

Exposing Covetousness

(An Allegory)

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FOREWORD:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” ¹ **Jesus Christ**

Narrator: Truth, Reason, Patience, and Charity were having a conversation with Sincerely Seeking, Mr. Single Eye, and Slowly But Surely. However, Carnal Reasoning and his dear friend, Mr. Muddy Questions, sought to merge their thoughts into the dialogue, and thus overtake, or rather quench and subdue the voice of Truth and His companions. Their conversation stirred many, and became of interest to others who later joined. The disciples of Truth are: Reason, Patience, and Charity. Sincerely Seeking and Mr. Single Eye are twins from the City of Light, their uncle being Slowly but Surely. It goes as follows:

Truth: *Sell that ye have and give alms.* ²

Mr. Single Eye: Whatever you want me to sell and give as alms I'll do it.

Sincerely Seeking: I can think of a few things to sell, but can you give me a general idea of where to start?

Reason: You can begin with the things you don't need and things that are not useful to the kingdom of God. Think of it: you are commanded to sell what you have and give alms. Therefore it is unlawful to keep for yourselves what you do not need and what is not useful to the kingdom of God. In fact, if you are unwilling to sell what you do not need or what is useless to the kingdom of God, and give alms, because you wish to keep

¹ Revelation 3:14-19

² Luke 12:33

what is “yours”, you are covetous. If then, you are forbidden to keep these things, it is most certain that you cannot purchase them again.

Sincerely Seeking: Not to be contentious, but if it is unlawful for me to purchase or keep these things, then would it not also be unlawful for me to sell them?

Mr. Muddy Questions: Excellent observation Sincerely Seeking.

Sincerely Seeking: I was seeking an answer, not making a statement, Mr. Muddy Questions.

Reason: Only those things you possess which are inherently evil you should destroy. Just because something is not needful doesn't make it inherently evil. Begin selling what you don't need and is not inherently evil.

Mr. Single Eye: Very reasonable. I see exactly what you are saying. I know exactly where to start. I can sell my knickknacks, collectibles, hobbies, recreation equipment, play toys, and never purchase any again for myself, my family, or for anyone else; also, I can give my vacation money to the poor. I know I can begin with these things because I know I do not need them, nor are they useful to the kingdom of God.

Mr. Muddy Questions: *Begin with what we do not need?* Who could really know what he, much less anyone else does or does not need? What is a vacation? How many miles does one need to travel before it is classified as a vacation? Also, who are you to think that you can identify covetousness as if it were possible to actually know what is inside of a person's heart?

Carnal Reasoning: My thoughts exactly! There are hundreds of thousands of things available for us today. How could we ever possibly figure out everything we do or do not need? You are opening up a Pandora's Box. That is an unreasonable place to begin. That is the beginning of a journey to nowhere, and may very well overwhelm little ones and cause them to stumble.

Truth: **Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**³

Carnal Reasoning: Bless God! All of the things that the Gentiles are seeking after (vacations, dainties, decorations, hobbies, collectibles, play toys, knickknacks, entertainments, recreation equipment, etc.) are added to us because we have sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What God has added to us we may freely enjoy. Hence, He gives such wonderful gifts to His children!

Truth: **It is more blessed to give than to receive.**⁴

Charity: Vacations, dainties, decorations, hobbies, collectibles, play toys, knickknacks, and recreation equipment are not inherently evil and would be lawful to enjoy if the world you lived in were a paradise where none lacked any good and necessary thing, none were lost, and all were loved. But, it is evil to use your excess on yourself while many are in need; to live in luxury while many (in the world you live in) are in want of basic

³ Matthew 6:31-33

⁴ Acts 20:35

necessities. For even Christ did not please Himself⁵, nor did the King of kings come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.⁶ “The bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood.”⁷ Poverty is the worst form of violence. Poverty continues to exist primarily because men are selfish. Selfishness kills more people than all wars and is the root of the problem.

Reason: “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” These things your heavenly Father knows you have need of. However, your vacations, decorations, hobbies, collectibles, play toys, knickknacks, and recreation equipment, your Heavenly Father knows you do not need them; these, you cannot eat, drink, or use for clothing, but, extending the list of needs you have added these foolish luxuries to yourself. And concerning your dainties the Scripture says, “Be not desirous of his [a ruler’s] dainties: for they *are* deceitful meat,”⁸ and, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”⁹ If such is the tenor of scripture concerning dainties and food, how much more careful ought we to be to forsake once and for all dainties and so-called foods which are universally understood to be unprofitable and useless! The desires for all of these aforementioned things are of such an evil that the whole body becomes filled with darkness as a consequence of pursuing them.¹⁰

Patience: “Listen, then, to the works in which evil desire slays the servants of God: Foremost of all is the desire after another’s wife or husband, and after extravagance, and many useless dainties and drinks, and many other foolish luxuries; for all luxury is foolish and empty in the servants of God. These, then, are the evil desires which slay the servants of God. For this evil desire is the daughter of the devil. You must refrain from evil desires, that by refraining ye may live to God. But as many as are mastered by them, and do not resist them, will perish at last, for these desires are fatal. Put you on, then, the desire of righteousness; and arming yourself with the fear of the Lord, resist them. For the fear of the Lord dwells in good desire. But if evil desire see you armed with the fear of God, and resisting it, it will flee far from you, and it will no longer appear to you, for it fears your armour.”¹¹

Mr. Single Eye: God have mercy on me! How thoughtless I have been! How careless with the blessings of God!

Carnal Reasoning: But the apostle said, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”¹² Hence, when he uses the words “all things”, he apparently includes all things, such as: vacations, decorations, hobbies, collectibles, play toys, knickknacks, and recreation equipment.

Reason: The same apostle said earlier in the same chapter, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”¹³

⁵ Romans 15:3

⁶ Matthew 20:28

⁷ Wisdom of Sirach 31:21

⁸ Proverbs 23:1-3

⁹ Romans 14:17

¹⁰ Matthew 6:19-24

¹¹ The Shepherd of Hermas Book 2, Commandment 12th, chapters 1 & 2

¹² 1 Timothy 6:17

¹³ 1 Timothy 6:8

Mr. Muddy Questions: Let us be content with food and clothing only? How are we supposed to work with our hands if we have no tools, as Paul also counselled? How can we cook or eat without any utensils to cook or eat with, and thus bid a feast for the poor and needy as Jesus said? Are we to only eat that which requires no special utensils, such as fruits and nuts from trees and bushes? Are we to only work the labor which requires no tools?

Truth: **For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.**¹⁴

Reason: Will you ask for a more detailed account of what is needful before forsaking that which you know to be needless? If you walk in the light, then more shall be given. But if you do not follow, then the light will go on before you and leave you in the darkness of your muddy questions.

Charity: You ought to be content with food and clothing alone. Millions around the world suffer, even as we speak, from not having these necessary things, and would you justify taking a vacation?

Patience: Though you, Mr. Muddy Questions and Carnal Reasoning, have neither done nor spoken well, I will attempt to explain to you what is meant by, “Sell that ye have and give alms.” If you would listen to Truth, you would hear Him say, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” hence, if what you are pursuing has no involvement with God’s kingdom and righteousness it ought to be forsaken. This is why Reason and Charity have told you to forsake your vacations, useless dainties, decorations, hobbies, collectibles, play toys, knickknacks, and recreation equipment. These are all things you do not need. Follow the light, not your muddy questions, lest you become guilty of blood, for, “The bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood.”

Carnal Reasoning: My debts are paid, as well as all of the wages of my laborers. I have defrauded none. I work hard for my money and I didn’t get here easily. Solomon, wiser than all men, said, “That every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God.”¹⁵ I work hard and I have; why then should I not enjoy?

Charity: That expression, “I possess, and possess in abundance: why then should I not enjoy?” is suitable neither to the man, nor to society. But more worthy of love is that: “I have: why should I not give to those who need?” For such an one—one who fulfils the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—is perfect. For this is the true luxury—the treasured wealth. But that which is squandered on foolish lusts is to be reckoned waste, not expenditure. For God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious it is to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments! Whom have lands ever benefited so much as conferring favors has? It remains for us, therefore, to do away with this allegation: Who, then, will have the more sumptuous things, if all select the simpler? Men, I would say, if they make use of them impartially and indifferently. But if it is impossible for all to exercise self-restraint, yet, with a view to the use of what is

¹⁴ Matthew 13:12

¹⁵ Ecclesiastes 5:19

necessary, we must seek after what can be most readily procured, bidding a long farewell to these superfluities.”¹⁶

Mr. Single Eye: I am guilty. I have used what God has given to me on selfish pleasures that had nothing to do with His kingdom. If only I had thought about this earlier, how many would have benefitted! But now I am guilty of blood!

Sincerely Seeking: Ahhh. Me too Mr. Single Eye, me too. Though I have often thought about these things, and even took some action, my faith was weak, and I was hindered by the unbelief of others. I am not trying to justify myself, but the only examples I had of such a life were dead. I had great desire to live this way, but knew of none presently living it. Verily God was birthing this life in my heart, but the birds of the air, beholding my discouragement, easily snatched the seed God was planting.¹⁷ When I saw others’ unbelief and obstinacy I doubted. I looked for that city set on a hill but did not find it.¹⁸ But oh what a foolish man I have been! How unwise to compare myself to those I can see, rather than to Christ and His apostles whom I cannot see.¹⁹

Mr. Muddy Questions: Who’s to say that a vacation is a foolish lust, or that hobbies are to be reckoned waste, and that decorations are not expenditure? This whole list is mud to my ears, and, “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”²⁰ Did not your ears itch²¹ when Reason, Charity, and Patience were speaking? If we entertain their words would we not be straying from the *simplicity* that is in Christ?

Mr. Single Eye and Sincerely Seeking: Our ears did not itch when we heard the truth, but our hearts did begin to burn within us. The message of Truth and His companions is *simply* Christ, what is so complicated about that?

Mr. Muddy Questions: But where do you find Christ in the scriptures speaking of dainties, vacations, hobbies, and decorations? For I have found these things both profitable to myself and to His kingdom.

Mr. Single Eye and Sincerely Seeking: Though he may not have specifically addressed these things, you do not see Him participating in them.

Mr. Muddy Questions: You err brethren, you do err. At the wedding in Cana, *after men had well drunk*, did He not turn the water into wine and have it served to the people? If therefore self-indulgence is such an issue then surely He would not participate, and especially use His power to contribute to it!

Reason: Not only is there mud in your ears, but truly, mud is in your eyes. For the scripture *does not say that the guests had well drunk*, but the ruler of the feast simply stated, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until

¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, book 2, chapter 13

¹⁷ Luke 8:12

¹⁸ Matthew 5:14

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 10:12

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:3

²¹ 2 Timothy 4:3

now.”²² This he said as a general observation of *every man*, not as an observation of *Christ* or even as a general description of the wedding.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Though there are numerous other examples, such as the accusations of Christ being a glutton and winebibber,²³ I will refrain. It is enough that I and countless others I fellowship with all find these things to be both enjoyable to us and useful to the kingdom of God.

Carnal Reasoning: Indeed! I have met many interesting people on vacation and, after all, I want to see the creation of God and behold His works; my children and I have quality family time constructing and painting model airplanes which costs a measly \$300 each year. Also, many neighbors have complemented me on the Christian art I have used to decorate the interior and exterior of my house and lawn; because of these things I have many opportunities to witness to them.

Truth: **Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, which is hypocrisy.**²⁴

Sincerely Seeking: What is the leaven of the Pharisees?

Patience: The leaven of the Pharisees is their doctrine, which is hypocrisy.

Sincerely Seeking: I understand that I must beware of hypocrisy, but what doctrine were they teaching? I don't recall reading much about their doctrine.

Patience: Their doctrine is a cunningly devised theology designed by Carnal Reasoning but framed by Self-Will and Covetousness in order to justify themselves before men. It is the excuses they have established to release them from all obligation and duty concerning various commandments and the mind of God while appearing righteous before men.

Sincerely Seeking: Such as Carnal Reasoning's explanation for his vacations, decorations, and hobbies?

Patience: Yes. Rather than selling his decorations and giving alms, he keeps them. He says that the Christian art gives him opportunity to witness to others. However, you don't need art to witness. He could knock on doors, or preach aloud. He could obey the command to sell his decorations and use the money to help the poor, or to print gospel signs, literature, and tracts. To further your understanding of the doctrine of the Pharisees, here are a couple more examples:

1) The apostle taught, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"²⁵ There are often brothers and sisters who are struggling to pay off certain debts. They made poor choices in the past but are working hard to correct them. They have forsaken all of the vain pleasures previously mentioned. They miss time with their families, time with the brethren preaching, and time studying the Bible and praying because they must work themselves out of their debt. The Pharisees see their brother in need, that his wife

²² John 2:1-11

²³ Matthew 11:16-19

²⁴ Luke 12:1

²⁵ 1 John 3:16-17

and children need him, and though they have this world's goods they refuse to help him, reasoning that the brother got himself into this mess and that the struggle is good for him, that it will help him become a better man. However, the commandment is, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren." When Jesus saw us in our need, He was moved with compassion and gave His life to redeem us from death. He did not say, "You got yourself into this mess; now it is up to you to get yourself out!" This they do not only concerning debts, but also with other needs of their brethren, and (or) the poor.

2) Instead of obeying the command to love one's enemies,²⁶ the Pharisees, under the guise of religion, fight their enemies maintaining that they are providing for their own, and for those of their own household,²⁷ and that if they do not fight to defend then they are worse than an infidel. Thus they blaspheme God who does not (according to their interpretation) provide for His own. As it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."²⁸ Again, they show themselves to be ignorant of the power of God, for the apostle testified in the following verse, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."²⁹ God provides His own with the resurrection of eternal life, and in this way they are more than conquerors. As one of His own said centuries ago, "You can inflict no lasting evil upon us; we can only do it to ourselves by proving to be wicked people. You can kill us but you cannot harm us."³⁰

3) Many receive valuable gifts or inherit large sums of money, land, or other possessions. These reason that, since they did not purchase them, neither did they have any desire for them prior to receiving them, that they are therefore guiltless for keeping and enjoying them for themselves. Moreover, they reason within their hearts thinking, "Gifts are meant to be received. I don't want to offend anyone by rejecting or selling their gifts. Rather than grief or offense, I intend to bring the givers joy by happily enjoying them!"

Mr. Single Eye: Carnal Reasoning, You may have met interesting people on your vacations, and witnessed to folks as a result of your decorations; however, you say these things as Judas your father, not because you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, but as Judas bare the bag and took from what was put therein, so you, following his dissimulation under a pretense of caring for the lost and poor maintain your use of these things as just. You spend \$300 each year on model airplanes and paint to color them. You maintain that it is lawful because it allows good family time. But as Christians, what better way to spend time with family than preparing small meals for the poor, visiting the elderly, praying, reading and memorizing scripture? Your model airplanes remain fixed upon your shelves, and the dust of them shall be witness against you, and they shall soon be destroyed by the fire. You have heaped up vanities together for the last days. Behold, the sustenance of the poor and needy, the widow and fatherless, which is of you kept back by fraud, cry; and the cries of them which have suffered because of your covetousness are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, not to see the Creator God, but as you said, the creation of God, because that is where your heart is; you have nourished your heart with the

²⁶ Matthew 5:44

²⁷ 1 Timothy 5:8

²⁸ Romans 8:36

²⁹ Romans 8:37

³⁰ Justin Martyr, 1st Apology, chapter 2

flatteries of those who adore your lifeless decorations, as in a day of slaughter.³¹ Yea, you have sought not only vacations, hobbies, and decorations, but collectibles, useless dainties, recreation equipment, play toys, and knickknacks.

Carnal Reasoning: Who made you a ruler or a judge of such matters?³² You're not God, you are neither able nor have authority to define necessity or what is useful for His kingdom and what is not, for the kingdom is not yours, but God's. You are just following Charity and Reason. You were not saying these things until you started listening to them.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Yeah. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."³³

Truth: **Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?**³⁴

Reason: "We don't need rules," you say. This is the same as saying, "We don't need sound judgment." However, where there is no sound judgment all that is left is confusion, each man doing what is right in his own eyes, and God is not the author of that.³⁵ Besides, it is better to be transparent, and to teach the truth, which you call rules, than to keep them unspoken, pretend we keep only to the scriptures, and cause men to stumble over them later.

Mr. Single Eye: The prophet said, "Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment."³⁶ It displeases God when we do not judge what is right! Moreover, the apostle exclaimed, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?"³⁷ If we are to follow Truth, we must recognize who Truth is.³⁸ And having recognized Him we must choose both to speak and to do what is true regardless of consequences.³⁹

Sincerely Seeking: I agree with Mr. Single Eye.

Mr. Muddy Questions: But where does the Scripture mention hobbies, decorations, and vacations? By what authority have you judged these things?

Sincerely Seeking: I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority these things ought to be forsaken: Why do you need your vacations? Why your hobbies and collectibles? Your

³¹ James 5:1-5

³² Acts 7:27

³³ Romans 14:4

³⁴ Luke 12:57

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 14:33

³⁶ Isaiah 59:15

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:1-3

³⁸ John 18:37

³⁹ Justin Martyr, 1 Apology, chapter 2

answer must be clear and free from mud, which, if you are able to deliver such an answer, I will consent to your use of hobbies and collectibles; to your enjoyment of vacations.

Mr. Muddy Questions: I follow only what is clear in the Scriptures. What the Scriptures clearly say, I do. What the Scriptures clearly tell me to avoid, I avoid. I don't have a Porsche for my car, nor do I have a two million dollar home. If a man desired to fellowship with me who owned these I would talk to him about his expensive car and home. If he wouldn't listen and forsake them, but refused and justified himself, then I would treat him as a covetous man in idolatry.

Carnal Reasoning: Amen. No mud in that reply! We must be careful not to add to or take away from the Scriptures. If the Scriptures say, "No covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ,"⁴⁰ then he must sell his Porsche and two million dollar home.

Reason: The Scriptures do not specifically mention Porsches and two million dollar homes. You claim to receive your authority from the Scripture, yet you refuse to recognize all of the aforementioned vain pleasures of this world as condemned by Scripture. Earlier you asked, "By what authority have you judged these things: hobbies, decorations, and vacations?" To this I ask, by what authority have you defined a man unwilling to forsake his Porsche and two million dollar home as covetous? Which if you tell me, I will tell by what authority we have told you to forsake your needless hobbies, decorations, and vacations.

Carnal Reasoning: You are comparing apples to oranges. Any man with a single eye may easily discern the difference between what we're saying and what you are saying. By your answering a question with a question, seeking to elevate yourself to the place of Jesus, I perceive that you love to have the preeminence.

Truth: *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*⁴¹

Mr. Single Eye: Carnal Reasoning, you are mistaken; Reason is not comparing apples to oranges, but rather a large apple to a little apple.

Truth: *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*⁴²

Patience: It doesn't take authority to define necessity. All you need is a single eye which many avoid using lest they become guilty of their own definitions. Thus Mr. Muddy Questions, you have clearly avoided the enquiry of Sincerely Seeking. For you did not explain to him why you need your vacations, hobbies, and decorations.

Narrator: A wealthy young man stood listening to the conversation for a time. His nose was directed upwards as he began to speak. Lukewarm is his name.

Lukewarm: I thank God that I am not like other men, such as Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions, for they don't fast, and they only tithe little of all they possess. But I, again say I, from my abundance, give

⁴⁰ Ephesians 5:5

⁴¹ John 9:41

⁴² Luke 16:10-11

abundantly into the treasury. For I give 90% of all I possess and live off the rest. So I buy dainties, knickknacks, collectibles, and other ornaments for my house and lawn; I purchase tools and resources for my hobbies, and enjoy entertainment and a vacation from time to time. The fact still remains: I give more than many do in a lifetime. It is enough that I give 90% of what I earn to charitable causes. I give far more than I consume. May I not enjoy a meager 10% of my income?

Truth: **Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.**

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Charity: Many give of their abundance,⁴⁴ many love those who love them,⁴⁵ many give to those who can repay,⁴⁶ many lend hoping to receive as much again,⁴⁷ many are willing to go one mile,⁴⁸ however, the mark of a true Christian is to love until it hurts.⁴⁹ Hence, it is not how much you give, but how much you have left over, Lukewarm. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.⁵⁰ For example, if it is within your power to help 10, and you help only 6, because helping the ten you could no longer afford and have time for your entertainments, vacations, fashion, jewelry, hobbies, etc. then you sin a great sin. Did not the apostle say, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints”?⁵¹

Carnal Reasoning: Lukewarm may be better than I, but you are taking that scripture out of context.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Indeed, that poor widow was commended for what she gave, not commanded.

Lukewarm: Against what law do I sin, for doing good to six, instead of ten?

Truth: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.**⁵²

Reason: Against the law of charity you sin. If it were not in your power to do them good; if you were not withholding from the other four their sustenance for the sake of idolatry; if you needed your vacations, hobbies, fashion, jewelry, and entertainments to live, and to serve the Kingdom of God, then you would be guiltless and free from their blood. But as it has been demonstrated, you do not need them.

Lukewarm: Explain to me then how Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions are wrong concerning you taking the account of the poor widow out of context. For from what I perceive she was commended for her generous gift of all she had, she was not commanded. Even Paul himself said, “Every man according as he

⁴³ Luke 21:3

⁴⁴ Luke 21:3

⁴⁵ Luke 6:32

⁴⁶ Luke 14

⁴⁷ Luke 6:34

⁴⁸ Matthew 5:38-43, Matthew 7:13-14

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:38-48

⁵⁰ James 4:17

⁵¹ Ephesians 5:3

⁵² Mark 12:31, Matthew 25:31-46

purposeth in his heart, *so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver,*⁵³ and I both purposefully and cheerfully give an outstanding 90% of my income to God.

Patience: Some are lukewarm because they, knowing the good they ought to do, are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;⁵⁴ these render much thanks to God from their lips; they serve God some of the time, and use some of their resources for His kingdom. The rest of the time they serve mammon, and by means of their self-indulgence defraud the poor.⁵⁵ However, others are lukewarm from listening to the doctrine of Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions. They would follow Truth but remain neither hot nor cold being hindered by those which “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”⁵⁶ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose glory is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)⁵⁷ The poor widow indeed was commended. Nevertheless, we are instructed to give even as she, which if we refuse, and do not strive for that, we do despite to the spirit of grace.

Lukewarm: What! Prove it, but only from the scriptures.

Truth: **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**⁵⁸

Patience: The apostle wrote to the church of Corinth: “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves.”⁵⁹ The church of Macedonia was a picture of grace. During the first century there were severe famines, persecutions, and poverty. Not only was Christianity unpopular and despised, but it was also against the law and punishable by death! This church, during a great trial of affliction and deep poverty, gave generously and joyfully. For, they took no thought for tomorrow, but rejoiced, inasmuch as they became partakers of Christ's sufferings.⁶⁰ If this church's love was so hot that they gave what they actually needed to live, or at least to avoid a deeper poverty, is it conceivable that vacations, hobbies, entertainments, etc., would be tolerated?

Lukewarm: Again, that is a commendation of giving, even as the poor widow, not a commandment. Also worth noting, it was of necessity that Macedonia was not able to enjoy dainties, vacations, and entertainment, due to the famines and persecutions.

Patience: Furthermore the apostle wrote, “We desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.”⁶¹ You see here that this grace

⁵³ 2 Corinthians 9:7

⁵⁴ 1 Timothy 3:2

⁵⁵ Matthew 6:19-24

⁵⁶ Romans 16:18

⁵⁷ Philippians 3:18-19

⁵⁸ Revelation 2:7

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 8:1-3

⁶⁰ 1 Peter 4:13

⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 8:7

wasn't some special anointing solely for the church of Macedonia or that poor widow, but the apostle was sending Titus to complete this same grace in the church of Corinth so that they, "Abound in this grace also."

Lukewarm: You intentionally left out the following verse, "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."⁶² It is not a commandment but a commendation that was given to the poor widow and to the church of Macedonia. Away with your asceticism, teach truth!

Patience: Again you are correct in that they were commended for their giving; but you err to imagine that because he spoke not by commandment, that we are not instructed to do similarly. The apostle himself calls this "subjection unto the gospel of Christ" in the following chapter, "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*."⁶³ Concerning asceticism: In light of eternity, the present condition of the suffering world in which we live, and Christ's call to carry the cross, we will gladly be reduced to honesty and compassion from living the Gospel, though we be derided and scorned by you as being ascetics. We agree and embrace the words of the apostle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour more than thine own soul,"⁶⁴ and, "Thou shalt not hate any man; but some thou shalt reprove, and concerning some thou shalt pray, and some thou shalt love more than thy own life."⁶⁵

Lukewarm: But they were giving to brethren, not strangers. The word men in the last verse was added, therefore, he was meaning "unto all the brethren", not, "unto all men".

Charity: According to Truth, strangers are you neighbors. You may read of it for yourself in chapter 10 of Luke's Gospel.

Truth: **I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**⁶⁶

Patience: Lukewarm is your name, and truly, lukewarm is your heart. If indeed you were a new creature, born again by the redemptive power of Christ, you would rejoice in the instruction of the apostle who said, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."⁶⁷ Basically, if you had a handful of four children hanging off the edge of life, and you had the power to save them from falling 100 feet down into death, but needed your other hand to raise them up; while in your other hand however, was a bag full of vacations, another of hobbies, another of knickknacks, and yet another of entertainments; and the only way to save all four children was to let go of all the bags: Instead of dropping all your bags by forsaking your selfish desires and vain pleasures, you would be satisfied with holding on to some, and allowing two of the children whom you could rescue, perish! This is how you do despite to the spirit of grace. Because the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ teaches you, and creates

⁶² 2 Corinthians 8:8

⁶³ 2 Corinthians 9:12-13

⁶⁴ The epistle of Barnabas chapter 19

⁶⁵ The Didache chapter 2

⁶⁶ Revelation 3:15-16

⁶⁷ 2 Corinthians 8:9

in you the desire both to will and to do just like Him⁶⁸ to walk, even as He walked.⁶⁹ Not only does this grace teach men to forsake that which is not needed, but to even deny what is needful and give out of their poverty to those in need. We have only addressed what was needless. Once this is established we may move on to what is needful.

Lukewarm: I generously love my neighbor. Who gave you permission to raise the temperature? You make loving your neighbor sound intense and uncomfortable.

Patience: The words “love your neighbor” alone, are neither hot nor cold; the words “Love your neighbor” are not intense. “Love your neighbor as yourself” however, these words are hot, and yes, they are intense. Cold and hot are both uncomfortable climates, and obeying these words, as Jesus meant them to be understood, will bring discomfort.

Charity: Good words Patience. The apostle likewise said, “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let all your things be done with charity.”⁷⁰

Mr. Muddy Questions: I suppose you would have us to be of your mind, Charity, but the apostle says to be of one mind. This one mind is not you, but what seems best and most agreeable to the brethren; this is what is meant by having the same love . . . being of one mind. If brethren have the same love as each other, nothing more, nothing less, this is how we can be of the same love and mind.

Reason: Would you rather Charity have a carnal mind? To be carnally minded is death.⁷¹ For such a mind is not subject to the law of God nor indeed can be.⁷² The meaning of scripture will always be hidden from you until you wash your eyes clean of all that mud. For the apostle continues saying, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”⁷³ He was not instructing you to have the same love as the members of your church, nor to be of the same mind as other members, but for all members to have the same love and mind of Christ, as he also mentions of himself and his companions to the Church of Corinth.⁷⁴

Carnal Reasoning: But the mind of Christ is revealed when He said, “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.”⁷⁵ This he spoke to Judas Iscariot, after he complained about such a waste, saying, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?”⁷⁶ Mary had taken a very costly ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with her hair. Jesus did not object to this. Surely He would have prevented her if caring for the poor to your extent would have been so important to Him. Certainly He who commanded, “Love your

⁶⁸ Philippians 2:13

⁶⁹ 1 John 2:6

⁷⁰ Philippians 2:2-4

⁷¹ Romans 8:6

⁷² Romans 8:7

⁷³ Philippians 2:5

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:16

⁷⁵ John 12:8

⁷⁶ John 12:5

neighbor as yourself,” and, “Sell that ye have and give alms,” would have explained to Mary her error. You seem to have more of the mind of Judas than the mind of Jesus, for Judas was zealous to help the poor.

Reason: He Who is from above is above all.⁷⁷ As the heavens are high above the earth so are His thoughts and ways than your thoughts and ways.⁷⁸ Had you the mind of Christ and understanding of the scriptures you would have discerned what He was doing.

Carnal Reasoning: If He was doing something other than accepting to be first, rather than preferring to make Himself last, demonstrate it, yet only from the Scriptures. But I reckon you will undoubtedly fail, except you be a hypocrite and throw some mud in your response.

Reason: That it is obvious Jesus cared for the poor is without question. As Peter testified, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee,”⁷⁹ you see Jesus giving such as He had to all: as many as touched Him were made whole;⁸⁰ He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed by the devil;⁸¹ He returned to Judea to comfort Mary and Martha, and to raise Lazarus from the dead though “the Jews of late sought to stone” Him.⁸² Yea He was always placing Himself in dangerous situations for the sake of others. He knew from experience that, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”;⁸³ for, rather than yielding to the outcry of the flesh and sleeping, when He needed to be praying, He resisted the weakness of His flesh and the lethargy of His disciples; yea, in that Garden He chose to become poor: “And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”⁸⁴ It is recorded in the prophets, “His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”⁸⁵ For He became sick, weak, and poor in His body; hated, despised, mocked, and scorned; that we, through this poverty might be rich with His grace, healing, and eternal life. I have used scripture, but now hear this hymn:

As the ancient hymn of Clement says,

“Thou art our holy Lord, O all subduing Word,
Healer of strife. Thou didst Thyself abase
That from sin’s deep disgrace Thou mightest save our race
And give us life.”⁸⁶

And another hymn from 1153 A.D., (abridged)

“O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;

⁷⁷ John 3:31

⁷⁸ Isaiah 55:8-9

⁷⁹ Acts 3:6

⁸⁰ Mark 6:56

⁸¹ Acts 10:38

⁸² John 11:8

⁸³ Matthew 26:41

⁸⁴ Luke 22:44

⁸⁵ Isaiah 52:14

⁸⁶ Clement of Alexandria, The Christian Hymnary, Song Number 188

O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!
 Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered, was all for sinners' gain;
 Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.
 Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place;
 Look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee, Thou noble countenance,
 Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee and flee before Thy glance.
 How art thou pale with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
 How doth Thy visage languish that once was bright as morn!

Now from Thy cheeks has vanished their color once so fair;
 From Thy red lips is banished the splendor that was there.
 Grim death, with cruel rigor, hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
 Thus Thou hast lost Thy vigor, Thy strength in this sad strife.

What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
 For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
 O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
 Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee."⁸⁷

Mr. Muddy Questions: You have well-spoken concerning the spiritual aspects of His caring for the poor, but what of His practice concerning the needs of the body?

Reason: The riches Jesus had were priceless, and He freely gave them to all who asked, and to others whom He saw. It is enough that one gives all of "such that he has". However, I will show you some practical examples: Though He was the King of glory, the King of kings, He had no home or place to lay His head;⁸⁸ when He and His disciples had been with the multitudes three days in the wilderness He did not want to send them away without food, lest they should faint in the way;⁸⁹ during the last supper Jesus had with His disciples He told Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly."⁹⁰ Now no man at the table knew for what intent Jesus spoke this unto Judas. For some of the disciples thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, "Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor".⁹¹ They assumed Jesus told Judas to give something to the poor because it was nothing extraordinary.

Carnal Reasoning: You still haven't explained Jesus' words, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always."

Patience: Having eyes, can you not read? Jesus replied to Judas, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always." When Jesus responded to Judas'

⁸⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded", www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/s/osacredh.htm

⁸⁸ Luke 9:58

⁸⁹ Matthew 15:32-39

⁹⁰ John 13:27

⁹¹ John 13:28-29

complaint, saying that the poor was always with him at anytime you may do them good, He was not making light of giving to the poor, exalting Himself, or being selfish in any way; He was not preferring Himself before the poor, nor was He commissioning the erection of costly buildings devoted to Him as a praiseworthy pattern of worship. Rather, in His unique gentleness and wisdom (characterized by our Savior throughout the Scriptures), He was being kind and understanding with the sister who gave the best she had, especially considering that He raised Lazarus, her dear brother, from the dead, while exposing Judas' dissimulation. At any time Judas could have done good to the poor, but apparently He wasn't, nor even to Jesus. His complaint was false, under the pretense of caring for the poor, when really, as the apostle mentioned, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."⁹² This dissimulation and hypocrisy Jesus was patiently pointing out to Judas.

Charity: Today, if you hear God's voice, harden not your heart⁹³: You need to cleanse the inside of the cup and dish. Because, hearts full of mud soon become hardened by the light.

Truth: **For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.**⁹⁴

Narrator: A couple of spectators, Atheist and Agnostic, having recognized Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions (for they were from the very same town of Love the World) patiently listened to much of the discussion. When Atheist perceived that his neighbors had nothing more to say, he spoke thus:

Atheist: Though there is no God; for if He really did exist men would live like they believed He existed, or perhaps He has chosen to remain hidden from humanity which is altogether useless, which no one of a sound mind would assume. If you really believe the Bible Carnal Reasoning, Mr. Muddy Questions, and Lukewarm: You are the most cold-hearted creatures from our whole town. You should forsake more than all of those things which Charity, Reason, and Patience have enjoined upon you if you really believe Truth: Not only what is needless, but according to your own Book even what is needful at times; for who doesn't sometimes forsake what is needless to help a fellowman in need? These last three men may be pitied for their belief in God because such belief has caused them to hate their lives in this world; however, at least they are living like they actually believe God exists. I have heard them say nothing inconsistent with their beliefs, and their message is very reasonable. You however, and everyone from our town of Love the World, have not loved God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, or your neighbors as yourselves, as you tell others to do. Instead, you love the world and the things in the world. When it was in your power to relieve the afflicted, comfort the lonely, provide for the poor, and to seek the so-called lost souls that were supposedly on their way to a lake eternally burning with fire and brimstone you chose to go on vacation, purchase hobbies and recreation equipment for your weekends off, and you decorated your house and lawn with acquisitions from the flea markets and antique stores. When it was in your power to do good to ten, and to love ten, you chose to do good to six and to love the world, though you and your families would have lacked nothing needful having loved the ten. Why, I would never be a part of such a hypocritical, cold-hearted, and arrogant club as yours! I would reserve my tone and language if you were ignorant of these things, but now I know that you know

⁹² John 12:6

⁹³ Hebrews 3:7-8

⁹⁴ John 9:39

them. You are those which justify yourselves before men, and if your God was real, He would know your hearts, and judge them severely.

Agnostic: If such a group did exist, if such a God were real, I would know it if I saw it. However, all I have seen is carnal reasoning in churches, and Christians that are neither cold nor hot. Neighbors, you behave as one watching a man being burned alive while holding a garden hose in your hand. Rather than putting out the fire you look away and continue to water your garden. Or, as eating your food and useless dainties in front of a starving child, or having a party before one grieving. You know the sad condition of the world we live in, and you go on vacations, purchase recreation equipment, hobbies, play toys, decorations, entertainments, knickknacks, collectibles, jewelry, fashion, and not only dainties, but those dainties which the whole world recognizes as useless.

Carnal Reasoning: I just don't see voluntary poverty in the scriptures.

Narrator: Atheist and Agnostic left the discussion impressed by the honesty and sincerity of Truth and His disciples; nevertheless their hearts were hardened by their neighbors and they spoke evil of the way.

Patience: This is why Truth spoke earlier, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth, and, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."⁹⁵ All you see are your excuses which justify you in your own sight. Therefore, it is not that you do not, but that you cannot see voluntary poverty in the scriptures. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Your affections are on the things of earth, and not solely on the things of God. Rather than allowing the scripture to change you, you try to change it. For you seek your own will, and not the will of God. If your eye were single you would agree with Atheist and Agnostic. These men have nothing to gain or lose by agreeing with us. It is of no advantage for them to twist the meaning of scripture.

Mr. Single Eye: If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we only do what is just. This is the weightier matter of the law which the Pharisees neglected. Some may call loving your neighbor as yourself voluntary poverty, for we would be reduced to having only what we need. This however is not poverty, but equality. But now the scriptures instruct us to give even from a state of equality.⁹⁶ This means we will have less than our neighbors at times. If the apostle instructed the church to give this way, it is irrational to imagine that even one of the aforementioned selfish indulgences would be allowed.

Reason: Indeed! The same apostle testified, "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"⁹⁷ Was it because he loved the world and the things in the world? If men and women of the first century desired vacations, dainties, hobbies, recreation, and decorations, they would not have exchanged them for crosses, wild beasts, imprisonments, tortures, and poverty. Those who traded their freedom and peace to suffer and to die for the faith then, if they had been born into our times, would use their freedom and peace to live for the faith now.

Mr. Muddy Questions: If we are to take so seriously the command, "Sell that ye have and give alms," and consequently it becomes unlawful to acquire; the reason for this teaching partly being because of the world

⁹⁵ John 9:39, 41

⁹⁶ 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:30

we live in: many are in need of food, water, clothing, love and the gospel, then should not Mr. Single Eye sell even his tools? He has tools that could be sold to help provide for the poor.

Truth: *When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?*⁹⁸

Reason: The time and society Mr. Single Eye lives in is not suffering from war and poverty. Currently, there is relative peace and prosperity. He will be using his circumstances to be more effective. He is a carpenter by trade and the tools he has are not useless knickknacks arranged on shelves, decorations for his work truck, or collectibles stored in his tool chest. Henceforth, he uses these tools, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. If, however, the time and society he lives in should change, and war and poverty should follow, and his occupation should become useless or too difficult to produce; if his tools are collecting dust when others about him are thirsty and dying from starvation, then, if his tools could be sold, they ought to be sold to help the poor. However, he is laboring for what is eternal, seeking first the kingdom of God, preferring himself last, looking not only after his own things but also after the things of others, allowing the mind of Christ to dwell in and direct him in all his ways, that he may live a life of equality, loving his neighbors as himself.

Narrator: Evening set in and the town square became increasingly noisy as the restaurants and pubs were filling with people. They decided to move the conversation to a couple of benches under a nearby oak tree around the corner. They passed by a temple and looked inside. Within, they both saw and heard a man with his head bowed beating his chest, weeping and saying, "Have mercy on me O God, a sinner,"⁹⁹ and, "I have sinned against You, and men, and am not worthy to be called a son: please make me as one of your hired servants."¹⁰⁰ They heard him confess his sins to God. The name of the weeping man is: Godly Sorrow.

Carnal reasoning: God doesn't hear sinners! This man, if he were truly repentant, would first put away his addiction once and for all, and then come to God asking for mercy.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Certainly, for the scripture says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."¹⁰¹

Patience: You two are in a worse condition than this poor fellow. He is aware of his own poverty and need. He acknowledges his frailty, and confesses his struggles to God. Feeling unworthy to even look up towards heaven, he asks to be made as a hired servant rather than to be treated as a son. You however, boast of being the kingdom of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes.¹⁰² Yet, this man has more light than you two and lukewarm combined.

⁹⁸ Luke 12:54

⁹⁹ Luke 18:13

¹⁰⁰ Luke 15:21

¹⁰¹ Galatians 6:7-8

¹⁰² Romans 2:19-21

Truth: Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.¹⁰³ Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.¹⁰⁴ The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!¹⁰⁵

Sincerely Seeking: You ask within yourselves, “In what way are we worse off than this drug addict?” You are ready to tell others how to be reconciled to God, and to condemn them for their errors! Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?¹⁰⁶ For it is clear in your minds what this poor fellow needs to do and that, as he sows to his flesh that he will of the flesh reap corruption. Yet you claim to be a Christian without being like the Christ; to have lost your life while keeping it; to hate your life in this world while loving it; to be the kingdom of God when you seek first another kingdom; to have forsaken all when you still have—nearly all.

Patience: Of a truth, you are that generation *that is* pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness.¹⁰⁷

Charity: I am convinced of this as well. You warn this praying man, and speak of him being bound in the sin of his drug addiction, and how his sin affects other people. He however, unlike you, does not justify his addiction. But feeling deep remorse for his sin, and the terror of eternal judgment awaiting sinners, is confessing and forsaking his sins.¹⁰⁸ While you, hardened by your own hypocrisy, iniquities, and pride, remain blind to your woeful condition, and to the uncharitable use of your time and resources, which is covetousness. He is warring to overcome a drug addiction; conversely, you are peacefully addicted to vacations, not dainties alone, but those that are useless, hobbies, your recreation equipment, collectibles, knickknacks, decorations, and entertainments that have nothing to do with the kingdom of God. As this man ought to put away his addiction once and for all in the fear of God, you ought to once and for all forsake your vain pleasures and selfish ambitions.

Narrator: Now as Charity had concluded his thoughts, behold, the man approached the window where the discussion had taken place, his head bowed and wiping the tears from his face. Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions began to choke and to clear their throats.

Charity: Greetings young man. What is your name, and why do you weep so profusely?

Godly Sorrow: Greetings kind sir. My name is Godly Sorrow. Recently one morning I forsook my hometown of Worldly, and left everything. For years I used drugs and have partaken of the many evils which often attend such a life. I came here because I did not know where else to go. I weep, because I now understand the error

¹⁰³ Revelation 3:17

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 21:31-32

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 6:22-23

¹⁰⁶ Romans 2:21

¹⁰⁷ Proverbs 30:12

¹⁰⁸ Proverbs 28:13

of my ways, and how I have sinned against God. While I was using drugs I would think about meeting God after death, and how I knew I was deserving of severe punishment. Also, I began to hate how the evil I did would affect others. I lived in torment thinking about my condition. However, when I thought of leaving that doleful town of Worldly, and doing all the good I knew to do, I had hope of mercy. I recently yielded to that hope and have been praying since the morning. Having made that decision I weep, because unworthy as I am, I sense God is accepting me, and forgiving me of all that I have done. Yea, a love for Him has been kindled in my heart and all I want to do is know Him and serve Him forever. And, what is your name and what are the names of your friends?

Charity: I am charity. My companions are Patience and Reason. We began discussing the teachings of our Master—Truth, with Mr. Single Eye, Sincerely Seeking, and Slowly But Surely this morning. After few words Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions joined, and later, Lukewarm. We were on our way to the bench located just around the corner that is under the large Oak, but both heard and rejoiced to your earnest and heartfelt prayer.

Godly Sorrow: If it seems good to you, Charity, I would like to accompany you and learn of your discussion. For I perceive by your long gray beard, modest apparel, and your gentle disposition, that you have been in the way for quite some time, and that I could benefit from listening to your words.

Narrator: Charity smiled and greeted him with a kiss of peace. Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions, with furled eyebrows and a very disapproving look, cleared their throats again. As they turn the corner however, behold: A fight broke out between two men. One was hit by the other on the head with a club, and he fell down defenseless. The clubber showed no mercy. Charity ran to the scene.

Charity: In God's name stop! Put the club away and let this man be.

Narrator: The clubber stood to look at Charity. Not knowing what to say, he stared. With a grave look Charity pleaded with the clubber to forsake his evil ways. While he was pleading however, the man beaten regained his consciousness, arose, and managed to flee unnoticed by the clubber. Shortly after, a barely clothed man with a 2X4 in his hands approached Charity with evil threatenings. Some women prevented him from getting closer. Charity again pleaded with these, and then one of the women approached Charity and accepted a tract that he gave to her. Afterwards everyone parted ways, and Charity returned to his companions.

Carnal Reasoning: If you were so wise Charity, you wouldn't take such risks as to take a dog by its ears, as the ancient proverb says, "He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him, *is like* one that taketh a dog by the ears,"¹⁰⁹ that is, he is likely to get bitten.

Truth: **Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**¹¹⁰

Reason: Charity's wisdom is free from self-seeking which will always seem foolish to those of a carnal mind.

Mr. Single Eye: The clubber might have killed that man, had Charity not intervened. This reminds me of when Jesus decided to return to Judea to raise up Lazarus from the dead, and the disciples replied, "Master, the

¹⁰⁹ Proverbs 26:17

¹¹⁰ Matthew 5:9

Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"¹¹¹ Also, at the feast, some of them said, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him."¹¹²

Patience: Verily, Charity has his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.¹¹³

Narrator: The group walked towards the bench located underneath the oak to continue their discussion. Carnal Reasoning flicked his fingers as he paced through the crispy autumn leaves towards the wooden bench.

Carnal Reasoning: These commandments are great, and good, and glorious, and fitted to gladden the heart of the man who can perform them. But I do not know if these commandments can be kept by man, because they are exceeding hard.¹¹⁴

Reason: If you lay it down as certain that they can be kept (believing that with God all things are possible), then you will easily keep them, and they will not be hard. But if you come to imagine that they cannot be kept by man, then you will not keep them. Now I say to you, if you do not keep them, but neglect them, you will not be saved, nor your children, nor your house, since you have already determined for yourself that these commandments cannot be kept by man. O fool, senseless and double-minded, do you not perceive how great is the glory of God, and how strong and marvellous, in that He created the world for the sake of man, and subjected all creation to him, and gave him power to rule over everything under heaven? If, then, man is lord of the creatures of God, and rules over all, is he not also able to be lord of these commandments? For, the man who has the Lord in his heart can also be lord of all, and of every one of these commandments. But to those who have the Lord only on their lips, but their hearts hardened, and who are far from the Lord, the commandments are hard and difficult. Put, therefore, ye who are empty and fickle in your faith, the Lord in your heart, and ye will know that there is nothing easier or sweeter, or more gentle, than these commandments. If your heart be pure towards the Lord you will keep them; and all will keep them who cleanse their hearts from the vain desires of this world, and they will live to God.¹¹⁵

Mr. Single Eye: You know it is possible to sell what you have and give alms because much of what you have you lived without. In fact, for many years you easily lived without most of the decorations, hobbies, and recreation equipment you currently possess. If you can live so easily without them, it is certain you do not need them.

Carnal reasoning: You again open up the Pandora's Box by saying that we must define necessity.

Sincerely Seeking: You err, Carnal Reasoning. These men, with whom Mr. Single Eye and I are in agreement, are calling you to identify what is useful to the kingdom of God. Is this faithful with the unrighteous mammon? Is this seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Is this approving those things that are excellent?¹¹⁶ Is this according to the doctrine of godliness?¹¹⁷ Does this adorn the doctrine of God our

¹¹¹ John 11:8

¹¹² John 7:25

¹¹³ Ephesians 6:15

¹¹⁴ The Shepherd of Hermas, Book 2, 12th Commandment, chapter 3

¹¹⁵ The Shepherd of Hermas, Book 2, 12th Commandment, chapter 3-4

¹¹⁶ Philippians 1:9-10

¹¹⁷ 1 Timothy 6:3-4

Savior?¹¹⁸ Is this really what loving God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength looks like?¹¹⁹ Is this truly a snapshot of a city set on a hill that you could use to explain to others of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself?¹²⁰ Is this selling what you have to give alms? Is this being a faithful, obedient disciple of Jesus Christ, a lover of truth,¹²¹ or rather following another Jesus and not heeding sound doctrine but giving ear to fables? If you were sincerely seeking for truth, with candor these are the questions you ought to ask yourself and desire to search out with resolve of losing your life¹²² upon finding the answers.

Mr. Muddy Questions: You speak harshly to my dear friend. His struggle is not too difficult to understand. You speak of identifying dainties or rather, useless dainties, as one who knows all things. You are against purchasing a fifty cent ice cream cone from the burger joint as if this were a heinous crime against humanity. I mean come on, it is only fifty cents, and that, an ice cream cone! Is that truly of any significance?

Narrator: Lightheart, a very distinguished man, passes by with his six sons and only daughter. He, being loose in his convictions, has children bearing the fruits of his name. Though he may not approve of his children's behavior, his response to their behavior is light. He is a descendant from one Eli in Shiloh.¹²³ These are Lightheart's sons: Unseemly, Presumption, Indifference, Heedless, Jester, and Sluggish; his daughter: Impudence.

Lightheart: Greetings gentlemen. I do not wish to be rude but something this fellow said prevented me from passing by. I purchase ice cream as well and would like to know if you are expressing to him that he needs to forsake a fifty cent ice cream cone to be a part of the kingdom of God? After all, did not the apostle say that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? If this is true, which I believe it is, then why do you lay such a stumbling block as this before your brother?

Charity: We agree and declare that the kingdom of God is not in meat and drink. If however, we are warned against dainties, how much more those dainties that are universally understood to be useless? Though it is only fifty cents, and that twice each week; nevertheless it is more than you need. If however, you would justify yourself with fifty cents being of little value consider this: If only you, Carnal Reasoning, Lukewarm, and Mr. Muddy Questions forsook your twice-a-week useless dainty of the fifty cent ice cream cone that would total two hundred and eight dollars per year. Over a ten-year period that amount could afford one water well for an entire village or community which has no access to clean drinking water. This project could begin with you four now. Nonetheless there are millions who share your views; which if all forsook said useless dainty the water crisis would possibly become extinct. How many families are in your fellowship?

Lightheart: Fifteen. The husbands and wives total thirty, the children sixty, and there are five single brethren for an overall of ninety-five persons.

Charity: So if your fellowship alone forsook their useless dainty of the fifty cent ice cream cone which is enjoyed by them twice each week that would total \$4,940 dollars each year for an outstanding sum of \$49,400

¹¹⁸ Titus 2:10

¹¹⁹ Mark 12:30

¹²⁰ Matthew 5:14

¹²¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

¹²² John 12:25

¹²³ 1 Samuel 1:3

over a ten-year period which could provide more than twenty wells for those who have no clean water to drink.

Mr. Muddy Questions: You should not be named Charity, but Trickery. For why not use something other than ice cream in your illustration?

Reason: Would you rather Charity use beans and rice, nuts and carrots in his illustration? Store bought ice cream is only one useless dainty. A more common one is soda.

Carnal Reasoning: What! Now you are judging drink? This list keeps getting longer and longer. See, this is a Pandora's Box!

Charity: Do you drink soda?

Carnal Reasoning: Yes. I usually have a two liter bottle in the fridge at home and if I am out working I may stop at a convenient store and purchase one a few times throughout the week.

Charity: How much does one cost?

Narrator: Carnal Reasoning, feeling good about how little soda he drinks when compared to others, replied.

Carnal Reasoning: The cost is about one dollar and fifty cents for a twenty ounce bottle, and one dollar for a two liter. So . . . I spend about . . . well . . . let me think for a moment . . . I spend about eight dollars each week on soda. But what are these small figures, these trifling fragments among all the resources we have?

Truth: **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.**¹²⁴

Charity: That equals \$416 per year, for a total of \$4,160 over the duration of ten years. That amounts to two boreholes that could be dug to provide clean water for two entire communities who do not have access or resources to provide clean water for themselves to drink.

Lightheart: Surely God will not remember our enjoyment of dainties that amount to a paltry eight dollars per week. You are too severe in your position. You set yourself up as Lord and seek to micromanage the lives of many honorable and generous men.

Patience: We have a command to, "Let all your things be done with charity."¹²⁵

Truth: **He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?**¹²⁶

Mr. Muddy Questions: Must all Christians put soda away? Does it not have reasonable uses? My mother would give my siblings and I a cup of Sprite or Seven-Up when we were ill. You can also use Coke to clean

¹²⁴ John 6:12

¹²⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:14

¹²⁶ Luke 16:10-11

toilets and car batteries. This is why it is good to keep a bottle or two laying around the house. However, if it gets too old it will become useless and needs to be drunk before it expires.

Narrator: Feeling somewhat justified, Carnal Reasoning applauded his dear friend, Mr. Muddy Questions, giving him a hearty amen. Lighthead and his children approved as well, all except Indifference, who desired to leave the discussion and continue on his way.

Charity: We have not preached against medicine or cleaning agents, or against the reasonable use of anything. You reek of the old leaven of the Pharisees. As Truth taught us dear friends, we must take heed and beware of this evil doctrine. It doesn't take long until its foul stench clings to you and you become seasoned with hypocrisy. It is inevitable that the longer you entertain carnal reasoning and muddy questions that the truth we have shared will become obscure.

Lighthead: Uh hmm. Pardon me, but you still haven't explained why you used ice cream for the example.

Reason: Charity used store bought ice cream for an example because with food and clothing we ought to be content. Ice cream is what we call a non-food. Such like foods are one of the most obvious expenses we eliminated to advance kingdom work. What is meant by non-food cost? A non-food is something that is (for the most part) universally understood to be unprofitable for the body, a useless dainty, needless dessert, etc. Here are some examples: Skittles candy, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Mint Chocolate Chip ice cream, various colas and sodas.

Lighthead: What! A non-food sounds like something you do not eat, and assuredly there are millions who eat ice cream, and the other foods you specified.

Reason: Still confused by non-food cost? Would you ever tell your child at breakfast, lunch, or dinner to make sure they eat all of the candy, and then, and only then, they may eat their oatmeal, eggs, chicken, or potatoes? We know that would be absurd. But what makes it absurd? Because candy is what we have identified as a non-food, or nonessential, or useless dainty. We want to make sure our children get the food they need! You have seven children with you Lighthead. Do you eat dessert at home?

Lighthead: Indeed we do. We eat a large variety of pies, puddings, cakes, and cookies.

Reason: Do you ever tell your children to make sure they eat all of their dinner before they eat their dessert? Or do you tell them to eat all of their dessert and then they can eat their dinner?

Lighthead: Of course I tell them to eat all of their dinner first. I want to make sure my children get the food they need. What kind of father do you think I am?

Mr. Muddy Questions: You are a trickster like your dear friend Charity. For why do you separate dessert from dinner, rather than it being part of the dinner?

Lighthead: Hmmm. Yes, I never thought about that. Why do you separate dessert from dinner?

Reason: You both already have the habit of ensuring that your children eat dessert after dinner. Why then do you change your position?

Narrator: Mr. Muddy Questions, Carnal Reasoning, Lukewarm, and Lightheart cleared their throats as though they were one man.

Reason: Take the worldwide food crisis for example: The world has identified that sending candy, cola, and other useless dainties and treats to those suffering from malnutrition around the world is irrational and ultimately will not help those suffering from hunger. Instead they send beans, rice, lentils, potatoes, and other somewhat nonperishable and useful foods. According to different websites (you may research fairly easy for yourself) the average Love The World household is estimated to spend \$75.46 on ice cream annually, \$125 on Halloween candy, costumes, and decorations during that season and \$850 per year on soda alone. Let's stop with these three: that totals \$1,050.46 per year. None of these things are needed, and as pilgrims of the cross ought to be forsaken. Would you serve a plate of Twinkies and Starburst to Jesus, along with a tall ice cold Pepsi and say, "This is for You Lord"? Notably so, when Jesus was thirsty, He went for clean water at the well in Samaria.¹²⁷

Carnal Reasoning: If that is all we had to offer, and the only food available within a day's journey, we would at least consider offering these things to Him.

Reason: If the only food left to eat in your city were useless dainties and treats that would be something to consider. However, your town of Love The World is filled with markets full of many useful foods, much of which is actually thrown away.

Mr. Muddy Questions: It seems your argument lies chiefly in whether or not it is healthy. It is more expensive to eat healthy, and would you have us spend more money on healthy food when we could use that money to help the poor? Perhaps it is you who are seeking to save your life.

Patience: You spend \$1.50 on a bottle of soda. You could purchase 6 gallons of water for the price of that one bottle. You spend fifty cents on a worthless ice cream cone from the burger joint. Those fifty cents could buy a pound of bananas. Your line of reasoning is not straight. Your heart is filled with too much mud. The more you seek to justify yourself the muddier you become. Cleanse your heart and compare our words to yours and you will see that nothing is more reasonable and preferable than what we are explaining to you. For, why spend \$2.00 on junk and get less for your money, when you could eat well, for strength, and have multiple meals?

Reason: If you insist on your desserts, to be reasonable, you must at least forsake store bought desserts. Why? Because, as already explained, desserts are a needless expense. Think about how far your nation has fallen: Farming had been the natural production of food for thousands of years. Your generation however, is so consumed by various lusts, that much of your food is created and processed in a laboratory. In fact, your minds have become so debased by your passion for food and countless flavors, that your "Love The World biotechnology companies" who engineer your food¹²⁸ (I have heard), use the creatures of God in their research! What for? To create better flavor enhancers for multiple processed food products which is, in our opinion, the summit of gluttony! Let this sink deep into your ears: The servant of the cross willingly embraces hardship, even unreasonably, so as not to cause his brother to sin.¹²⁹ He avoids even eating lawful necessary

¹²⁷ John 4

¹²⁸ Search for Wikipedia and Senomyx on the internet

¹²⁹ 2 Timothy 2:3

and useful foods such as meat, if meat would offend his brother.¹³⁰ But you, the enemies of the cross of Christ and servants of your own bellies cannot bear the loss of even one dainty morsel, so as to provide for a poor man his daily needful bread!¹³¹

Carnal Reasoning: Why! Uh . . .

Mr. Muddy Questions: Where then, would you have us obtain our desserts?

Reason: If you or your neighbor has fruit trees, and need to use the fruit, and wish to make a pie lest the good fruit perishes, go ahead. Just keep it simple. Eat to live, rather than living to eat. Learn to eat for strength and not for pleasure.¹³²

Lukewarm: You are wise overmuch. That savors of legalistic bondage. Was it not for “liberty” that Christ set us free?¹³³

Reason: You say this now because of all that has been said. It seems overly complicated but it is really simple. As far as dainties are concerned the first to go are those which are useless. Why? Because it is uncharitable and unfaithful to squander your resources on foolish luxuries. Say that a man has a wife and six children who all live and work on a farm. The farmer harvested his peaches and took them to market. A rich man tried one and was delighted to buy 3 pounds. The rich man gave the farmer a five dollar tip. Now, this family works hard and they make enough barely to sustain the farm, and pay all their bills. However, they have a poor disabled uncle who cannot work. This uncle inherited a house, and though it is paid for, the taxes are high. He can only afford one meal per day, sometimes two. The farmer ponders within himself what to do with these five dollars. He and his family work hard and rarely get ice cream. “With these five dollars I could surprise my family with a half-gallon of ice cream,” the farmer considers. Yet he remembers his uncle. What do you men suggest the farmer should do?

Lightheart: Are you serious? We all know that the farmer should forsake the ice cream and use the five dollars to help his uncle.

Lukewarm: That is the least he should do. He could do more.

Reason: Then why justify yourselves when there are so many uncles in the world today suffering in a similar manner? The poor you will always have with you, and at any time you may do them good. You may always forsake spending five dollars on a half-gallon of ice cream to help those in need, but rather than doing that you justify yourselves before men. You say that to use the five dollars to help his poor uncle is the least he can do, and in that, you have spoken truly. For they could take turns fasting, and each member could give up a meal from time to time to supply their uncle’s need. They could let him sell his house and land, and have him move in with them, and they could take care of him at home, and welcome him as part of the family. This they could do regardless of whose uncle he is.

¹³⁰ 1 Corinthians 8:7-13

¹³¹ Philippians 3:17-19

¹³² Ecclesiastes 10:17, Nehemiah 5:2-3

¹³³ Galatians 5:1

Lightheart: You tricked us again with using ice cream for an example.

Mr. Single Eye: Ice cream is not the main point. Reason chose to use a useless dainty as an example to further illustrate the hypocrisy of what men claim to know, and what they are doing with what they know. Instead of suggesting ice cream he could have used oranges. Oranges are good and useful, nothing unprofitable in them. However, the consideration of purchasing ice cream rather than oranges (when considering the awful circumstances of the poor) becomes more absurd when choosing between purchasing ice cream and helping the poor. Toys are to tools as desserts are to food. As far as necessity goes, it is unsound to group toys and tools together as much as it is to group desserts and food. It would be equally absurd to claim that the work tools should be sold, instead of the skis and snowboards.

Narrator: A young man with his wife had paused to listen. His name is Self-Deceived, and his wife's name Forgetful Hearer. These had two children: Empty Sorrow is the name of their son; Clouds Without Rain the name of their daughter.

Self-Deceived and his wife Forgetful Hearer: We agree with much of what you are saying and wanted to assure you that you are right on. We really appreciate your message. Keep standing for the truth.

Narrator: Wiping the tears from his face, Empty Sorrow spoke thus:

Empty Sorrow: It is truly sad to think about the suffering in the world . . . terrible indeed. All of those poor people, it just grieves my heart to think about it, Lord help them.

Clouds Without Water: I intend to do something about it!

Narrator: All these reach forth to shake the hands of Charity and his companions, encouraging Lightheart and his children, and the others who agreed with him, to listen to Reason and to follow after Charity. They said farewell, and departed.

Charity: But where are you leaving to with such haste?

Self-Deceived: We need to make it to the airport to catch our flight. We have a trip planned to visit a certain island; there we hope to go snorkeling, parasailing, and surfing.

Reason: But you just agreed with us, and what we were teaching.

Self-Deceived and his family: Oh, but we do agree good friends, we do agree. See you in Paradise!

Narrator: Now prior to hearing all of this, Charity had already recounted to Godly Sorrow the main points of the conversation. Godly Sorrow proceeded to speak:

Godly Sorrow: Repent Lightheart, Mr. Muddy Questions, Lukewarm, and Carnal Reasoning, repent! Your ways are crooked, and as the Scripture says, "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself forward."¹³⁴ Repent! Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to

¹³⁴ Psalm 18:26

heaviness.¹³⁵ Through deceit you refuse to know the LORD.¹³⁶ You are content with being confused, from having deceived yourselves that (because of the confusion) God will be merciful to you. However, this confusion is akin to obstinacy. And because of these sins (presumption and obstinacy) God would send you a strong delusion, that you should believe a lie: That you all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.¹³⁷

Lightheart: Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?¹³⁸

Carnal Reasoning: Can any good thing come from the town of Worldly?

Narrator: Lukewarm didn't understand Godly Sorrow's zeal, so he explained thus to Godly Sorrow:

Lukewarm: I appreciate your enthusiasm; however, seeing you are so young in the faith, it is obvious that you haven't considered the cost of what these men are saying.

Truth: *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*¹³⁹

Godly Sorrow: Indeed I have. Christ was crucified for me!¹⁴⁰ My sins, as filthy as they are, caused Him much suffering and grief. The cost was far too high for me to continue to indulge in my former lusts, and greed. Any price I must pay here on account of following Him, who hung on that tree for me, I am certain, I will find to be cheap enough. If you would but wash your eyes with salve,¹⁴¹ you too would see how much Jesus Christ endured for your sake, and how little you offer to Him, who gave everything for you. However, in your own eyes Lukewarm, your spiritual temperature is just right.

Mr. Muddy Questions: We have been in the way longer than you, and, if you would lend your ear you would learn from us what the apostle meant when he spoke of "zeal without knowledge".¹⁴²

Godly Sorrow: I know and am persuaded that Christ died for my sins! Dear Lord, please send understanding to these men.

Narrator: During the latter part of this conversation the skies became very gray. But when Godly Sorrow prayed for understanding, the face of Reason began to shine. Hence, he opened his mouth and began to explain . . .

Reason: There was upon a time a missionary who left his country for a season to evangelize a tribe in the rainforest. He met the village chief, Paul was his name. For clothing, all Paul and his people wore were loincloths. They only covered the secret parts of their bodies. The missionary began to preach and to reason with Paul concerning Christ and His doctrine. He explained to Paul how loving God is, and how God demands

¹³⁵ James 4:8-9

¹³⁶ Jeremiah 9:6

¹³⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

¹³⁸ John 9:34

¹³⁹ Luke 7:47

¹⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:3

¹⁴¹ Revelation 3:18

¹⁴² Romans 10:2

His children to be loving; that this God, in fact, commands His children to love their neighbors even as themselves. He taught about the righteous judgment of God. That God will judge everyman according to His works, whether good or bad.¹⁴³ He thoroughly explained how Christ is the Pearl of great price, and that for joy over His kingdom men forsake everything to obtain it.¹⁴⁴ He testified how many of the Christians' ancestors died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth: for they declared plainly that they sought a country. That truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But they desired a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.¹⁴⁵ He furthermore explained to Paul that all men die, how we have here no continuing city, but we Christians seek one to come.¹⁴⁶ For the kingdom of God is such that Christians seek nothing else *but* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to occupy themselves with the business of their King, laboring only for what is eternal.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, the missionary shared how much Jesus suffered for the sins of men, to save them from an eternal death,¹⁴⁸ make them new creatures,¹⁴⁹ and to reconcile them to God,¹⁵⁰ and that Christians, having tasted this goodness, seek nothing else but to love and to serve this one God alone in spirit and in truth.¹⁵¹ When some time had passed the missionary asked Paul, "Are you at all ashamed?" "What for," Paul replied. "You are naked," the missionary explained. Paul scratched his head with a confused look on his face. "Naked," Paul pondered in his heart, "What is naked?" When the missionary perceived Paul's confusion he explained what it meant to be naked and why it is a shame to wear only a loincloth,¹⁵² and how one could dress who wishes to be modest.¹⁵³ After reasoning with Paul for a few weeks about these many things, Paul wanted to know this Christ and follow Him. The missionary baptized Paul and began discipling him. After a few months the missionary decided to return to home, and Paul returned with him. Now, as they were driving from the airport to the missionary's home Paul was observing the neighborhoods and their elaborate houses and lawns with all their decorations. Paul said within himself, "How silly are these decorations! Certainly, my good friend and teacher will not have such fooleries polluting his yard." As they were approaching the missionary's home and pulling into the driveway, much to Paul's surprise there were decorative statues of lions, saints, and other animals, along with a couple of antique wagon wheels, and a useless antique wheelbarrow. Though the house was not elaborate there were many exterior decorations other than those mentioned. They parked the car, unpacked their luggage, and proceeded to the door. They entered the house and there, in the corner of the living room, was a China Cabinet with expensive China; across from that were a few shelves full of collectibles, knickknacks, and other useless ornaments. As Paul was pondering these things in his heart the missionary led Paul to his room. As they walked down the hallway Paul noticed the walls were filled with pictures of vacations that he and his friends and family had gone on. The missionary opened the door to Paul's room. This room is

¹⁴³ 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

¹⁴⁴ Matthew 13:45-46

¹⁴⁵ Hebrews 11:13-16

¹⁴⁶ Hebrews 13:14

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 6:33, Luke 19:13, John 4:34

¹⁴⁸ Hebrews 2:9

¹⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

¹⁵¹ John 4:23-24

¹⁵² Genesis 3:7

¹⁵³ Genesis 3:21

where the missionary stored his recreation equipment, hobbies, and entertainment. Evening approached and dinner was served. The food was somewhat modest and pleasant. All had eaten, except some of the children, who were sitting quietly as if they were expecting something else. At last, the missionary's wife returned from the kitchen with cake and ice cream and explained to the children that they must finish all of their dinner before they eat dessert, assuring them that she wanted them to be strong and healthy, and that they would not get any dessert if they didn't eat all of their food. "Dessert must not be so important if it can be withheld," Paul conceived. "In fact, why doesn't she serve dessert first? And if they did not eat all of it, then they couldn't have any food?" Paul asked the missionary, "What is the purpose of this dessert?" The missionary answered, "Well, we work hard and from time to time reward ourselves with special treats, such as the cake and ice cream you now see". "I understand," Paul sighed. As Paul sighed he turned his head and happened to see a fishing boat in the backyard. "I didn't know you were a fisherman," said Paul. "Of course I am! When I fish, I preach that I might catch men. But when I boat it is for recreation, not to catch fish," replied the missionary. Paul began nervously scratching his head, and then paused. Pondering these things in his heart, he then looked intently into the missionary's eyes, and asked, "Are you not ashamed?" "Ashamed of what?" the missionary replied. "You call yourself a Christian, a pilgrim passing through this world. You claim that you and your church are the kingdom of God, and that you love your neighbor as yourself. You talked to me about being faithful with the unrighteous mammon, and how we need to lose our lives and hate our lives in this world, seeking nothing but the kingdom of God and His righteousness. You explained how people are dying in their sins every day and need to hear the gospel, how many suffer around the world from not having access to clean drinking water, that many are starving, lonely, and lost and how we are to labor for only what is eternal, using all of our resources and time to preach, help the poor, and to share God's love. You told me how we need to redeem the time, because the days are evil.¹⁵⁴ Yet you go on vacations, purchase decorations for your house and lawn, and buy knickknacks and collectibles that sit there. You probably even forget they are there until it comes time to dust your house. You purchase hobbies, entertainment, and equipment solely for recreational purposes and spend your time doing these things. How do any of these have anything to do with this kingdom of God or His amazing love for man?" exclaimed Paul. "For it makes no sense in my mind that these things are in the category of picking and choosing, when the apostle taught 'to live is Christ, to die is gain.'¹⁵⁵ "For if these things are not useful to the kingdom of God and in no way benefit humanity, namely when used in this manner, then your only option is to sell them and give alms," reasoned Paul. The missionary was speechless.

Sincerely Seeking: Why do you suppose so many have not taken much thought about these things?

Reason: First of all they are discouraged from their elders and brethren. Secondly, they are told covetousness cannot be defined. Thirdly, they are blinded by their culture.

Reason: You see dearly beloved, Paul's mind was, like other men in his country, debased by the culture he was born into. Without taking much thought about his nakedness he only wore a loincloth. Likewise, the missionary's mind was debased by the society and culture he was born into. Where he comes from the men work hard, marry a wife, buy a house and decorate it, go on a vacation from time to time, and enjoy recreation, entertainment, and hobbies. Men from his country thoughtlessly live in vain, and unwittingly serve

¹⁵⁴ Ephesians 5:16

¹⁵⁵ Philippians 1:21

two masters, laboring some of the time for the kingdom of God, and the rest for the vain pleasures of this world, not realizing that this is hypocrisy. They are altogether serving mammon and not God. But think for a moment about decorations. Often men and women pass by a shop window or skim through a magazine and something catches their eye. They think, “That would look good above my fireplace”, or, “I’ll place that with my collectibles”, or, “That would look nice in my front lawn.” These possessions are often arranged and then forgotten. Why then does it become so important when Truth commands, “Sell what ye have and give alms”? It is clear that men don’t need them, and that they have no use for the kingdom. Yet they maintain it is lawful to hold onto them because there is no Scripture which specifies that holding on to decorations is covetousness. They imagine that because they feel no love or have no feelings attached to these items that they are therefore free from covetousness.

Truth: No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.¹⁵⁶

Charity: Exactly. Many who serve mammon feel no hatred towards Christ. In fact, many who often serve mammon claim they love Christ. While serving mammon these have no feelings of hatred in their hearts, neither do they feel that they despise Christ. But it is our actions, who or what we serve, not what we *feel* in our hearts that determines whether or not we love the one, and despise the other. In a similar manner, men feel they have no covetousness in their hearts because they feel no strong desires or lust for certain things, such as decorations and vacations. It is not a matter of what we feel; it is who we serve, what we are seeking first. Do we prefer the Gospel, the glory of God, loving our neighbors as ourselves, or, do we prefer a useless decoration for our bodies, homes, or lawns; or a week of fun during a vacation? This is why the apostle speaks of a covetous man being an idolater.

Lighthead: We must let the Holy Spirit show these things to individuals. If He wants them to know these things then He will teach them.¹⁵⁷

Patience: Your philosophy excludes the great commission. Christ gave gifts to the body.¹⁵⁸ We can either receive them, or shun them. The Scripture says, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you,”¹⁵⁹ and, “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”¹⁶⁰ Apparently, the work of a Christian is to speak the truth with his brother and to care for his soul. If he should get offended it is still your duty to tell him the truth.

Narrator: Lighthead’s son, Jester spoke:

Jester: Where we are from, there is an ancient philosophy, “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and you get rid of him for the whole weekend!”

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 6:24

¹⁵⁷ John 14:26, John 16:13

¹⁵⁸ Ephesians 4:8

¹⁵⁹ Hebrews 13:17

¹⁶⁰ James 5:20

Lightheart: Son, now is not the time for joking.

Charity: For Christians, there is never a time to be joking. Joking belongs to the lighthearted. Pure Heart, Honest and Good Heart, Broken and Contrite Heart, With All Your Heart, these have inheritance in the kingdom of God; however, there is no place for Lightheart. As it is written, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”¹⁶¹

Narrator: Rather than admonishing his son, Lightheart rebuked Charity.

Lightheart: Don’t you ever laugh Charity? Where is your joy? I mean, come on, is this really so serious? Lighten up a little!

Charity: I rejoice not in iniquity, but in the truth.¹⁶² If you would repent, and raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord,¹⁶³ truly, my face would be radiant with joy.

Narrator: A man whose name is Bitter happened to hear Reason telling the story of Paul and the missionary.

Bitter: You miserable Christians. You poor wretches. You serve the most self-centered, egotistical, hypocritical, and arrogant God of them all. For He commands you to do all these things, and seek first His will, and to obey His will, and it is all about *His* will! Why, if He was so selfless and loving it would not be all about *His* will!

Narrator: Bitter concluded his thoughts, turned, and walked away.

Charity: Dear friend, wait a moment. Come, and let us reason together.

Lightheart: You see Charity and Reason: You all make God’s will to be more strict and severe than it really is, so that it becomes both unbearable and unreasonable. Why, if men listened to you they would have no life of their own to live. They would have no happiness, no comfort, and no pleasure. Think of it: You preach against a vacation. A vacation is not killing anyone, stealing from anyone, or sleeping with anyone’s wife. It is not coveting your neighbor’s goods. It is only a few weeks out of the year, and that, for a little fun. What is so harmful about a little fun? Again, you hate decorations, even Christian decorations! They injure none. What is the big deal about decorating your house so that your walls aren’t bare and boring? Doesn’t the Book of Deuteronomy command us to write God’s laws upon the doorposts of our homes?¹⁶⁴

Godly Sorrow: Lightheart is your name, and lightness is your game. Your speech is intended to make what is selfish appear innocent. You speak of loving your neighbor as yourself being a light matter. Yet this is the weightier matter of the law which Jesus reproveth the Pharisees for leaving undone.¹⁶⁵ You ask, “What is so harmful about a little fun?” Your fun costs the thirsty, the hungry, the dying, and many lost souls to go

¹⁶¹ Ephesians 5:3-5

¹⁶² 1 Corinthians 13:6

¹⁶³ Ephesians 6:4

¹⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 11:20

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 23:23

unreached. Say not within yourself, “But how have I not helped these by having fun? For I have helped all of those you mentioned and have had my fun!” As Charity explained to me earlier, when it is in your power to do good to ten, and to help ten, you and those like you, namely, Carnal Reasoning, Mr. Muddy Questions, and Lukewarm, you all choose to help six rather than the ten, that you may indeed appear righteous outwardly, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy, covetousness, and idolatry. Is there not utterly a fault among you when Christ taught His followers to lose their lives? Yet you claim to be His follower and will not even lose this world! Yet you say, listening to Reason and Charity, you would lose your life; yet if there is any truth in that statement it is only because your life *is* this world.

Lightheart: We take loving our neighbors very seriously.

Godly Sorrow: On the Day of Judgment, say that to those you could have helped, but instead of helping them you chose to purchase and pursue useless dainties and treats, knickknacks and collectibles, fun and hobbies. I am persuaded however, that they will not believe you.

Charity: Bitter is filled with worldly sorrow. He loves his world and hates all who would try to make him feel guilty for loving it. He finds fault with God because God expects men to serve Him; yet he finds no fault with himself for making something useful for himself. He is ignorant as to why it “is all about God’s will.” Many accuse God of being vain, selfish, and arrogant, because He is so strict about obedience, seeking Him and His kingdom first. But who does “Sell that ye have and give alms,” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” benefit? Doubtless it benefits the recipients, the one you gave alms to and the neighbor you loved as yourself. For what does it benefit God if we turn the other cheek and bless those who curse us,¹⁶⁶ other than the world seeing our good works and glorifying our Father in heaven?¹⁶⁷ God stands in need of nothing. He doesn’t seek, neither does He need glory from men. It is not that God is so loving that we can be unholy; rather God is so holy He expects us to be loving. Bitter is unhappy with our words because he believes that our personal interests and happiness are and should be of utmost importance to God. It is not our happiness however, but our holiness that God is interested in. Bitter asserts, “God has to overlook our behavior here, and wink at a little selfishness, in order to be less severe in His dealings with us, because otherwise we would be unhappy. He is more than willing to wink, for God is love.”

Lightheart: You demand more than Christ Himself! For Scripture says that those who went before us, namely: the early Christians, apostles, and, even Christ Himself, as is recorded in the parable, these bore the burden and heat of the day.¹⁶⁸ Therefore it is not necessary to suffer with them but only as culture demands it. I am content with my wage. For if the master pays us all the same whether we began at dawn, or the third, sixth, or eleventh hour, then really, what does it matter?¹⁶⁹

Lukewarm: Amen, and Amen!

Godly Sorrow: The pride and lightness of your hearts has blinded you to why the master paid them all the same. He was teaching equality by giving them equal pay. As Patience mentioned earlier, when he quoted

¹⁶⁶ Matthew 5:44-48

¹⁶⁷ Matthew 5:16

¹⁶⁸ Matthew 20:12

¹⁶⁹ Matthew 20:5-16

paul, saying, that equality was “subjection unto the gospel of christ.”¹⁷⁰ But why didn’t you mention the rest of the parable? Those who were idle, when called, labored until the day expired. Though the last wrought but one hour, from the time they were called they labored for their master. If our master bore His cross, if He came not to be served, but to serve, if He came not to live His life, but to give it, if He did not His own will but the will of Him who sent Him, if He labored only for what is eternal (He, the King of kings, the Lord of glory, the Eternal Self Existent One—God manifested in the flesh),¹⁷¹ then who are you, or who am I, to seek anything else but His cross alone? For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*.¹⁷² And, the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.¹⁷³

Lightheart: All this talk of voluntary suffering, humility, and asceticism! The Scripture warns against people like you, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ . . . Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”¹⁷⁴

Charity: It is not a vain philosophy to deny yourself the vain and needless pleasures of this world for the purpose of spreading the gospel and helping the poor. Perhaps it would be vain if you wished to live a self-denying life merely for the purpose of knowing you are living a self-denying life; if you were living a life of self-denial without a greater cause. But is there not a cause? This world is in rebellion to God and needs to hear the gospel. Statistics say that every second 3.6 people die without knowing Jesus,¹⁷⁵ 21,000 people die every day from hunger related causes,¹⁷⁶ 663 million people lack access to safe drinking water,¹⁷⁷ and many more suffer from cold, nakedness, war, and natural disasters. Is there not a cause? Are there no needs? For what cause do you need your useless dainties and treats, your entertainments, recreation equipment, hobbies, and decorations? For what cause do men need the gospel, clean water, food, and clothing? This is the difference between asceticism and the cross of Christ. Wash your eyes with the salve of the true gospel and you can see that it is not our philosophy that is vain, but your own.

Patience: The Jewish Law contained lists of clean and unclean foods which the Jews were not to touch or taste. However, Christ taught that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him but what comes out of the

¹⁷⁰ 2 corinthians 8:1-15, 9:9-14

¹⁷¹ 1 Timothy 3:16

¹⁷² 2 Timothy 2:10-12

¹⁷³ Romans 8:16-17

¹⁷⁴ Colossians 2:8, 18-23

¹⁷⁵ http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/billions_of_people_going_to_hell.htm

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.poverty.com/>

¹⁷⁷ <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-sanitation-facts/>

mouth.¹⁷⁸ Paul wasn't warning the church to guard against those who preach self-denial, cross bearing, and against the selfish and vain pleasures of this world, for the same apostle said, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose glory is* in their shame, who mind earthly things." Those who hold fast the Head, have let go of all those vain desires and empty lusts to hold fast the Head. These are not carnal ordinances, or commandments of men. These are the words of Christ as He meant them to be understood. For the apostle goes on to say, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."¹⁷⁹ Besides all of this, if someone was given dainties as a gift, or if someone found dainties in a grocery store's dumpster, it is unlikely they could sell the dainties and give alms. If they ate such dainties they would not be defiled.¹⁸⁰ If the dainties were useless, it is foolish to eat them. Fornication, adultery, sodomy, covetousness, stealing, lying, killing, and hypocrisy are all inherently evil . . . food is not. Though food is not evil in and of itself, the temperate man abstains from purchasing dainties and useless dainties, and is moderate in his acquiring and consumption of good and useful food. Rather than preferring his lusts, he considers the poor. Purchasing dainties and an unwillingness to forsake purchasing them is covetousness, and we are admonished to not have covetousness once named among us, as becomes saints. For, no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Mr. Muddy Questions: But what if Christ tells me to go on a vacation to witness to a man at the Egyptian Pyramids?

Patience: Christ doesn't send men on vacations. He sends them on missions. The mission is not to seek the pyramids, but the lost souls at the pyramids.

Narrator: An older man drew near.

Lightheart: Why, my good friend Worldly Praise!

Worldly Praise: Truly, it is I.

Lightheart: Worldly Praise! What a fine Christian example we have here before us now! Verily, he is the finest example in our whole town of Admiration, and is esteemed by all. He believes all the words of Truth, Reason, Charity, and Patience, yet he does not beat others over the head with such beliefs. He quietly remains faithful to his own convictions.

Worldly Praise: It is my philosophy to preach the Gospel, and if necessary, to use words.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Matthew 15:11-20

¹⁷⁹ Colossians 3:1-6

¹⁸⁰ Matthew 15:11

¹⁸¹ Often attributed to Francis of Assisi

Truth: **The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.**¹⁸²

Godly Sorrow: What! Worldly Praise, that is the same as saying, “Feed the hungry, and if necessary to use food.”

Patience: He quotes the ancient philosophy, but is ignorant of the author’s meaning, and of his zeal for using words to preach. Likewise, he silently teaches everyone that the truth of what we teach is only his own personal convictions.

Narrator: After hearing these things, Worldly Praise gave his best regards to his friend and continued his own way, for he was among those who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.¹⁸³ Godly Sorrow however, beholding the stubbornness, and lightness of these obstinate men, began to weep. While he wept, they all heard a loud voice from a distance exclaiming, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! They are not valiant for the truth upon the earth, they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity. Through deceit they refuse to know the LORD. Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit. Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness. Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Mammon, which their masters (Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes, and Pride of Life) taught them, therefore are their selfish deeds recorded in the Book, and will be witness against them in that final Day. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning *women*, that they may come: And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.¹⁸⁴ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.¹⁸⁵

Carnal reasoning: Huh hmm.

Narrator: Mr. Muddy Questions, Lightheart, and Lukewarm likewise cleared their throats.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Huh hmm. Hmm hmm! Are you saying that the walls of my house must be bare? I mean, what does a dollar decoration from the Dollar Store mean in eternity? A dollar isn’t worth much.

Godly Sorrow: The scriptures say that with food and clothing you must be content and would you complain about bare walls? It is enough that you have a place to lay your head. Besides, many decorations men purchase are placed in or around their homes and forgotten. When they passed by at the market it appealed to their eye and they bought it.

¹⁸² John 7:7

¹⁸³ John 12:43

¹⁸⁴ Jeremiah chapters 9 & 23

¹⁸⁵ Ephesians 4:17-19

Sincerely Seeking: The questions you need to ask yourself, Mr. Muddy Questions are: Why do I care so much about my walls being decorated? Why is it so important to God for me to spend money on these items? Is it to adorn the doctrine of God my Savior, to relieve the poor and needy, to fund missionaries and print Christian literature?

Reason: You who condemn costly clothing, outward adornments, costly church buildings with their stained glass windows, steeples, and other useless decorations, while you shop at Vanity Fair for your homes, do you not condemn yourself?

Carnal reasoning: Again, you are comparing apples to oranges. It is obvious to all that to adorn a church building is far more costly than decorating a home.

Patience: You err again, Carnal Reasoning. What you need to consider is not in which way is a church building or a home different, but in which way is decorating them similar.

Lukewarm: We follow the Scripture. Our women don't wear gold or pearls or costly clothing.¹⁸⁶

Mr. Single Eye: Your eye is not as single as you imagine. For a carnal eye is an evil eye. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee."¹⁸⁷ Though you condemn adorning the body with jewels and gold, yet if you adorn your homes and lawns with such like vanities, and justify yourself, are you not yet carnal? You are not modest because you avoid one error and follow another. If you ask in what way should we adorn ourselves, homes and lawns, understand it means to forsake vanity and to allow modesty to be defined through your life. Be clothed with humility,¹⁸⁸ longsuffering, contentment, meekness, and fervent charity; these are of great price in the sight of God.

Carnal Reasoning: But the apostle warned not against loving pleasure, but against loving pleasure more than loving God.

Godly Sorrow: If we are to love God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves, then what love have we left for pleasure?

Charity: Amen. Those who live in pleasure are dead, though they live.

Carnal Reasoning: You add to the Scripture Charity. It does not say *those* who live in pleasure, but *she* that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.¹⁸⁹

Patience: Charity was not quoting the scripture, but was simply applying its meaning to our present discourse. However, the Greek word for pleasure in that passage is only used twice in the New Testament: in 1st Timothy it is translated as pleasure, and in the Book of James as wanton: Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you* Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have

¹⁸⁶ 1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Peter 3:1-6

¹⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 15:9

¹⁸⁸ 1 Peter 5:5

¹⁸⁹ 1 Timothy 5:6

nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.¹⁹⁰ Do you know what many cows are doing before they are delivered to be slaughtered? They are typically consuming large amounts of grain, more than needed. There they become fatter and fatter. You, and those who agree with you, fatten your hearts in a similar way with all of your vanities. You live in the pleasures and wantonness of your vacations and dainties, hobbies and recreation equipment, entertainments and other selfish indulgences. You, like the cows, have little to no reality of what is coming.¹⁹¹ You need to forsake your lukewarm conception of God, and offer yourself as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.¹⁹²

Reason: If it is your reasonable service to offer yourself as a living sacrifice on the basis of that God created you for Himself,¹⁹³ how much more on the basis that God humbled Himself and became a man,¹⁹⁴ and lived the life He lived as an example,¹⁹⁵ and endured all that He did not for His own sake, but for your sake.¹⁹⁶ If we are to walk even as He walked, and, unless we die with Him we will not live with Him, it is absurd to consider that vacations, hobbies, entertainment, useless dainties, and decorations could ever be acceptable! It is enough that all He expects is all that we have, for all that we have could never afford such a promise, such a blessed inheritance as what He has supplied. Yet ye say the way of the LORD is unequal.¹⁹⁷

Carnal Reasoning: I have never said such a thing!

Reason: Though you say it not, it is not needful to use those express words to communicate what is in your heart.¹⁹⁸ For when you charge us with being harsh or too severe, when all we're doing is calling you to repent of all your selfish desires and vain pleasures and to seek first the kingdom of God and to love your neighbor as yourself, you do in fact accuse the way of the LORD as being unfair.

Charity: And though you give everything and obey everything Jesus commanded you are still unprofitable servants.¹⁹⁹ Christ cannot profit from you until you do more for Him than He did for you, and to do that is inconceivable. Though you forsake all your vanity to labor only for what is eternal it is only your reasonable service. For what Christ offers tips the scales by an eternal measure. And what He requires is not for Himself, but for the lost and dying in the world in which you live. There is a difference between losing your life and losing this world, Carnal Reasoning. Your affections are so fixed upon the things of this earth, you feel that you would be losing your life to give up all of these things. However, to forsake these things is not to lose your life, it is to lose the world. And if these words seem evil to you, understand that what is good to God will always appear evil to carnal reasoning.

Lightheart: But the apostle said, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."²⁰⁰ Now if He, by the work of Calvary is made unto us all of

¹⁹⁰ James 5:5

¹⁹¹ Hebrews 9:27

¹⁹² Romans 12:1

¹⁹³ Romans 11:33-36, Romans 12:1-2

¹⁹⁴ Philippians 2:5-9

¹⁹⁵ 1 Peter 2:21

¹⁹⁶ Hebrews 12:2

¹⁹⁷ Ezekiel 18:25

¹⁹⁸ Matthew 12:34

¹⁹⁹ Luke 17:10

²⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:30

these blessed graces, then truly, it is finished and whatever we do is from the goodness of our own hearts, not because we have to, but because we get to.

Godly Sorrow: You follow a proud doctrine. “Not because we have to but because we get to” indicates you imagine you’re doing something exceptional or extraordinary when you obey God. It is not from the goodness of your own heart as if you are doing something extra or over and above that which is required. It is your duty, and reasonable service to do all those things Christ commanded. As far as your interpretation of the scripture you mentioned, you are greatly mistaken Lighthouse. If we walk even as He walked, if we do righteousness then are we righteous even as He is righteous,²⁰¹ if we purify ourselves even as He is pure,²⁰² if we walk in the light as He is in the light,²⁰³ if we are holy as He is holy,²⁰⁴ if we are perfect as He is perfect,²⁰⁵ if we lose our lives and hate our lives in this world as He did,²⁰⁶ and are crucified, dead and buried together with Him, then²⁰⁷ and only then may we truly experience and understand what the apostle meant when he wrote, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” To better understand the apostle, hear what he wrote to the early church, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”²⁰⁸ If we follow Christ and live as He lived, we are indeed in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Lighthouse: You are filled with pride. You cannot be like Christ.

Truth: **The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.**²⁰⁹

Patience: There is no pride in that man who bows his heart and says, “Yes Lord. Whatever you say Lord. You are God, I am the man. What you tell me to do, I can do. I can be what you want me to be.” The proud man either refuses to bear his cross, or doesn’t believe Jesus would actually require him to do it.

Narrator: By this time the evening classes of a nearby university let out. Professor Minimind exited the school taking his usual route to his house of untempered mortar,²¹⁰ following the path which leads to the bench where the large oak is located and where the conversation is taking place. He stopped to listen.

Carnal Reasoning: Do you not understand that by your serious position on these things that you are causing others to stumble? Do you not realize that you are turning people away?

²⁰¹ 1 John 3:7

²⁰² 1 John 3:3

²⁰³ 1 John 1:7

²⁰⁴ 1 Peter 1:15-16

²⁰⁵ Matthew 5:48

²⁰⁶ John 12:23-26

²⁰⁷ Romans 6

²⁰⁸ Galatians 2:20

²⁰⁹ Luke 6:40

²¹⁰ Ezekiel 13

Patience: Men shall turn their ears from truth and be turned unto fables.²¹¹ In reality, your carnal reasoning does not consider the lost, the hungry, the thirsty, the orphan, the widow, who need your resources not to indulge as you, but to simply live. These you cause to stumble.

Carnal Reasoning: But you are making the way harder by adding rules to the way.

Reason: Patience doesn't add rules; he teaches the rules of the way already laid down by our Master and His apostles.

Carnal reasoning: Bare walls, no dainties, and laws, such as no vacations, entertainments or hobbies! That reeks of the savor of death.²¹² I do not want to turn others away or allow such a foul odor to cause them to stumble. After all, The Rose of Sharon is interpreted to be Jesus Christ.²¹³ As roses are attractive and pleasant, so is Jesus and His doctrine.

Patience: Every rose has its thorns and we consider that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us,²¹⁴ if we will but endure to the end.²¹⁵ We would rather be pierced with thorns from laying hold of Jesus, and bleed as He did, and to have Him; rather than to avoid injuries, keep this world, and be without Him. Was not He injured for us? If the words of life, as Jesus meant them to be understood, are a savor of death unto you, understand that we will not become a savor of death unto God to win the dead.²¹⁶ On the contrary, whatsoever things are a sweet smelling savor of life unto God, this we will endeavor to offer up to Him, and teach men.²¹⁷ Judge for yourself what smells more like Christ and His apostles: vacations, hobbies, decorations for your bodies, homes, and lawns; holidays and birthdays, entertainments, recreation equipment, dainties and treats, collectibles and knickknacks, or, selling and forsaking these things to provide for the poor and fund the work of the Gospel, to love your neighbor as yourself, and to offer your body as a living sacrifice?

Professor Minimind: Huh hmm. Greetings kind sirs. You lay heavy burdens on simple Christians who either have not yet received the grace to bear them, or have not yet been asked by the Holy Spirit to do these things you are preaching. The life you live, the zeal you possess, the sacrifice and labor you offer to God is not by your own work, but by the Holy Spirit working in you. Before you knew God you could do nothing. But when you were washed by the blood, and after the Holy Spirit regenerated you, it was then, and only then, that you could now do what you are doing. For example, a glove can do nothing apart from the hand. Once the hand inhabits the glove, the glove likewise takes on the nature and motions of the hand. What the hand does, the glove does. This is what it means to be born again. This is why you are able to sell what you have and give alms, turn the other cheek, forsake the vain pleasures of this world, and faithfully bear your cross each day. God is not going to punish those who do not do these things if they do not have the grace to do it. Is it not written, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that

²¹¹ 2 Timothy 4:4

²¹² 2 Corinthians 2:16

²¹³ Song of Solomon 2:1

²¹⁴ Romans 8:18

²¹⁵ Matthew 24:13

²¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:16

²¹⁷ Ephesians 5:1-2

ye may be able to bear it”?²¹⁸ This is why He sent Jesus to die for their sins. As long as they trust in His atoning sacrifice for their sins, and they do what they are able to do, then there is no need to fear punishment or fearful threatenings from men like you.

Narrator: Carnal Reasoning, Mr. Muddy Questions, and Lightheart all applauded their new friend, for his unsound words and courage to share them so boldly. Lukewarm however, was a bit insulted that the professor included him as one who lacked grace or guidance from the Holy Spirit, as if he stood in need of something.

Professor Minimind: Furthermore, these young men are new to the faith, and these sayings of yours are too hard for them.

Reason: The way out of every temptation is the cross, not the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you will die: but if through the Spirit you do mortify the deeds of the body, you will live.²¹⁹ These sayings are for beginners. Is not your name Professor Minimind?

Professor Minimind: No! Professor Highmind is my name. I dwell upon the high things of God.

Reason: I am persuaded that you are that Professor Minimind who lives in the house of untempered mortar down the way in the neighborhood of Smooth Speech.²²⁰ If you still have ears, hear:

A falsehood commonly conveyed and regarded as truth amongst many professing Christ today is that the Holy Spirit takes possession of men, or that He controls men, similarly as when a hand takes control of a glove when inserted, and consequently the glove takes on the will of the hand. This falsehood charges God with one of two blasphemies: That God was ignorant of this option in the beginning of Creation, and consequently many evils, ie., wars, adulteries, greed, etc. resulted from His ignorance. Or, that God was not ignorant, but knew His own will to take possession of men by the Holy Spirit, but desired that men should first sin, provoke Him to wrath, and then be destroyed. That He knew how to avoid all of these evils, to create men who needed no improvement, that were altogether perfect and inherently virtuous, but for some mysterious reason chose not to produce this until years of much misery were accomplished, which is a most absurd view of God.

You see professor, if Adam was created to “fall”, then he needed no forgiveness from God. He would have been perfect, free from fault, and without blame, for he would only have done what he was designed by God to do. God would not have told Adam to not eat of the tree, if that was the reason Adam was created. Both God’s spoken and eternal plan would have been in conflict with each other, the one being an illusion, and the other God's true design.

If man is not the one who chooses each time to obey,²²¹ to endure, to believe, to suffer long while being kind,²²² to really love his neighbor as himself, to turn the other cheek, to bear his cross,²²³ to give and to forgive; if God is really the One doing all of these things in each man by His grace and the Holy Spirit (without

²¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:13

²¹⁹ Romans 8:13

²²⁰ Romans 16:18

²²¹ 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

²²² 1 Corinthians 13:4

²²³ Luke 9:23

any cooperation from man), then God made a mistake by placing man in Eden, and telling him not to eat of the tree, and for allowing him to err as he did. For then God's own will would accuse Him, and He would become the Author of sin, the Lover of what He hates, the blame for all evil, and incompetent to retain absolute control over His creature; if God had absolute control over man, then in Eden He willed against His own will, and His kingdom being divided against itself, could not stand. And, if man had no will of his own, then it would not be possible for man to ever love God. God would be served by creatures that could not do otherwise. But the fact that it is possible for each man to do otherwise (than to lovingly serve God) is what makes our relationship to God, distinct from other creatures.

Again, if it was God's will for man to obey God, by being controlled by the Holy Spirit, God's grace, or any other power than man's own free choice, then God, lacking wisdom, must have overlooked this option in the beginning of creation; or even worse, played a cruel game with man while He withheld His power.

If somebody were to ask, "If God is so holy, so perfect, all wise and all knowing, then why did He create an imperfect man, who would make a wrong choice, bringing death to all humanity, causing every person to run the risk of hell for eternity?" The answer could be explained as: Love is a complicated thing. For some it is too complex but for others it is not. God created man as perfectly as He could have within the confines of love. God would not be that which He is not, nor would He do that which He would not; therefore the essence of God is faithfulness, being that God is love. So, it would be against His nature to behave or act contrary to that nature. God, through being, upholds the entire universe. The eternal seams which hold the universe together would suddenly come undone if He were to reverse Who He is. Therefore, it was expedient that He established freedom in the will of man. This grand creation of His was placed in a garden with two trees.²²⁴ The trees represented two choices and two realities. The wise choice would make man immortal; but to err would mean the gravest mistake, resulting in mortality. Man erred. However, God foreknew the choice His creation would make, so He prepared redemption for humanity long before man ever became a living soul.²²⁵ Is there then, injustice with God, who knew that man would fall, yet made him anyway? Certainly not! For He was willing to suffer the loss of all those who would perish in their own unbelief and rejection of what is good, that He might have those who would believe in Him of their own volition and love what is true and just.

As for why evil exists Professor, it is understood as the direct and indirect result of humanity's abuse of their free will. Thus free will is the gift that makes it possible for us to do evil and is what makes it meaningful when we choose to do good. Apparently our Creator believes that a universe in which evil is possible would still be better than a universe where free will, love, and meaningful relationships are impossible.²²⁶

If humanity does not possess "free will" then everyone is perfect and the only Person to be blamed for the evil in the world is God. However, the problem has never been with God, but with our own free will, as one early Christian stated, "We were not created to die, but we die by our own fault. Our free-will has destroyed us; we who were free have become slaves; we have been sold through sin. Nothing evil has been

²²⁴ Genesis 3

²²⁵ Ephesians 1:3-6

²²⁶ Hatzair

created by God; we ourselves have manifested wickedness; but we, who have manifested it, are able again to reject it."²²⁷

Let it be known that loving God and doing His will is not so important to Him because of vain mortal ambitions. Some may accuse God of being vain, standing in need of recognition and love, etc., because it is all about His will (Him). These accusations would only be true if He does not have the most perfect will, or if His will is selfish. But who benefits by doing His will? Who benefits if you take the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" seriously? Who benefits if you turn the other cheek, help the poor, and purify your heart from lustful looks and carnal desires? Who benefits from knowing God, acknowledging Him, and doing His will? Doubtless, above all, humanity is blessed in doing His will, obeying His commands, acknowledging Him, pursuing holiness, and from knowing God. He is the source of all life, love, righteousness, true joy, and peace! It is when the human race rebels and seeks its own that morality declines, and men suffer, which effects not only humanity, but in short, even animals, and the environment.

Furthermore Professor, the Scripture records, "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 'If any man WILL come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."²²⁸ It is absurd to think that He declared such a statement to men, when such a statement would belong to God only and if God alone had the ability to choose. The fact that He proclaimed those words to great multitudes of MEN who were with Him, "If any man WILL," demonstrates His understanding of what is in men: A will able to choose to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him. The Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,"²²⁹ is how he taught His disciples to pray. If it were not possible for another will to be done, this prayer makes no sense. If His example in the garden applies to us, "Nevertheless not My WILL, but Thy will be done,"²³⁰ then it is because we have a choice to do "Thy will," or our own will. The Lord's lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!"²³¹ This plainly declares that men resist the will of God.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."²³² If men have no free will, then men are not going to be punished for not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They have no choice in the matter. The very evil works they do would be the will of God, not theirs. Such a blasphemous view of God debases the mind, and produces totally depraved men.

²²⁷ Tatian, Address to the Greeks, chapter 11

²²⁸ Mark 8:34-38

²²⁹ Matthew 6:9-13

²³⁰ Luke 22:40-46

²³¹ Matthew 23:37

²³² 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

Is God going to cast Himself into hell? Is He going to render to Himself according to His own works? Is He going to tell Himself "Well done thou good and faithful servant?"²³³ or depart from Me ye cursed into the everlasting fire?"²³⁴ Certainly not!

Moreover, Wisdom says, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth."²³⁵ The waters do not transgress His commandments because the waters have no choice in the matter. Men will be punished for transgressing His commandments, because men (unlike the waters) are capable of performing them, but choosing not to obey they are guilty of transgression. If God is completely Sovereign and ruling over man in the same way as He does the aforementioned waters, then He will not be punishing men for transgressions. However, God does not rule over men the same way He does the waters, for He has commanded men not to transgress His commands yet they do it anyways.

"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."²³⁶ Again, if any man WILL do his will. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."²³⁷ Notice: whosoever WILL.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."²³⁸ The Son of Man will never be able to do this if the works men do are not their own works. If men are not doing what it appears they are doing (if the works they perform are not the results of their own free choice) then the works are not their own, and Jesus made no sense when He said that He will reward every man according to his works.

But let it be known that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; Who is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for the whole world.²³⁹ This is needed, not because the Holy Spirit takes possession of men slowly, and therefore, the inherent evil in men manifests from time to time; but because the Holy Spirit does not take possession of men, but rather men choose to walk after the flesh, and not after the spirit.²⁴⁰ This is why God calls men everywhere to repent,²⁴¹ warning those who don't, and promising eternal life to those who do. "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,"²⁴² says the apostle. For the Holy Spirit does not steer men, rather He guides them into all truth; for God is a Teacher, not a puppet master.²⁴³

²³³ Matthew 25:23

²³⁴ Matthew 25:41

²³⁵ Proverbs 8:27-29

²³⁶ John 7:17

²³⁷ Mark 8:35

²³⁸ Matthew 16:27

²³⁹ 1 John 2:1-2

²⁴⁰ Galatians 5:16

²⁴¹ Acts 17:30

²⁴² 2 Corinthians 5:9

²⁴³ John 14:26, 16:13

If God alone has the power of choice, then He alone is responsible for everything, whether good or bad, not the men He promises to bless or punish for the good or bad done in the body. And all of the wrath kindled in Him by wicked works would be the consequence of His actions, not ours. In fact, He would be blaming man for His own mistakes! If God alone has the power to choose, then man is wholly innocent, and a good God does not punish the innocent!

Additionally God waited until the fullness of time to send His Son to be born of a Virgin,²⁴⁴ that time when all of the free choices of men and all circumstances would all work according to the counsel of His own will,²⁴⁵ from Caesar Augustus' decree for every man to return to his native region,²⁴⁶ thus fulfilling the prophecy that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah,²⁴⁷ to the envious Pharisees and leaders who had Jesus crucified, who gathered against Christ to pierce His hands and His feet, thus fulfilling the 2nd and 22nd Psalm.

Professor Minimind: Huh hmm. Those events took place because of predestination.

Reason: You imagine Professor, that an event, predicted through foreknowledge, comes to pass because it was predicted; but we do not grant this, maintaining that he who foretold it was not the cause of its happening, because he foretold it would happen; but the future event itself, which would have taken place though not predicted, afforded the occasion to him, who was endowed with foreknowledge, of foretelling its occurrence. Now, certainly this result is present to the foreknowledge of him who predicts an event, when it is possible that it may or may not happen, viz., that one or other of these things will take place.²⁴⁸ Predestined is not predetermined.

You justify your greed on the basis of being human, as if it were impossible to forsake all and surrender all and to give all. And though many humans have done this you maintain that grace is irresistibly given to some and not to others, and that therefore we need to cool our message. But we maintain, that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.²⁴⁹ If men will but humble themselves, and hear wisdom calling in the streets and feel her solemn tones of warning,²⁵⁰ and repent, then they too may be formed into the image of Christ²⁵¹ and grow into the fullness of His stature.²⁵² But since we are to grow into Him and to live His life, it is only reasonable that we must forsake our own and entirely lose ourselves in Him, as the ancients declared, "The more we love God, the more we enter within God,"²⁵³ and again, "God makes Himself known to those who, after doing all that their powers will allow, confess they need help from Him."²⁵⁴ You see, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."²⁵⁵ This again is full of great wisdom. For a man by

²⁴⁴ Isaiah 7:14, Galatians 4:4

²⁴⁵ Ephesians 1:11

²⁴⁶ Luke 2:1-6

²⁴⁷ Micah 5:2

²⁴⁸ Origen against Celsus, Book 2, chapter 20

²⁴⁹ Titus 2:11-12

²⁵⁰ Proverbs 8

²⁵¹ Romans 8:29

²⁵² Ephesians 4:13

²⁵³ The One Who Knows God, by Clement of Alexandria

²⁵⁴ Origen against Celsus, Book 7, chapter 42

²⁵⁵ Luke 18:27

himself working and toiling at freedom from passion achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself very desirous and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. For God conspires with willing souls. But if they abandon their eagerness, the spirit which is bestowed by God is also restrained. For to save the unwilling is the part of one exercising compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace. Nor does the kingdom of heaven belong to sleepers and sluggards, “but the violent take it by force.”²⁵⁶ So if a man plainly shows himself to earnestly desire freedom from his fleshly passions, God will give him the power to attain it. However, a man must first be convinced that such passions are fleshly and need to be forsaken. He must believe it is possible to follow Christ,²⁵⁷ and to be like Christ. He must choose to be faithful and hold fast what he has to the end, regardless of difficulties.

Truth: **“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”**²⁵⁸

Charity: The pure in heart shall see God, because at the core, at the foundation of their seeking Him, there is no self-interest. And that no one may say what is said by those who are deemed lovers of Truth, that our assertions that the wicked are punished in eternal fire are big words and bugbears, and that we wish men to live virtuously through fear, and not because such a life is good and pleasant; I will briefly reply to this, that if this be not so, God does not exist; or, if He exists, He cares not for men, and neither virtue nor vice is anything.²⁵⁹ Though some may pursue good works for fear of future judgment, we maintain that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,²⁶⁰ and that the perfection of wisdom is charity. Neither is to be despised. For when one is so entangled with the love and cares of this world it often takes the fear of God for one to be purified from these things. He is not however, to remain a beginner. He is to press on to perfection by letting all his things be done with charity.²⁶¹

Narrator: Now when the professor saw the boldness of Reason and perceived that he and his companions were unlearned and ignorant men, he marveled. He took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.²⁶² As for the testimony of the truth which Reason courageously bore he could say nothing against it. And they which heard *it*, namely, the professor and his colleagues, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last,²⁶³ until a very tall man, and burly, approached having a terrifying countenance. In a deep raspy voice, the stranger saluted, “Greetings.”

Professor and his colleagues: Greetings to you sir. What is your name?

Narrator: The stranger answers, “My name is Sola Scriptura, which being translated from Latin to English, means, Only Scripture.” There is no need to leave.

The Professor and his colleagues: Sola Scriptura! Aren’t you the president of the University?

²⁵⁶ Matthew 11:12, Clement of Alexandria, Who is the Rich Man that Will be Saved, chapter 21

²⁵⁷ John 8:12

²⁵⁸ Matthew 5:8

²⁵⁹ Justin Martyr, Second Apology, Chapter 9

²⁶⁰ Proverbs 9:10

²⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 16:14

²⁶² Acts 4:13

²⁶³ John 8:9

Sola Scriptura: Indeed I was for many years. I have retired. I handed the university over to one named Biblicist. He is well qualified and teaches the Scriptures precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little.²⁶⁴ His method of persuading men to follow the Scriptures is more successful than I. In fact, his method has already gone throughout the world. If all of you travel much longer in this direction, I am confident you'll meet up with him; or rather that he is sure to meet with you. These men whom you've been chatting with are very crafty. They have tried teaching their deceptive doctrines at my school, but I drove them out with many railing accusations, and warned others concerning their divisiveness. Be patient, and learn from me as I engage them in battle. Why, Mr. Muddy Questions, I almost didn't recognize you, and . . . is that Carnal Reasoning?

Carnal Reasoning: Yes it is.

Sola Scriptura: Why is your countenance fallen?

Carnal Reasoning: Because these men are most unreasonable. They will not back down from their odious message which causes men to stumble. They teach against vacations, hobbies, play toys, using money for holidays and birthdays, recreation equipment, jewelry, decorations, entertainment, knickknacks, collectibles, dainties and useless dainties, saying that you cannot pursue these while being faithful with the unrighteous mammon, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, selling what ye have to give alms, and loving your neighbor as yourself. In brief, they say you cannot be following Jesus while seeking these things. They claim that these things are of the world, and that the reason why we cannot understand their words is because we ourselves are of the world.²⁶⁵

Sola Scriptura: My dear pupils. I taught you how to win these arguments myself. What is the philosophy of my school? I had you recite this every morning to ensure your success in the world.

Carnal Reasoning and Mr. Muddy Questions: *Sola Scriptura* may be defined as *Scripture Alone* being the primary and absolute source for all doctrine and practice (both faith and morals). *Sola Scriptura* denotes several things. First, the Bible is a direct revelation from God. As such, it has divine authority. For what the Bible says, God says. As it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."²⁶⁶ Thus, the Scripture alone is sufficient and is all that is necessary for faith and practice. Therefore, Scripture alone is the final authority for our faith. Moreover, the Scriptures not only have sufficiency but they also possess final authority; they are therefore the final court of appeal on all doctrinal and moral matters. Regardless of how sound they appear, or how helpful they are, all of the early church writers, pastors, prophets, and Councils are fallible. Furthermore, Scripture is clear. If a passage appears uncertain, then use Scripture to interpret Scripture, for the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible. What is clearly stated in the Scriptures should be used to interpret the unclear passages.

Sola Scriptura: What is this I hear of you men? What are your names?

²⁶⁴ Isaiah 28

²⁶⁵ 1 John 4:5-6

²⁶⁶ Luke 4:4

Narrator: Patience and his companions revealed their names and rehearsed the main points of the conversation to Sola Scriptura. To this, he stopped his ears.

Sola Scriptura: Enough, enough I say. I have heard plenty of your arguments, but what Scriptures do you have to back such statements? Are these things *true*, or are they your *personal convictions*?

Mr. Muddy Questions: Why, I should have asked that question long ago! Tell us plainly, are these things true or are they your personal convictions?

Narrator: As the discussion commenced between Sola Scriptura and the companions of Truth, some fellows dressed in plain clothes stopped to listen. They called themselves the Plain People.

Patience: Without question, these things are true, and those who have a kindred spirit with Truth, Charity, Reason, and Patience; all who have a single eye, are sincerely seeking, and filled with godly sorrow: share these convictions. Regarding Scripture, here are a few: Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 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?²⁶⁷ Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?²⁶⁸ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ?²⁶⁹ And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight?²⁷⁰

Narrator: With an air of confidence, Sola Scriptura responded:

Sola Scriptura: I am well acquainted with all of those Scriptures. I agree with what you're saying, that is, I agree with your *principles*. It is your *application* I disagree with. Tell me, where does it say in those Scriptures anything about vacations, hobbies, play toys, recreation equipment, holidays, birthdays, jewelry, decorations, entertainment, knickknacks, collectibles, dainties and useless dainties?

Reason: We will endeavor to explain our position with Scripture, but first tell me, what is the pillar and ground of the truth?

Sola Scriptura: It is recorded in 1 Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

Reason: Well spoken. But what is your understanding of this verse?

²⁶⁷ Mark 8:34-38

²⁶⁸ Luke 16:10-12

²⁶⁹ Philippians 1:9-10

²⁷⁰ 1 John 3:22

Sola Scriptura: The church is the pillar and ground of the truth, because the church has the Scriptures.

Reason: This verse was written when the church had no Bible. This Scripture does not say that the church *has* the pillar and ground of the truth, but that the church *is* the pillar and ground of the truth. The philosophy of your school doesn't account for this Scripture, for it says that Scripture alone is the primary and absolute source and final authority for all doctrine and practice regarding faith and morals. Your philosophy implies that Scripture alone is the complete revelation of the will of God, and that there is therefore no need of any further source to identify, recognize, or to define truth. However, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth because it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ *Himself* being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.²⁷¹ The same Spirit that guided the apostles and their disciples into all truth guides those who obey Him into all truth. The church is taught by the grace of God to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. How do you define ungodliness and worldly lusts?

Sola Scriptura: What the Scripture clearly reveals, what the Bible specifically identifies as ungodliness and worldly lusts, this is how we define it.

Reason: Such as?

Sola Scriptura: Fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, sodomy, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion, uncleanness, lasciviousness, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, revellings, maliciousness, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. The scriptures mention more, but this gives you an idea.²⁷²

Reason: Your list is long, but is in many respects powerless if left undefined. For good principles, without application are similar to a car with no gasoline.

Sola Scriptura: The best method of defining Scripture is using Scripture. For example: Covetousness is defined in Luke 12 when a young man said to Jesus, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."²⁷³ He then follows this with a parable, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure

²⁷¹ Ephesians 2:20-22

²⁷² Romans 1:29-31, Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9

²⁷³ Luke 12:13-15

for himself, and is not rich toward God.”²⁷⁴ The man coveted his brother’s inheritance, and the other in the parable coveted his treasure and laid it up for himself.

Reason: The fool in the parable is considered wise by the world's standards. He is the man who saved up money to retire and enjoy life. Correspondingly, King Solomon spoke of the wise man whose “barns will be filled with plenty.”²⁷⁵ But King Jesus calls the man a fool who builds greater barns to store his crops and goods. Solomon said, “I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry,”²⁷⁶ and, “drink your wine with a merry heart.”²⁷⁷ But Jesus, who is greater than Solomon,²⁷⁸ calls the man a fool who says to himself, “Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁹ The enjoyment of taking ease, eating, drinking, and being merry has no part in the kingdom of God.” (254) The Apostle Paul took up the cross daily and wrote: “I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”²⁸⁰ I agree with those passages you shared, however, covetousness is still left undefined. For what exactly does it mean to lay up treasure for yourself and to not be rich towards God?

Sola Scriptura: Clear scriptures are the lines from which fellowship must be established. These are the lines which must be drawn. Where there is no specification or definite explanation of a moral issue, these are left to each man’s conscience.

Narrator: With an approving look, the Plain People added:

Plain People: We agree with Sola Scriptura. The Scripture states, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.”²⁸¹ What may be sin for you, may not be sin for another. Where there is no clear revelation in Scripture we must let each man decide for himself what is clean and unclean. For before this statement, the apostle said, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 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.”²⁸² If *you* are convicted about buying ice cream and donuts, or decorating your home and lawn, this doesn’t mean that Christ shared these convictions. Only *His* personal convictions are truth. We must follow the apostle’s admonition to let each man work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.²⁸³

Sola Scriptura: Indeed Plain People. I like your talk.

²⁷⁴ Luke 12:16-21

²⁷⁵ Proverbs 3:10

²⁷⁶ Ecclesiastes 8:15

²⁷⁷ Ecclesiastes 9:7

²⁷⁸ Matthew 12:42

²⁷⁹ Romans 14:17

²⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:31-32

²⁸¹ Romans 14:14

²⁸² Romans 14:12-14

²⁸³ Philippians 2:12

Sincerely Seeking: Plain People, though your clothes are plain, it appears female modesty is a matter of morality for your women, and of conscience for your men. But tell me, where does it say in the Scriptures that, “Clear Scriptures are the lines from which fellowship must be established”?

Charity: Indeed it does not say, Sincerely Seeking. This philosophy is exactly what brought Lukewarm and his church into their woeful condition. For as long as sin is left undefined, and is treated as a matter of conscience, the temperature will typically be just right in your own eyes. However, Jesus said to those “who had need of nothing”, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”²⁸⁴

Reason: But you, Plain People, also go beyond the Scriptures.

Sola Scriptura: What! Prove it, but only from the Scripture.

Reason: They teach against cosmetics, women wearing pants and tight form-fitting clothing, men wearing gold or pearls or costly array, boxing, football, and other violent sports, women looking upon men with lust, and polygamy. You also condemn cruelty to animals, violent movies, the circus, and the fairs; you even teach against men having a close friendship with a married woman.

Plain People: Mr. Muddy Questions and Carnal Reasoning, do you not agree with the list Reason provided? Does scripture not speak against such practices?

Carnal Reasoning: No, they do not. I disagree with the list. I believe you can attend the circus, fairs, and sporting events. As for the violent movies, these are just actors in a play. In reality, there is no violence being done. The Scripture does not say that God hates violent movies, but that He hates violence itself.²⁸⁵

Mr. Muddy Questions: I likewise disagree: I enjoy my gold and multiple wives. Did not Abraham and King David enjoy their wives, wealth, and go to war? We also enjoy the amusement parks and fairs. The Scripture is not clear on any of these matters. If anything, there is more to support polygamy than what condemns it. Did not the apostle say, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife”?²⁸⁶ This teaching was not necessary if it was understood that Christians may only have monogamous marriages.

Plain People: Concerning violent movies, Carnal Reasoning, it is written, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.”²⁸⁷ And to you Mr. Muddy Questions, regarding the amusement parks and fairs it is written, “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world.”²⁸⁸ And the Bible clearly condemns war, self-defense, and protecting one’s own when it says, “Resist not an evil person and love your enemies.”²⁸⁹

Sola Scriptura: Gentlemen, war, self-defense, and protecting one’s own, are necessary and *just* acts of violence that are not wicked. However, these must not be a source of one’s entertainment, for God hates violence. Concerning polygamy, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his

²⁸⁴ Revelation 3:15-16

²⁸⁵ Psalm 11:5

²⁸⁶ 1 Timothy 3:2

²⁸⁷ Psalm 101:3

²⁸⁸ 1 John 2:15-17

²⁸⁹ Matthew 5:38-48, Luke 6

wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.”²⁹⁰ The polygamy specifically condemned in Scripture is multiple wives at the same time. If you divorce one wife however, you may marry another. In some cases this is permitted.

Plain People: What! I was in agreement with you Sola Scriptura until this. As for divorcing one wife to marry another, the Scripture is clear, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”²⁹¹ When Jesus’ disciples asked Him about His teaching on divorce, He explained the permanence of marriage by clearly calling marriage after divorce, adultery. As for you companions of Truth, beware of taking away and adding to the Scriptures. You must not teach for doctrine the commandments of men. What you have defined, Jesus did not define. These teachings of yours (regardless of how good they may be) are not true, but are merely your personal convictions. If you persist in these your doctrines beware that you are not found Judaizers and Ebionites on the last Day!

Narrator: Sola Scriptura was offended by the hypocrisy of the Plain People, for they defined and interpreted the Scriptures beyond the written letter just as everyone else, and he severely reproved them for it. After those words from Sola Scriptura, the Plain People departed.

Reason: Sola Scriptura, I agree with your use of those passages, but not with your following statements. For you cannot be a Christian and go to war, have multiple wives, and deck yourself with gold, though the passages themselves do not explicitly condemn war, amusement parks, fairs, men wearing gold, or polygamy. In many respects, those who hold to your philosophy may always be right in their own eyes for the evil they do, using Scripture or the lack of Scripture, to justify themselves. Interpretation is necessary. The Holy Spirit and the grace of God are necessary. We are accused of causing others to stumble, but we maintain that is you, and those who hold to your philosophy that are the occasion of scandal to others. For it is more of a stumbling block to contend that you only hold the Scripture as your authority: 1) Because others observing you will not find that to be true about you; 2) If Scripture alone is the philosophy of you, your colleagues, and the plain people, then all of these groups must have fellowship with a man who has an exception to marry another woman, if drafted he may go to war and serve the governing authorities, dresses however he wants, gambles, does drugs, lives in luxury, furnishes his home with all kinds of useless knickknacks and toys, goes on vacation as often as he desires, indulges in whatever sports or hobbies he takes interest, shaves his beard, his armpits, legs, chest, you name it, watches ungodly movies, has a profession as a clown, wears jewelry, has multiple wives, purchases contraceptives, wears makeup, and attends the circus and still be a Christian, and inherit the kingdom of God, simply because there is no scripture specifically addressing these things, and many others. It is evident that such a man is not taught by the grace of God, or led into all truth by the Holy Spirit, but, that he is following specifically the letter, Sola Scriptura. Those who maintain there are Scriptures that specifically address these things, though they are honest with the spirit of the letter, they are not being honest concerning the letter itself. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth because it is the dwelling place of God, led into all truth and taught by His grace, not the Scriptures alone.

²⁹⁰ Mark 10:1-12

²⁹¹ Mark 10:9-12

Narrator: Sola Scriptura, and his colleagues clear their throats, fold their hands, and look down to the ground with their feet swiping the dirt back and forth.

Patience: Furthermore, the apostle said, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”²⁹² He tells the church that the works of the flesh are manifest (apparent, evident, and obvious). He provides a list and concludes it with “*such like things*”. These “*such like things*” he explains will, along with those works he listed, prevent you from inheriting the kingdom of God. Where the Scripture is unclear or silent concerning moral issues or lacking in definition, it is the church’s responsibility to judge and to define. It is not enough to know the Scripture; you must understand its language. For Scripture says, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”

Reason: Again, understand the language of Scripture, “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.”²⁹³ We have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, but what are wholesome words and the doctrine according to godliness? Wholesome words are seasoned with grace.²⁹⁴ They lead men into unity with and conformity to Christ. The doctrine according to godliness is whatever is like God. For example: in the garden Adam and Eve sewed for themselves loincloths of fig leaves for themselves after they sinned. God took those away and made them both tunics of skin, one for Adam and the other for Eve. The principle of modesty was established in the garden for both male and female. Tunics are not form-fitting and do not expose the form of the secret parts, therefore whatever clothing men and women wear must have this principle working in their clothing, whether tunic or no tunic.

Sola Scriptura: You sirs, open a Pandora’s Box.

Reason: We are only doing what the Scriptures say to do. We don’t just understand what the Scriptures say, but we follow what the Scriptures are saying.

Narrator: Before leaving, Sola Scriptura and his colleagues attempted to shake hands with Charity and his companions, but they refused, and kindly told them to repent.²⁹⁵

Sola Scriptura and his colleagues: And, what about you Slowly But Surely? What is your conclusion, for you have not yet revealed where you stand concerning these matters?

Narrator: Slowly But Surely Prayed, “O LORD, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have

²⁹² Galatians 5:19-21

²⁹³ 1 Timothy 6:3-5

²⁹⁴ Ephesians 4:29

²⁹⁵ 2 John 9-11, 1 Timothy 6:3-6

made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, *nor* the judgment of their God.”²⁹⁶

Truth: Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side . . . and some fell on stony ground...and some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit . . . and other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred . . . these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful . . . But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.²⁹⁷

Slowly But Surely: If I will be that good soil upon which the good seed fell, I must cut my way out of these thorns that have sprung up with it. For indeed I perceive that much fruit is being choked by these thorns.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Will you indeed go with these men? They are beside themselves, for they forbid ice cream altogether!

Narrator: As earlier, a loud voice was heard, saying, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.”²⁹⁸

Slowly But Surely: I perceive by the words in my ears that you cannot hear. These men are reasonable. For their message is one of truth, charity, and faithfulness to the Lord. The message I heard was not, “Touch not ice cream, taste no ice cream.” Had you shown yourselves a bit more reasonable during the discourse I would have confidence to explain their words. But seeing you have not heard them, I am persuaded you will not hear me.

Mr. Muddy Questions: Is it really necessary to take such risks? Who knows what fruit you could produce if you remained where you are, and only cut away the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, leaving your lust for other things unscathed? It is certainly more promising that in cutting away all three vines you could produce one hundred fold, yet, what good is that if you lose your life here? Moreover, it is well pleasing to the Master if we bring forth thirty and sixty!

Truth: Remember Lot’s wife.²⁹⁹

Slowly But Surely: It was not yours or your companions’ object to investigate everything here in the spirit of truth, and to accept whatever you might find to be useful; but you and they composed your questions and statements in the spirit of an enemy, and with a desire to overthrow everything as soon as you heard it.³⁰⁰ Regardless of the choices I make, I know my life on earth will end.

²⁹⁶ Jeremiah 5:3

²⁹⁷ Luke 8:5-15

²⁹⁸ Jeremiah 6:10

²⁹⁹ Luke 17:32

³⁰⁰ Origen against Celsus, Book 2, chapter 3

Carnal Reasoning: But the thorns are long and sharp! If you hastily cut away all three thorny vines at once, you risk many potential hazards. Consider the words of the professor, if you have enough grace to live that way.

Slowly But Surely: You are carnal, sold under sin, and would you have me listen to your counsel?³⁰¹ Hear my words: Though the thorns be long and sharp, they will not hurt or cut as deep as those final words, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."³⁰²

Lightheart: Ohh, be careful. You still have time for your head is not entirely gray.

Slowly But Surely: You err Lightheart. Time is short for me. Because I have taken so long these vines are thick and the thorns long. The longer I take, the greater the risk of never being able to escape. I must act now.

Lightheart: There is no need to take this so seriously! Relax; the thirty, sixty, and one hundred fold are all acceptable to God.

Slowly But Surely: He must increase. I must decrease.³⁰³ It is not about my fruit, or my glory, but that the Lamb which was slain may receive the rewards of His suffering.

Lukewarm: But you are safe now. Just hold on to what you have and forsake the pursuing of more. As long as you remain still you have no need to escape. The only danger is in escaping.

Slowly But Surely: In your eyes, Lukewarm, I am safe and have need of nothing. In your eyes I am safe, rich, and increased with goods.³⁰⁴ If you obeyed Truth and applied the salve to your eyes, then you could see that these vines are truly increasing in strength, and how the thorns continue to grow the longer I remain in this place.

Lukewarm: If you insist on leaving, then at least be careful, and squeeze between each vine avoiding every thorn, so as to not become pricked or torn to pieces. Surely the loving Master, Truth, would not call you to such injurious behavior.

Truth: **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.**³⁰⁵

Slowly But Surely: If I am to be *careful*, I must be *zealous* to repent. While you consider merely the present dangers, you cannot grasp the eternal consequences involved. It is certain that one day I will die. However, it is better to risk much suffering and death by departing this barren place, than to live here only for a few more years and to suffer with guilt and everlasting burnings forever.³⁰⁶

Professor Minimind: But how do you know if you have the grace to endure this? Do not follow convictions of mere men, but follow the Holy Spirit.

³⁰¹ Romans 7:14

³⁰² Matthew 7:23

³⁰³ John 3:30

³⁰⁴ Revelation 3:16-17

³⁰⁵ Revelation 3:19

³⁰⁶ Revelation 21:8

Slowly But Surely: But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.³⁰⁷ And with simple faith I trust that His grace is sufficient for me. I recognize the words of these men to be in harmony with the Word and the Spirit. I am convinced.

Sola Scriptura: But it is not necessary for you to forsake vacations, hobbies, recreation equipment, jewelry, decorations, entertainment, play toys, using money for holidays and birthdays, knickknacks, collectibles, dainties and useless dainties, in order to follow the Scripture. By doing so you run the risk of adding to the Scriptures, a thing explicitly condemned in both old and new covenants.³⁰⁸ Will you not listen to any of us who are now pleading with you?

Slowly But Surely: You are of the world: therefore you speak as of the world, and the world hears you.³⁰⁹ Howbeit, if I would follow Christ and inherit the kingdom of God; if I would consent to wholesome words, be a lover of truth, and love God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and my neighbor as myself: It is clear that I must part with you Sola Scriptura, Professor Minimind, Carnal Reasoning, Mr. Muddy Questions, Lukewarm, and Lightheart. Indeed, I must part ways with you and follow Truth, Reason, Charity, and Patience; and be intimately acquainted with Mr. Single Eye, Sincerely Seeking, and Godly Sorrow. Their message is abundantly clear in so far as one is delighted in their ways. If it is difficult to love these men who are free from self-seeking, then their words will always appear dark and vague. For by listening to their words I perceive that Jesus' invitation to follow Him was a call to carry the cross. The call to carry the cross was not an invitation to a comfortable life, or to merely study the words which speak about the call; rather, this call is to crucify the fleshly, carnal, and selfish desires of the soul that seek to live without God or Neighbor in the equation. In this worship, Jesus is King of our hearts, and self is dethroned. From here the paradox is learned, "We are poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."³¹⁰

Sola Scriptura and his colleagues: If Slowly But Surely is truly your name, why then are you willing to part with us so quickly?

Slowly But Surely: Your words are empty and idle, and if I entertain you folks then darkness shall surely come upon me.³¹¹

Sola Scriptura and his colleagues: But you and these men, by words and divisive tactics, are using compulsion to win others to your side.

Slowly But Surely: You hypocrites! Which of you shall have a brother, friend, or even a stranger, err from sound doctrine and will not straightway strive to pull him out by means of persuasion and nonparticipation?³¹²

Narrator: And they could not answer him again to these things. Yet, they pleaded with him once more . . .

³⁰⁷ James 4:6

³⁰⁸ Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18

³⁰⁹ 1 John 4:5

³¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 6:10

³¹¹ Ephesians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 15:33

³¹² James 5:19-20

Sola Scriptura and his colleagues: But the Scripture says, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.”³¹³ If we then are weak in the faith you ought to be patient with us.

Slowly But Surely: You are both unruly, and have been warned. If you were humble, and received the word of God with meekness;³¹⁴ if you loved Truth and did not contend *with* Him but *for* Him; if your eye were single and Christ’s sorrow were in your hearts³¹⁵: I may accompany you a little longer. Howbeit, when you were corrected, you stiffened your neck, shrugged your shoulders, and made your hearts as an adamant stone.³¹⁶ You railed on and mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, and warned the entire nation about Truth and His companions, and have deceived his people, till there *was* no remedy.³¹⁷ Those who begin pressing into these teachings you hinder by your carnal reasoning, muddy questions, lightness, and lukewarmness, while also hindering, and (or) provoking Atheist, Agnostic, and Bitter. Indeed, I have seen in you a horrible thing: you commit idolatry, and walk in lies: you strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none do return from their covetousness.³¹⁸ For from the least of you even unto the greatest, everyone *is* given to covetousness; and from the brother even unto the elder everyone deals falsely. If I continued with you after all I have seen and heard from you, I would heal the hurt *of the daughter* of your people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace. Were you at all ashamed when your covetousness was exposed? Nay, you were not at all ashamed, neither could you blush: therefore you ought to hear this call to repent. Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls. But you said, “*We will not walk therein*”.³¹⁹ Hear the word of the LORD, “With lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.”³²⁰ To be frank: If I must lose your friendship to walk with Christ, so be it; even so and amen.

Narrator: As Slowly But Surely reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Sola Scriptura and his colleagues trembled, and answered, “Go your way for this time; when we have a convenient season, perhaps we will call for you.”³²¹ At that point, Slowly But Surely took a violent step and pressed his way through the thorny vines, which had grown up with him, leaving his flesh hanging there. Then they all parted ways: those with Truth, and the others with Sola Scriptura. Charity, Reason, and Patience exhorted Truth’s new disciples saying, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Remembering, no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”³²² Be faithful unto death.³²³ If you take your eyes off of the light then the carnal arguments of those who either took their eyes off of the light or who have never seen the light, and consequently have

³¹³ 1 Thessalonians 5:14

³¹⁴ James 1:21

³¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:9-11

³¹⁶ Zechariah 7:9-12

³¹⁷ 2 Chronicles 36:15-16

³¹⁸ Jeremiah 23:14

³¹⁹ Jeremiah 6:13-16

³²⁰ Ezekiel 13:22

³²¹ Acts 24:25

³²² 2 Timothy 2:3-4

³²³ Revelation 2:10

developed humanistic tendencies: their carnal arguments will become reasonable and palatable while the light will appear hard, harsh, unjust, unequal, unfair, and unbalanced.

Truth: **Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.**³²⁴

Footnotes:

All scriptures are from the King James Version. Early Christian Quotes are from the Philip Schaff volumes of the Anti-Nicene Church Writers in PDF format.

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³²⁴ John 12:35