

THE SPIRITUAL LAW

The Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.—ROM. 7:14

The ideas associated with the words carnal, natural and spiritual are various and generally confused. And before defining the above Scripture let us glance briefly at the meaning and scope of these words. *Natural* signifies according to *nature*. Nature has two principal definitions—"The sum of qualities and attributes which make a thing what it is as distinct from others"; also, „the regular course of things, the usual order of events.”—*Webster*. The first of these is the primary or strict meaning of the word, but from custom the latter is generally understood and used.

Using the word *natural* in connection with mankind in its primary sense, the strict meaning of the expression, *the natural man*, would be a man possessed of the *sum* of qualities and attributes which belong to human nature, i.e., *a perfect man*. According to this strict definition, there is not a natural man living in the world to-day; for there is not one who possesses in perfect measure all the qualities and attributes which belong to human nature. But the general use of the word natural, would define the expression, „the natural man,” thus: a man in harmony with the *regular*, course of things, and after the *usual* order of mankind as it exists at present, which Scripture asserts is a *fallen* or depraved condition, and not the condition which belonged to, and was enjoyed by, the first of the race.

The word *spiritual* is used in two ways also. The strict or primary meaning is, „Consisting of spirit—a *spiritual* substance or being.” A secondary meaning, and the one generally used, is, „Pertaining to the intellectual and higher endowments of the mind—as influenced by the spirit, controlled and inspired by the Divine Spirit.” According to the primary meaning of the word, to become spiritual would be to become a spiritual substance or being. According to the second definition, it would be to have the intellect under the guidance of God’s spirit.

The expression, „the law is spiritual,” cannot be understood according to the first definition—the law is not a spiritual being—but according to the second. The Law appeals to the intellectual or higher endowments of men and represents the Divine mind or spirit.

In answer, then, to the question: „Can a natural man *keep* a spiritual law?” we answer, It depends upon what you mean by a *natural man*. If you use *natural* according to the second definition, your

question would in substance be, „Can a man after the *usual order* of men [fallen and imperfect] as we see them about us to-day, keep the Law of God which is spiritual and represents his perfect will? And our answer to this question would be, No; the race has become imperfect in mind and body, and has lost the original likeness to such an extent that it is *impossible* for them either to fully appreciate that law, or to keep it. „There is none righteous; no, not one.”

But if the question be changed so as to give the word *natural* its primary meaning, it in substance would be: „Could a man possessing *all the qualities and attributes* which BELONG to the human nature keep a spiritual law?” To this question we would say, Yes: God made man in his own image [endowed with *like* mental and moral qualities, though of less *scope*] for the very purpose of having him able to appreciate his law—which is spiritual, or which represents his mind. It is in this particular that man differs from, and is superior to the lower animals. He was made capable of appreciating fully the will of his Creator.

Sin and its consequences have warped and twisted man’s intellect and judgment by which he was intended to apprehend God’s dealings and laws, to such an extent, that now, with somewhat perverted judgment, he, in his present fallen state, is unable often to discern the righteousness of God’s rulings, and cannot ever fully keep the requirements of His perfect law.

This agrees with Paul’s argument in the connection in which this text occurs. He reasons that the Law was just and good—in fact, was *spiritual*, or represented the mind or judgment of the perfect Creator, hence, could not be wrong; and since he and others by nature (second meaning, *i.e.*, in the condition usual or common to all) were out of harmony with that Law, and were condemned by it, it proved that they were imperfect and sinful. He then explains how it comes that man is out of harmony with the perfect law, saying: „I am carnal, [have a *fleshly mind*, or a mind conformed to the ordinary or depraved course of this world], sold under sin”—sold by the first Adam, for a momentary gratification, into slavery to sin and its train of consequent evils, terminating in *death*.

This is the reason that a variance exists between the perfect law and man as he is—under sin. Not that man, as originally created in the image of God, was at variance with the law of God and unable to keep it, but that, having lost much of God’s image in the fall, and having become depraved through sin, he is unable to keep the Law now, *because he is carnal*—sold under sin.

The perfect man of God’s creation—Adam—had the full range of mental and moral faculties which constituted him God’s image, but of *practical knowledge* he of course had none, the design of the Creator being that His (God’s) knowledge should be accessible to the man. And so long as Adam was content to follow his Maker’s instructions perfectly, that is, to be controlled by God’s spirit, or mind, or will, so long he prospered and was happy. The fall was occasioned by his leaning to his

own understanding or judgment, which, from lack of experience, was defective.

Losing the mind or spirit of God, he not only was condemned by the Law of God, which represents or expresses God's mind, but the race soon began to lose even that perfection of organism and mental balance, which at first enabled Adam to see and appreciate things from the standpoint of the Creator. Hence it is said that the mind which men now have is *carnal*—made up according to their earthly circumstances and surroundings—and not the mind of God.

OUR NEW MIND

Believers in Christ, who realize through his sacrifice the forgiveness of sins, are exhorted to make a full surrender of their will (which in all, is *carnal*) to the will of God: that is, to cease to look at matters from the depraved standpoint, and to use every effort to look at things from God's standpoint. This is a much more difficult matter for us now, than it was for Adam, because of the bent which sin has given us constitutionally, which is offset to some extent by our *knowledge* of the circumstances as revealed in God's Word.

As we may become acquainted with the mind or spirit of our fellow creatures by attention to their words, so God has given us His Word that thereby those who desire to do so, may ascertain his mind or spirit. If we consecrate ourselves fully, and ignore our own will, to accept of God's will, then we are said to be *spiritually minded*. Then we stand in precisely the position which Adam occupied before disobedience—controlled by the mind of God. „To be *carnally minded* is death, [to be controlled by any other will than God's will, brings distress, misery, trouble, and eventually death, according to the perfect and unalterable law of God]; but to be *spiritually minded* is *life and peace*.” (Rom. 8:6.) To have a mind in perfect harmony with that which is perfect and which is working all things according to the counsel of his own will, is the way not only to insure peace and happiness, but the only way to insure everlasting life; for God declares that all who will not be subject to his perfect will or law, may not live forever, since such lives would be an injury, both to themselves and others.

THE SPIRITUAL MIND TO BE RESTORED TO MANKIND

Since this condition of *spiritual mindedness* was one of the things lost by mankind in the fall, it would surely be one of the things restored to men by the Redeemer and Restorer in the times of restitution of all things. Mankind may again come into God's likeness, and being freed from sin by the Redeemer, will in due time be freed from the *carnal mind*, (of opposition to God,) which is the result of sin.

This is expressed forcibly by the prophet, who says of the work of the Times of Restitution: „I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” That is: I will remove the caloused and depraved elements of disposition—your *carnal mind*—and give you a mind such as you should have as men, such as belongs to perfect manhood, a heart of flesh. Again: „I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.” „After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Ezek. 36:26,27, and Jer. 31:33,34.)

Again it is stated:

„It shall come to pass AFTERWARD, that I will pour out *my spirit* upon all flesh.” [After the Gospel age is ended, the spiritual mind is to be restored to all flesh, during the Millennial reign.] „And *in those days* I will pour out my spirit upon the servants and upon the handmaidens.” (Joel 2:28,29.) [During the Gospel age none can receive God’s spirit except they first become his servants by consecration, while in the next age, the carnal mind being removed by the process of restoration, the acquirement of the mind of the spirit will be without difficulty.]

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THE SAME SPIRIT PRODUCES DIFFERENT RESULTS UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Since, then, the Spirit of God is one Spirit, and is to be *in the world* in the next age, as it is *in the Church* in this age, the question arises, Will it not produce the same *effects* in them (the world) that it now produces in the Church, and will not the *results be the same*? if the possession of the Spirit by the world gives evidence as with Adam, of *perfect MANHOOD*, does it not indicate that the highest aspirations of the Church under the same Spirit should be perfect MANHOOD? or, on the other hand, if the hope is well founded that the Church through the possession of the Spirit and as a result of it, becomes changed from *human* to SPIRITUAL NATURE (a spiritual body as well as mind), does it not prove that if the world comes under the influence of the same Spirit the result will be the same to them?

From a surface view one might answer, Yes. But we think we can give the best of logical, as well as Scriptural reasons for answering, No, the possession of the same Spirit or mind will not lead to exactly the same results because of the difference of circumstances during the two ages. The same Spirit, or mind of God, under the *same circumstances*, would produce the same results, but under opposite circumstances would produce different results.

The mind of God is always in harmony with justice and love, hence if we possess that Spirit *now*,

during „this present evil world,“ while in contact with sorrow, trouble, pain, injustice, etc., we must of necessity oppose them, and use our influence against them, and this Spirit of God will lead us not only to sympathize, but to *sacrifice*, in our endeavor to bless and alleviate. As the apostles saw the dreary darkness of those about them, and knew the joy and comfort and peace of heart it would give them to know of a Ransom by Jesus and a coming blessing upon all through him, they sacrificed much to

„Tell the whole world the blessed tidings,“

Because led of the same Spirit or mind of God which prompted the Father to send the only begotten that the world through him might live, and which inspired our Lord when he „gave himself a ransom for all,“ therefore the apostle could exclaim even in the midst of tribulation, „Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.“ (1 Cor. 9:16.) Under the influence of that Spirit he could take pleasure in nothing else. Possessed of that Spirit, his own comfort, ease, pleasure, honor or wealth appeared as loss and dross, to be gladly abandoned for the privilege of being a co-worker with God, and joining his life in sacrifice to the Master's. And in *proportion as WE possess* the Spirit or mind of God, we will so view matters and so act, so long as ignorance, blindness, trouble and sin exist.

If the miseries, etc., of the present should continue during the coming age, the Spirit of God would ever prompt in the same way to its alleviation, and the results would still be *sacrifice* among all possessing the Spirit: but it will not be so. With the end of this age the predominance of evil will cease; and with it the

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necessity and opportunity of suffering by opposing it, will cease. The time of suffering will have given place to the time of rejoicing and glory. Glory to God in the highest, glory to Christ and the Church, and on earth peace and good will toward men, with naught to molest or make them afraid. The Scripture will be fulfilled: „In His day the *righteous* [Right-doer—those possessing God's Spirit] shall flourish.“ Whereas, *now*, „Whosoever will live Godly [according to the Spirit of God] shall suffer persecution.“

Thus we easily and quickly show that the possession of the Spirit of God would have different effects according to the circumstances—one time necessitating and producing suffering, sacrifice and dishonor, and at another *the very reverse*, blessing and honor.

It only remains for us to show from Scripture, that *different rewards* result from the possession of and obedience to the Spirit of God, which we now proceed to do briefly.

When the difference of circumstances is kept in mind—the favorable circumstances of those in the coming age, when Satan and evil is bound, and blindness, ignorance, and depravity, are being removed, and when the full knowledge of the Lord is flooding the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the unfavorable circumstances of the present age, when Satan uses his blinding arts and ensnarements, when we must walk by faith and *not by sight*, when to have and exercise the Spirit of God demands self-crucifixion, self-denial, dishonor and adversity, are kept in mind, who can *wonder* that God has provided „some *better* thing for us” than for the world in general. (Heb. 11:40.) Not that the world’s portion will not be good, yea PERFECT, but that our portion will be better inasmuch as it will be a perfection on a higher plane of existence than the human, even a partaking of the *divine nature*. (2 Pet. 1:4.) Do you question *how* both could be PERFECT yet one better than the other? Let us illustrate: When Jesus was „*made so much* BETTER than the angels,” think you that it implies that they are degraded or *imperfect*? Nay every creation of God in its perfection is very good, though there are various orders or kinds, and the perfection of each differs from the other. So with the *perfect man* RESTORED to God’s image and controlled by his Spirit, he will still be „*a little lower* than the angels” in comparison, (Ps. 8:5,) while the glorified Church like her Head and Lord will be „*so much better* than the angels,” inasmuch as with her Lord she becomes partaker of the *divine nature*, which, though no more perfect than angelic nature, both being perfect, is nevertheless superior as a higher order of nature—above all.

The proof of a different reward for those who during this Gospel Age suffer with Christ is briefly stated thus: All the promises to Israel according to the flesh, and the world, which they in figure represented (the priesthood excepted, who represented the Church,) are earthly promises, adapted to perfect human beings, viz.: the land, fruitful fields, abundance of peace, restoration, etc. (Gen. 13:14,15; Exod. 20:12; Micah 4:4.)

The promises to the Church are the *reverse*—on earth suffering, poverty, affliction, persecution, self-denial, and in the future, heavenly glory, honor, power and association with and likeness to Christ Jesus. They have the privilege of not only suffering with him, but of sharing with him in the restoration of mankind.

„Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward *in heaven*.”

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