



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

13. "Packerism"

As the Creator transform one into His own image, Packerists will find it impossible to appreciate or even understand it.

"Alfred Packer devours five of his companions." It actually happened; Packer was a cannibal. He lived about one hundred years ago. But this "headhunter" was not a native of Borneo or Africa, he lived in our own United States.

My wife and I were traveling through the beautiful state of Colorado. It is the highest state in the Union with an average altitude of 6800 feet. It has 52 of the nation's highest mountains. It has 1500 peaks over 10,000 feet, and the highest lake in the 48 contiguous states. The Continental Divide runs through the state in a north-south direction. We decided to take a spin down to the Royal Gorge, where we were intrigued with its grandness, its beauty, and its marvelous 800-foot span.

We observed a paper on the stand, "The Royal Gorge Gazette" and paid our quarter and then sat down and scanned it as we took the "incline to the bottom of the gorge." It was in this paper that we read the hideous account of Packer, who ate five men, buddies of his, if you please. It seemed almost unbelievable. Yet Packer was finally arrested, tried, and found guilty. When before sentencing the judge permitted Packer to make a statement, he said that the sweetest flesh he had ever eaten was the breast of man.

We shudder. His crime, as shocking as it was, is overshadowed by his apparent lack of repentance even after the court had convicted him. The enormity of his guilt made no impression, so far as we could learn, on this beast in human form. In this chapter we apply the label "Packerism" to all forms of selfish advantage taken of another.

Our Lord has a moral code of conduct; in the center of this law is the fourth commandment. This commandment is not merely the center of morality; it contains the key to morality, namely the creative power of our God. Only as man receives a new heart by virtue of our Lord's creative power can he be safe from "Packerism" in one form or another under all circumstances and conditions. He will devour others, either by gossip, selfish business deals, or physical violence.

The great apostle Paul wrote, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." What a mighty statement!

The apostle continues, "Now we have received. not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." May the Holy Spirit bless us as we give earnest heed to this statement. Paul then climaxes this thought with these words: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:11, 12, 14.

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There we have it: Only as the Holy Spirit creates in man the new birth, and only as man continues to be a new creature in Christ Jesus, can he understand and appreciate God's morality. Jesus declared, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

At another time He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8. How can one see God or live a completely "at-heart" moral life without the new birth? He cannot.

It is because the unconverted heart cannot understand the born-again Christian that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." This is why a son will be "at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law." Matthew 10:36, 35.

No, the unconverted heart cannot harmonize with Christ, His kingdom, or its principles. For the spiritually minded followers of Christ to turn from their relationship with the Lord in order to find peace through compromise is to deny Christ and all that His spiritual kingdom stands for.

Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matthew 10:37-39.

Alfred Packer is an example of the natural man's not appreciating the high standards of morality. We understand that recently a group of moderns "exonerated" Packer for his misdeeds. Why? Because the natural man cannot appreciate spiritual standards of moral conduct beyond a certain point. Even men who are outwardly circumspect may, like Packer, be at heart vicious monsters.

The apostle Paul, before his conversion, was outwardly blameless. But he was a murderer of the worst sort. We have been in lands where there appears to be a strict kind of morality; but when certain events transpire, the real nature of the unconverted man comes out like that of a devouring lion.

The unity, the fellowship, which our Maker brings, is not a conforming harmony, it is a transforming unity. The apostle Paul contrasted the two in these words: "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

If you will observe once again this text of Scripture, you will see that it is stating a great truth. It declares that in order to prove what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" we must be "transformed." There is no shortcut. Harmony and unity based on any other foundation is superficial, unstable. In time someone is sure to devour another.

Take Mrs. Cole and Gerald Dell for example. Mr. Dell was a Christian businessman. Mrs. Cole was a sensuous, unstable, untrustworthy woman. Yet one day Mrs. Cole began a whispering campaign against Mr. Dell.

After several months of this low-keyed gossip, it came to the attention of Mr. Dell. Mr. Dell opened his ledger and spread out the facts before Mrs. Cole. There they were in black and white. Mr. Dell was happy, in his heart, that he could thus satisfy Mrs. Cole and bring to an end her unworthy and untrue gossip throughout the community.

But Mr. Dell was in for a disappointment. No fact convinced Mrs. Cole. No explanation, though backed up with the clearest evidence, changed Mrs. Cole's mind.

Mr. Dell and Mrs. Cole belonged to a Christian church. They were often found in the same sanctuary. But their standards were hemispheres apart.

Mr. Dell prayed much to be able to help Mrs. Cole, but in vain. Why? Because her own heart was unable to credit another as being more unselfish than she. Later Mrs. Cole herself left the community under a

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cloud of moral turpitude. Like Alfred Packer, she devoured others, only later to be exposed for what she really was.

If it seems incredible that an unworthy character should put forth every effort to demean a righteous businessman, take a look at the religious nation of Christ's day. After three years of ceaseless acts of mercy, of forgiveness, and of love on the part of Christ, a group of religious people cried out, "Away with him." They wagged their heads at Him and spat upon Him. They placed a wreath of long Palestinian thorns on His brow. As one wretch smote Him on the crown, the thorns pierced His temples. Blood trickled down His holy brow and dropped on the pavement below. They chose to release one of the most vicious murderers, actually a notorious gangster, in place of the pure Lamb of God.

Why? Because "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. This is Packerism.

This helps us to understand why in the last days of human history he "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" is able to attract many to his banner, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

"Packerism" is selfishness at work in destroying others.

On the other hand there are those who are not deceived, whose hearts have received "salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

It will require this divine sanctification to fit God's faithful ones to pass successfully through the coming "mark-of-the-beast" persecution. But having His Spirit, they can claim the promise of Isaiah 54:17, that no weapon formed against them will prosper.

The natural man cannot understand Christ-centered ones. Yet at the same time he may consider himself very wise in raising skeptical questions. Every now and then some individual comes to us and asks, "Where did God come from?"

We sometimes give such a questioner two examples of the inability of man to so much as begin to understand this truth. The lesser is that of my own study of algebra. We were studying under a teacher who was not well-versed in the subject. He sometimes worked on a problem for hours without success. One evening he struggled with me on algebra for the whole study period without solving so much as one problem. It was not the fault of algebra. It was the fault of his and my own mind.

The more appropriate example of man's lack of capacity to know God might be that of a dog. If you were to give a dog music lessons for twenty years, why could he not read the notes? The answer is simple. His mind is not capable of understanding the notes. One might explain a thousand times to the dog every rudiment and truth about the bars and measures of music, but without success.

The fact that an unbelieving, unchristian mate cannot understand spiritual things and therefore persecutes the other does not, however, give license to the Christian mate to descend to the use of carnal weapons, such as argument, belittling, or retaliation. The Christian may at times be attempting an impossibility in trying to indoctrinate the unspiritual mate.

Why? Because as we have seen, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The Christian solution is to manifest a humble and meek attitude. Saith the Scriptures, " Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [behavior] of the wives." 1 Peter 3:1.

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"Packerism" is not cured by debate, denunciation, or forced instruction. No amount of argument has ever brought harmony. The unconverted mate may be won without the word, or without a word, by his observing a "meek and quiet spirit" in you. You cannot argue him into a new life, but you can reach him through your example. Outward adorning won't do it. And to employ "Packerism" to cure "Packerism" doesn't work either.

Again, what will convert the unchristian mate? "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." "That, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation [behavior] in Christ." 1 Peter 3:9, 16.

It was not the sermon of the martyr Stephen that was the beginning of the conversion of Saul, the persecutor; it was his behavior. Saul was holding the garments of those who stoned Stephen when that man of God "kneeled down. and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:60.

The Holy Spirit used Stephen's shining behavior to convict Saul and begin the process which would transform him into the apostle Paul.

How foolish for professed Christians to seek harmony either through compromise with the world or through argument, controversy, or unwanted instruction! True unity, we emphasize, comes not through conformation but rather through spiritual transformation.

As stated earlier, we are not called to denounce those who misunderstand us. The crucified Christ did not engage in vituperatives. (insulting words) Neither did His martyr Stephen. Both asked the Father to forgive their murderers.

And their prayers were answered in a marvelous way, some time after Pentecost "a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." And not long after Stephen's death, Saul the persecutor "fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'" Acts 9:4.

What a marvelous conversion! To understand that the way to win others to unity is by transformation of life rather than by compromise of conscience is of the utmost importance.

Yet in avoiding the one extreme, let us not fall into the opposite error; namely, a temptation to assume that all who misunderstand us are unconverted. This is not necessarily so. Human communication is faulty, unreliable.

Have you perhaps, played the game called 'gossip'? At one end of the line a person whispers a sentence into the ear of the one standing next to him. No one else can hear what is whispered in that ear. That one in turn whispers the same sentence to the next one in line. And he to the next and so on down the line. Each one repeats as nearly as possible the exact words that he thought he heard.

One day I united with a group in playing this game. At one end of the line I whispered, "It has been raining hard today." By the time it had been repeated several times it came out at the other end of the line. "Cecil Maynard is here today." Yet everyone repeated word for word what he thought he heard. Cecil Maynard was one of the men playing the game.

The Word of God gives us no excuse for engaging in "Packerism" or in using carnal weapons to combat it; rather it states positive rules of Christian communication and conduct. Some of these follow:

1. It is not given us to determine the spiritual status of another. Jesus made this clear in His parable of the wheat and the tares. After the farmer had sowed wheat an enemy sowed tares. As the tares sprang up in the wheat, the servants asked the owner of the field if they should go out into the field and pluck up the tares. But the owner of the farm replied. "Nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the

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wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Matthew 13.

An example of the difficulty of determining whether a professed Christian is genuine is that of Judas, had he died before the last journey to Jerusalem, would have probably gone down in history as a great church leader, a spiritual giant for God. Yet all the while he was at heart a traitor. His real character did not surface until the last night before the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus did not expose him, however, during those three years. Yet Jesus knew, as He said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John 6:70.

On the other-hand, Peter, who denied his Master with cursing and swearing, came through like pure gold and preached the sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Aren't you glad that the responsibility for judging character is not left with us?

"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" John 5:22. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather. that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Romans 14:13.

2. If we do engage in the judging of motives, we may ourselves come up "weighed and wanting." This is because of the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Therefore when we see a mote in our brother's eye, it may be because a "beam" of selfishness is in our own eye. Matthew 7.

3. If we think our brother has done wrong, we are not to tell others. Rather we are to "tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Matthew 18:15.

"Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself: and discover not a secret to another." Proverbs 25:9. To tell others first is to be guilty of talebearing. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." Leviticus 19:16.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Proverbs 11:13. "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Proverbs 26:20.

"He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Proverbs 17:9.

"A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." Proverbs 16:28.

4. When we go to talk things over with an individual who we think has wronged us, we are to follow carefully this instruction: "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" Galatians 6:1.

"He that is slow to anger appeaseth strife." Proverbs 15:18.

"The meek will he guide in judgment: the meek will he teach his way." Psalm 25:9.

"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." Proverbs 19:11.

5. For church councils and committees of consultation as well as for individuals, we have this instruction: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3.

For an individual to cling to his own opinion where personal judgment is involved against the united judgment of his brethren, can be disastrous to his spiritual life. We must never forget that at one time

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Lucifer was "perfect." But of him the Word of God declares. "Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." Ezekiel 28:15, 17.

I think we do no violence to the text when we state that it does not pay to be too "bright," thinking our judgment superior to that of the united wisdom of our peers. This can corrupt both our own wisdom and our spiritual life.

Lucifer's attitude was "I will ascend." But Jesus states that the one who exalts self will eventually be abased. Therefore it does not pay to be conscience for others or a spiritual know-it-all.

During one of our series of meetings a lay preacher came to our motel room. He wanted to share a problem. He had been a member of his church council and in a certain matter that came before the group he ventilated his opinions but was voted down. Again when the matter came before the whole congregation in a regular business meeting, he was voted down once more.

He had a perfect right to share his opinions—in fact, probably a duty, for he was an elected officer of that church. But then he decided to try to gather to his side every member of the church possible and thus force the church to rescind its action. In doing so he endeavored to destroy the influence of the most faithful church leaders. He was guilty of "Packerism."

In a show of deep sincerity he came to seek our sympathy and backing. When he was through with his story, he asked me. "What would you do were you in my place?" To help make more certain that I would side with him, he gave me a little rundown of his abilities and capabilities. He told how he had been invited to speak in several churches of the area for many years. He had also been a local elder of that church for two full decades.

When he asked for my opinion, I prayerfully answered that I was not absolutely sure what I would do. This is because the Bible says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12. But I offered to share with him what I should do. The Bible says to confess our faults to one another. James 5:16.

I knew that there was to be a meeting at the church that very afternoon. I pointed out that, even though he had done right in stating his convictions both in the church council and the church business meeting, yet his activities leading to disunity after this were improper. He had set out to belittle and destroy the godly guardians of the church. Therefore, I suggested that, since the whole church knew of his disuniting activities, he might ask for a few moments of time that very afternoon and apologize before the church. Thus his page would be white once more, and the Lord could bless him in his Christian life.

Like the rich young ruler who came to Christ and went away sorrowfully, this elder hung his head saying, "I have not come to that place in my Christian experience yet."

This man had come to the place where he could speak fluently on various doctrines of the Bible, but he had not learned the first principles of Christian harmony.

6. In considering what might be the basis for others' apparent unkind attitudes toward us, we should study most carefully to learn whether we ourselves have failed to observe the simple principles of harmony.

For example, Lucy, a teen-age girl, came to us while we were holding a series of meetings at a boarding school. Lucy was extremely in earnest. She had a problem with another girl in the school, and the apparent alienation existing between them brought tears to Lucy's eyes. She wanted desperately to iron out the differences. So she sought our aid. It might be, Lucy suggested, that we could say something publicly that would open the other girl's eyes and help her to change her ways so harmony could be restored.

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"This girl," Lucy began, "is in the dormitory. She wants to be a friend of mine, and we were friends for a while. Now I have cooled off toward her, and she cannot understand why. She comes into my room and, without so much as asking, takes one of my dresses out of the closet, or my shoes, anything she wants. Then she goes around the school with my clothes on and wonders why I have cooled off toward her. Pastor Coon, will you please tell the kids not to take things from others' rooms which do not belong to them! I want to be friends with this girl, but I cannot warm up to her when she does not recognize the simple principles of integrity."

Lucy's dormitory friend was not eating her as Alfred Packer did, but she was devouring her things. It is the same basic principle of not recognizing simple morality even though the manner in which it manifests itself is different from that of Alfred Packer.

Recently we were in conversation with a Christian businessman. During our visit we discussed Christian business ethics, particularly in the area of paying accounts promptly. This gentleman gave us some amazing information. He spoke of several Christians who were store managers who made it a practice not to pay their current obligations for two or three months unless a penalty was attached. In discussing this principle with one of our teammates, she said that in a business school she attended it was made clear that this is often the practice of unscrupulous businessmen.

You cannot put your finger on this as dishonest. Neither do you want to point it out to these businessmen for fear they will close out their dealings with you and give others their business. So it leaves the honest small businessman in the middle of a situation where certain professed Christians are less Christian in their business dealings than are many who make no profession of Christianity.

Is it any wonder that the church is so powerless! Can we expect the Holy Spirit to be poured out in a desired unity which ignores Christian business ethics? Can such principles be blessed by our heavenly Father? Can Jesus bless with His presence those who, while professing the name of our Lord, ignore the simplest principles of Christian conduct in business dealings? Can we blame a fellow Christian for pulling away from a superficial call to harmony by Christians who practice financial cannibalism; "Packerism"?

If any of our readers have engaged in shady business dealings, why not apologize and make restitution? If you are guilty of "Packerism," won't you fall on your knees with us and pray?

Dear Lord, how unworthy am I to approach Thee. But I come through the Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to fulfill Thy promise to deliver me from this devilish disease of destructive criticism. I believe Thee, because it is "impossible for God to lie." Hebrews 6:18. And I thank Thee that I have now received deliverance from that demoniac spirit that devours men, even those more righteous than myself. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PACKERISM

Packerism oft devours
Sincere Christians who confide
In this monster—vicious beast—
Who is walking by their side.

He is gloating that their breast
Soon will serve a sumptuous meal;
Yet his words of fun and jest
Oft obscure his hellish zeal.

Christians, no antipathy
Cherish toward this cannibal;
Theirs is but the simple plea

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That their love his lust will heal.

Sinful greedy selfish man
Cannot understand the pure;
He has followed Satan's plan,
Neither been in Christ secure.

To your knees then, Christian friend,
That our Lord will give new hearts,
Thus may "Packerism" end,
Felled by heaven's love-tipped darts.

Reflection: In the chapter just finished you behold most briefly the great controversy between Christ and Satan. You may wish to study carefully the following seven great facts. Then go through the chapter and review them.

Seven Great Bible Facts:

1. From Genesis, chapter one, through to the last book of the Bible, our Lord is pictured as the Creator. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1; "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1.

2. Satan, on the other hand, is pictured as the destroyer. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15.

3. Satan was not merely the first liar; he was the first murderer too. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44.

4. Christ, the Creator, is life and "truth". "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:1-3; "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." 14:6.

5. Satan's followers can be so deceived that they will lie about and kill God's faithful followers. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Matthew 5:11; "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." John 16:2.

6. To protect His children, the same Spirit that "moved on the face of the waters" at Creation's dawn is promised to bring comfort and guidance to His faithful children. "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Genesis 1:2; "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." 13.

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7. The reason why people cannot understand the spiritual motives of His children is that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" 1 Corinthians 2:14.