now, when looked at more seriously, these verses that I am going to give you nail two realities solidly to the wall.

And so, we are going to go to Romans once again, just a couple of chapters before where we were before.

Romans 8:5-6 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

To be carnally minded, brethren, is death. You think being carnally minded is not important? To be carnally minded is death! But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Now he gives the answer to that:

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

When we look at this series of verses, we frequently overlook a couple of things by focusing on verse seven, “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” and we do not look very carefully at verses five and six; we just skip over them.

In one sense, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, except that it causes us to overlook something vital. Now I am going to add another thought to your knowledge here, your knowledge of carnality, so that our understanding is more accurate regarding where it came from and how devastating it has become to our character.

I want you to turn all the way back to Genesis 1. Where did our carnality come from? Did God plague us with something horrible when he created Adam and Eve? No He did not. Let us look at that. This covers an awful lot, and it means that we have to look elsewhere for where carnality came from.

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

I heard Mr. Armstrong talking about this, I do not know, maybe thirty or forty years ago now it has been, and I forgot about it. I really did not grasp how important it was. He said something there that I just remembered about two weeks ago, it popped into my mind once again.

Now in this verse God judged and He stated that everything was rightly prepared for what He had purposed to accomplish. I want you to understand. This is true. Adam and Eve were finished products in terms of being prepared for the environment. They were ready to live on earth. It was all *very good*—not just good, but it was very good, including human nature. Make sure you get this right: God created human nature. Human nature is that which is natural to man as he was created.

I think you understand that sin was not natural to man when he was created. It did not become natural to man until after they had sinned repeatedly, and it became a part of their character.

But at the time that this was done, human nature was considered by God Himself—by the Creator—as being good. So was our stomach, and so were our eyes, and our ears, and our tongue, and our heart, and our mind. It was all very good as God made them.

Human nature—make you sure you get this right—was *not* a creation of Satan. God created human nature. *Satan created carnality*. There is a major difference between those two.

God created Adam and Eve in the beginning with human nature, and it was *not* sinful. They with the help of Satan made it sinful. And it converted to being carnality.

Here is how it happened—this is what popped into my mind regarding what Mr. Armstrong said. When Adam and Eve were created, God created them with human nature, which was a gentle pull toward the self with the attributes within it. All the attributes we need in our stomach were there, everything; every part of the body, all of their attributes were there, including the attributes of human nature, one of which was a pull toward the self.

It had all of the attributes necessary to the dressing and keeping responsibilities given by God, including the dressing and keeping of the self in things like proper health, in good working order, so humans could bring glory and honor to God by its accomplishments, because if He did not put something like that in them, they would not take care of it. They would have no reason to take care of it. There was human nature given to keep man attuned to the creation the way he was supposed to be. And human nature performed a necessary function for God's purposes. The entire creation of Adam and Eve was marvelous in terms of beauty and function within God's purview.

But, here is what happened when mankind began sinning. Incidentally, do you remember what the first sin involved? It involved taking care of the self, and what did they do? In this case they disobeyed God right along with what they did. He said, “Don’t eat from that tree.” That is where they should have stopped, right there. But they not only ate of it, they did it in disobedience.

Human nature was already beginning to come under abuse. It was being used for a purpose for which it was not made. *It was not made to sin.* It was made to be taken care of, just like your eyes are to be taken care of, your ears are to be taken care of, your stomach is to be taken care of—every part of the body is to be taken care of, within the framework of what God created us to be able to do.

Mankind began abusing every aspect of God's wonderful creation. The effects for the most part did not show up immediately, but the continual abuse gradually wore down various parts of it. Much of the abuse occurred either through too much or too little—too much food, not enough food; alcohol or whatever you want to call; and mankind sinned, for example, against his stomach. The stomach was just another part of the body, as was human nature, just another part of the functioning of man's body.

And so we eat too much, and we abuse the stomach, the digestive tract, and the elimination tracts, and so forth. Well, I used the stomach because it is an easily-grasped example so we can learn that basically the same sort of destruction occurred with human nature with one major exception. And this exception is that because human nature has a major influence on behavior, as a result of this gentle pull—a gentle natural pull toward taking care of the self, which in reality is very good—Satan chose to attack it particularly hard, stirring it to overdue attention to the self, stirring it over a particular area of self-centeredness that strongly appeals to any particular individual, which led therefore to enslavement through the very pull that God put in the body to protect it.

We abuse it through sin, and in a matter of time, with the abuse, it became another function of the body, called carnality. So by this means, this gentle pull that God created toward taking care of things, we should take care to glorify God, it converts to carnality through abuse, and thus sinful enslavement to any manner of sin, and the mind permits it with regularity. It becomes ingrained in our thinking.

I will put this in belatedly, but it actually, in a sense, proves the process here.

In Romans 8 there is a key word that is very helpful.

Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh [here it comes] set their mind on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit [notice the difference] they set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

As long as we continue setting our mind on the things of the flesh, we will never going to overcome sin, because we will just keep regenerating it.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death. . .

Now, we want to go to one other place. I shall read this to you, and you will see why the apostle Paul said what he did. You will recognize this right away.

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ [out of the waters of baptism], seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [A converted person will do this:] Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

That is as plain and clear as anything as instruction from God so what I converted person has to do. We have to forcibly set our mind on things. The apostle Paul says, “That I have to make my mind do what I want it to do, not what it wants to do.” That is where he got that. It is not wrong to do that, because if we allow our carnal mind to have its way, it will pick the bad way almost all the time, because it is mind is set—fixed—on the wrong things. We have to break that forcibly, if need be.

God gives us a lot of help by means of His Spirit. But there are times that we have to grab control and make sure that we make the choice of the right things.