

September 9, 1983

Lawlessness

Lawlessness is anything done while out of communion with the Father. We know that those who *practice* lawlessness will not enter the kingdom. Mt 7:17-23. Our Master spoke of the fruit of the tree. The fruit makes quite *evident* the quality of the tree. A tree doesn't have to strain to produce a piece of fruit — it is a natural outcome of its life — trees just naturally make fruit (James 3:11,12). What is in the fountain *will* gush forth. In the same way, the fruit (deeds) of the flesh are just as evident (Gal 5:19-21), and if we *practice* these things we will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Rom 8:7 — "The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not *subject itself* to the *law* of God," in other words, "it is a lawless mind which is set on the flesh" — this is the state of the lawless man, one who practices lawlessness (Rom 8:5). If we live according to the flesh, setting our minds on the things of the flesh, the fruit of the flesh will become evident. In Gal 5:19 the incomplete list of the fruit of dwelling in lawlessness is clear, as it ranks envy with drunkenness, disagreements (dissensions) with sorcery, jealousy with immorality, etc., etc. If our life manifests any of these such deeds, it is obvious from what source they are coming. "What's in the well comes up in the bucket." Outbursts of anger, *strife*, disputes, are normal behavior of the man of the flesh, the man guilty of lawlessness. *But* how surprised that man seemed at his judgment in Matthew 7 because his so-called "work for the Lord" *looked* so good. He has been so busy doing things for the Lord outwardly, yet inwardly there was no true communion with the Lord — He didn't even know him. His deeds were lawlessness, coming forth from the bad tree (the polluted fountain) of the flesh.

But if you "live according to the spirit (in vital communion with the Holy Spirit) you put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom 8:13). If you walk by the Spirit, you won't carry out the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16). In cases such as these in the Bible where it talks about the *spirit*, it should not really be spelled with a capital letter for it is referring to our own spirit which has been quickened, made alive, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Before we received the Holy Spirit, our own spirit was dead because of sin, but now it has been brought to life. If our spirit is taking the leading role in guiding our lives it is because it is vitally united with God's Spirit and is functioning according to the way it was originally created to function in man before the fall (Rom 8:10).

Controlled by our flesh, we remain hay-wire and out of communion with the Father, hostile to Him (Rom 8:7). Controlled by our spirit, we are being filled with life and peace (Rom 8:6,10), knowing and being known by Him because of our communion with His Spirit. The flesh and the spirit are at war (Gal 5:17) for the controlling role in us. If our flesh wins out, our spirit returns to its dormant state, and our Master must knock for admission (Rev 3:20).

"If we are led by the spirit we are not under the law" (Gal 5:18). Does this mean that we are *lawless* if we are led by the spirit? No! Lawlessness means not subject to the law or unrestrained by the law. One who is led by the spirit would never be led to do something contrary to the law, because the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23) is manifest in actions against which there is *no law* (verse 23), in fact the whole law is fulfilled by them (Gal 5:14; Rom 8:4). In the New Covenant, we have the law engraved in our heart and because our spirit has been made alive in Him, as we are led along by the spirit, the fruit of which comes forth from our life would never conflict with that law.

The flesh, on the other hand, is not that way — it is lawless, it will not subject itself to the law of God. If we are not walking in communion with the Father, our spirit is no longer the leader in

our life, and we are led by the flesh. Being the well-cultured, civilized, educated, polished people that we are, we may be able to continue on in our daily routine without having vital communion with our Father. We forget to pray and seek Him, our "busy lives" begin to exclude Him. Soon, though, we might be breaking our backs night and day *to serve Him*, when we are in reality walking in the flesh, in lawlessness. Perhaps we really enjoy the deeds we are doing (even more than we enjoy our Master), and they *look* good to those around us. Perhaps we had to *strive* hard to get into this position of service in the Body, and we are striving hard every day to maintain that position, but it *looks* good. We can sing great songs, teach great teachings, build great buildings, grow great gardens, paint great pictures, cook great meals, and everyone thinks we are doing a great job — it *looks* spiritual but in reality we know deep within that we have forsaken our "sweet fellowship with our Master." Though it may appear outwardly as a *good work*, it is actually a lawless deed of the flesh. Sooner or later the fruit of the flesh will become evident in our lives as well. Both the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit are evident (Gal 5:19-22). Soon, our good deeds will be either the bad fruit of jealousy, strife, envy, drunkenness, no self-control, anger, etc., or the good fruit of love, joy, peace, kindness, etc. The fruit will come gushing out at unguarded moments like the water out of a spring (James 3:11). And no matter how we try to justify it or cover it up it is still evident.

Lawlessness is a mystery. It is often times well masqueraded, as in Mt 7:22. It looks good outwardly. It is a thing of the heart. Only one who knows the law can be lawless (refusing to subject oneself to the law of God) — one who has come to the knowledge of the truth (Heb 10:16), yet does not love the truth so as to be saved.

2 Ths 2:7 — "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work", preparing a foundation for the anti-Christ, the MAN OF LAWLESSNESS, to come and begin his grand finale on earth. His ability to deceive (verse 10) will be founded in every man's heart upon their own lawlessness. For those who are deceived will be the ones who did not *love the truth so as to be saved*, but rather *took pleasure in lawlessness* (verse 12). These men *knew* the truth but they did not find pleasure in the truth — their pleasure came from their own lawless deeds. These deeds are a *mystery* because they look good, and are difficult to detect. Only a man's own heart can be the final judge — and judge it we must because unless we judge and put to death the deeds of the flesh and take no pleasure in them, we will be turned over to such a *deluding influence* (verse 11) that we will believe *the lie*. Lawlessness is Satan's open door to our soul. The message of the *Man of Lawlessness* will be so pleasant to our ears because we have taken so much pleasure in lawlessness. His voice will be a *familiar spirit* because he is the *father of lawlessness* (lawlessness being the state we have been dwelling in for so long). He will come to be received among the lawless people, but God has chosen (verse 13) to save us from this by the purifying work of His Spirit which *would* cleanse us from the deeds of the flesh and by our faith in the truth (love for the truth, verse 10). When the *truth* comes to us to purge us, we must love it so as to be saved.

Our Master Yahshua gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed (Titus 2:14), making for himself a pure people for *His own possession*. As long as we are still dwelling in the flesh in lawlessness, and taking pleasure in it, our Master does not have us as His own *possession* (Rom 8:9). We do not *belong* to Him if we continue in lawlessness. A *possession* is something that *belongs* to us. We must be purified from lawlessness in order to be a people for His own possession. Walking in the flesh puts the Savior once again outside the heart's door knocking for entrance. We are the possession of whoever controls us. At the appearing of our Savior (Titus 2:13) we will be drawn to Him only if we are His own possession — He holds our

heartstrings, we have taken pleasure only in Him. But if we have taken pleasure in our lawlessness, then when the *master of lawlessness* appears we will be drawn to him. We may think, "Oh, that is impossible; I'll never be drawn to the anti-Christ," but that is not true. You may say that now because you have not yet been turned over to a *deluding influence*. But once you are turned over, you believe a lie with all of your heart. Your mind will no longer be a free agent like it is today. Today everything is so clear, but under the influence of delusion everything will be quite different.

That deluding influence has already taken several from our midst. Have you ever wondered how some of our wonderful friends have just turned their backs on us overnight and the next time we see them they are spewing forth *lies and hatred*? It seems as if they really believe the *absurd lies* they are telling — that is because they do *believe the lies*. (Though they have seen with their own eyes something totally different than the lies they are telling). The deluding influence has come upon them. They have answered the call of the *mystery voice of lawlessness* which has lured them out of the protection of peace. They no longer heed the voice of the True Shepherd, but rather follow the call of the *master of lawlessness*, a voice that they have now become much more familiar with than their Savior's. But it is not the wicked who leave that hurt us, but the wicked who *stay*.

Our Master knocks for entrance at the heart of the man of the flesh. He desires that we be in communion with Him at all times. Every day *if we hear his voice* (Heb 3:15) and walk in obedience to that voice we will be living by the spirit. Then we are not under the law. Only a man of the flesh is "under the law." The man who is led by the spirit is led by his New Covenant heart, so he will fulfill all the righteous commands of the Law (Rom 8:4). The flesh refuses to subject itself to the Law although the fleshly man will try with *all* of his own good intentions to do what the law requires. The fleshly man is once again under the system of trying to maintain a good performance by keeping the law, but is meeting with all the same impossibilities that all men did who were living under the Old Covenant. Only one with a spirit which has come to life can fulfill the righteous requirements of the law, for he is no longer *under* the law — the law is *in* him. If we walk by our spirit, we are full of the capacity to fulfill the law.

So, our Master Yahshua says, "Don't say, tomorrow I will do this or that, but say *If the Lord wills* I will do it." This does not just mean that we should tack that phrase on at the end of our list of plans. It means that we shall not be walking in lawless deeds of our own initiative, but that we should be led along by our spirit to fulfill all righteousness (Rom 8:4,10), making sure that our plan is not one inspired by our flesh.

We have a safeguard in the edah in the covering of our brothers. But the mystery of lawlessness is great — all our safeguards can be carefully eluded. We *can* push through our plans in the flesh, but only death will result (Rom 8:13). In the last days *lawlessness* will greatly increase and so because of this the *love* of many will grow cold (Mt 24:12-13). BUT those who endure to the end, will be saved (enduring *in* Salvation).