

The Father of Lights sheds every wonderful blessing upon His Creation, but especially making us a special kind of firstfruits of all His creatures. Therefore we have some “wherefore’s” that follow from this momentous fact. This new life compels attitudes and actions befitting it.

First, since we are not the Source of all Wisdom, we are to humbly be swift to hear, slow to speak and above all, certainly, slow to wrath. Wrath is not simply anger but a furious explosion of rage with all the passion a being can muster. Only God can rightly and safely execute wrath. And He does and will upon occasion, but even these occasions are few and far between, perfectly warranted, focused, controlled and appropriate. His wrath works His righteousness. The wrath of man is often personally motivated for a wound received, real or imagined. Our wrath may even be righteous in the sense that a real sin has injured a loved one or an undeserving fellow creature. But God is slow to wrath and He says “vengeance is mine.”

The second wherefore is a much needed command to clean up our own lives. This is especially appropriate when tempted to judge another. Remove the rafter from our own eye before attempting to remove the mote in another’s eye. Wrath is totally out of place in one who is still engaging in filthy behavior or excessive wickedness. We should expect to see fruits that reflect the reality of a person’s repentance after a profession of salvation in Christ. God expects that.

Having new birth we are then to grow by meekly receiving the word of God that has been implanted in each of us and allow it to grow and flourish in our thinking and lives. Though not mentioned here, this growing is enabled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon our receiving the gospel and becoming saved. Paul puts it together for us.

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

As we read the scriptures we grow to think in light of it. It enables us to turn away from the wicked thoughts and conduct we once enjoyed. It changes us from the inside out. If we hear the word and don’t set out to do it there will be no benefit from it. We are no better than the Pharisees of James’ time who knew the scriptures intimately and sought to impose them religiously upon their countrymen but did not apply them to themselves. They hated Jesus because He pointed out their inconsistencies, while they could find no fault in Him.

James teaches us using an experience common to all, the mirror. It honestly tells us much we do not always like to see, so we are all too willing to let the memory of our inspection of our image lapse. We prefer an image more favorable to a self-image we have developed in our minds. But the scriptures, when held up to our lives, show what we really are in God’s sight. Yet He loves us and nurtures us

spiritually and emotionally equipping us for the walk and service for which He saved us, **the law of liberty**. The believers in Israel’s twelve tribes were all too familiar with the Law of Moses and most knew well enough no man was able to keep it. So what is this perfect Law of Liberty? It is embodied in the Lord’s statement “If ye love me keep my commandments.” Anyone continuing in it and doing it will be blessed in his deed. Note he doesn’t say “will be saved” nor “saved from eternal judgement.” He is speaking of our life, walk, conduct as believers already saved by the blood of Christ on the cross. We have therefore received the engrafted word. And we hear it (or read it) but do we promptly forget it and go our own way? If we heed it and walk in it we will be blessed and a blessing. This is true religion, not mere ceremonial observances of certain rites and rules which satisfy the flesh but doesn’t impress God. James tells us true religion is three things.

I. A consistent bridling of the tongue (more on that later in chapter three). See also 1Peter 3:10.

II. A regular overflow of respect and goodness to others less blessed than us, for example, visiting widows and orphans in their helpless need and loneliness. This includes providing food, shelter, clothing and other support as well as spiritual and emotional encouragement.

III. Keeping one’s self unspotted from the world. Whoops! What’s that doing there? My tongue is a big enough problem and finding time and energy to help others is not easy, but disengaging myself from the world, . . . ? Yet this is simple loyalty to the Lord and Savior of my soul who was crucified in and by this world. Note that the New Testament writers consistently warn against worldliness. And they are simply following Jesus’ words and lead.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world:

Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world,

2Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

1John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

And many more!