

The Staff and The Sword Ministry

Relationship Reports

RELATIONSHIP REPORTS February 1984 to January 1985

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RELATIONSHIP



PART 5 THE APPEARANCE

INTRODUCTION

The APPEARANCE of things. This may SEEM like an easy concept, but it is more than that. This may also SEEM like a difficult concept, but it really isn't.

In discussing this, we are, however, now beginning to get to the heart of the matter. Read on . . .

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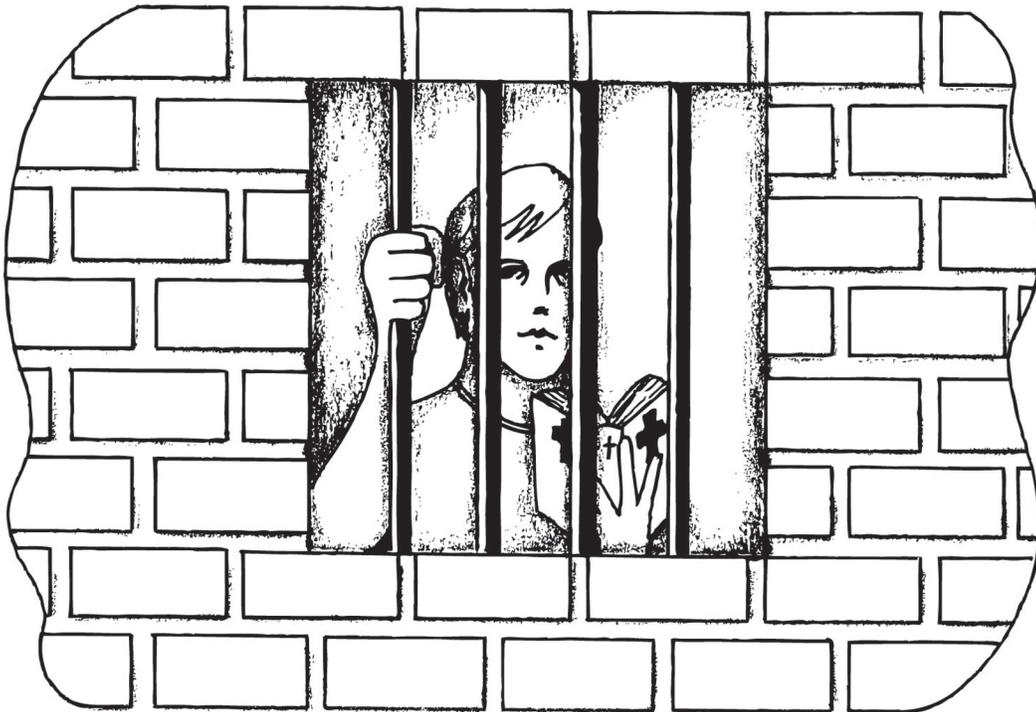
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THE CHURCH SYSTEM OF MAN

“JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO THE APPEARANCE, BUT JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.” (JESUS in John 7:24).

mans system of church rehabilitation



Back in 1976, on the Three Day Walk through Chicago and after going from church-to-church, the Lord would lead past a cemetery and there revealed that these churches were like the tombs, white-washed but full of DEAD MEN'S BONES. Stinging though it was, Jesus did not present that insight with any condemnation but stated it as a simple fact.

FEAR is taught in the church system of man for many reasons, but one primary reason is that man's system is "powerless" to change man's inner nature and knows this, therefore uses fear as a way to compensate for a lack of power, to contain the sin nature by appearances of righteousness. The Sunday Blue Suit, the many ways of man's system constantly presents us with an easy way of

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being righteous by looking that way, by acting that way. But, the unsaved, the outright sinner is not deceived by it, and ridicules openly this double standard of the Church today, Saints on Sunday, Devils the rest of the week.

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

When you begin to draw closer to Jesus by the Spirit of God, you will be more and more aware of your own unrighteous condition. Your own lack of worth will fade away in His Light as you draw near Him. You will be struck by the most blessed experience that there is neither condemnation in Him for you over it, and that He “already knew that” but sees in you the potential He gave you and that His Love is boundless and sweet. Not until you come to experience His Love in this respect will you begin to see the sharp contrast between Jesus and the church system of man.

It’s “IN JESUS’ LOVE” that you will first come to see your own lack of worth, and begin to understand the dimension of your own weaknesses and short-comings—**this is step one**. And the blessedness is in finding His Love is constant and He is very aware of your sin nature but without condemning you at all.

STEP 2: JESUS HAS THE ANSWERS!

Now you understand what step one is. In the next step you will learn that while by His Spirit you will come to see and understand the source of your own troubles, that you in your self have NO answers, only He does!

SEEKING JESUS

“THE LORD IS GOOD UNTO THEM THAT WAIT FOR HIM, TO THE SOUL THAT SEEKETH HIM.” (Lam. 3:35).

This Scripture is drawn out at this point because it clearly speaks of the “HOW” of overcoming the sin nature: SEEK HIM with PATIENCE. And implied in this Scripture is ENDURING PATIENCE in SEEKING THE LORD.

The previous sketch shows a Christian behind bars, in a prison and that prison of man’s system is OUTWARD APPEARANCE It is identical in principle to the modern penal system, and works as well as it does.

OPPORTUNITY & THE THIEF

If we can liken the sin nature we all have to say a THIEF—the society arrests the thief, sends the thief

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to jail to reform him. But in truth, what really happens is that the OPPORTUNITY the thief has to steal is removed, he is enclosed in a cage of steel and brick. The thief is given a uniform, is compelled to follow daily rigors, various disciplines designed to re-structure his behavioral patterns. But, in large part, little is ever done on the INNER MAN but much is done on the OUTER MAN. Once his time is up and he is set free, the vast majority of thieves, once having the OPPORTUNITY will steal again, once he is free to steal. Nothing has really changed.

The church system of man does the same. Individuality is suppressed in favor of local codes of morality and ethics and we are constrained by a variety of activities to live out a RIGHTEOUS APPEARANCE, much like the daily rigors of prison life—we conform to a dress code like a convict's uniform as this becomes an outward symbol of righteous appearance.

Any of us, having OPPORTUNITY and facing a strong temptation, will too readily cave into the sin nature—telling us that in fact we lack power over that sin nature. Is the answer in a church prison system?

It is in this terrible environment that many of God's children are trapped, and when they slip they may repent, but try and escape what's in them by hiding behind the prison bars. This in turn drives many to do GOOD WORKS and that revives the "earning heaven by works" doctrine that so subtly has an almost invisible hold on churchgoers. In trying to compensate for a sin nature they cannot control or get power to overcome, they are moved by self-condemnation to justify themselves in 'good works'.

How does Jesus see them? With love, compassion, concern—for many truly desire to be free only no one around them knows how, or is willing to admit the commonness of the problem.

LETTING GO vs. HOLDING ON

The answer is in JESUS CHRIST, for He has the power to overcome. More, He has already overcome what we cannot. What's involved is LETTING GO and letting God set us free of what we cannot break free of ourselves. The only way we can come to the place where we "LET GO AND LET GOD" is out of a real living relationship with Jesus, where we Know Him and have learned to truly Trust Him more than ourselves. That is a process, a transition and it takes time.

We have all been so taught to HOLD ON that we can only LET GO by stages, but the good news is that Jesus is not pushing us or rushing us, only we do.

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One of the blessed purposes of drawing close to Jesus by the Spirit, and abiding in His Love, is that here in Him, we are totally free of all condemnation, of all guilt, of all fear—simply resting in His Love heals us in deep ways we cannot begin to see at first, we are refreshed and find a growing freedom in and out of Him from all the old sin nature and a power to overcome unlike we ever before knew.

When in Jesus' presence I was overwhelmed by an awareness of unworth, of being sinful and all messed-up; but how gentle He was, without a word Jesus made it plain He knew me, what I was and what I was not but that above all He loved me, He forgave me, He would never turn from me.

THE EFFECT OF JESUS' LOVE

What effect did Jesus' Love have on me?

In His Love, I began to receive without fear of condemnation, and I found it so wonderfully sweet to be able to talk to Him who knew everything about me, I did not have to justify myself or explain anything. That was when my sin nature began to fall away, in that Love of Jesus it became more and more apparent to me that He was seeing me as He had given me the potential of being in Him, a son of God, His brother, His friend. Then, a time later, I encountered the church system of man.

Here, I found myself in a battlefield where accusation, condemnation, judgments, flashed back and forth like machine gun fire in a war—Love would emerge briefly while all sides were reloading. When I became the target of day, barrages or accusation would come relentlessly, and in a time I realized that the actual effect was to create in me inclinations to sin I never had.

Man's system is like a tar pit in which all are stuck, when Jesus began to draw me out, those in the tar reached out to pull me back in. I began to see and understand what Paul the Apostle meant when he referred to those who hated their freedom in Christ and how they sought to re-bind those who were being set free in Christ.

THE TRANSITION

When you begin to make the transition from man's system of righteousness to putting on the righteousness of Christ, you will have the GRACE of God to cover you for in that transition, you will make mistakes but you need to realize that the Grace of God is given to cover you in that time, until you can make the transition.

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That the Church is not what it should be today, will make it difficult and trialsome, for men will spy out your freedom in Christ and look for, wait for, the slightest error in you to level condemnations, to drive fear into you, to drive you away from Christ and back to man.

THE PROBLEM OF REDIRECTION

Many leave the church prison system, then fall trap to their sin nature, and for want of a real relationship with Jesus elect to return to the prison as the only way to overcome the problem, but it's never overcome. It is merely contained and then redirected.

Redirected? In the Church today, accusation, condemnation, gossip, lies, hatred, strife, divisions, tumults, and more flourish to the extent that it becomes obvious this suppressed sin nature is merely redirected and emerges in other ways. When the unsaved, those outside the church system, can so easily and rightly define the hypocrisy in the Church (and I have heard if from too many unsaved over the years) tells me that it is a widespread condition.

The wave of liberalism in the church today has it's foundation in this. When we see portions of the church system of man attempting to justify the homosexual in the Church as an acceptable life style, what we are really seeing is an open admission that there is no power in the church system to set men and women free of this specific sin nature. And I've heard from ministers the most unexpected comment, whereby they would resist praying for the sick, lest they be healed and cause a controversy. So in come cases, it's not so much that they do not know where the answer lies, but that they have the keys to the kingdom but won't enter in, or let anyone else either.

I present this subject, not as an open criticism of the church system but as blunt observation of what's evident. It is a tragic condition, much of it because men just do not know what they are doing, and some because they do know what they are doing. But I have no leading to search out the nature of it past seeing this and am led to make this observation.

FAITH vs. BELIEF

The church system of man is powerless because they have not learned to look to or to truly Trust Jesus Christ in all things, for all things. Those who openly state their Faith in Christ with resolve, often fail to obtain or appropriate the desires of their hearts. They do not realize that the mere expression of Faith is "BELIEF" not faith, and while it has a power it is limited by itself is hollow for anything, any doctrine apart from Jesus is lastly a dead letter, and APPROPRIATION speaks of a relationship with Jesus Himself, who is the source of all things.

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APPEARANCE: TWO MAJOR POINTS

1. REALIZATION OF YOUR OWN SIN NATURE

We are, each of us, products of this church system in many ways that we hardly can understand at first. As we draw close to Jesus, we begin to be set free of the artificial restraints of the 'system' and the inner sin-nature begins to emerge. When Scripture speaks of the Saints being refined like gold, it speaks of fire bubbling out the impurities, and as you draw closer to Jesus, His Love and Light has that effect, the effect of FIRE, and so what's impure in us emerges to the surface. What emerges is the sin nature. If you never realize you had it, in a time you will find out you do.

I state this, this being my experience, that when it happens the first thing one thinks of is running to prison to be safe. At this point we need to carefully search just who we truly Trust in, Jesus or man! We will always face the decision of either going through the fire of refinement or turning back and away from Jesus. Like the three Hebrew men who put their Trust in the Lord and were then thrown bound into the fiery furnace—the Lord stood with them and the fire only burned off their “bonds”. Most when facing the furnace fires, without understanding, decide to worship the false god as the safest route but perhaps the worst route to go, is to go into the fire without really Trusting in the Lord. That's why a real living relationship is so important, for in and out of it, you learn and experience His faithfulness, His unending, unfailing love. Without having that, one cannot endure.

2. INNER CHANGE

As you draw closer to Jesus, by the Spirit, a deep inner change will begin in you, one you will hardly see but others will and you will face envy, hatred and accusation. You cannot help being hurt, but you must not join the frenzy of returning blow-for-blow. Ever in prayer, you need practice and do as Scripture requires: forgive, pray and bless. The overriding thing to remember here is: EVER LOOK TO JESUS AND HIS LOVE!

God Bless,

Chuck-JOHNEL