

# Man

by Dr. Manford George Gutzke

THE whole of the Bible concerns man. When it speaks of the soul, it means the soul of man. When it speaks of sin, it means the sin of man. When God became incarnate, He came in the form of man. When the Gospel is preached, it is preached to man. Salvation means the salvation of man. Resurrection means the resurrection of the body of man. The blessing of God means the blessing of God upon man.

The Bible teaches that man was created by God. Man lives in a world made by God. Man is what he is because God made him that way. What man does, matters to God. What happens to man matters to God. God wants to save man (John 3:16) from the consequences of man's sin and to eternal fellowship with God. The Bible shows how God will save man through Jesus Christ, who was God in the form of man.

The real meaning of a man is not seen by looking at the human being in himself as he is. The truth is revealed in the Bible, which shows man as he is in relation to God and His plan for all things.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . ." (Ps. 8:1).

## MAN IS IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The Bible teaches that man was created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27). As discussed in Chapter One, the Hebrew word of *image* means *shadow* and is generally translated by the English word *likeness*. Here it would help to think of a person's shadow on the ground. The shadow has a likeness to the man, but the shadow is not exactly the same as the man. The man is a great deal more than the shadow. The shadow can fall on sand, but that dark area seen on the ground remains sand. This does not mean that the man standing there is sand, but it means that the shadow on the sand is shaped in the likeness of the man.

When we make the statement that man is created in the image of God, we are saying that the Bible sets forth very definitely that there is more to a man than there is to an animal. This can be seen when we compare various things in the natural world. Think of objects such as stones. A stone has size and it has weight. When the sun shines on a stone, it gets warm; when the rain falls on it, it gets wet.

Now, let us think of trees. A tree has what a stone has. A tree has size like a stone. When the sun shines on it, the tree gets warm; and when the rain falls on it, the tree gets wet. You cannot poke your finger through a stone; you cannot poke your finger through a tree. In many ways a tree is like a stone, yet it is different. The tree can take elements into itself. It has a process going on by which it grows. It gets bigger and it can reproduce its kind. It can produce fruit. A stone cannot do that. A tree is a plant, and thus is more than a stone. It can grow, bear fruit, and reproduce itself into other trees.

Now let us move from plants to animals. Think of horses. A horse has many of the characteristics that the stone has – such as size and weight. When the sun shines on a horse, it gets hot just like a stone or a tree. The rain falls on it, and the horse gets wet the same as the stone and the tree. The horse is like a tree in that the horse can take in food. The horse can grow like a tree; however, there is more to a horse than to a tree. The horse can go places. It can move around. The horse can see. So we can see that a horse has some features that a plant does not have – just as a plant has some features that a stone does not have.

Now let us look at man. Man is in some ways like a stone. He has size and weight. When sun shines on him, he gets hot; and when rain falls on him, he gets wet. He is also like a tree in that he can eat and grow; but he is more than the tree. Now compare him with a horse. Man can move; he can look and see where he is going. He can feel things and have certain reactions to them like a horse. Many seem to think this is all there is to man; that he is just some kind of "improved" animal. But the Bible does not stop here.

Man has certain creative capacities. A man can make things different from anything that has ever been made before. Animals do not. Birds do not. The first time a robin builds a nest, it is a robin's nest; and the last time it builds a nest, it is a robin's nest. The first nest is just as good as the last. It has not learned anything in the process. It has a certain pattern that it can produce, and it produces that pattern.

Bird psychologists are unable to account for the fact that you can take a sparrow and let that sparrow hatch out in a robin's nest, so that it never sees a sparrow's nest. But when it is big enough to build a nest, it will not build a robin's nest – it will build a sparrow's nest. It will never have seen one before, but it will build a nest that is characteristic of all sparrows.

Man has the ability to change things and is akin to God in his capacity to create. His creative ability is much more limited than God's. Christian theology teaches that God created the world *out of nothing*. Man must confine himself to using the matter that God has created when he engages in any creative act. It cannot be denied, however, that man has the capacity to create, build, and make things that would be impossible for any animal to do.

No theory of evolution that considers man as having come from the animal kingdom is satisfying to the Bible. The Bible simply does not accept any such view of mankind. The Bible does not consider man as being an animal that has improved. The Bible considers man distinct and unique among the creatures of the earth. Although the image of God has been disfigured in man because of sin, it has never been wiped out. Man is the crown of God's creative acts. When the Bible says that man was created "in the image of God," it seems to point to certain ways in which man can act which are like God.

Man can be "self conscious." He knows himself as a person and can think of himself as being somebody, always the same person from the cradle to the grave. This means that man sees himself as a person who has dealings with other persons. He can plan and work for himself and his loved ones.

He feels "responsible" for what he does. Man feels he "ought" to do this, and "ought not" to do that. When he does wrong, he feels "guilty." Thus we say he has "moral responsibility."

Man can think of new things, new ways of doing things, new things to do. We say that man can be "creative" in that he can change his ways to do better than he was doing before.

Also man can take some of what he has, and give it to others who may need it. He can exercise "grace."

Man can find his greatest values in his loved ones. He can consciously deny his own desires in order to help someone else.

In all these ways we get ideas of what it means to say "Man was created in the image of God." While all these capacities can be abused to man's own hurt, they still mark him as being the highest creation of God.

"For thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Ps. 8:5).

## **MAN IS BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT**

The Bible speaks about the nature of man in two ways. Sometimes it refers to man as having body, soul and spirit. Then again it speaks of man as having body and soul. The Bible does not maintain a clear-cut distinction between these two views, but always refers to the body as being *material* and to the soul and spirit as being *spiritual*.

In telling how the world was created, the Hebrew record uses three different words. First we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." For this the word *bara*, meaning "create," is used. This word means "to bring into existence out of nothing."

The word most commonly used is *asah*, meaning "to make," which implies taking raw material and making something new out of it. But when the Bible tells about the creation of man a different word is used: the Hebrew verb *yatsar*, which means "to form or fashion." In English we read "God formed man out of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). The word *fashioned* could be used instead of *formed*. In fact, we could well say, "He built man out of the dust of the ground."

The Bible says of man, "For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). This "dust" is actually the various chemical elements that make up the physical body of man. The Bible goes on to say that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). The word *breath* is the same as the word *wind* and the same as the word *spirit*. "The breath of life" could as correctly be called "the spirit of life" or "the wind of life."

The interesting thing is that in the Greek a similar word is used in speaking about the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). In the Greek, the word *wind* and the word *spirit* are very closely related. The same is true of the word *breath*.

So what we have in the record is that God breathed into this material structure – called the body – the *breath* of life, the *spirit* of life. This could very well be the origin of the spirit of man given to him from God. We read ". . . and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Here the third word *soul* is used.

The order of the creation seems to be this: when the spirit comes from God into the body, which comes from the ground, man becomes a living soul. The word *soul* refers apparently to man's emotional consciousness, the word *spirit* to his intellectual consciousness, and the word *body* to his material being.

The devil tempted Jesus of Nazareth to make the stones into bread to feed His body. The Lord Jesus answered in this way, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). For many years I stumbled at this statement. I could understand the saying that man does not live by bread only, but I did not see how he could live by the Word of God.

My trouble was that I did not know of the spiritual aspect of man. It helped me a great deal when I found that the Greek could be understood to say "man shall *not* live by bread *only* but also by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." I now take a little liberty with that and I say to myself as I read, "man shall not live by bread only – though he does live by bread surely in the body – but also by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God spiritually." This is a way of saying man is both body and soul: as the body of the man feeds in the flesh on the things of this world, so the soul of man feeds on the Word of God.

The body and soul are both in man, but they are not of equal importance. The Lord Jesus is the one who said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). What physical thing on earth is worth as much as the soul, which is spiritual?

Keep in mind that in our culture the body is very well taken care of, and the soul is commonly neglected. One thing we must be very careful about is that we not go by popular opinion about the body and soul. The public will take care of the body but will neglect the soul. People usually take care of the bodies of their children very carefully, and neglect their souls and never worry a bit about it. That is *not* true about God. He thinks the soul is more important than the body.

## **MAN NEEDS COMMUNION WITH OTHERS**

The Bible tells us one thing about man that is easy to believe. "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Of course, most everybody will smile at first and say that is the reason all men get

married. But there is a lot more than marriage involved in this idea about man.

When the Bible says that "it is not good for man to be alone," it is saying in a very simple fashion exactly what the social scientists say when they tell us that man is a social being. Man develops normally to his greatest capacity in association with other people, and that is just the way the Bible puts it. Not only is it true that it is not good for man to be alone in any way, but it is also true that he needs to have communion and fellowship with someone who is his equal.

The story in Genesis tells us that when God saw man as He had created him and realized it was not good for man to be alone, He called all the creatures and the animals before man – that man should name them. Have you ever realized how much intellectual ability man would need to be able to name the animals? Have you ever tried to name something you have never seen before? It is not easy. Usually we name a thing we have not seen before by saying, "Give me that thing-a-ma-jig," or "that dingus you've got over there," or "whatever it is." It is an exceedingly difficult thing to give a name to anything.

In our modern time, we give names to things in scientific or functional fashion according to what a thing does – telephone, telegraph, automobile, etc. When Adam faced these creatures, he named them. This means he evaluated them; he estimated them. The Scriptures then say, "But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:20). In his estimating the animals, he did not find one that was *meet*, meaning no one that would meet him on a level that was equal to him. The companion of man needed to be equal to man to provide the fellowship and communion man needs. This is very important in trying to understand the nature of man.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2:21-22). This is language and description which baffles us, but it is not any more bewildering than the idea that He took the dust from the ground and formed man. Both descriptions go beyond anything we understand. It is quite interesting to note that when God made woman, He did not take her from man's head as if she were to rule over him. He did not take her from his feet as if he were to step on her. She was taken from his side in order that she might be his equal.

At the time Genesis was written other nations around Israel held a very low estimate of woman. Even to this day many pagan cultures treat women as if they were something less than human. Certainly woman was not considered the equal of man. The Bible, however, emphasizes that when woman was created she was equal to man.

As a matter of fact, man would not be at his best if he did not have fellowship with an equal. If a man at any time treats other people as less than himself, he is hurting himself and ruining his own experience. Just as surely as he despises other people as less than himself, he has reduced himself with those people. He can no longer be what he could have been. We need to be with people who are our equals if we are going to be what we could be.

Let us consider the matter of isolation. Have you ever seen people who live a lot to themselves for any reason? If you have seen such people, I want to ask you, don't they get to be queer? Think back on any member in our larger families – an uncle, aunt, or cousin – who for one reason or another lives off by himself or herself. Doesn't that person get to be odd? They all do. It is natural. Any of us would be queer if we were left to ourselves.

What many a man does not know is that the one thing that is keeping him from being queer is that good wife, who forever keeps harping at him about his peculiarities, and rubbing off those queer spots. As far as women are concerned, if they are left to themselves, they can become peculiar, too. Being alone is not good. Mind you, we all need fellowship with other persons.

If people are left to themselves – and as a consequence, they do not have contact with other people's minds – things happen to them in various ways. They don't talk with people; and if they do talk, they don't listen. They live to themselves. They don't read; they don't listen to the radio; they have no contact

whatsoever with other people's minds. They begin to have hallucinations and illusions. Some of these poor unfortunate people get beset with delusions until life is a misery for them. They do not have contact with other people who could knock those crazy ideas out of their minds by laughing at them or by showing how ridiculous they are. Without the benefits of fellowship with others, a human being is not normal.

If you are asked to go into the house or the room of one of these lonely people, you will often discover a certain untidiness. The argument may be raised that once in a while you will come across a woman or man who lives alone, where everything is neat and clean. But you will come to find out they do not live alone. In their minds, they have their relatives, they have their friends, and they are fixing things up for their people. Although their friends may live 500 miles away, they are keeping them in mind. Consider a person, however, who lets his mind get completely loose from other people. There will be a lost sense of values, no pride in one's appearance, and a loss of ambition. This is what we mean when we say such a person will not be normal.

Many a boy in high school who worries his teachers to death because he has neither interest nor ambition is a lonely boy. That boy is not having any personal dealings with anybody. Somehow his family is not having any association with him. He is in the same house, he eats the same food, and he sleeps in the same rooms; but somewhere, the contact with his family has been broken. It is evident that this boy has become shiftless and strange, for it is not good for a person to be alone as this boy is.

Anything which promotes good will among people from two up to two million is good. Anything that promotes or injects alienation and causes enmity and hostility is evil. No worse thing can be done to a person than to take away his friends. This can be done by gossip – the most devilish thing on earth. Through gossip, a person's status with his friends may be ruined. Shakespeare put it, "He who filches from me my good name hath robbed me of something that does not make him rich but leaves me poor indeed." Oh, yes, tremendously poor. Loneliness is man's worst fate. Nothing in the world will be so corrosive to human personality as loneliness.

It is a wonderful thing that the Gospel is a Gospel of *reconciliation*. The Lord Jesus came to people who were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34) and gave Himself to win them back to God, to bring them back into the family of God. He did this to reestablish them in communion that they might be normal. And so it works in the Gospel. The person who accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord becomes a member of the church in communion with Christ, and will never be alone again.

## **MAN MUST RULE**

The Bible says it is in God's plan for men to rule over things (Gen. 1:28). Having dominion over something is to have the right to put it here or there or to dispose of it. To rule over anything is to have the right to say what it will do and where it will go. This may seem very simple to us, but it shows something about man that is quite important.

To be able to rule, man must have the power of choice. Man can see different things to do and different ways of acting. He must be free in himself to take it or to leave it as he wishes. He must be free to decide whether to turn to the right or to the left. Unless a person is free to make choices, he will not feel he is living normally. He will experience a sense of frustration. Only as a person is able to make decisions and act upon them can he fulfill his role as a man. It is only in this way he can be at his best. This is the nature of man.

Many human beings do things largely because circumstances force them. As long as a person is doing what he does because he has to do it, he is not really living in the way originally intended for him to live. It is when he controls things that he is like a man. If he does not control – if he is being pushed from place to place, pulled by this or that, and crowded into doing things – he can never be satisfied. If man lets the things around him control and boss him, he is in for a miserable time. It is only when he manages them that he can have a feeling of fulfillment.

Everyone can apply this to his or her particular situation. The lady of the house may have only a kitchen in view. A man may have only an office in view. He must, however, "subdue the earth and have dominion over it" if he is going to be happy. If he cannot in some way manage it, if he cannot in some way have it in hand so that he can dispose of it, he will not in himself feel that he has accomplished what he can. And he will not be all that he could be.

What has been said about subduing the earth is also true about man himself. It is a very proper thing for us to recall that in our bodies we have a certain amount of the earth. I generally consider myself with over 200 pounds of it; and I go around with this day by day. For me to be at my normal best, I must take charge and control my body.

The wise man in the Book of Proverbs says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh the city" (Prov. 16:32). Paul battled to have this control over himself. He said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). This is of great importance with reference to the living of life as a whole. We must be able to control and have mastery over the things that are of this earth.

In this connection, we can understand why slavery and bondage are so distressing. There are some people not really able to do what they want to do, because they are in bondage to their own desires. Some people have certain emotions that carry them away. Others may have fanciful ideas; or still others may have habits. In any case, where there is a person who is not in himself free to choose right or wrong due to some kind of compulsion or pressure, there we find a man in distress.

Man is happiest when he is in a position to respond to God's command and rule over the earth. Part of man's trouble comes when he tries to rule over his fellow man. Nothing in the Bible tells him that he should do that, and yet this tendency is in man all the time. He is trying to rule somebody else. This is related to the natural drive that he must be boss of something. If any human being is ever to amount to anything, he must have something to be boss over.

The trouble comes when he tries to manage the folks who are in his house or the people he works with. His disposition to want to manage is not unusual; it is a matter of properly directing his efforts. If he would remember to subdue the earth – to go out and work in the yard – he would be a lot better off than trying to manipulate the lives of others.

Man's ability to rule over the earth and his control of it is commonly called *science*. With man contriving so many technical ways of controlling the earth, it is hoped he won't develop something that, like Frankenstein's monster, will ultimately destroy him. As long as he can control it, it is all right for him to have it. Any human being who wants to live with some degree of happiness and satisfaction would like to do things, to accomplish things, to achieve things. The doing, accomplishing, and achieving of things is *exercising dominion over*.

Children are not very old before they like to manage things. Maybe what they are managing is just throwing their rattle on the floor, but they want to manage it for themselves. They have an urge from within to subdue something and to have control over it – run it, manage it. This is the thrust and drive in man that moves him on to achieve the things that he does in life as a whole.

One of the basic flaws in the communist ideology is the attempt to deny this inborn desire on the part of man. To fulfill his role as a man, a person must be free in order to obey the Lord's command to "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it." If a situation is created in which everything is controlled from the outside so that the outcome is sure and fixed – and there is nothing a person can do that would change any part of it – people lose interest. The sparkle will leave their eyes and the spring will leave their steps. Because they have been deprived of their freedom of choice, their will loses its sensitivity. This is what has happened in many a dictator state. In order to achieve any degree of happiness, man must be free to choose.

It is because man has the power of choice that the Gospel is presented to him, and he is invited to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. When God offers His Son to man, the understanding is that man has the capacity to receive Him. Of course the natural man's will has been rendered insensitive to the Gospel appeal due to sin. God in His sovereign mercy revives the will so that man is enabled to receive for himself the gift of salvation.

## **MAN IS RESPONSIBLE**

Because man has the power of choice, he is held responsible for what he does. When man first sinned, God called to him, "Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9). When Eve stood before God, He asked her, "What is this that thou hast done?" (Gen. 3:13).

These questions were not for God's information. God knew what Adam and Eve had done, but they needed to answer for what they had done. They needed to acknowledge for themselves that they had been disobedient to God's command. God was saying in effect, "You pass judgment upon yourself. You admit and answer for the misdeed you have committed."

When Cain killed Abel, the Bible tells us that God confronted Cain. His question was, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9). It was evident that God knew where Abel was because He told Cain afterwards, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). Cain is called upon to admit his deed and acknowledge his sin before God. God created man in His own image, gave him the power of choice, and holds him responsible to answer for his actions.

The word *responsible* has in it the word *response*. Man is obligated to make response to God for what he has done, because man is not the lord of creation. He is not even the lord of himself. God is Lord and man is His creature. God created the world in which man lives; and man lives under the eye, or the supervision, of the Lord.

Man is dependent upon God, the Creator, for all things. The body that he has is given to him; the world in which he lives is given to him. The air he breathes, the water he drinks, the life and strength that he has in himself – all are given to him. The circumstances under which he lives, the sun that shines, the rain that falls, the people that are in the world – all are gifts from God. Man could not make them; he could not secure them. The entire situation in which man lives is prepared for him.

Man, living in this total, over-all situation, is responsible to God for what he does with it. A great deal is put within the reach of man. Out of all the things that are around him, he can select those things that are good for himself. He can choose those things he needs. Man is not at liberty, however, to take *all* the things that are put around him and within his reach. God wants man to exercise control over himself. Man can exercise his free will and make certain decisions; and yet God has certain things in mind that He wants man to do. Man is not turned loose to do as he pleases. Rather he is to live in this world, realizing his responsibility to God, for God will call him to account for what he has done.

The Bible tells us that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was put within reach. Man was told not to eat fruit from that tree. He was warned that in the day he did, he would die. Thus God confronts man with a choice of obedience or disobedience. He puts all things within the reach of man. And then He names one thing – points to it – and says, "Not that one." But he leaves it within reach. Man is challenged to exercise self-control in this matter because he is responsible to God. God would have us answer to Him for everything we do.

As a case in point, consider the Sabbath day. God said, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). Man was not to work on the Sabbath day. Because God gave man six days to do his work, he was to abstain from any labor on the seventh day. It was a command to be obeyed. Man was free to choose what he would do on the Sabbath day. But if he would enjoy the favor of God, he would do his work in six days and rest on the seventh. Man is free, and yet he is responsible. As Paul says, "Every one of us must give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

Man in his freedom makes his choices. He may decide to go to church or stay away from church. He may decide to read the Bible or not to read the Bible. He may decide to pray to God or not to pray to God. He may decide to trust in God or not to trust in God. Man will exercise his power of choice as he sees fit, and will do the thing that he chooses to do. Man is never to lose sight of the fact that God continues to ask the same question He asked our first parents, "What is this that thou hast done?"

God is the Judge of all the earth, and He is the Judge of all mankind. He is the One that judges the conduct of man and fixes the penalties. More than that, He is the One who is going to have man be conscious of what he has done. He wants man to become aware of what he is doing; therefore, He puts upon man the responsibility of answering for what he does. Man in freedom makes his choice; then God in justice appraises his action. God calls on man to estimate and judge his deeds. If he has been disobedient to the will of God, it is important that he acknowledge his sin and repent of it.

Throughout the Bible this truth is repeated over and over again; and we find it applies to ourselves. We are not able to escape responsibility for the action that we take, because we have exercised a certain choice. We did what we did because we wanted to do it. God is going to ask, "What is this that thou hast done?" and man must pass judgment on himself in order to answer.

Through *confession*, God brings us to feel our responsibility before Him. God's calling upon man to account for what he has done will bring to man's heart and mind the consciousness of his wrong-doing, because man will then feel it before God. At this spot, there is a tendency on the part of man to lie about what he has done.

We sympathize with little children who are two or three years of age – old enough to give an answer for what they have done – when parents ask them point-blank, "Did you do this? Did you do that?" The little youngsters are tempted to try to get out of it. Their quick imaginative minds are prone to get the best of them, if they feel they have a chance of getting "off the hook." Suppose a little girl comes into a room and her father asks, "Did your mother say you could have that?" The child has a terrific temptation to say, "Yes." If she does, her father will probably let her have it. If, however, this is an outright lie, she is leaving herself open for the consequences when and if the truth becomes known.

Parents might as well make up their minds to it – babies are all going to have to experiment some with lying. They are going to have to try to find out if it is as good as it seems. In many instances it will look like the easy way out. A boy in a Sunday school class was asked what a lie was. After thinking for some time he said, "A lie is an abomination unto the Lord, but a very present refuge in time of storm." We can all appreciate this story because we have all been tempted to head for this port at one time or another.

God is going to ask, "What is this that thou hast done?" Basically man is to be obedient to God. He is so constituted that he is to respond to the natural world around him. He learns to admit the hard facts of life. He does not try to butt his head into a stone wall or try to walk through fire. He admits things the way they are.

Man is to be realistic in his responsibilities to God. He is to obey God's will and carry out His purposes. Only as he does this is he able to fill his role as one created in the image of God.

## **MAN CAN BE LOST**

When is a man lost, and when is a man saved? The Bible says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" {Luke 19:10). A great many people have thought that when a man is referred to as being lost, he is somehow wiped out. For them, *lost* means that there is no hope for man, that he will forever remain lost.

What the Bible means can better be seen in an illustration. A mother and her little boy go downtown shopping. The child gets separated from his mother. Has anything happened to the child? Are his bodily organs not functioning? Can he see? Can he hear? Can he walk? Can he think? Yes, but not too well. He is probably scared to death for he is *lost*. But, the *lost* child can be found. His trouble can be

overcome in a very simple way – merely get the child back to his mother; restore him to where he was.

So we say a person is lost when he does not know where he is. He is some place, but he does not know where. Can you think back to the last time you were lost? Were you ever lost? Were you ever in a place without any notion of where you were? Perhaps there were trees and there was sky and sun, but you did not recognize any landmark to which you could refer. If you have never had such an experience, you will hardly know what I am talking about. If you have, you will remember quite readily the empty feeling you had in your stomach.

I remember the first time I was lost. I was a boy of about 10 or 11 – big enough to do a piece of work by myself on the farm. I had been sent to bring a certain cow home. I had to bring her about three miles. I knew the country well and I knew my directions – north, south, east, and west. I could even tell directions from the sun. However, I went for the cow through a wooded area. I came up to the farmer's house, where I was to get her, from one direction and then started home another way.

When I had walked with the cow about half a mile, I was suddenly lost. I didn't have any idea in the world where I was. I looked ahead on the road and to the hills that were in a certain area. Somehow those hills didn't look right. I was in a bit different position from what I had been several miles over; and nothing looked exactly the same. How puzzled I was over the fact that only three miles from home – in broad daylight – I could be lost. I was out of touch with things.

When the Bible speaks of man's being lost, he is lost not geographically but *spiritually*. Spiritually, in his consciousness, he is out of touch with any point of reference that he can recognize. A good way to determine whether a person is lost is to ask him, "Where are you?" He replies, "I don't know." "Where are you going?" "I don't know." He is lost.

Spiritually speaking, you can discover whether or not a person is lost if you ask him this question: "What is your relationship with God?" The answer may be, "I don't know, except that I believe God made me." "What about your relationship with Him now?" "Well, I don't know." "Where are you going? Are you going to heaven?" Under certain circumstances he will say, "Well, I hope so. I wish I could; if there is a heaven and any way to get there, I'd like to." If you were to get in close touch with that person, you would find that he is spiritually lost. He has no consciousness of his relation to God. He is a lost soul.

Some people think that the word *lost* ought to mean more than that. They believe that a person who is lost should feel bad. When I was lost with the cow, I felt bad. I almost walked back to the farm where I had been to make sure I would get home. I couldn't believe the sun and the shadows that I saw, because everything seemed so strange. When a person feels lost in a city, in a building, or in a crowd – and among complete strangers – there is a feeling of fear. Part of this fright is experienced in loneliness. Nobody likes it. A person does not want to be alone; and he wants to know where he is. Not to know is confusing. It is discouraging. It is disheartening. It is demoralizing.

The condition of being spiritually lost is very common. Yet for many people it is so hard to understand, they do not seem to be able to get hold of the idea. It is enough for a person just to admit, "I do not know my relationship with God. I do not know what is going to happen to me. I do not know where I am going." Many, many people who are lost do foolish things in their own personal lives. They allow their values to go by the board and their characters to break up for no other reason than that they do not know *where they are*, *where they are going*, or *who they are*. It is, psychologically, an unbearable and intolerable condition.

A person lost in the woods may surmise that three miles north from where he is there is a village, and that two miles south is another little town. If he starts walking out of the woods toward one of these places, there is a strong possibility he will walk in a circle and wind up right back where he started. This has happened more than once.

Since so very few people walk in uncharted woods any more, a more appropriate illustration would be that of a night-flying pilot. A person flying a plane in the dark cannot see the ground; therefore, he has

no frame of reference. For this reason, pilots are drilled to fly by their instruments. If a pilot refuses to go by his instruments, there is every likelihood that he will become lost. It happened in wartime during night-bombing missions. Some of our early casualties in the war in Europe were due to the fact that men flying on night missions would not believe their instruments.

Their instruments may have told them they were flying in a certain direction or at a certain altitude, but they had a feeling their compass or altimeter was in error. They flew according to the way they felt and either became lost or had a mid-air collision. It was made a matter of major discipline that a man must fly his aircraft according to the instruments. Why? Human nature could not be trusted.

In other words, if a man goes out to do what he thinks is right, he will not go straight. It is not human nature. He may start moving in what he feels is the right direction, but it will be only a matter of time before he comes to a state of *lostness*. After expending a great deal of energy, he may find himself right back where he started. The only way a person can go straight is to have his eye on a point of reference outside himself.

This is what the Gospel does by pointing men to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). One of the things that the Bible has done is to reveal God as the Invariable Checkpoint. "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8). This is a sound psychological statement as well as a scriptural one.

Man left to his own devices inevitably becomes lost. It is a comfort to know that God does not wish any man to remain in this lost state. Luke 15 presents a beautiful picture of a sheep, a coin, and a son that were lost and then found. This demonstrates in a vivid and dramatic way God seeking the lost. Here we read, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

## **MAN HAS A CONSCIENCE**

In addition to being responsible, man has a way of feeling his responsibility. He has a conscience. The Bible says men have "the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (Rom.2:15).

Man not only answers to God; he also answers to his fellow men. Many of the things man does, he does because of other people. He wants other people to think well of him. Therefore, he acts in a way which he thinks will meet with their approval. As long as it doesn't cost him too much, man is likely to act to please others. When it costs him something, then there may be a different story. Nevertheless, man feels responsible to a certain extent to his fellow men.

Man is also answerable to himself. He judges his own actions and deeds. This is conscience at work and shows man's moral responsibility. It reveals that man feels responsible for his actions – whether good or bad.

Have you ever stopped to think how early conscience develops in a child? How soon does a baby become conscious of whether or not it is doing the right thing? Most children will act in certain ways to gain the approval of grown folks. Sometimes children act in ways that will annoy their elders. They find out what will irritate, and they do just that to get a perverse pleasure out of seeing someone upset. Children and adults alike have the capacity within themselves to sense that certain things are right and other things are wrong.

If a person does not know his right hand from his left, we say he is mentally retarded. So if someone has no sense of the rightness or the wrongness of his action, we say he is morally retarded. The normal human being has a sense of the fitness of what he is doing. He knows whether his acts are good or not good in the eyes of other people.

Some people are quick to claim credit for what is good. They want to be seen when they do something good. They want to be noticed when they do right. Thus they prove their ability to judge themselves. The average person has a feeling of well-being when he engages in something that gains the approval of

his fellow men.

When a man does something wrong and society frowns upon it, he is inclined to deny that he did it. This can be seen when a child drops something. The child's first reaction is to cover it up, moving as far away from the scene of the act as possible. A child acts in this way because he feels the wrongness of what he has done. He is uncomfortable and wants to get away from it as quickly as he can. This is true as long as he lives. Conscience is an inward gauge that measures our conduct. It is a device that is in us to keep us on the level.

A person's conscience is like an inward balance wheel. He feels within himself whether he is doing right or wrong. The form of a man's conscience is taken from the community in which he grew up and from the people he has known. Each class of people has a different conscience and will feel differently about various things. The customs and the habits of the community have their effect on the feelings of anybody.

Conscience can be informed and changed. A better conscience can be had as the days go by. And when one becomes a Christian, a Christian conscience is developed. This is the best. A Christian, however, is not limited to his conscience for his sense of right and wrong. He has direct guidance from God through the Scriptures. God gives the Holy Spirit to the Christian to guide him in God's Word. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is an invaluable guide to the happy Christian life.

It has already been said that as soon as children are old enough to feel disapproval, they start acting in certain ways because they want to be liked. However, they do certain other things because they want to irritate their parents. The feeling of conscience is operating in them. The desire for approval is a great incentive, and it can be used. If man once is happy in the feeling that what he has done is pleasing to people and he enjoys their pleasure, he will do more and more to please them. The Apostle Paul, in speaking of his own Christian experience, says that he was ambitious to be well-pleasing in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him (the Father)" (John 8:29).

It is characteristic of all people that they are aware of what they are doing. They may not have complete understanding of their actions, but they know whether their behavior is agreeable or disagreeable to the *powers that be*. This is part of a man's guidance system. Approval is a great incentive in doing the right thing; and disapproval is a real deterrent in keeping man from doing the wrong thing. Many a time we would like to do certain things; but we hold back, for we know that someone would not like it. On other occasions, we don't want to do a certain thing; but we do it, because someone would like it and approve it.

The Christian is aware that he is responsible for his thoughts, words, actions, and deeds before God. If he has the feeling of assurance in himself that he has done that which is well-pleasing in God's sight, he can have a free mind. However, if he has a feeling within that he has not done what he should have done, then the feeling of distress will overcome him. Christian people with an understanding of the Gospel will know that what God primarily wants them to do is to turn to Him. A person who from the bottom of his heart knows that he has put his trust in the Lord will have the assurance that he is doing what God wants him to do.

The non-Christian is not nearly so sensitive to the will of God because his experience is not God-related. He takes notice of things he should not have and should not take; but he wants them for himself, and he winds up taking them. Although he can act against his conscience so often that it does not disturb him much after a while, he is still not completely free to act as he pleases. God in His *common grace* continues to work in the life of the non-Christian. This conscience, or law written on his heart, will continue to disturb or guide. In the providence of the Lord, it can prove to be a real factor in the eventual conversion of a sinner.

The conscience will never be a sufficient guide so far as conduct is concerned, because the conscience of man is always limited to his past experience and environment. But it can produce a whole some

dissatisfaction in the heart of man and give him a sense of right and wrong. As surely as a man feels he has not turned to God as he should, then he will know that this is the time to come to God. He will know he is on the wrong road. If a man departs from the will of God and gets into wrong things, his conscience will make him aware of it. Man can be thankful that God has given him a conscience.

## MAN SUFFERS IN DISTRESS

We sympathize with anyone who is suffering. The problem of suffering is as old as the human race. It is a well-known fact that man can suffer physically. But to say he can suffer *in distress* implies a deeper kind of suffering. His heart can be heavy and burdened. He can be heartbroken. When he considers his actual condition, looks ahead to consider how things are going to be, or looks back and considers how things have been – a man can hurt; he can have pain. Trouble is distressing. It is not only that trouble is puzzling and disturbing, but it can hurt a man inside.

Man suffers in *failure*. He suffers when he is not able to adjust himself to his environment. Man is in the world. He is to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, and he suffers when he does not get this done. If at any time the earth seems to rise up and slap him down, man gets hurt. If he is able to manage his ordinary living, he can experience a sense of well-being; but if not, he feels bad.

If a person is not able to obtain enough food, he is hungry. If he is not able to secure enough water, he is thirsty. Physical suffering is involved in both hunger and thirst. If a person is not able to achieve what he set out to do – or if what he does results in loss – so far as this world is concerned, he will suffer. The human being is a sensitive creature. In general, a man suffers from the frustration of defeat.

The person who can *suffer* is the person who can rejoice. The person who can be sad is the person who can be glad. Man has feelings – emotions – and they give value and significance to the things that happen in his life. The things that man feels good about and enjoys, he wants to have as much as possible. But the things that he feels bad about and that hurt him, he wants to avoid in every way possible. Toward anything that can hurt, man experiences fear, depression, and frustration.

The newborn baby suffers only because it is hungry or because it has physical discomfort. Very early – long before it can talk – it becomes conscious of human companionship and begins to suffer from *separation*. How terrible it is for a baby to be truly separated from the person it has learned to love and trust. Many fathers go through the experience that at a certain stage in a child's life, the child doesn't like to see Daddy go away. It hurts the child. Usually, if Mother is there, it is still all right. But if both Mother and Daddy walk out, it can be a most distressing experience for the child. It can't seem to bear the feeling of being *separated* from those whom it loves.

Man also suffers in *bondage*. If he is not able to do what he wants to do, he is distressed. People who have habits that bind them are suffering in distress. We meet people every day who are experiencing sorrow, regret, hurt, and pain. We may ask such persons about their health and get this response: "I feel fine." We may ask them if they have financial need, only to hear, "All my debts are paid." It is then that we realize that we are seeing evidence "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4). The need of such persons is not physical or material, it is *spiritual*. A man can be in the bondage of sinful habit to such a degree that he becomes greatly distressed.

Physical pain is relatively small when weighed among the various experiences of distress. People can have hurt and sickness, aches and pains in their body, but those are not the longest nor the deepest kinds of suffering. Consider the suffering that is in loneliness. Reflect on the suffering that comes to one who is lost. He wishes he knew where to go, but because he does not know which way to turn, he is filled with a sense of frustration and fear. When man has dropped out of touch with God so that he is not receiving 'His guidance, he is alone in the world.

When man does not know where he is going – nor what is going to happen to him – he is filled with fear. He has a sense of frustration. He is lonely. All these are troubles. We read in the Bible, "Yet

man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Due to trouble, man suffers. And it is the suffering of mankind that makes the Gospel so important and so appealing. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Christ came to the suffering that He might ease and take away their suffering. God is spoken of as "The God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Often our suffering is relieved – in some degree – if someone shares it with us. One of the good things about having a friend is that when you tell your joys to him, you double them. If you tell your troubles to a friend, you cut those troubles in half. God wants to be a great Friend to mankind, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

It is the suffering of man that attracts the compassion and mercy of God. Matthew 9:36 explains, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." For a sheep, it is a suffering experience to be separated from the shepherd. Christ could use no better illustration to describe the frightening feeling of aloneness in man.

Christ, speaking to His disciples, said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). Christ sent His disciples among human beings to tell them that God is willing to share their sorrows and their griefs. They can come to Him with their burdens, and He will give them rest. Christ probably spoke no word that has a greater appeal to men than, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Being *wearry* from labor and *heavy laden* is a form of suffering. The weariness which comes from the exhaustion of hard work and being weighed down with a burden is enough to give man an oppressing sense of distress. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29, 30).

The great promise of the Gospel to the whole world is that it meets man in his suffering. Suffering is a result of sin. The Bible makes it emphatic that the soul that sins, shall die. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The fact that man experiences suffering suggests his need for help. He needs help from God. God matches the distress of mankind with His own grace and mercy coming to man in his suffering.

"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). We can encourage people in suffering and distress to "learn of him," that they may know that the Lord has them in mind, and He is looking upon them with thoughts of pleasantness and peace. God would like to help us; He can help us if we will come to Him. In the providence of God, suffering can be used to help us realize the wrongness of what we are doing.

Man suffers in distress, but God can truly comfort him.