

“The Law Was Our Schoolmaster”

19

From Glory to Glory



Character development is said to be the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. During the next hour we will explore both our privilege and our responsibility to become Christ-like in character. Join us now for this powerful time of personal renewal as Pastor Stephen Wallace takes us "From Glory to Glory."

Greetings, my dear friends. Thank you, thank you for coming back. Did you have an enjoyable fellowship dinner? {Amen} You didn't enjoy too much did you? I hope not. We're going to know whether you did or not. How are we going to know that? Those of you who overdid it at the fellowship dinner are going to doze off on me. {That won't happen; we didn't eat dessert today.} Good, good.

I praise the Lord for the privilege of studying, these Sabbath hours, His Word, and not just any topic, but the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. I can't think of a better way to spend the Sabbath than in the study of His Word. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} What a joy; what a privilege. And thank you for giving me the privilege of leading out in that study with you. But I want to freely acknowledge to you that I am not up to the task, except by a miracle of grace. I need that grace. And I hope you recognize that you need grace as well, in order to be able to rightly relate to and understand and appreciate the truth of God's Word. Do you recognize that? **Spiritual things are only spiritually discerned. {1 Cor 2:14}** And we are dealing with some challenging truths, my dear friends.

I have some more things to share with you that probably won't make you all that happy with me. But I have to run the risk of offending you, not because I want to, but because for Christ's sake, I must encourage you, strongly, to look honestly and objectively at your own hearts, to see whether, just possibly, you might be in a Laodicean condition: self-deceived, thinking you are **rich and increased in goods, but really are wretched, poor, blind, miserable and naked... lukewarm. {Rev 3:17}** Please know that I am not seeking to judge anyone of hypocrisy. But I do know that the True Witness always judges aright. And evidently there is so much hypocrisy amongst us as this end-time Laodicean church, that it is our identifying characteristic. And so my dear friends, I think that in light of that fact, it would be wise for us to examine ourselves - honestly, objectively - and see whether we truly be in the faith. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen}

We are shining the laser light of God's law upon our hearts. And that's never a pleasant experience because, you know, we might be forced to recognize some things that we've been in denial regarding for a long time. But how much better to recognize them now, when we can do something about it. Amen? {Amen} If there's any hypocrisy that needs to be discovered, God help us discover it now. Amen? {Amen} I don't want to go on in self-righteous self-deception until it's too late. Do you? Until we have to hear that terrible verdict and be shocked: **"Depart from Me you workers of iniquity; I never knew you." {Mat 7:23}** May God help us find whatever needs to be found now, while there's still time to get real. Amen? {Amen} And thank you for being willing to come back and continue to search your heart as we, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, study God's Word together. And that's the influence that I want to give you opportunity to personally invite into your hearts just now. And as you pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon your heart and mind, would you please remember your brother. I covet your prayers. I too, I especially, need the anointing and the outpouring of God's Spirit. Let's spend a few moments on our knees, shall we? ...as is our practice.

Father God, in the quietness of this Sabbath afternoon I thank you for the privilege we have of gathering once again to feast on the Bread of Life. But Father, before we proceed with this meal, we choose to heed the knock at the door of our heart. We choose to get up from the table and open the door and invite You in the person of Your Spirit to come in and sup with us. Please Lord, by the power of Your Holy Spirit give us that hungering and thirsting and I thank You that You have done that. The very presence of these dear brothers and sisters is evidence that You have placed in their heart a hungering and thirsting for the Word. And I pray that You would sharpen our appetite. And I pray especially that You would give us the capacity to digest and assimilate the Bread of Life, that we might be nourished by it. Mine is the undeserved privilege, Father, of breaking and distributing that bread and I choose to wash my hands, wash my heart, wash my mind, wash my tongue, wash my whole being in the blood and in the water that flows from the pierced side of Jesus. Cleanse me, Father, please. Don't let my humanity even flavor the bread, let alone defile it. Please, protect me from myself. And should anyone receive a blessing from this meal, we will know who alone gets the credit and the praise. It is You and Your Son, the Bread of Life Himself, and not the poor bread breaker that You condescended to use. Grant this prayer my Lord, for I ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

We have been looking at our cooperative role in the development of a Christ-like character. What is our part? Can we change ourselves from glory to glory? No, only the Holy Spirit can. But that doesn't mean we have nothing to do. It is **divine grace combined with, what? Diligent, persevering human effort** - that is required. {CT 544.2} And that effort must be directed in the governance of the mind. Now the "what" of the cooperative role is where our focus is: "what" we are to do; "how" we are to do that will come later. And I assure you that whatever God asks us to do, He will enable us to do. Amen? {Amen} You know it's such a precious assurance that **all of His biddings are enablings**. {COL 333.1} That's why I have to insist that **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ {2 Cor 10:5}** is indeed possible because He's asked us to do that. And the very fact that He has asked us to is an assurance in itself that He will enable us to, amen? Yes!

We don't have such a cruel God who would ask us to do something that He isn't fully prepared to enable us to do by His grace. The consistent, complete governance of the activity of the mind to the point of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ is, by grace combined with diligent, persevering human effort, a possibility. It's a possibility.

In fact, it's more than that. It's a necessity if we are going to be sealed. To be sealed is to come to the place where we, for the love of Christ, have made it such a habit to bring our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ that we would rather... what? {Die.} Die, than knowingly transgress God's law, even in the privacy of the mind. Now that's a high standard. But my dear friends, I dare hold up no lesser standard than the one God's Word holds up for us. I freely acknowledge to you I have not attained, nor am I perfect. I have not reached that standard. But I assure you that for the love of Christ **I am pressing on towards the mark**. {Phil 3:14} Are you with me? Are you with me? Let's leave that standard up there. And for the love of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, let's press on towards the mark. **"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."**

Why is it so important for us to govern the mind? Well, what are the three, no it's four now that we're on, isn't it? The four reasons: number one, we must govern the mind, **keep it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life**. {Pr 4:23} Everything we say and do has its origin in our thoughts and feelings. Therefore, if that which comes forth in the realm of behavior is going to be pure and Christ-like, that which goes on up here between the right and the left ear must be pure and Christ-like. Correct?

Secondly, we must **keep the heart with all diligence** because it is what goes on in the heart that makes us what we really are. **"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."** {Pr 23:7}

The third reason we must keep the heart with all diligence is because if we don't, who will? Satan.

And the fourth reason, which we are presently on, is because **it is in the heart that God looks for and requires obedience of us.** {1 Sam 16:7} And we ran out of time in our last study.

We were looking at the spiritual nature of the law, listening in on that remarkable sermon of Christ, the Master Preacher, called the Sermon on the Mount, where He was expounding on the spiritual nature of the law. And He was needing to do that because He was addressing a whole lot of self-righteous hypocrites who had made it a profession to live in compliance with the letter of the law, but had totally missed living in harmony with the spirit of the law. That's precisely why, my dear friends, those same conscientious letter-of-the-law, Sabbath-keepers were so anxious to get the body of the Lord of the Sabbath off the cross so they wouldn't break the Sabbath! Talk about missing the whole spirit of the law. And please know that we are capable of that same degree of hypocrisy, aren't we? We wouldn't think of being gainfully employed in some occupation, most of us, on the seventh-day Sabbath, but what do we talk about freely? Come on now, admit it with me: our jobs, and all sorts of worldly, everyday things on the Sabbath. **Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.** {Mat 12:34, Lk 6:45} And just because we manage to keep ourselves from behaving in an inappropriate way, we think that we're keeping the Sabbath.

But my dear friends, you and I keep the Sabbath between the right and the left ear. Or not. You know I'm telling you the truth. We're capable of that same kind of hypocrisy. And so Jesus, who was preaching His heart out to the scribes and Pharisees, was trying to help them recognize that there is more to obedience to the law than just compliance with its letter. That's why He says, **"Unless your righteousness,"** what? **"...exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** {Mat 5:20} You've got to have a holiness of heart if you're going to have a fitness for heaven. **"Without holiness, no man shall see God."** {Heb 12:14} And my dear friends, if you don't think that we today, Seventh-day Adventist Christians, need to really listen to this very same sermon, then please think again. We too have a form of godliness... only... typically. We too are professional letter-of-the-law keepers, but have, by in large, totally missed the spirit. That's why we're lukewarm, doing all the right things, but for all the wrong reasons. So we too need to listen to the spiritual nature of the law.

We looked together at the commandment that says, **"Thou shalt not kill."** {Ex 20:13} And we came to recognize that it has jurisdiction not only over our behavior, but over our innermost private feelings. **He who hates his brother is a murderer.** {1 Jn 3:15} If we harbor feelings of anger towards a brother, even if we manage to bite the tongue and keep from calling him stupid, we have still transgressed the law that says, **"Thou shalt not kill,"** because it's spiritual. And that's where we ran out of time. What we need to do now is something even perhaps more uncomfortable. And that is recognize how the law applies to our feelings... our thoughts, excuse me, our thoughts as well as our feelings. Our thoughts. What commandment does Christ address to help us understand this? It's the seventh. And my dear friends, number seven is a very serious problem. There's a lot of transgressing of the seventh commandment going on. Listen to what the Lord says, **Matthew 5:27: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** Do we hear that, my dear friends? You see, when Jesus said, quoting the commandment, **"You shall not commit adultery,"** {Ex 20:14} the scribe, the Pharisee, who had managed to keep his behavior in compliance with the letter of the law, did a quick review and asked himself, "Have I ever done the deed? No, I'm righteous." Then what does Jesus go on to say? **"But I say to you, whoever looks upon a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already,"** where? **"...in his heart."** {Mat 5:28} Now dear sisters, bless your hearts, you're going to have to make application. I've got to speak to my brothers now.

Ask for the Holy Spirit's aid in making application to your own experience. This is obviously addressed to men. Brothers, do you recognize that you and I are capable of transgressing the law that says, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery,**" in the privacy of the imagination alone? Do you see that? You know, this is something that is, by and large, not recognized though. I remember once, for example, I was standing next to some young men, this was many years ago when I was a young man, and... it was at a camp meeting, in fact. And there was some poor scantily clad female strutting by, and they were watching with very lustful eyes. And as she moved out of sight, one of them noticed that I was not participating. And he said to me, "Aw, come on Steve, there's no harm in looking." Is that true? But you see, a whole lot of people believe that. Why? Because they think that as long as they don't do the deed, they haven't sinned. But what does Jesus say? "**But I say to you that whoever looks upon a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already,**" where? "**...in his heart.**"

Is there no harm in looking? Brother, sister, think about this please. You see, the law is spiritual. It has jurisdiction then, over what goes on in the private realm of your imagination. That's why you can transgress the law that says, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery,**" in your fantasies alone. Are we all together on this? Don't let yourself dodge this. **Patriarchs and Prophets, page 308: "'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' This commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them.**" Pause: we've got to deal with this a little bit. And this is not comfortable. I don't enjoy this, but I'm under conviction that I must address it, so please allow me to. This commandment forbids not only what? Not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Are there certain practices that tend to excite sensual thoughts and desires, are there?

Dear sisters, maybe this is where you fit in. Please let me address you kindly, as a brother who loves you. And brothers, don't leave me up here all by myself on this one. Is it possible for our sisters to dress and act in a way, brothers, that tends to excite sensual thoughts and desires? Is it? Yes, it surely is... It surely is. You see, sisters, men are very visually oriented, more so than you. And they are very easily visually stimulated. And if you dress and act in a way that stimulates sensual desires in a man, please know, please know that before God and in the record books of heaven, you are just as guilty of having committed adultery as he is, in the fantasies of his mind. And I shudder, I shudder for a lot of my dear sisters who will have to face a long record of adultery, when maybe they never actually did the act, but because of the way they dressed and behaved, they have transgressed the law that says, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**" Dear sisters, I tell you that because I love you. Some of you don't know better. But the frightening thing is that some of you do, and do it anyway, because you like that kind of attention... God help you.

Or any act, or any - what is the actual word? "**...or any practice that tends to excite them.**" My dear friends, what are the implications here regarding the whole massive pornography industry? Does pornography tend to excite sensual thoughts and desires? Does it? Of course, that's what it's all about. What are the implications of this regarding probably the most universal and deadly personal habit that the human race is in bondage to, known as masturbation. What are the implications there? Is that not transgression of the law that says, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery?**" Why of course it is... Why of course it is. You know that, if you're at all honest or objective with yourself, knowing the spiritual nature of the law. My brother, my sister, please, please recognize that even though nobody else may know what you're doing, God does. And you're going to have to face an absolutely precise and accurate record of every sensual thought and act on judgment day. I beg of you, while there's still time, receive forgiveness and victory. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} For your sake I plead with you, don't fool yourself on this one. Don't fool yourself on this one. It is absolutely frightening to me how readily available pornography is over the Internet now Absolutely frightening. And the pornography industry generates more funds than all other business combined on the Internet. That's how widespread this bondage is. And my dear

friends, if any of you are trapped in this, please... Let Jesus Christ by His blood and by His Spirit set you free. Please, there is freedom; you can overcome! But it will take diligent effort combined with divine grace. But you can, you must overcome. **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."** {Mat 5:8} There is no way that you can be pure in heart if you are involved in this practice, no way. And you're not going to be fit to be entrusted with citizenship in heaven and eternal life. How can I speak more clearly? We must **keep the heart with all diligence**, my dear friends, because it is in the heart that God looks for and requires obedience of us.

Now some of you might be saying, "Well, wait a minute, wait a minute! Does that mean that every time I have an evil thought I have sinned?" No, because you see it's not a sin to be tempted; and temptation always engages your thoughts. Are you following this? But the key point, my dear brother, sister is what you and I do with that thought that determines whether or not it becomes sin, or only remains temptation that you, by God's grace, overcome. Are you following this? And what I must very carefully and systematically study with you at a later lesson, is precisely what it is that causes temptation to become sin. Most people think that temptation doesn't become sin until you actually do the deed. Is that the case? Most emphatically no.

Obviously Jesus says, **"I say if you look upon a woman to lust for her you've committed adultery with her already in your heart."** Did you do the deed? No. But you broke the law that says, **"Thou shalt not commit adultery."** So again, that makes us question what it is that causes temptation to become sin. And we will address that issue later. But for now just to clarify this, let me read a statement, and I will verbally underline the key points that hopefully will clarify at what point and by what means temptation actually becomes sin. The statement is found in **Testimonies, Volume 2, page 561**. Listen closely. **"You should control your thoughts. This will not be an easy task; you cannot accomplish it without close and even,"** what? **"...severe effort."** What does that sound like again? **"Keep your heart with all diligence!"** {Prov 4:23} **"...you cannot accomplish it without close and even severe effort. Yet God requires this of you; ..."** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} **"...it is a duty resting upon every accountable being. You are responsible to God for your thoughts."** Now, listen: **"If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity."** Do you see how that works? That is what determines whether or not you are just tempted, or whether or not you have sinned.

"If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting the mind to" what? **"...to dwell upon impure subjects you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity."** When we have an evil thought, an impure thought, if we instantly, for the love of Christ repel it, have we sinned? No, we have overcome temptation. But my dear friends, if you allow it to remain in your mind, and you dwell upon it, and you turn it over, and you fantasize, in God's eyes you have what? You've sinned... Please know that. No wonder **Isaiah says in 55:7 and following, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts."** Please notice: What's the only way we're going to change our ways? ...our behavior? By changing our what? Our thoughts! **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteousness 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."** Amen? **"He will abundantly pardon,"** but you've got to go to Him and ask for that, and victory as well. **Verse 8: "'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.'"**

Oh, may God help us think the thoughts of Christ, that we might have the ways of Christ in our life. This is what David is referring to when he says, **"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I**

might not" what? "...**sin against Thee.**" {Ps 119:11} In the heart, that's where we gain or lose the battle against temptation. It's between the right and the left ear, my dear friends.

Testimonies Volume 8, page 314: "Our hearts..." Our what, friends? **"Our hearts must be educated to become steadfast in God. We are to form habits of,"** what? **"...thought that will enable us to resist temptation. We must learn to look upward. The principles of the word of God - principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity - we are to understand in their bearing upon our daily life. Every act, every word, every,"** what? **"...thought is to be in accord with these principles."** Oh, that's a high standard, isn't it? That's a high standard, isn't it? Oh, my dear friends, work with me on that statement. **"Our hearts must be educated to become steadfast in God."**

Tell me, do you get an education overnight? No, it takes time to get an education. And bless your hearts, I'm not asking you this afternoon whether or not you have your degree, whether or not you've graduated in this educational process. But I am asking you whether or not you're even enrolled in this school. You see, this is **the school of Christ.** {CT 51.1} This is where we learn to fight and win the spiritual battle to govern the mind. Most Christians aren't even enrolled in this school. Are you hearing me? {Amen} Most Christians are simply enrolled in the school of behavior control. Just like the whole rest of the world, trying to keep the lid on inappropriate behavior so they don't mar their reputation, or get themselves in trouble. But that isn't the school that the Christian is even supposed to be enrolled in. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} We are to be enrolled in the school of Christ where we learn to govern what? The thoughts and the feelings. Learn to govern the mind. Are you in that school? Are you even enrolled? That's what I'm asking you.

And what is the objective of that education? It's to help you and me come to the place where the principles of God's Word... There's our word again, principles. Remember, we studied about that earlier? Principles, that's what the Holy Spirit writes on our hearts. This is something more fundamental than "dos and don'ts." It's the underlying law of God, the principle of God's government that the "dos and don'ts" are simply practical applications of. **"The principles of the word of God - principles that are as high as heaven, and that compass eternity - we are to understand in their bearing upon our daily life. Every act, every word, every"** what? **"...every thought is to be in accord with these principles."** Is that really Biblical? Is that the standard that the Bible calls us to reach? Absolutely, my friends, absolutely. I've referred to it, but read it with me now. It's in 2 Corinthians 10:5. **2 Corinthians, 10:5:** What are we to be doing? **"...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,"** and what else? **"...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."** Yes it's Biblical, it is God's standard. Please don't settle for any lower standard, I beg of you. **"...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."**

Now my dear friends, I have a question, a vital transition question. Follow me on this. Is it possible for us to do that? Let me give you a little more courage to answer that question. Is it possible for the natural man to do that? {No} No, most emphatically, no. In fact, hear me: It is not only impossible for the natural man to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, it is impossible for the natural man to bring even one thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. One! On what basis do I say that? Again, on the basis of Scripture. **Romans 8:7.** What does it say regarding the natural man? ...and the natural heart? **"The carnal mind is,"** what? **"enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God nor indeed can be."** Please understand what Paul's telling us there. The carnal, natural mind is incapable, utterly incapable, of governing itself by the spirit of the law. It can't do it.

Now watch out though. What can it do if ego motivation is sufficient? What can it do? It can govern your behavior by the letter of the law. But it can't govern itself by the spirit of the law. And right there, right there lies its remarkable capacity to fool us, to deceive us into thinking we're something we're not. Did you hear what I said there? You see, "the heart is deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked." But it is absolutely, frighteningly capable of disguising its wickedness with whitewash, behavior that complies with the letter of the law. Brother, sister this, again, is why it is never safe nor wise for us to evaluate the legitimacy, the genuineness, of our Christian experience by an analysis of our behavior, is it? Never safe... Never safe. Under Lesson 19, fourth statement down, **Signs of the Times, May 23, 1895: "The carnal,"** in brackets, not mine but the Spirit of Prophecy: **"The carnal [or natural*] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."** I looked up the word natural just to better understand why inspiration put that word in there to help us better understand what carnal means. **"*Natural: of or pertaining to one's nature or constitution; innate; inborn; existing in one's nature, not acquired but inherent."** We have as a birthright, innate, inborn within us a hatred for God and an absolute, incorrigible rebellion against His law. That's our natural inheritance, my friends. That's the way we are born by nature. I say praise God we can be born again, what do you say? {Amen} But the heart that we receive as a natural inheritance, is tyrannized by the spirit, the law, the principle of selfishness. That's precisely why it's incapable of submission to the spirit, the law of love... Incapable. The natural man hates God and righteousness, and loves Satan and sin.

Some of you might say, *"Well come on, I think you're going a little far there. I know some people who don't make any claims to be Christians but they would never, they would never say anything about hating God."* Work with me on that. If about two thousand-plus years ago, you had come up to the scribes and Pharisees and asked them what they felt about the soon-to-come Messiah, what would they have said? *"Oh, we love that prospect. That is what we're looking forward to. We can hardly wait until he comes."* If you had told them that they hate the Messiah, what would they have said? *"You are insane."* They would have stoned you on the spot. *"We love the Messiah."* But when He actually came, come on, what did they do to Him? They murdered Him. What's going on there? Self-deception. You see, the carnal heart comes up with a carnal God and then loves that God. That's exactly what the scribes and Pharisees of old did. They came up with a carnal Messiah that would meet all their selfish agenda. And make them superior to everyone else on earth, break the bondage of Roman governance, and have them respected and adulated by the whole world. That's the Messiah they loved. But when the real one came, they murdered Him. And my dear friends, do you know what scares me? ...is that there are a lot of us doing the very same thing.

We have invented a carnal savior, and he is very popular to the carnal mind. Because he makes you, what? Healthy, prosperous. He meets all of your needs; he protects you. He makes you happy, happy, happy. And he, of course, would never ask you to deny self. And that's the god that so many in Christendom are in love with. And this is precisely why, hear me, Satan will so successfully personate Jesus Christ. Did you hear what I just told you? Because they are looking for that kind of Messiah. My brother, my sister, please don't be fooled in this matter. The natural man can only hate God. But also take courage that we can experience a supernatural change that will enable us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The real God, the true God. That's what the new heart makes possible. But, hear me now: Before we will ever get this new heart, we must what? Ask for it, right? Can God give us something without our asking for it? Not without violating our free will. That's why the whole economy of heaven operates on the simple principle, **"Ask, and it shall be given."** {Mat 7:7} You can't earn it, but you need to ask for it because as much as God wants to give it to you, He can't force it on you. He has to have your request in order to give it to you without violating your free will. Are we together on that?

But here's the problem. We will not ask for it unless we recognize our need for it. Does that make sense? What is it that helps us recognize our need for the new heart? It is the law of God spiritually discerned. Work with me on this. This is very important to understand... Please. This carnal heart that hates God, and is incapable of subjecting itself to the spirit of the law. Again remember, it's

frighteningly capable of subjecting your behavior to the letter of the law. Note how that's clearly brought out in **Review and Herald, April 11, 1893, bottom of page 40: "It is beyond the power of man to please God apart from Christ. We may make resolutions and promises, but the carnal heart overpowers all our good intentions. We may control our outward conduct..." "We may control our,"** what? **"...outward conduct, but we cannot change the heart."** Do you see there, though, the frightening capacity of the carnal heart to fool you into thinking you're something you're not?

Steps to Christ, page 18: "It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Job 14:4 and Romans 8:7." Now listen: **"Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are,"** what? **"...powerless."** But what can they do? Listen: **"They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is,"** whom? **"...Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness."** Oh, my dear friends, I want that power in my life. Are you with me? {Amen} We desperately need that power. And that power is ours when we receive a new heart.

But again, we will not receive a new heart unless we ask for it. And we won't ask for it unless we recognize our need for it. And for those of us who, with sufficient ego motivation, are behaving remarkably well especially when compared to others, we are very prone to be fooled regarding our desperate need. Are you hearing me? In fact, it is often the more light that one has, the more prone they can be to be fooled into thinking they are something they are not. **Saul of Tarsus, by the deeds of the law** what? **...blameless {Phil 3:6}**, because he had such a broad understanding of what constituted appropriate behavior. And because his life was in compliance with that understanding, he thought himself to be righteous. He thought himself to be righteous. And we are prone to do the same thing. **Proverbs 16:2**, note that with me: **"All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs,"** the what? **"...spirits."** Work with me on that. Why are the ways of man pure in his own eyes? Because he simply evaluates that behavior on the basis of the letter of the law. "Ways," that's behavior. And because his behavior is in compliance with the letter of the law, he thinks that he is what? **Pure, rich and increased in goods and has need of nothing. {Rev 3:17}** **"But the Lord weighs,"** tests the what? **"...the spirits."** What's that? The motives behind the behavior. Do I hear an amen? {Amen} And my dear friends, we too need to test the motives. We too need to test the motives. **We need to examine ourselves.*** Dear fellow Laodiceans, I insist that this is imperative for us to do. Scripture says, **"Examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith." {2 Cor 13:5}** And really it's all the more appropriate and necessary to do this in light of the fact that we are living in the antitypical Day of what? Atonement. What were the children of Israel doing in the typical Day of Atonement? They were fasting and praying and searching their hearts to see whether it was well with their souls. In the antitypical Day of Atonement, don't you think it would be all the more appropriate to be doing the same? Yes indeed, my friends.

And yet how little of this is being done. Here's a prayer that I want to recommend to you in this soul-searching that I strongly encourage you to get involved in. **Psalm 139:23 and 24: "Search me O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way,"** where? **"...in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** What is David pleading with the Lord to help him do? Look beyond the behavior. Look past the external lifestyle and evaluate the motives, and the thoughts and the desires behind it all. And my dear fellow Laodiceans, we need to pray such a prayer too. Amen? {Amen} And please understand that since **spiritual things are only spiritually discerned,**

and since weighing the spirits requires spiritual discernment, you're going to have to pray that God **anoints your eyes with what? Eye-salve... Eye-salve. {Rev 3:18}** You see, we can be oh, so easily fooled and dazzled by whitewash. And if you don't have spiritual discernment, you might fool yourself into thinking that because your behavior is so good, you're righteous. But my friends, weigh the spirit behind it. Ask God to anoint your eyes with eye-salve and help you recognize not just what you do, but why you do it. What's your motive? What's your motive? And in this self-examination, please, please ask the Holy Spirit to energize and direct your conscience.

Listen, **Proverbs 20:27: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart."** Very interesting... work with me on that. **"The spirit of man,"** what's that? That's the highest faculty of man's mind, which is especially his conscience that voice by which God can communicate to him His will. And this spirit of man is the lamp, it's the flashlight if you like, with which we're going to be able to look inside and discover whatever needs to be discovered. But my dear friends, this flashlight has to be given to Jesus, in order for Him to put the batteries of the Holy Spirit in it. And it has to be directed by the Word in order to expose to us whatever needs to be exposed. Are you following this? Otherwise the lamp of man's conscience won't work. So give that lamp to Jesus. Let Him energize it with His Spirit, and let Him direct it with His Word, and it will help you to discover whatever needs to be discovered in the inner recesses of your mind and heart.

Now, in this self-examination, please learn to use the Word of God, but use it spiritually discerned, my dear friends. **Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the,"** what? **"...the thoughts and intents of the heart."** You see, when the Word is spiritually discerned, it is a razor-sharp sword that will cut its way clear down to the very core of your being, to the realm of your thoughts, and even the intents of the heart, which are your motives. But my dear friends, if the Word isn't spiritually discerned, it's only a butter knife, and it'll make you feel good about yourself. Make sure it has that sharp edge on it. And then be willing to submit your heart to some open-heart surgery. The Master Physician is oh, so skilled. He won't inflict any unnecessary pain, I promise you. But He will, let me warn you, expose to you whatever needs to be exposed. But when you discover it, don't resent it. Flee to the cross, receive His forgiveness, and by His grace, overcome it. And my dear friends, please do this while there's still time. Don't put it off. Examine yourselves; search your hearts. Is it well with your soul? That's the question. We need to take a break; would you stand with me for prayer?

Father in Heaven, please continue to help us understand how it is that we can come to have a new heart. We've got to recognize our need for one if we're ever going to ask for one. And it is by the laser light of Your Word and the penetrating beam of Your law, with spiritual discernment shining into the core of our being, that we can discover whatever hypocrisy needs to be discovered. And help us to discover it now, while we can still flee to the cross and cry out for, and receive, a new heart. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

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*** Guard jealously your hours for prayer and self-examination.** Set apart some portion of each day for a study of the Scriptures and communion with God. Thus you will obtain spiritual strength, and grow in grace and favor with God. He alone can direct our thoughts aright. He alone can give us noble aspirations, and fashion our characters after the divine similitude. If we draw near to him in earnest prayer, he will fill our hearts with high and holy purposes, and with deep, earnest longing for purity and cleanness of thought. {RH, November 10, 1910 par. 14}