

Communication And Coming Out Of Babylon (Part 3)

Continuing in the Faith

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The main theme in the two sermons in this present series has been in regard to the place, the importance, and the effect of the communication that has really added immeasurably to what we have become in terms of attitude and character since our birth.

I want to go all the way back to the beginning with Adam and Eve and help us all to understand clearly that Adam and Eve were not created with an evil nature. At the end of the sixth day of creation God took pleasure in all that He had made and He pronounced it "very good." Adam and Eve were created by that time, and that included the nature with which He created them. I cannot see how an evil heart could possibly be termed by God as "very good." They were not created with an evil heart. Mr. Armstrong used to say that he pictured them as being sort of like a blank slate with a slight pull toward the self, but not with the strong self-centeredness, touchy, and offensive heart that is communicated to us through contact with the world following our birth.

Following their creation, God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and instructed them concerning their responsibilities. He then purposefully allowed them to be exposed to—and thus tested by—Satan who most definitely had a different set of beliefs, attitudes, purposes, and character than God. Thus they freely made the choice without intervention from God to allow themselves to be influenced by that evil spirit, thus choosing to submit to him.

Comparing our contact with Satan with Adam and Eve's contact with him, one of the more sobering aspects is that God shows they were fully aware of Satan when he communicated with them. In other words, there is every indication there that they could see him. We saw several scriptural proofs

though that a spirit being can communicate with humans by transferring thought, and we would never know it. Adam and Eve *did* know it. We do *not* know it. There is a difference there, and our situation is a bit more difficult.

Back in thought to Adam and Eve again. Genesis 3:7 states: "And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked." This indicates that there was an immediate change in their attitude and their perspective. It also implied a change of character from the way they had been created, because they indeed did sin willingly, thus reinforcing the actual act of the whole process.

We are going to fast forward up to our time.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

When Adam and Eve did what they did, that was the beginning of what the apostle Paul calls in Galatians 1:4 "this present evil world." It resulted from the contact that human beings had with Satan. The ones who carried that contact into the world were our forefathers. All it took was contact with and communication from a very evil source to effect a profound change from what they had been. They then passed the evil product of their encounter with Satan onto their children, and the process has continued unabated till this day. Even when God wiped out everybody in the flood, Noah, his wife, his children, and their wives carried it right on through into the world following the flood.

When Jesus came, we find in Matthew 13 a general comment about mankind.

Matthew 13:10-11 And the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speak you unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

In other words, the blindness continues except for those who are selected to receive the truth and have a mind opened to receive it.

Matthew 13:12-17 For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

When we were born innocent of any sins on our own, we entered into a six thousand year old ready-made world permeated with the spirit of Satan and his demons, and the evil cultures they created through a deceived mankind all over the world. Thus, unbeknown to us, we faced a double-barreled threat: demons and the world. We very quickly absorbed the course of the world around us. We lost our innocence and became self-centered and deceived like everybody else.

The vast majority of this world is totally unaware that they are in bondage to Satan, and they are so unaware that I am confident that if they are told they are blind and unaware, they would reject it. Look what they did to Jesus. He preached the Gospel to them, and they rejected it. There was God in the flesh—the very strongest witness that they could have of truth. He was truth personified. They rejected Him and put Him to death. That is how blind mankind is. If mankind does not receive some outside spiritual help from God, it will reject the truth of God as a way of life.

One of the things that the ministry of Jesus shows, and what happened to Him there is that mankind, of and by itself, will not fully grasp the importance of these factors unless God draws them and opens their spiritual eyes.

Notice how Paul made use of this very fact when he was teaching the Corinthians regarding the Jews of their day. We are going to see that he drew on this same principle in II Corinthians 3.

II Corinthians 3:12-16 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness [or boldness] of speech, and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is passing away, but their minds [also in Moses' day] were blinded: for until this day [in Paul's day, 1400 years after Moses and the Israelites] remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament, which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when one shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Paul very freely there uses the term "veiled," rather than "blinded," but the picture by which he is illustrating is that something is hanging over the eyes of the Israelitish people so they could not understand what it was that they were hearing.

Be aware that the miraculous removing of this "veil of blindness" by God, though it is a wonderful work and it gives us great hope, it also places a weighty responsibility on us. With the blindness gone, we are thus provided the ability to choose between God's way and the world's for the very first time in our life. But the attitude and character effect of the self-centered way that we have absorbed through the course of this world from the time we were born remains, becoming what we must overcome. It is going to dog us all of our days of conversion as some of the means of testing the determination to be in God's Kingdom, and for our love and loyalty to God.

I want you to notice how Paul describes the position a Christian is confronted with upon having the blindness removed. We are going to go to Romans 7. Notice the setting here. Paul wrote this sometime before the middle 50s AD. He had been converted over twenty years. Most of the people who research into these things feel that Paul was converted probably no later than about 33 or 34 AD when that "road to Damascus" thing occurred. So if it was 33 AD, we are talking about 20 to 21 years.

Romans 7:15-17 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Here we are, twenty-some years after his conversion, and sin was dwelling in him. That is how deeply embedded it is.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

He wanted to do the right thing. Let us understand that Paul was not sinning left and right. He is talking here about his desire not to sin, but there were occasions that he did sin.

Romans 7:19-25 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God: but with the flesh the law of sin.

In verse 17 Paul says that though he was converted for about twenty years when he wrote the book of Romans, he said that sin dwelt in him. In verse 18 he said "in his flesh dwelt no good thing." I am giving you this so you understand that human nature—that which we have absorbed from the world—is going to dog us to our dying days. We are going to have to do battle with it.

In verse 19 he admits to an occasional sin. In verse 20 he repeats again that sin dwells in him, and in verse 21 he says that evil was present with him. In verse 23 he states that within him a war raged between the law of sin and the

law of his mind. They were antagonistic to one another. In verse 25 he mentions those two again.

That evil within him—the sin that dwelt within him—was the remnant of what he absorbed from Satan's world prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus. The "law of his mind" was the new heart from God that he so much wanted to dominate his life. The war was between "the law of sin" and "the law of his mind." This same apostle says the following:

Galatians 5:16-17 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust [the desire, the pulls] of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.

These three sermons have essentially been on communication and its tie-in to God and the world. What we just read in Romans 7 shows us very clearly from Paul's experience that each was communicating with him, to him, or whatever. The evil within him wanted to dominate his life and continue the bondage it held over him all of his life until "the road to Damascus."

On the other hand, the "law of his mind" was there to nullify "the law of sin and death," but Paul was caught in between the two of them, and so are you, and so am I. This is why we cannot physically escape Babylon. There is nowhere we can go that we do not take our mind with us—what we are, all of our experiences, our character, our hopes, our dreams, our drives, our motivations. They go where we go.

One of the reasons so many monks of the Catholic Church went to live on mountain tops was their way to try to get away from the world. But it will not work. It cannot work because the world was in them. It was a good try, but it was not biblical. We cannot physically escape Babylon because it has left its mark upon our perspective, our attitudes, our character, and we carry it with us wherever we are. But our escape from Babylon can be accomplished, because if it could not, God would not command it of us. He said to come out, and we can.

Now how do we come out? It is accomplished by choosing to allow the law of our mind to triumph against the law of sin and death even though it may require a great deal of sacrifice to do it. The next question then has to be: Where does one find the strength necessary to make the sacrifices required that we might be able to have the right motivation?

The first thing we are going to do here is look at a promise that is made to us in Philippians 4. This is a simple statement, but it is part of God's Word now. It was God-breathed, and it says:

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by [or through] Christ Jesus.

I did a little research on that and came up in one of the places with the following, which I think is very interesting. This commentary stated that what Paul said was literally, "He will supply our need gloriously." What is it that we need? Let us start picking off some things. First of all we need faith in that fact that God is. In addition, we need faith in the form of trust that He is indeed with us personally and individually, and that His Words are truth.

Where are we going to get that faith? Besides that, we need vision so that the goal in our life is pointed in the right direction. We need hope regarding the value of what is to be gained or lost if we do not reach that goal, or if we do not make right choices. Last, but certainly not least, is that we need love for God and for our fellow man.

The next question has to be: What is the media through which these will be communicated to us, because we do not have them naturally? They have to be given. They have to be communicated to us from a source. Now what is the media for this communication, because we have to find it, or we are sunk. I think we found it, or it found us.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

It is right here that the importance of what is taught in this verse comes to the fore. We have to get a little bit of information from elsewhere first as we

proceed on, so let us go back to Romans 5 where we will be able to see this plainly and clearly.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We hope for the glory of God. How are we ever going to have it? Let us pick up another piece of information.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.

Adam and Eve represented all of mankind. When they sinned they were expelled and banished by God from the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden represents being in the presence of God, and thus having easy access and communication with Him. He was right there.

Earlier, in Genesis 2:17, God warned Adam and Eve that in the day they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they would die. Following their sin it becomes evident that God did not mean they would die immediately. But He meant that "in the day that you eat thereof, you are as good as dead," because they sealed it with their sin, and made sure that they were going to die. But God allowed them to live on, to produce children, and to pass on to others what they had learned through Satan.

Their life went on, but God, wanting to emphasize the serious affect of their sin to later generations—that is, to you and to me who would be reading His Word—placed a flaming sword that traversed the garden's borders, thus accenting that mankind was still alive, but was cut off from any relationship with Him. He was in the Garden; they were out. He is in heaven; we are not. Access to Him, and therefore communication from Him, is something that we are denied. Therefore, the only beings which can communicate with us freely and openly are demons, and of course the world that they created.

Sin, which demonstrates a lack of love and loyalty to our Creator, not only seals the death penalty on each sinner, but it also denies one a lifetime of access to, and thus communication with, God while they live under Satan's continued influence.

Now Jesus paid the penalty for sin. When we, by faith in that sacrifice, are justified, we are placed in a legally "cleared-of-guilt" position before God (Romans 5:1-2). It is as though the flaming sword barrier between us and access to God is removed, thus opening the way for communication with Him and growth in a relationship with Him that never before existed for us.

I said in sermons a number of times that the relationship we have with the Father and the Son through the work of Jesus Christ, both as the payment for our sin and as our High Priest, is *everything* in terms of salvation. Now why is this true? It is true because of the communication that can now take place between us and them. What we need in order to be delivered from Babylon, in order to be able to make the right choices, in order to fulfill God's purpose, is to have communication with the Father and the Son.

Can you begin to see why this is absolutely necessary? This is absolutely necessary, because up until the time we are converted, the only communication that we have had was from demons and other people who are also under the influence of demons.

When the Bible says that we are in bondage, it means exactly what it says. We are in bondage to Satan, to sin, and to death, and that is the only thing that God can, shall I say, *reward* us with because we have not received communication from a Spirit that is able to save.

What is the medium then through which this communication takes place? It is the relationship with the Father and the Son. Do you know what a medium is? It is a means in which things can be combined, brought together, produced, or developed. We have got to understand it, and we have got to have faith in it, that the means of communication with the Father is more than merely a counter-balance to the influence of this world. It very decidedly tips the scales in our favor in this war for our spiritual survival if we will but continue to believe and trust them, thus taking advantage of the contact, communication, and the influence given us.

What Jesus ever so briefly says and does in John 17:3 is to tie the quality of life, called "eternal life," as hinging on one's relationship with God, and the world does not have that relationship. This is why I keep saying that relationship *is* salvation. Since the world does not have this relationship with Him, there is no communication from Him to them.

There is no doubt there is a very large number of people who know many things about God, but they cannot love Him without access to Him anymore than you can know someone across town by reputation, but at the same time know nothing about that person without intimate contact. There is so much of a gap in the knowledge of someone that you do not have intimate contact with that you may as well say you do not know that person.

Adam and Eve getting kicked out of the Garden was very serious business.

Let us go back to I John 2.. I want you to pay attention to this because this is powerful, sobering stuff.

I John 2:10-17 He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not whither he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one. 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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.

I want to go back through this. The first thing I want you to remember is that John's epistle was written to church members. This is not written to the world, and therefore he puts things in absolute terms that offer no middle ground regarding sin in one's relationship with fellow man or with God Himself. We have got to understand that it must be this way because this is our one and only opportunity for salvation. Sin is serious business. That is John's theme here. What did he say sin is? He said sin is transgression of the law. He also describes sin as being a lack of love, or a lack of loyalty to God.

We must fully understand, regarding our moral and spiritual conduct, that there is no twilight zone, especially in one's relationship with God. A Christian cannot muddle around morally or spiritually thinking that sin does not matter. In this relationship, that is, in reality, in preparation for marriage, love and loyalty are extremely important. Does God want to marry somebody who is out fornicating with the world? I do not think you would want to do that. He commands us to be holy, to keep ourselves clean. That is His communication to us. He is saying, "Save yourself for *our* marriage."

Notice in verse 11 the sin that John mentions is against a brother: "He that hates his brother." Remember, this is written to church members. He is telling one group of church members that if they hate their brother, that is not good. Hatred is not a trifling matter.

I John 3:15 Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: [It is as if the sin has already been committed within the spirit of the law.] and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John must have been dealing with a very bad problem here.

If one brother hates another, what is the affect of that sin? Remember, the person is a murderer. What happens when somebody murders another? Any relationship, any communication, is done. It is over with. These people John was talking to were still alive, but he said that hatred is murder. Therefore, what is happening in the relationship that John is talking about here? The relationship is broken.

Now it even gets more serious. We find that the sin against the brother is also affecting one's relationship with God because the effect of that sin is some measure of spiritual blindness. Look at verse 11 again.

I John 2:11 But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes because that darkness has blinded his eyes.

What is happening to the relationship with God if the person is in darkness? God dwells in the light. Does it not look like the relationship with God is in the process of ending too? John, the apostle of love, is telling us that sin is serious business, because this lack of love breaks the relationship not only with the brother, but also with God.

I want to go back to Hebrews and show you Paul's comment on something similar to this. In chapter 3 Paul just framed it in somewhat different words. Brethren, I want you to understand how important this relationship is, because from it we get communication with God that we otherwise do not have.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called Today: lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Here is one of sin's gravest dangers. It lies in its deceptive quality because it promises so much before it actually becomes an act of conduct, but what it delivers always falls short of its promise. However, the sneaky aspect of it is that it has a powerful tendency to lure us into further sin, enslaving us, and all the while it is doing it, it is hardening our mind against righteousness, and sin becomes ever easier to commit, and righteousness becomes harder and harder to do. This is why John was saying that a person who hates his brother has an ongoing sin. It is destroying the relationship with God as well as destroying the relationship with the brother. Herein lies the cause of John's concern.

God is the source of spiritual truth; that is life, and we are sanctified as His child and to His service by it because we believe His truth. But under the hating circumstance, communication with God begins to break down and the sinner thus puts himself into danger of stumbling.

Notice in verses 13 and 14 that John mentions that the fathers—those in the congregation older in the faith—have known the Father, and he is appealing to them to use their long-standing mature leadership within the congregation in a right manner.

The word "known" ties John's thoughts directly into John 17:3; that is, that knowing God, having an intimate relationship with Him, is the key to living a life called "eternal life" which will be acceptable for living in the Kingdom of God.

So hating the brother is actually cutting the one sinning from the Source of the communication of the gifts and strengths necessary to living that quality of life. In other words, the sinner is not making right use of what has already been given, and is showing disloyalty to both God and another family member. It is right at this point that John pens one of the more famous commands in his writings: "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." (verse 15).

Brethren, this ought to be scary stuff for the Christian because it is telling us something. Why would he say that right after he talks about the sin, right after he talks about the breakdown in the relationship not only with the brother, but also with God? If there is anything we need from God, it is love. We need the Father's love in us.

Why does John say such a thing as "Love not the world"? It is as easy as one, two, three once you understand. It is that the sinner's conduct—the hatred of the brother—is really revealing the source of the communication motivating the sin. God would never motivate anybody to hate, and so whatever was motivating this person to hate a brother was coming from the world. That is the only place it can come from. What John is saying there is that sin is revealing where the communication is coming from to that

person's heart. In other words, what he is doing, and without saying it directly is, "Buddy, you had better repent before God and get communication from Him rather than from the world, because the act is showing the source."

John is telling us that the person's affections are drawing him toward the world and away from God, and that the person had better do something about it or he will go completely back to the world. This also ties into something that John said earlier:

John 1:5 And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Darkness represents Satan's world where truth is lacking. In the book of Revelation it is represented by Babylon in chapters 17 and 18. Babylon does not get spiritual truth. The only spirituality the world can ultimately communicate is inducements—motivations—to sin and this it does insistently and attractively. This brings us back again to Adam and Eve. Everything begins there, it seems.

Satan is the ruler of this world, and thus its leader and its governing principal. He induced Adam and Eve to sin. This leads us to understand that the only way we can come out of the world is to reverse the process that got us into the world, and that is by stopping sin in our life. The process has to be reversed. The communication with God has to be increased, becoming more intense, and the communication with the world has to be decreased. In other words, the way to reverse the process is to take advantage of the communication with God.

We can never get completely out on our own, and God mercifully comes to deliver us by calling us. I do not understand the mechanics of what actually happens to our mind, but in His calling He miraculously does something to it in order to begin leading us to think on things in relation to God with a clarity and a forcefulness that we have never experienced before. It is almost as if we suddenly understood a foreign language.

Let us go back to the apostle Paul's conversion in Acts 9, because this dramatic event gives us insight to what has happened to everyone of us to some degree.

Acts 9:3-6 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will you have me to do? And the Lord said unto him: Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.

Now it did not happen to us as dramatically as it did to Saul, but the process was essentially the same. We were going on in our own life. There is absolutely no way that we could have ever gotten back into God's good graces. The flaming sword was keeping us out. We were blinded to the truths of Him. We knew a little bit about Him, but really know Him, we did not know. He had to do something to our mind.

Like I said, I do not know the mechanics of it. All I know is we begin—for some it is suddenly, for others it is a bit more gradually—thinking of things in relation to God in truth, and begin to see then with a clarity that we never had before, and God really begins to be important in terms of truth. It is very important to understand that.

Paul had his sight taken away from him for a three-day period. He was then told to continue on into Damascus.

Acts 9:8-15 And Saul arose from the earth and when his eyes were opened he saw no man but they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias, and he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for, behold, he prays, and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And

here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on your name. But the Lord said unto him, Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

We may not face this or experience it with the same measure of force that Paul did, but nonetheless, this was what occurred.

Now, did Paul just sit there doing nothing? No, he did not. There is some understanding we need in what Paul did. What did he do? It is real simple. There is nothing complicated about it. He followed God's directions and did exactly what he was told. What does that show you? Remember who this was. This was a man who was very well educated. This was a man who was an enemy of the church, who persecuted the church. He may have even been responsible for the deaths of some people, and now, here he was, taking orders from God. He submitted to God's will even though he was blinded. He nonetheless submitted to what God said to do.

Let us rehearse something here and apply it to ourselves. God, out of His love, gives us this start. He forgives us through Christ's blood, and He justifies us, thus establishing peace with One with whom we had been firmly at war. He then gives us His Spirit, thus granting us for the very first time in our life the true opportunity to choose between good and evil, with understanding. He then grants us access to Him—right into His personal Holy of Holies in heaven, not some mere copy-on-earth building.

He is more than willing to give us His Spirit, thus granting us the gifts we need to enable us, if we will choose to stop listening to the world's siren song, and quit sinning. In other words, we have to do what Paul did. He continued in the process that was started by God, and we have to follow the same pattern. Even though he did not know what he was doing, he was nonetheless impressed enough to begin following the process against the One who had formerly been his enemy. Like Paul, we did not know that we were the enemy of God. Paul did not know that he was God's enemy. He thought he was doing God's will. Before conversion it is very likely that we thought we were doing God's will; but we were not.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?

Paul quit persecuting the church. Granted, in a practical way, he could not have done any persecuting because he was blind, but what he could do, he did. He submitted, which shows that already the antagonism he had for God was beginning to leave him. Paul went through and continued the process that was begun. But there is something very interesting here, and that is, verse 2 says, "God forbid." Some Bibles translate that as, "Perish the thought!" Another is, "May it never be!"

Do you know how many times the apostle Paul uses this exclamatory expression in his epistles in relation to sin? Sixty times. Did Paul think that to not sin was important? You had better believe it! I bring this up because this world's Christianity has succeeded in communicating to its adherents one of the most devastating of all false doctrines—the one that teaches people that the works of keeping the commandments of God is not required. They insidiously twist the truth. Though works cannot assuredly save us, stopping sin in one's life is absolutely required in order to give evidence that one indeed is a Christian and to bring glory to God, and grow. I want to tie this to something I said earlier.

The only thing that Babylon can communicate is sin, and you can know the source of peoples' conduct by what they are doing. If people are continuing to sin the way the world does, you know that they are not Christians. The most obvious thing to us is that they keep on breaking the fourth commandment. But as James said, if you break one, you have broken them all. Where are they getting that communication from? The answer is, from where they have always gotten it. Though they may be sincere, and though they may in many cases be doing some very good works, they are not converted because their communication, which leads them to sin, is coming from the world. It is revealing to us the source of their communication.

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed.

The key word there is "continue." We are going to go from one place to another where it says that we have to continue. It is very important, brethren, that we do not let this communication lapse.

John 15:9 As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Colossians 1:23 If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven: whereof I Paul am made a minister.

I Timothy 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

II Timothy 3:14 But continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them.

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Colossians 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

I John 2:24 Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.

Here we are right back into the same contact that we spent so much time with earlier. John counsels that if we abide in what we have heard from the beginning, we will continue in the Father and the Son. Here then is our

challenge once God calls us. We are to continue what was started in us by the Father and the Son all the way to the end that they might make us into the image of what they already are. It is a process that has a beginning, and it has an end. Our part is to continue in it and not let sin break the relationship with the Father.

It is such a simple process in one sense. We see it in Adam and Eve. They had communication with the Father until they sinned, and then the communication was broken off and they were not allowed back into the Garden. Now it has been opened up to us and we have to make sure that we do not allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies, as he says, so that we are able to keep that relationship going.

Romans 10:10-17 For with the heart man believes unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, Whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing [by a communication, and that communication is truth], and hearing by the word of God.

Verse 17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing." Faith comes by a communication. Just change the word, but it is the same thing. And that communication is truth. Here is how we got to where we are. As I said before, I do not know the mechanics of what God does to our mind, but there is something that He does that enables us to understand His word, His communication, in a way that we never knew before.

Again, let us go back to the apostle Paul who was a well-educated man. When I say he was well educated, he was well educated in religion—in the

religion of the Jews. He knew the Old Testament backwards and forwards, but he did not know the truth of it. He knew the words. He knew things they said, but he kept putting them into the wrong place at the wrong time in his life until God did something to him, and suddenly the truth began to leap out at him from the Scriptures. The same things that he had looked at before suddenly now meant something that they did not mean to him before.

Paul did not allow it to lay dormant within him. He immediately shows in Acts 9 that he submitted to God's will even though he was blind. In other words, he still did not know very much. He was still in darkness, but he was impressed enough by what he already understood from what Jesus told him—"I am the One you are persecuting"—that he began to submit. From the submission sight was restored, but this time it was true, and it was on God's Word.

One of the humbling things is we have to readily grasp that this was entirely the work of God—a gift from Him. It did not matter how much money we had. Our sex did not matter. It did not matter what country we were in, what state we were in. It was completely and totally His choice to separate us away from the rest of the world by an understanding of truth. Now the voice that most of us heard was that of Herbert Armstrong. It was not that he was so important, but he was the one being used by God as the message-bearer to those He intended to call in order to establish the church at the end-time. It is what God did that is so important. But once He does what He does, then we begin to become more important to the process of what *we* become.

Like I said earlier, even though this is a great and wonderful gift, it places a very heavy responsibility upon us because this is our one and only chance. If I can make it simple, everything depends on whom we communicate with. **Everything** depends on the communication that we allow to come into our eyes, our ears, or any other sense.

God communicates directly with those called even though we did not know it at the time, and thus began a personal relationship. The responsibility of maintaining that relationship falls upon us in order to continue the communication afforded by the access to Him. It is right here that Bible study, prayer, meditation, and consistent obedience come to the fore, because all of these are aspects of communication essential to a vibrant relationship

based on faith, on hope, and love, with the very pinnacle of all Beings in creation.

I know it is "old hat" to exhort people to study and to pray, but brethren, it is one of the more important things we do in our life.

I John 2:17 And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides [continues or lives] forever.

The communications from the world are all around us. They are an almost constant, insistent drumbeat urging us to act and to react and fall away, stirring our tempers to offend, or to be touchy, to be easily offended, as though there are really important things that such and such should not be done to us. It moves people to anger, or to thievery, thinking that they are actually justified in stealing, or lying, or to commit adultery or fornication. It fills us with pride, with self-pity, with self-confidence, with self-righteousness in order to provide a seemingly foul foundation for any sort of sin. It makes vanities seem so important that we just have to pursue them.

In order to make the right choices it is absolutely essential to have communication of truth from God, to obey God's will. To obey God's will is what matters, as John says in I John 2:17. Communication comes either through His word as written or a direct communication by thought transfer, because we are part of a personal relationship with Him. Here is where the action begins or ends.

The action begins or ends with what we do with what is communicated to us. Make sure that you are thinking about where the communication coming to you is coming from, because the source can be either good or evil. If it is moving toward something that is not part of God's will, you know it is coming from the world and it is going to get you into trouble and maybe break the relationship.