



Changing an Angel Into a Devil

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Lucifer was once an honored angel, a cherub. He was perfect in beauty, full of wisdom, and was admitted to the holy mountain of God, where he walked in the midst of the stones of fire. He was in Eden, the garden of God, of which the one on earth was evidently a copy. His ways were perfect, and God gave him the work of "covering," and also anointed him.

But Lucifer was not satisfied. He was envious of God. he became lifted up because of his beauty; he corrupted his wisdom because of his brightness, and decided upon a course which he hoped would make him equal to God. He went so far that he said, "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God."

ENVY

Envy is closely related to discontent. The envious man is a discontented man. Note the company that envy keeps: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; . . . envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:13-21.

It was because Joseph's "brethren envied him" that they, "moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." Genesis 37:11; Acts 7:3. It was because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "envied Moses" that they were swallowed up as the earth opened, and "a fire was kindled in their company." Psalm 106: 16, 18. It was because the "Jews which believed not" were "moved with envy" that they tried to kill Paul. Acts 17:5. It was because the chief priests were envious of Christ that they attempted to kill Him. Even "Pilate . . . knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy." Mark 15:9, 10.

"Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." James 3:16. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men!" 1 Corinthians 3:3. Those who at last are given "over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," are such as are "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, . . . who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Romans 1:28-32.

"They which commit such things are worthy of death." These are solemn words. To be envious does not seem a great sin to some, but in the sight of God it is counted worthy of death. Envy played a large part in Lucifers fall; envy raised up rebellion against Moses; envy sold Joseph into Egypt; envy attempted to kill Paul; envy gave Jesus to be crucified. With such a record it is well to heed the admonition of the apostle Peter and lay aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." 1 Peter 2:1.

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No man is safe from this sin until he has learned to rejoice in the success of others. If there is jealousy in the heart, if there is envy when others are spoken well of, there is danger. The musician who cannot bear to have another musician praised, is of small caliber, however great his name. The scientist who is illiberal in his estimate of the accomplishment of other scientists is unworthy of the name. The preacher who is jealous of the success of others and fails to give them due credit for work done, is not fit for the kingdom. God loves the man who is willing to work, and work hard, without thinking of the reward. There are some who are not even willing to shut a door without pay. Malachi 1:10. Such do not have the spirit of Christ.

Although discontent and envy are related, they are not identical. Discontent is a lack of satisfaction with oneself or one's own conditions, unrest in the mind. Envy has reference to one's feeling toward another, because of his superior success or endowments or possessions, and generally issues in resentment and grudge. The two words are interactive: envy breeds discontent and dissatisfaction, and in turn discontent breeds envy. Discontent may possibly exist without envy, but envy almost surely leads to discontent.

DISCONTENT

Some might hesitate to call discontent sin. Yet few sin have a more sinister nature and are the cause of more misery. Discontent gives a distorted view of life and events, sours the disposition, and causes irritation and evil thoughts. It finds its sole consolation in having others share its misery and gloomy outlook. It is a stranger to love, and is antithetical to faith and hope. Like misery, it loves company; in fact, misery and discontent are nearly synonymous.

Discontent is mostly a state of mind. A person may be entirely satisfied with his lot; he may not be in want in any way; but suddenly he discovers that someone else has what he has not, and immediately he becomes dissatisfied. As he broods over the matter he becomes convinced that he has been ill treated, that someone is against him, and after a while the situation becomes intolerable to him and he feels that he can stand it no longer. He is convinced that he is right and that in taking steps to rectify the alleged injustice he is merely doing his little share in establishing justice in the earth. Had he the gift to see himself as others see him, he would know that his motives are not as pure as he would have them appear, that envy and jealousy play a large part in his feelings, that evil thoughts and evil words and works have resulted, and that a residue of bitterness remains that is not from God.

Christ considered the matter of discontent of such importance that He devoted a parable to it. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered

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one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny! Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own! Is thine eye evil, because I am good! So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Matthew 20:1-16.

Some who read this parable are puzzled as to its meaning. They are doubtful that the householder did right. Should not men who work long hours have more pay than those who work only a short time! They are inclined to believe that the men had just cause for complaint. Such fail to get the lesson which Christ was attempting to teach.

The householder had agreed with the men who were hired early in the day that they should have a penny each. A mutually satisfactory arrangement had been reached, and the men were presumably satisfied, as a penny was the usual pay in those times for a day's work. They labored all day without complaint, expecting to get their penny when the day was done. They would doubtless have been satisfied with their bargain had it not happened that those who had labored only a short time were paid off first and given a penny for their work. When the first laborers saw this they expected to get more; and when they did not they began to murmur. The householder took them aside and told them that he had done them no harm. They had agreed to work for a penny; they had received a penny, and they should be satisfied. "Is thine eye evil," the householder says, "because I am good?"

The lesson here is not that all men should have the same pay whether they work much or little. Christ's other teachings make it very plain that a man is worthy of his hire, and that the reward is to be proportionate to the effort put forth. The lesson is rather that a man is to abide by the bargain he has made, and not whine; and that it is none of his concern if others are treated better than he, or get more pay.

This is not an easy lesson to learn. Much of our discontent arises, not from any injustice done as such, but because we have discovered that others have more than we, or we think they are treated better. Immediately our complaints begin. After the resurrection Jesus had a talk with Peter, and then asked him to follow Him. Peter did so, but noticed that John followed also. Peter did not like this, and said as much to Jesus. The rebuke which Peter received, he did not forget soon; nor should we. "Jesus saith unto Him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee! follow thou me." John 21:22.

"What is that to thee?" In other words, is that any of your affair? How often we choose to make that out business with which we have nothing to do! It would be well if we could learn to attend to our own affairs, and let others' alone. We would be better off; and so would they.

Once some soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked him what they should do. He answered, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Luke 3:14. The soldiers did not get a large wage. They therefore used other means, at times unlawful, to increase their income. John's advice was that they do violence to no man and accuse none falsely, but be content with their wages.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Tim. 6:6. Discontentment is a great loss. It is hard—shall we say impossible—to be discontented and be a Christian. Discontent leads to gloominess, darkness, discouragement. It leads to jealousy, evil thoughts, and murmurings. It has its roots in covetousness and evil surmisings. It is weariness to the bones, and saps the vitality of Christian experience. It is the first step in a long list of evils that may lead a man far from where he intended to go in the first place.

On the other hand, how beautiful is contentment! A contented soul is thankful, whereas a discontented soul is unthankful and has forgotten the many mercies of the Lord. We all need to encourage the

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virtue of thankfulness. We should be neither unthankful nor unholy, both of which the discontented person is likely to be.

DIVINE DISCONTENT

To this philosophy some may object, and ask, "Does not a Christian have a right to make a complaint and to attempt to have a wrong adjusted! To this we answer that as a citizen he has the same right as any other citizen, and that not only has he a right, but at times it is his duty to make every possible effort to have an injustice corrected. As a Christian, however, he must be careful lest his attempt to right matters centers about himself only. When others are having a hard time, when others are discriminated against, is he as anxious to have their cases heard as he is to have his own! Or is he merely working for selfish interests and letting others take care of themselves! For a Christian these are vital matters. Unless he can show that he has appeared as often in the defense of others as he has for himself, it would be well for him to examine his motives. No Christian looks out for himself alone. The golden rule has a higher aim.

It may be well to state, however, that there is such a thing as proper discontent, or, as it is sometimes called, divine discontent. This discontent however, is as far removed from the ordinary discontent as heaven is from earth. We are to be content with such things as we *have*, but we are never to be content with what we *are*. Higher, ever higher, must be the aim of the Christian. He must never rest satisfied with present attainments. As soon as he has reached one goal he must set for himself a higher one. As soon as he has won one victory he must plan for a still more aggressive campaign. He must ever press forward to the mark which Christ has set for him. Never must he rest, day or night, if he would perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This divine discontent is commendable in the sight of God. And yet, how men have turned things upside down! They are satisfied with themselves and discontented with almost everything else. Such a state is dangerous, even fatal. We need to pray God to arouse us from our lethargy. Discontent was one of the first sins in heaven.

PRIDE

Pride is one of the subtlest of sins. By many it is looked upon with indulgence, and it is tolerated in the church. Some influential church members are afflicted with it, and consider it a badge of distinction. The Pharisees of old were proud of their pride. So are the Pharisees of today.

Pride is a sin most offensive to God and hard to eradicate from the life. It was one of the causes of the downfall of Lucifer, and it has lost none of its potency. It poisons every good word and work, and makes of no effect deeds of mercy which might otherwise be commendable. It is closely related to hypocrisy, and often cannot be differentiated from it.

Pride is inordinate self-esteem, conceit, egotism, haughtiness, vanity, arrogance, disdain, lordliness. It is defined as the high esteem one has for oneself because of some fancied or real superiority of person, possession, or achievements, and is ordinarily accompanied by a desire for public notice, approval, or praise. The excessive desire for public notice led the Pharisees of old to stand on the street corners to be seen of men, pretending to pray. The same desire to be noticed leads some preachers to perform antics in the pulpit, and politicians to "play to the gallery, and it is even appealed to in raising money for otherwise worthy purposes.

PRIDE – THE PARABLE

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is well known. "He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke 18:9-14.

The parable was spoken for such as thought that "they were righteous, and despised others." It is impossible for a person to exalt himself without comparing himself to others and concluding that he is better than they. This is what the Pharisees did. They considered themselves righteous and despised others.

In the parable the Pharisee informed God about himself, and told Him how good he was; He did not ask God for anything, and he did not receive anything. He was content with conveying certain information to God which he felt He should have. Having done this, he departed, his work being done. God now knew who he was and what he had done, knew him to be a worthy man, and though he did not need anything at this time, it was well for God to have him in mind.

How different was the humble publican! He did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. He simply uttered the words, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "I tell you," Christ said, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Some theologians lay much stress on the theory of justification. In their anxiety to comprehend the subject adequately, they pursue a panting Greek verb from Dan to Beersheba. Conjugations and tenses, dictionaries and lexicons, ancient and modern usages, commentaries and sources from alpha to omega, are marshaled to prove a moot point; and even then the wise men do not always agree.

What could be simpler than Christ's teaching on justification? The publican doubtless knew little of theology, but he prayed humbly that God would be merciful to him; and he went down to his house justified. Justification is just that simple. Jesus taught no difficult or involved theology.

By way of contrast, note what Christ said of the scribes, "He said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation." Mark 12:38-40.

"These shall receive greater damnation." Christ had little patience with those who loved to have the pre-eminence. They might stand high in the nation and in the church. But Jesus did not so place them.

PRIDE THE LESSON

Christ's disciples were not exempt from the desire to have a high place. The Gospels mention several occasions on which there was dispute as to who should be the greatest. One such occurrence is recorded in Mark 9:33-35: "He came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way! But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Jesus had His own way of dealing with such as wished to "show off." Note this incident. Once when Jesus had fed the five thousand in the wilderness, He sent the disciples away in the boat, and He went up into the

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mountain to pray. While He was praying a storm arose, and the twelve had a hard time rowing. Toward morning Jesus came walking to them on the water. The disciples were troubled, and thought Him to be a spirit. Jesus soon calmed them, and came near the boat. Peter conceived a scheme and cried out, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Matthew 14:28.

There was no need for this. He could just as well have waited for the Lord to come to the boat, but for some reason he decided that he would like to walk on the water. And Jesus humored him. He could have told Peter to stay in the boat. But Jesus permitted him to come, and Peter started out valiantly. We suppose that it was with some hesitancy that he first put his foot on the water; but the water bore him up and Peter walked toward Jesus. It must have been a proud and triumphant Peter who thus was permitted to go to his Lord across the surging billows.

Years ago we read a comment on this in a little volume written by a devout Christian. It gave an almost humorous slant to this incident. As Peter walked toward Jesus he was thinking of the men back in the boat, and yielded to the very human temptation to look around to see whether they were watching him and admiring the ease with which he could walk on the billows. Had he come back without any mishap, the other disciples would never have heard the last of Peter's exploit. He would continually have talked of the time when he walked on the water—at least until he was thoroughly converted. He would triumphantly have asked the others whether they could do the same.

But in turning to look at the men in the boat Peter had to take his eyes off Jesus. Immediately he sank down. When Peter was helped back into the boat he was a wet and chastened Peter. Apparently he never mentioned the incident again. He had learned his lesson. May it not have been for this purpose that Jesus let him walk on the water! May it not be for the same reason that certain things happen to us! Peter is not the only one who needs a lesson of this kind. Too many of us are willing to be admired.

We should not forget that pride was one of the sins that caused the fall of Lucifer. It was the beginning of which the end was rebellion. We need to watch every step we take, lest pride come into the heart.

"Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Proverbs 16:5. "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Peter 5:5. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" Proverbs 16:18. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" Luke 14:11. We are counseled, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." 1 Peter 5:6. God "shall save the humble person" Job 22:29. With these texts in mind let all serve God with humility, and esteem others better than themselves. This is true Christianity.

SELFISHNESS

Most people like to have their own way. It is an almost universal trait. Yet all should know that it is not given to anyone to have his way most or even much of the time. It is one of the laws of life that this is not to be.

What child is there who does not plan to do just as he pleases when he grows up! While children are small they are compelled by their elders to do many things that they do not like to do. They promise themselves that when they grow up things will be different. They are not going to be ordered around all their lives. They feel that their parents, older brothers and sisters, teachers—everybody—have conspired to make life miserable for them. They are wishing for the time to come when they will be independent of all these. Then they will do as they please.

But alas, they soon find out that the time never comes when they can have their own way. They might finish school and have no more teachers to annoy them; they may establish their own home to get away

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from parental discipline; they may establish their own business, so as to be independent. But all is of no avail. They still cannot have their own way. Life does not permit them.

Kings do not have their own way. Presidents do not. Even dictators have their difficulties. Only God, says one, has His own way. But God does not have His own way. Probably He has His way less often than anyone else. Sin has come in. Men resist God. He does not have His way with us. In very few lives, in fact, does He rule. No, God does not have His way. If He did, sin and death would be no more, and many things on this earth would be different.

It is one of the "given" things of life that we are not to have our own way. Yet all are struggling to have it. Nations, statesmen, individuals—all are engaged in a futile struggle for supremacy, all trying to get their way, when a little reflection should make it clear that they are attempting the impossible, for there are too many conflicting interests. We might as well learn to adjust ourselves to the inevitable, and we would be much happier for it.

Life is a matter of adjustment. We are here on earth to learn to adjust ourselves. He who learns it well learns to live. He who refuses to adjust himself thereby proclaims himself unfit to associate with others. If we are to live together in peace and harmony in this world or in the world to come, we must learn to get along with others and give them due respect. Only thus is a harmonious and successful life possible. This is one of the chief lessons of life, and only as and when we learn it are we ready for the life to come.

GOD RUNS A RISK

From a merely human viewpoint it seems that God is running a terrific risk in attempting to save humanity. How can He be sure that if He takes a million or two million people to heaven, or a billion or two, they will live together in harmony and peace! Men are not doing it here. Christians are not doing it. There is constant struggle and strife, and the future does not hold out hope for anything better. If God gives men eternal life, so that they will never die, will they not have a longer time to hatch out their evil plans, and will not this make matters worse!

But, says one, will not all the people who are saved be good people! If so, there will be no danger of any kind, and God run no risk. This is just the problem. How can God be sure that all the people He selects will stay good! How can He be sure that throughout the long eternity sin will never again occur! This is a vital question, for no one has any inclination to repeat the history of this earth with all its sorrow and misery. When sin is ended we want it to be ended forever.

We are likely to think that this is God's problem, not ours. And this is true. But we are vitally interested in it, nevertheless, for if a rebellion should ever start again in heaven or on earth, we would suffer with the rest. For this reason we are, should be, greatly interested in the kind of people who are to be saved. If God permits any to get to heaven who are not fit, all will suffer. Although we cannot be as interested as God is, we should be vitally concerned, for we have much at stake.

It is evident that if any are saved who have the least taint of sin, there is danger of the infection's spreading. Sin is like leprosy or cancer. If the least bit of diseased tissue is left in the body, the danger of recurrence is ever present. The only safety is to have all offending matter removed. Even then there must be great carefulness.

Selfishness is one of the deep roots of sin. There are many degrees of it, and its complete eradication is not easy. In its milder forms it appears quite innocent, and some are inclined to believe that it should not be entirely rooted out. They seem to think that a certain amount of selfishness is necessary for existence, and that if it is not carried to extreme, it serves a good purpose. It may be well to explore this subject.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

When Jesus was asked which was the great commandment in the law, He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40.

Christ in these words sets forth the law of His kingdom. We are not only to love God; we are to love our fellow men, and we are to love them as ourselves. God is no respecter of persons. His gifts are for all alike. It would not conform with His nature to favor some and neglect others. There must be absolute impartiality. This is the law, and the only law that will ensure peace and happiness.

This law of love destroys all selfishness. If all loved their neighbors, there would be no need unsupplied, for the good Lord has provided for the wants of all His creatures, and it is only when some take more than their share, and hoard it, or fail to distribute it, that want occurs.

The law of the kingdom is the law of love. Love never fails. It thinks no evil, it reports no evil. On the other hand, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise—and is a situation conceivable in which these are entirely absent—it will think of these things. Love will share. It will do more. It will give all. This is what God did. This is what Christ did. God withheld nothing. Christ withheld nothing. And if God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!" Romans 8:32. God could do no more. When He gave His Son He gave all.

Unselfishness is the law of heaven. And unselfishness means more than sharing with others for the sake of a future reward, or for the purpose of being seen of men, or even with the hope of getting recompense at some later time from the person befriended. Note the following rather hard doctrine, as some would call it: "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:12-14.

Feasts of this kind are not very popular or common. Although we understand that the gospel does not forbid the calling together of friends and neighbors for social occasions—rather we believe that Christ encouraged this and Himself attended such gatherings—we are convinced that the scripture quoted has its application. We believe that it is not enough, not a fulfillment of this command, merely to contribute a sum of money to provide a feast for the more unfortunate once or twice a year. The gospel is more personal than that. It requires individual service. Even the Old Testament demanded personal application of religion. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen! to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke! Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house! when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh!" Isaiah 58:6, 7.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

It was after a certain lawyer had asked Jesus concerning eternal life and had received the answer that he must love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, that Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan.

This well-known parable reads as follows: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on

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the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves! And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Luke 10:30-37.

In this parable Jesus tells us that our neighbor is not merely the man who lives next door, or one of our relatives, or a member of the same church, or even a citizen of our own country. He may be an entire stranger to us. We may not know his name, and it may be only a chance meeting that brings us together. The one thing that matters is that there is a need, and that we may be able to help. The good Samaritan took the whole burden upon himself. He did not unload the unfortunate man on the innkeeper. He paid for his immediate care and arranged for the future. He could have done no more had it been one of his friends.

It would have been kind of the Samaritan if he had put the man on his beast and taken him to the inn for others to take care of. It was doing more than could be expected of him when the Samaritan provided for the man as he did, and promised to pay any further charges incurred. Christ doubtless gave this direction to the parable to show us what He considers real Christianity to be. The Christian will not spare himself. He will do all that he can, and then ask whether there is any more he can do.

The Samaritan could have passed by on the other side as did the priest and the Levite. He could have argued that probably the robbers were still in the neighborhood, and that it was dangerous to stop. He could have said that the man was not of his nationality but of a nation that hated Samaritans, and that the wounded man would almost certainly not stop to help a Samaritan if the roles were reversed. He could have reasoned that his ministrations would not be appreciated, that it would greatly inconvenience him to stop to minister to the victim, and that he did not care to get mixed up in the mess. All this he could have reasoned, but he did not. All he saw was a man who needed help, and he extended it to him. That, Christ says, is Christianity.

SELFISHNESS IS THE ESSENCE OF SIN

It would be hard to conceive of less thought of self and of more thought for others than is revealed in this parable. The fact that the man was a Samaritan is important for the reason that he had every ground for believing that the wounded man, being a Jew, hated Samaritans and would have nothing to do with them. (John 4:9.) Despite this the Samaritan did all that he could for the Jew. He did for an enemy all that he would or could do for a friend. We have no record that the Samaritan received any thanks for what he did.

Selfishness is self-love. It puts self before others. As such it is the very opposite of Christianity. Theologians generally hold that sin in its essential nature is selfishness. If love of God is Christianity, love of self must be anti-Christianity. Selfishness is the very essence of sin.

We believe that it can be shown that selfishness is one of the chief roots in all sin, perhaps the chief one. An examination of the Ten Commandments reveals that the transgression of them is rooted in selfishness. It is the one underlying principle that explains all violation of law. It is clearer in some violations than in others, but it is an essential principle in all. There is no such thing as disinterested sin. A man may be possessed of an evil spirit, and he may also be possessed of himself; and all men are thus possessed to a greater or a lesser degree.

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If we understood better the heinous nature of selfishness, we would shun its first manifestation. Selfishness is a state of the heart and is not always shown in outward acts. In fact, it is possible for a person to do what outwardly appears to be a generous deed, but inwardly be contaminated with the worst kind of selfishness.

The man who contributes money or services to a political campaign and expects to be reimbursed in some way, is not generous. The man who serves God or contributes to His cause for the purpose of being saved is not actuated by pure motives. The man who does right because it pays, or who is honest because it is the best policy, has yet something to learn of Christian ethics. In fact, as we survey fields of Christian activity we wonder how much is done without ulterior motives, and whether selfishness is not connected with many of our apparently generous endeavors.

We must be careful, however, lest our reasoning bring us to the conclusion that all men are actuated by unworthy motives, and we are thus led to take the same position which Satan took when he accused Job of serving God for selfish advantage. There are many who worship God out of a pure heart, who are honest and sincere, and whose motives are unquestioned. This we not only admit but are glad to state. It is well for all of us, however, to adjudge out own motives, lest we mix selfishness with the pure gold of obedience. God wants us to serve Him because it is right, not for selfish advantage. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

COVETOUSNESS

The commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," was the one which brought Paul to a consideration of the fact that the law condemned the thoughts of the heart as well as the outward act. "I had not known lust," he says, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7. By this Paul does not mean that he had not known lust as such, but rather that he had not known lust as sin. He knew that immorality was sin, but now it was revealed to him that the law went deeper than the outward act, and that coveting was sin also. This made an entire change in his conception of the law's demand. He now knew that the law dealt with the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Covetousness has by some been called the mother of sin. The desire to sin first arises in the heart before it finds expression in the act. It is this first desire that needs to be watched, or it will blossom into full-blown sin.

For this reason covetousness is justly counted one of the worst sin in the whole category of transgressions, even though it does not appear as bad as some other sin. It should be remembered, however, that small rattlesnakes are also snakes, and that they grow into bigger ones. It is well to watch the first outcroppings of covetousness and quench every unlawful desire, lest a fire be started that cannot be put out.

Against this sin Christ warned most earnestly. "He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12:15.

Beware of covetousness. It may look innocent and appear to do little harm. But it poisons the very wellspring of life and taints every action.

COVETOUSNESS – A PARABLE

To impress upon men the wickedness of covetousness, Christ spoke this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits! And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns,

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and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided! So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21.

The rich man did not murder anyone; he did not reproach the name of God; he did not violate the Sabbath. He merely decided to build bigger barns in which to store his abundant harvest. Judged by any human standard of conduct, he was not a wicked man. He would not have been judged by a jury of his fellow citizens as having done anything reprehensible. They would have thought him a prudent man who provided for the future. He was one of the "substantial" citizens. Why should any complaint be lodged against him! He was erecting good buildings and deserved commendation for his enterprise.

Apparently it did not occur to the rich man that he was his brother's keeper. It did not enter his mind to share with those who did not have much of this world's goods. He had no conception of his responsibility to others. He thought only of self.

The rich man did not consider that the abundance of his harvest presented an opportunity to help others. To him it only presented a problem of how to take care of the abundance. "What shall I do," he said, "because I have no room where to bestow my fruits!" His dilemma could easily have been solved had he considered himself a steward instead of the owner. God had given him the harvest, but he felt no obligation to his fellow men. He did not want to share with others what God had given him. He was intent on enjoying himself for years to come. He would take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Then came the summons. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided!" Had he shared with others, had he given to the poor, he would have been rich toward God, and would have had a treasure in heaven. Now he had nothing. He had not been wise. He was a fool.

Christ knew the evil of covetousness. He had seen it develop in Lucifer until it culminated in a desire to be like God and a readiness to do anything to reach the coveted goal. Beware of covetousness, He warned. It may seem innocent, but its end is death.

PHARISAIC COVETOUSNESS

The Pharisees made a great show of their religion. For pretense they made long prayers, and were willing to compass sea and land to make one proselyte. They loved the uppermost seats at the feasts, and were very punctilious about ceremonial observances. At the same time they devoured widow's houses, omitted the weightier matters of the law, and "within" were "full of extortion and excess." Matthew 23:25. It was to them especially that these words were addressed: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:13-15.

The Pharisees heard these things and derided the Master. Were they not serving God! The whole nation could testify to that fact. They were very religious. Some of them fasted twice in the week, all of them made long prayers, and they were careful about their Temple attendance. The fact that they did these things to be seen of men did not seem to disturb them. They might take some advantage of widows, but when Christ said that they were full of extortion and excess, He was going too far. And when He added that "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God," they could but

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deride Him. They felt that they were not only highly esteemed among men but also highly esteemed of God, that it was Christ who needed to revise His estimate of values, not they.

Thus is covetousness deceitful. The Pharisees were not wicked men in the ordinary sense. They were highly religious, and probably not bad morally. They attended church, and did many commendable things. But when Christ saw the covetousness which possessed them He could not fail to warn them that this one trait nullified all the good they could otherwise do. It was as poison that contaminated every otherwise worthy endeavor.

This lust for power and place has invaded the church. Men and armies have fought to uphold one or the other side in a religious controversy. Men have vied with one another for the highest spiritual honors till we find those who are willing to be worshiped, who even sit in the temple of God, showing themselves that they are God. Strife for the high place was common among the disciples of Christ's day. He rebuked them for this. He does the same today.

Covetousness among individuals is not confined to misers and Pharisees. Many others are affected by it in a smaller or larger degree. Few are willing to admit that they have any responsibility beyond their immediate relatives or neighborhood. To be self-centered, to think mostly or only of self, is a common human trait. Of this we are to beware.

Covetousness leads to stealing, to dishonesty of all kinds, to defalcations, to marital difficulties. There are few fields, indeed, into which covetousness does not enter. It is a sin that affects church members and worldlings alike. And as it is one of the "respectable" sin, it is the more dangerous. It contributed much to Lucifer's fall. It is still a vital factor in many other falls.

COVETOUSNESS – THE CONCLUSION DRAWN

It is not money or wealth only that men covet. Many are willing to sell their souls for position, for plaudit, for power. It is the overweening ambition of men that is causing so much evil and oppression in the world today. Nations have been plunged into war, millions have been killed, billions in property have been destroyed to feed the ambition of a few men. And the end is not yet.

HATRED AND LYING

Christ stated that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and also a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44.) This places these two sins as primary sins. Murder has its beginning in the heart, in hatred and anger. (Matthew 5:21-23.) It is the heart, therefore, that needs to be guarded, lest evil and wicked thoughts, anger and hatred, creep in.

It is informative to be told by Christ that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. We doubt that the angels understood this when Lucifer first made his advances to them and tried to persuade them to join him in rebellion. From Christ's statement it appears that Satan had thought the matter through and was willing to go to any length that promised success, even murder. That such thoughts really possessed him, Satan showed at Calvary. There he hanged the Son of God on the tree, after cruelly scourging Him. This demonstrates how far sin will carry an individual after he begins to yield. The end is not always predictable from the beginning.

Satan "abode not in the truth." God is truth, and Lucifer was with God. But he did not abide in the truth. He was not honest. He said and did that which was not true. He was deceitful. On this ground God could not meet him, for God cannot lie. Satan could use weapons which God could not.

Thus it has always been and always will be, till sin shall be no more. It is marvelous how untruth can be made to appear as truth by those who are expert in falsification. How often we have heard stories told

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that sounded plausible, whereas we knew that there was hardly a word of truth in them. And apparently some can tell a story often enough to believe it themselves, and to appear hurt when others do not. (2 Thessalonians 2:11.) This illustrates the deceitfulness of lying, and constitutes a mighty argument for truth.

It is well not only to tell and to live the truth but to abide in it. It is of little use to have a profession of religion if those who know us best are not convinced of our honesty of intention. Abiding in the truth is not merely telling the truth. It is living in an atmosphere of honesty that will not permit of any pretense, hypocrisy, or extravagance. God wants His people to be honest. Nothing else will do.