

The Holy Spirit And The Trinity (Part 7)

Seeking God

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Given 17-Oct-98; Sermon #363

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Today I am going to give the sermon that I had intended to give on the Last Great Day. I have titled it "Seeking God: A Major Key To Growth In God's Spirit". The connection to the Last Great Day and the sermons on the Holy Spirit is obvious, because Jesus is speaking here of the time when God is going to offer His Spirit to all of mankind. I prepared enough material on The Fear of God sermons, and I felt it better to conclude the subject of The Fear of God at the Feast rather than breaking its continuity.

In verse 7 above, Jesus said, "Let him come unto me, and drink." That is a very clear invitation, but I need to ask a question here. Do we have the will and enough desire to follow through with Jesus' invitation?

Let us set the stage here by defining *will*. My dictionary says, "It is control exercised by deliberate purpose over impulse." Common synonyms are: control, resolve, desire, drive.

We will further set the stage by where we are whenever God calls us. I am going to use some very familiar scriptures. They will be a good review and a good lead-in for this sermon on getting more of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 3:10-11 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.

Here is where we all begin. In a major way we all begin at the same point with a very confused idea and concept about God and what He is like. As a result of this, we do not really know what to seek. We may be seeking what we think is God, but then again it is far more likely that we are not really seeking the true image of God. We are seeking what we have learned from the world about God.

Revelation 12:9 says clearly that "Satan has deceived the whole world." Certainly he has deceived the world not simply about God's plan, but about God Himself. We all have to begin at the same place, and that is with a revelation from God—an invitation to have a relationship with Him.

Psalms 65:4 Blessed is the man whom you choose and cause to approach unto you, that he may dwell in your courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple.

God causes us to be able to approach Him. He enables us by helping to create in us a measure of understanding of what He is, and a measure of understanding His purpose. His purpose gives us the desire to begin to turn our lives toward Him in truth, not something that has been a concept created

from the precepts of men. His purpose is something that is derived directly from the Word of God, with the aid of God's Spirit.

We all know that John 6:44 says "No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." This is just further confirmation of this truth that we all begin at the same place. We have ideas that we are seeking God, and we do that in sincerity. There is no doubt about that at all, but we cannot do it in truth because Jesus' own statement says that God is taught by the precepts of men. We have all been victimized in that way, and so God can make a statement that "There is none righteous; no not one. There is none that seeks after God." Until He reveals Himself, we have no idea what to seek, except what we have been taught in the world.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

God not only causes us to be able to approach to Him, but He also works in us both to will—control, exercise, by deliberate purpose over impulse—where we are beginning to truly and honestly seek Him. We do this by putting down our impulses to just do our own thing, and actually actively seek a true concept of God.

God is right in the middle of this. He not only causes us to come to believe the gospel and to believe true concepts of Him, but He continues through this process all the way to birth into the Kingdom of God, working in us both to will and to do. That is what creators do. He does not just start a project and leave it up to us. He begins the process and carries it through to completion.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 2:7-8 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes [rulers, leaders] of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

We are not the only ones who were deceived. Everybody is deceived, and that includes the "high and mighty"—the leaders in business, the leaders in politics, and the leaders in academia. Everybody is deceived. We are so deceived and so far from God before conversion that He has to work a miracle in order to reveal Himself to us. He begins to get our lives turned in the direction where we will truly seek Him, and not merely a concept that is devised and put together by the precepts of men who were deceived just the same way that we have been. They get some things right, and they get some things wrong, but if you have a picture that is partly right and partly wrong, it seems to me that it may as well all be wrong. It will leave us not really pursuing after God, seeking after a true image of God.

Let us look at another aspect of this briefly in Numbers 16. This is the account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses. There is a little principle here that is important.

Numbers 16:5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he has chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

Numbers 16:7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD does choose, he shall be holy: you take too much upon you, you sons of Levi.

I wanted to inject this, because I want us to see what we are talking about here is also a sovereignty issue. God is in charge of the purpose He is working out according to His plan. God is running every aspect of His creation. This is important to understand to our relationship with God. We need to know. We need to take the right sense of the privilege that has been given to us, that our calling is not a mere generalization. We are truly "hand-picked" by the Creator. It is He who has caused us to turn to Him, and it is He who continues to work in us both to will—to set our mind to accomplish certain things within His purpose—and He also enables us to do it.

In Psalm 104:30 it says, "God sends forth His spirit, and they are created." Now we change that just a little bit, "God sends forth His spirit, and we are drawn to Him."

What is created by this drawing? A relationship is created. God sends forth His Spirit and a relationship is created where none existed before. We may have known about God, but—and this is important—it takes a relationship to know Him. There is a big difference between knowing "about" Him, and "knowing" Him. You can know about somebody who is a public figure, because his name might be splashed over the television news and the newspapers and magazines, but you really do not know him. You only know what others tell us about him. It may be wholly accurate, or partly. Mostly it is just partly accurate. And so it is with God. It takes a relationship to know Him. This is again important to us because it says in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." It is only through knowing God that we can be created in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

There are two qualifiers there. 1) We have to love God, and 2) We have to be called according to His purpose. And then all things will work together for good, meaning "good" within God's purpose.

Romans 8:29-30 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Nobody has been glorified yet but Jesus Christ. God is so confident that He can finish what He started, that He carries out the sentence, the promise, as though it is already completed.

In verse 29 it says, "For whom he did foreknow." Foreknow applies to that period before His calling of us. We are taking this back one step further. Before He caused us to turn to Him, before He actually extended the invitation, He knew us even then. He was watching over our lives. Who knows how many times He intervened to alter the course or direction in some period of our life in order to bring something about, whether it be education, or whether it be saving us from injury. Maybe His intervention kept us from even being killed, or He healed us from a disease. Who knows how He might have intervened, because He did "foreknow us."

I am going to read something to you from my Study Bible about the word foreknow:

Foreknow: This is not simple prescience or advanced knowledge. This knowledge should also not be understood in the sense of being acquainted with, but in the sense of bringing into a special relationship with, as Adam knew Eve his wife.

In other words, foreknow does not merely mean to be acquainted with, or merely to have advanced knowledge of us. What is being said here is that when God foreknew us, He was so close to us He was sticking right by our side. He had very clear insight and closeness of attention about what was going on in our life.

Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth.

God is saying to Israel, "You are the only family on the earth that I have known."

Jesus said, "I know My sheep." In another place, He said to another group of people, "I have never known you."

Foreknowledge is God's determination to bring certain ones into a special relationship with Himself. Since it was foreknowledge, He had that determination in mind to bring us to glory long before He called us, and long before He caused us to turn to Him.

He has been personally involved with us. We were not just personally selected, but personally sought out. Why? We could say "glory," being resurrected and inheriting His Kingdom. That is certainly right, but in the context of this sermon, it was so that He could have a relationship with us, that we might seek Him. Remember all of this is connected to growing in the Holy Spirit, having more of the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 2:15 adds another little piece to this puzzle. It says that Adam and Eve were put into the Garden "to dress and keep it." Remember, the Garden was that environment that God created for this relationship to take place. Adam and Eve's responsibility was to dress and keep it. They were put in there to not do nothing, not to just pluck fruit off a tree, not to merely receive eternal life, but they were put in there to take care of the Garden.

"Dress" means to embellish. This may seem a little bit weird, but they were to take care of it so that it was better than God gave it to them. We like to think of that Garden of being a place of absolute and perfect beauty. I get the picture instead that since He told them to "dress and keep it," it was not complete. It had only been started. What He had done was certainly beautiful, but He wanted them to carry on.

There are spiritual lessons here. "Dress" means to embellish. "Keep" means to guard, to preserve. If they did not work to dress it, then God was telling them it was going to deteriorate. That is the way of all things that are physical. They degenerate if they are not maintained and taken care of.

We have been invited into a relationship with God. Like any relationship, it must be worked at to make it increasingly tighter and productive. We are to "dress and to keep it." We are not in the Garden, but we are in the relationship. In order to do this, one must use and grow in the Holy Spirit. We are dealing with a Holy Spirit—God. The relationship is the key to accomplishing this. If there is no relationship, there is no Holy Spirit; no relationship, no chance that we will ever grow in the Holy

Spirit; no relationship, no way we are going to be close to God. The relationship is the key to accomplishing this. Remember, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden.

I want you to think about the general layout of the Tabernacle in the wilderness as well as the Temple that was in Jerusalem. Both basically are the same. As you approached the front of it, the first object in your path would be the altar of sacrifice—the brazen altar by which atonement was made. That word which is translated atonement in the Hebrew, means by which we draw near. In other words, it is by the sacrifice, represented by the brazen altar, by which we draw near to God, seeking Him. After the brazen altar comes the laver. We might describe this as being like a big bathtub. Here one was to wash oneself before one could proceed any further. Once inside, the light on the inside came from the candelabra, representing Christ as the Light of the world, and also representing the Light of God's truth shining through the seven churches.

On the table was the shewbread, representing Christ as "the bread of life." Directly in front of you, as you proceeded past the table which had the shewbread on it, would be the altar of incense, representing the prayers of the saints. But barring your way into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God, was the veil. Once we could get behind it, we could be right into the presence of God.

At Christ's crucifixion, Matthew 27:50-51, states the following:

Matthew 27:50-51 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twin [torn in two] from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

Since the veil was torn apart at Christ's death, it symbolizes that a personal relationship with God can be established. This relationship in that environment is the key to the transforming from glory to glory.

If we cannot get in God's presence, if we are far away, there is not much hope of that transformation. This incidentally is why you see so frequently in the Bible that we are to seek God. That is part of "dressing and keeping" the relationship growing. This close relationship is the key to increasing the Holy Spirit in us. James 4:8 gives us this admonition.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

I think that you can see why an admonition like this would be in the Bible. Once invited into this relationship, we have to take advantage of it. We have to draw near to God.

We are going to be pursuing this just a little bit. First we are going to go to I Chronicles 28:9. This is a charge, an admonition, from David to Solomon.

I Chronicles 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, know you the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts: if you seek him, he will be found of you: but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

We must make an effort to "dress and keep" the relationship. Despite all that God does as aspects of His grace and His favor toward us, in giving us whatever gifts that we need in order to submit to

Him, to obey Him, and to dress and keep the relationship, we still have a function in this. One of the functions we are seeing here is to seek Him.

There is a flat-out promise that if we do seek Him, He will be found of us. Keep in mind that this promise does not apply to just anybody. I think that I should have proved that to you at the very beginning of this sermon. We are caused to come into this relationship. It does not just happen because a person thinks he will seek God, and he is going to find God. This promise is made to those who already have made the covenant with Him. They have already been invited by God into it. That is the position that Solomon was in. He had already made the covenant with God, and so had David, and we have to look at this as though David is speaking directly to us.

If we seek Him for the purpose of drawing near to Him, He will be found of us. In the first place, He has already invited us to draw near to Him by His calling. A principle now arises. These things are always on God's initiative. He is the Creator. He is the Sovereign Ruler. We can take advantage of His invitation and come at Him at any time. That is our responsibility.

Go now to Romans 5 and we will pick up something that also plays on this.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

I will not go through the whole doctrine here. When Adam and Eve sinned, God judged sin in Adam and Eve. Since they were the father and mother of all of mankind, all of mankind sinned in Adam and Eve.

God's judgment was correct, because given the chance, we have all sinned. His judgment was correct. Even genetically, some people have proven that there were enough genes and chromosomes in Adam and Eve to account for everybody on earth. Everybody was already there in Adam and Eve. Between the eggs and the sperm, everybody was there. It is incredible, but that is an aside.

What then happened to Adam and Eve? They were ushered right out of the Garden. After they were ushered out, God put cherubim there to guard the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life so that nobody could get back to that place where God started mankind on its way. This is why at times you will see in the Bible that people are bid to return to God when they never seemingly turned away from Him. But all of mankind turned away from God in Adam and Eve, and He invites us to return to the place, symbolically, where everything started, right back to the environment that He occupies, where the Tree of Life is.

The relationship is everything to our salvation. Without what Christ did in dying for our sins, we would not be in this position. The payment of our sins opens up the way for a relationship to be built and for us to grow in the Holy Spirit, because now we have access to the Tree of Life in a relationship with God.

Go now to II Chronicles 15:1-4. This is a sequence of verses that we read during the Fear of God sermon about reciprocity.

II Chronicles 15:1-4 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear you me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you, while you be with him; and if you seek him, he will be

found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel has been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

Remember, they had made the covenant with Him. I wanted to touch on that again because it is important that we understand that reciprocity exists in our relationship with God. He begins by drawing near to us, and He expects a similar response from us.

Understand that we do not come near to Him in one giant leap. As it is in almost all human relationships, the love relationship develops gradually. There are some who feel that they fall in love with one glance across a crowded room. What really happens is that the two mistake lust or passion for love. A love relationship exists when two people really know one another, see all the warts and character imperfections, and are still willing to submit and serve each other in a warm and generous willingness.

God is perfect in His character, and the projection of His personality is also perfect in every way. We are the problem in this relationship. We are the ones with all the warts and all the blemishes. They are in our thinking. I am not talking about things on the outside. I am talking about our thinking, our attitudes, and our character. We draw near to God for the purpose of the removal of our wrong thinking and attitudes. That is what the relationship is all about, so that we can be like God. He is perfect and mature, and He wants to bring us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and then a marriage can take place.

We are going to go back to the book of Amos and touch on something there. I want to read this for two reasons. I know of no other book in the Bible that is more relevant to cultural conditions within the United States and Canada in our very day. At the same time, this book also very clearly delineates spiritual conditions that have existed in the church of God over the past twenty years.

Amos 5:4 For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek you me, and you shall live.

Instead of Israel, think about "the Israel of God." "Seek you me, and you shall live."

Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD, and you shall live.

Amos 5:8 Seek him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: the LORD is his name.

Do you know why He interjects that? He is talking about the creation. He is talking about how night and day change. He is talking about the earth spinning on its axis and of its rotation around the sun. He is talking about those things that when God does something, He makes a difference in people's lives. "Seek Him and live."

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken.

These verses are very clearly written to those who have made the covenant with God.

Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth.

We are clearly commanded to seek God. Every commentary that expounds on this chapter, and specifically this verse, will tell you that "seek" in this case does not mean to search for something that is lost. We have already been invited into a relationship. We already know where God is. We do not have to seek Him in terms of searching Him out like He is lost somewhere. We know where to go. It means, as the *Expositor's Dictionary* says, "To turn to Him in trust and confidence." *Barnes Notes* says: "It does not mean to seek to get something from Him, but rather to seek God for what He is in Himself."

Brethren, to me that hits the nail right on the head for the purpose of this sermon, because "what He is in Himself" is another way of describing "seeking to be in the image of God." Do this, and we will live forever, like He does. When He says "live," He means "abundantly."

Regardless of how much we have in the way of material goods, we can still live abundantly, but this is directly tied to "seeking" Him. We seek Him to be like Him. We seek Him to build the relationship with Him. When He says "live," He means "abundantly" and "everlastingly."

The commentaries describe that both "seek" and "live" are in the imperative. It is a command to be diligent, fervent, and persevering in following through "seeking." This corresponds very closely to what David left us in Psalm 63:1-4.

Psalm 63:1-4 O GOD, you are my God; early will I seek you: my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary. Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you. Thus will I bless you while I live: I will lift up my hands in your name.

This exemplifies David's deep, diligent, and persistent longing for the fellowship with, and the favor of God. "Early will I seek you" indicates that seeking God through prayer should be the first thing accomplished every day so that God would get the freshest and the best.

David's first thoughts, his best thoughts, and his first object in life was to seek God each day, each week, each month, each year. David is saying that all of his passions and all of his desires, and all of his whole nature is willed in that direction—fighting impulse. It is not merely from duty, but from loving admiration.

His desire for God is compared to parched desert soil desiring water. David also sought God in worship at the Tabernacle. God's presence in his life was more important to him than life itself.

And like anyone who really loves another, David wants to brag about God. David is not giving us a report of someone who knew some things about God. David knew God. This is the testimony of one who was very familiar with God and loved Him very much, and was certainly on his way toward eternal life. We have a difficulty with this, because God is "other worldly."

Several times in the Fear of God sermons I quoted Isaiah 40:18. "To whom then will you liken Me?" This is why we have to come to know God. There is nobody like Him. Nobody measures up to what He is. The only way that we are going to get to know Him is through this personal relationship, and that means seeking Him. This is going to take a lifetime.

I do not mean to get you discouraged by saying that, but His intelligence, His personality, and His character is so vast and so pure. It has such depth and breadth to it, that it takes us a long time to begin to grasp even elementary things about Him. But He has called us into having experiences with Him, in seeking Him, and drawing near to Him in order to develop a relationship. This relationship is the key to the new creation—the creation of us in Christ Jesus.

So what am I saying? Every single one of us has to feel our way through this. It is that personal. Even though we have some help from those who have gone before us, much of this is very similar to pioneering, because we are exploring a new dimension of new life.

At this point I think it helps to remember that at the very beginning of the Book, Genesis 1:26 to be exact, He reveals that we are made in His image. We can look at ourselves and we can examine how human relationships, which lead to friendship and even to marriage and family circumstances, are cultivated and they grow. We can learn much.

I said that God is "other worldly," and that is true because He is God. Our God is also our Father. He is also our Elder Brother. He is a person. A person is defined usually as a man or woman or child having distinct individuality or personality, as distinguished from an animal. God is certainly not an animal. God is described as a person. Even out in the world they describe the trinity as one God in three persons. So men recognize God as a person. He has a personality, and it is distinct and individual.

Once God has called us and we have taken up His invitation, a relationship can be cultivated with Him in much the same manner as with any other person with whom we share things in common. God is a person who has a deep, mighty, and pure nature. He thinks. He wills. He plans. He takes pleasure in what He does. He feels. He loves. He desires. He gets angry. He is saddened. Wine cheers His heart. He laughs. He hopes. He has vision.

It sounds very human, does it not? Of course it does. We are in His image! Where do you think these characteristics we have come from? The problem is that all of our faculties need to be brought up to speed in order to be harmonious with His deep, mighty, and pure nature. But there is reason to hope. He was the Friend of Abraham, and He wants to be our Friend too, but the friendship must be cultivated. Now that He has revealed Himself, we are obligated to respond. We have to seek Him. We must draw near. The relationship and drawing near are the keys to the transference of God's mind to ours—of His spirit to us.

There might have been other ways that God could have thought of to accomplish this, but judging with what happened to ancient Israel, this is undoubtedly the best way.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace [favor] wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The point of Christ's death was not merely to forgive sins, but to provide access to God's presence. Two cannot walk together unless they agree, and the mention of justification indicates that sinning man is at the beginning stages of agreement with God. Sanctification, in which the righteousness of God becomes truly ours through life's experiences with God and being led by the Holy Spirit, occurs during the intercourse of the relationship.

Think about this. We are surrounded by people that we do not know. They live down the street, around the bend, in the next town, in the next city, country, state, nation, and halfway around the world. We will never in this life be able to cultivate a relationship with them. Why not? Because basically we can only have a relationship with those who are near to us, and to some extent those that we know.

Almost every relationship begins with a casual meeting. Sometimes it is chance. On other occasions it is specifically intended, and so a date is made. The relationship develops because one or both pursue the relationship by visiting with each other and talking with each other. The experiences with each other begin to accumulate, and a history is being developed as the relationship is cultivated.

Past experiences are shared. Present experiences are done together. Hopes and dreams, and likes and dislikes are expressed. Sometimes there are even arguments and offenses because of disagreements. Sometimes these relationships, which began with mere acquaintances, even lead to marriage where the process is continued on in an even more intimate basis. This only happens to the greatest degree when two very important elements that are vital ingredients in what we call "love" are present. The first is desire. The second is the commitment, or the resolve, or the will to make this wonderful oneness occur. There must be desire, and there must be the will to carry it through, or they will never be one with each other, or with God.

Some people try to make a marriage on the strength of passion—the passion that they feel for the object of it. Others try to carry on with the strength of duty. Passion usually fizzles out, because if that is all one has, divorce usually occurs, and the people never really become one. Others stay married because of the children, or "It's the thing to do," or "What would other people say?" Sometimes they stay together for business reasons, because if they get a divorce, they get fired. "It's bad for the company." Duty perseveres much longer than passion, because it is the stronger of the two. But if it is all by itself, it produces a cold, sterile relationship.

There is an interesting message from Christ in Revelation 2:1-7 to the Ephesian church. One of the reasons it is so interesting is because this was the first century church of the apostles, and one would think more highly, I guess you might say, of it. The second reason is because it comes very close to paralleling the one to Laodicea, in severity.

Revelation 2:1-7 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know your works, and your labour, [Pay attention to this.] and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil: [Sounds pretty good so far, does it not?] and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: And have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have laboured, and have not fainted [have not gotten weary]. Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches: To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Christ admits that these people hate sin, and that they are doctrinally pure. He condemns them only on one point, and it is so important that it virtually cancels out all of the good things, because He says

that unless they repent, they are going to have their candlestick removed. They had lost their first love. The fire had gone out of their relationship. There was no feeling for Christ any longer. The passion was gone. The devotion to Him as a person was missing from their lives. He does not say they were sinning all over the place. They just did not have any feeling for Him anymore.

Would you want to be married to somebody who had no feeling for you? Would you want to be courting somebody who could "take you or leave you," just like you were an old dishrag or something? You are something nice to have around, and nice to use, and comforting, but "So what?"

The book of Hebrews confirms that sin was not the problem. That too was written to the first century church as they progressed through the last half of the first century. Sin is not the issue. The attitude of the people was the issue, and because they had lost their first love, they were neglecting "so great salvation." (Hebrews 2) Salvation is in the relationship. They were letting this great salvation slip through their fingers by means of a neglectful attitude toward our great God, Savior, and High Priest.

Paul wrote that book in an effort to encourage them to have more ardent zeal and devotion to Christ. Have you ever read in Song of Songs how Christ describes His bride, and how she describes Him? There is heat there in the feeling.

Understanding a great deal more about the properties of spirit, did you think that there is going to be much of a transference or flowing of the Spirit of Christ into the minds of another who is really complacent about a personal relationship with Him? I do not think so. With that kind of an attitude there is probably not going to be much time spent being close together anyway. How can one share life with somebody they have little or no feeling for? Without this quality, worship of God becomes mere form, even though it may be moral.

Did you ever notice or wonder when Paul describes in I Corinthians 13 what love does, not once does he mention keeping the commandments. The keeping the commandments is the duty aspect of love. It is absolutely necessary for the sake of morality. When one also has a good personal relationship with Christ, the attributes of love of which Paul writes in I Corinthians 13, are sent forth from us by the Spirit of God flowing from Christ to us. This love then goes out into or toward others, because those attributes are in our mind as a result of the close relationship with Christ. So love can then be kind, and good, and gentle, and positive, and uplifting.

Here is Jesus is talking to the woman at the well:

John 4:23 But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him.

Here, spirit stands contrasted to ritual, rite, or form as represented by the mention of the Temple in Jerusalem (verse 20). Spirit there refers to heart, mind, with gratitude, with praise, with pure sincerity, and fervent desire to glorify Him by being like Him. It is these true worshippers to whom God grants His Spirit. They are close to Him because they are seeking Him.

He presses the relationship. He continues to pursue it right onto the end because it is good. Here is reciprocity at work. We seek Him, He seeks us. He gives us His Spirit, and it flows out from us in good works that bring glory and honor to God.

Psalm 69:32 The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

Seeking God makes the heart live. How many times have we seen heart, spirit, mind, and thoughts related in the same context? Is that not what we want in this relationship? We want our heart to live. What is it that makes it live? It is the Spirit of God energizing it because of the close communion.

A biblical example of this is when Moses went up on the mount to be with God those forty days and forty nights. At that time the Israelites made the golden calf. When Moses came down from that close association with God, he came down with his face glowing, shining. This was because he was reflecting the glory of God through close communion with Him all that time. This is a form of what he is talking about here, of the close communion with God. Seeking Him, and dressing and keeping the relationship, and submitting to Him is what is making our heart live, because His Spirit is flowing into it, and we are beginning to live the kind of life He lives. That is what the Bible calls "eternal life." Eternal life is to live as God lives.

We are seeking to have a relationship with One who is not far from us. He is close to us, and He delights to pour Himself into our hearts and minds. We seek Him through desire. Do we really want this One to be our Husband? Do we really want to be like this One we are to marry? If we do not desire Him, He will not reciprocate with any zeal, and so we will just kind of putter around with this relationship. We seek Him by turning our thoughts to Him by communion in prayer and communion in Bible study.

The desire to be like Him in every way drives our submission to Him in obedience. We are in the midst of a courtship. Can there be any passing of spirit when one is so far from the other that they have no desire? Desire rises when we know Him well enough, because we are thinking about all His wonderful attributes.

I do not mean to sell you on this as "a cure-all" for every spiritual problem. As both the Ephesian and Laodicean messages show, they were so important that both of those groups were threatened with destruction. One was complacent, and the other one had lost the feeling. Neither was close to Christ.

Are we attracted enough to Him to be affectionate toward Him?

Spending time in fervent communion with God in prayer, Bible study, meditation, and occasional fasting all lead to a pure submission to Him. This enhances the closeness even more. It is basically the same cycle that brings human beings together—talking and experiencing things together as we go through life.

That fervent attitude of sincerely wanting to be like God will bring a positive response. The principles are simple, and they are as old as the hills. They work, because that is how spirit is transferred to create oneness. That is why you people are married to one another. It is the same principle and the same process that is at work here.

Luke 11:9-13 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of

any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

If you are close enough that He can hear you, He is going to respond in spades. He will give it because He wants you to be like Him. That is the reason He gave us this invitation. That is the reason He caused us to turn toward Him.