

If you are hard-headed enough to plow through this difficult material to full understanding, then you may need its liberating truth.

How to Walk in the Spirit for Hardheads: the Mystery of the Hoof and Cud

Scriptures fr King James and New King James Bibles

part one

Genesis 15 and the Meaning of Ritually Clean Animal Sacrifice

Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat. Nevertheless these you shall not eat . . . the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you . . . and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you. (Lev. 11:3-4,7-8)

Word definition: Vulnerability—exposure to injury, attack, or ridicule. Without defense or protection.

What does this have to do with us now?

This little passage is just another meaningless rule from Leviticus, a book full of old ritualistic laws which have long lost their meaning for modern times, right? Wrong! It is one of the most important jewels of wisdom in a book crammed so full of secrets of spiritual life as to need nothing else in the entire Bible except to explain and expand on these glorious mysteries and their fulfillment in Christ.

The mystery of the cud and hoof contains the basic principle of the most difficult element of the Christian life: how to walk in the Spirit. It contains the key to spiritual *resilience*: how to bounce back from failure and sin as though it never happened, or even better than if it had never happened. In it lies the secret of deep-level joy, the inner well “springing up into everlasting life” until it becomes “rivers of living water” (Jn. 4:14; 7:38).

Furthermore it provides the means God has given us to identify with and understand not only our fellow Christian brothers and sisters, but even wicked rebels and dictators like Hitler, realizing we are no different than they without God’s grace.

Finally, this weird passage that defines what makes certain animals clean or unclean holds within it the pathway to our own identity, both in the flesh and in Christ. It extends to us an offer of such openness and honesty with ourselves and others as to make us gloriously transparent, like gold in its ultimate purity, like the firstfruits of Revelation 14 “who follow the Lamb wherever He goes . . . without fault before the throne of God” (14:4-5).

And through it God invites us to “know Him,” not only “in the fellowship of His sufferings,” but also in “the power of His resurrection” (Php. 3:10). To know Him in sweet intimacy, like the bride of Song of Solomon, the “choice one” out of all the queens, concubines, and “virgins without number” (S.S. 6:8-9).

How on earth, you’re thinking, could all this come out of a cow standing restfully on its hooves quietly chewing its cud? Aha! God weaves his most delicate strands of wisdom within the tapestry of things so common and ordinary as to mislead us entirely, unless we desperately long to find and know *Him*.

For that reason, this little study is likely to be as boring as Leviticus itself. If you’re not that desperate, put it on the shelf for a later time. Even after I had been through Bible college and was now pastoring a church, I learned to skip Leviticus in my Bible reading lest it discourage me from finishing the Old Testament. But in God’s timing, at my lowest point until then, God opened it up through Andrew Bonar’s commentary on it, and it became my “medicine” hours a day for a solid year.

The mechanics of a split hoof . . .

To understand the spiritual application we must first see it in the natural. In Psalm 18 David credits God with arming him with strength and making his feet like the feet of deer (hind, KJV), enabling him to stand on high places (v.33).

Many years later Habakkuk received a revelation of faith that empowered him also to “walk on my high hills” as with the feet of a deer. The flexibility in the split hooves of deer and mountain goats gives them a distinct advantage over solid-hoofed animals.

On a wildlife TV program I once saw a mountain goat begin at the top of two high vertical walls of rock facing each other and jump back and forth between them from the top to the bottom in a few seconds—clack, clack, clack, clack, clack, clack. I was intrigued by the ability of this split-hoofed animal to find instantaneous footing on sheer rock, as though feet and treacherous heights were designed for each other.

One of my favorite stories is of a horse that slipped off a mountain path and rolled all the

way down the side of the mountain into a river and survived.

I called an equine veterinarian years ago (1985) to ask about the horse hoof. Here’s the gist of my conversation with his secretary: “Dr. W. says the split hoof is an advantage especially in marshy areas. The solid hoof [of the horse] cuts straight down into the mud and is further pulled by suction. The split hoof has no suction. Also in rocky mountainous regions the two halves add balance and stability unavailable to solid hoofed animals.”

I thanked her and was about to hang up, when she added, “He said the solid hoof of the horse is an *unnatural state*.” I’d read in a commentary on Leviticus 11 that “Cleanness is the *natural* state of most creatures. . . . Uncleanness is a standard condition to which men descend through bodily processes and sin” (emphasis mine).¹

It awed me to realize God had spoken through this horse doctor confirming a link in one of the most exciting Bible journeys I’d ever experienced.

. . . and the cud

Now let’s look at what happens when a cow—or sheep, goat, or deer—chews its cud.

Cud chewers have four stomachs. When they swallow their food, it goes first into the rumen, where special bacteria adapted to breaking down plant cellulose attack it. Later the animal goes to relax and finish digesting his food, which comes up from the rumen as “cud” and is chewed again and swallowed into the next of three more stomach compartments. By the time the food is converted into nutrients for the blood, it has been thoroughly broken down and processed.

In contrast, a pig eats fast, swallows, and that’s it! The food is assimilated into his system without the lengthy processing a ruminating animal goes through. No wonder beef or lamb is much healthier than pig meat, which not only has potential for trichinosis, but some studies have found it carcinogenic.

In the New Testament, however, Jesus said that real uncleanness is a matter not of the stomach but of the heart, “thus purifying all foods” (Mk. 7:19). If that is the case, then these ancient Levitical rules might possibly contain hidden clues to heart-purity, enlarging and enriching our understanding of how to walk with God “from faith to faith” until we find ourselves leaping sure-footed over mountains of difficulty into glory.

And indeed they do!

What is “a sacrifice”?

Before going any further it is important to understand that the purpose for an animal sacrifice in the Old Testament was to provide a substitute for the person offering it. In other

words, the offerer himself was held accountable for his sin and had to die, for “the soul that sinneth shall die” (Ez. 18:20). But God made provision that certain “clean” animals could be slain in place of the repentant sinners.

The effectiveness of the sacrifice was not in the animal’s death in itself, for meaningless sacrifices later became an abomination to God (Is. 1:10-15; 66:3). The effectiveness lay rather in the understanding gained through participating in the blood-shedding and burning ceremony of the animal, *as though it were the offerer himself*.

In that case then, the various types of sacrifices and the manner of their “execution” became a “show and tell” lesson on the fear of God and enabled the sinner to humble his heart and undo the motivation that empowered sin.

For example the poor had only to bring a dove or pigeon for a burnt or sin offering, because normally it didn’t take as lengthy or drastic a process to humble a poor person. In spiritual things, the “poor in spirit” are closer to the Kingdom of God than the rich (Mt. 5:3, Mk. 10:25, Lu. 4:18), those who “have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17).

So the wealthy were required to bring larger animals which required a more extensive sacrificial ritual, in hopes that the offerer would be led to comprehend the horror of his heart-condition despite his apparent lack of need.

Genesis 15

When God “cut covenant” with Abraham, He told Abraham to take a heifer, goat, ram, dove, and pigeon for this special covenant-making ritual. Abraham cut the bigger animals in half, “but he did not cut the birds in two” (Gen. 15:10).

Each representative cutting covenant passed between the two halves to signify their agreement and observe the consequence of breaking covenant—a bloody, gruesome death, like the divided animals. So the animals and birds actually symbolized the parties making covenant.

However, the birds were not divided: they represent those who don’t need to see such a violent splitting apart to warn them of breaking the covenant. It corresponds to the various degrees of sacrifices in Leviticus 1-5, where the poor needed to bring only a dove or pigeon for a burnt offering instead of a sheep, goat, or bull.

I call them “dove Christians” because they are humble enough not to need as much affliction to break them as do “bull Christians.” The book of Job is the best example of the lengthy process it takes to break down “wealthy” believers to the point where they, with Job, say, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (42:6). This lengthy, violent humbling enables them also to finally do God’s will without inner resistance and

self-effort. It's called "rest," and fulfills the Old Testament *Sabbath Day of Rest* (Heb. 4).

To understand the details of how the sacrifices were "broken" is to appreciate the complex thoroughness of the price the Lord Jesus paid when He took our place as the final Sacrifice. They were killed, blood splashed and sprinkled, cut up into pieces, some parts burned completely, others cooked and eaten, or all of it burned completely to ashes at the Tabernacle altar (Lev. 1-3). And some were taken "outside the camp" to be burned because they were too contaminated with sin (transferred to them from the people) to be burned within the camp (Lev. 4, Heb. 13:11).

Abraham's ordeal

But the ritual of the basic covenant with Abraham, which included us, was very simple, though just as bloody and gruesome. The obvious purpose was to put a healthy fear and respect concerning the seriousness of the covenant. But a less obvious meaning in the two halves "one against another" would portray, perhaps not to Abraham but to us, thanks to Paul's epistles, the two halves of our *inner* nature—soul and spirit (Rom. 6-8, Eph. 4:22-24)..

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that *rest* . . . For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. (Heb. 4:11-13)

Adam Clark commenting on Jeremiah 34:18 states that these covenant animals cut in half were actually divided through "the spinal marrow . . . in the most careful manner."² His statement, if true, confirms its link with Hebrews four.

After Abraham divided them in half, God seemed to abandon him while vulture-like birds attempted to devour the bloody animals. Perhaps with heavy heart, wondering, waiting, Abraham kept driving them away until the *sun went down* and he fell into "a deep sleep" and "horror and great darkness."

Then God spoke, telling him about the "horror" of slavery his descendants would undergo 400 years, followed by their deliverance and blessing. Having said that, God Himself in the form of "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces," ratifying and finalizing the covenant.

A unilateral covenant

Abraham, the other party in the covenant, normally would have been required to also pass

through. But who can cut covenant with God and live, for "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

The Old Testament, also called the Old Covenant, *seemed* to be a "bi-lateral" covenant (between two parties), and God dealt with Israel as though He were punishing them for breaking His Covenant (law) and rewarding them for keeping it.

Deuteronomy is a review of God's dealings with Israel by the covenant of law originally given from Mt. Sinai with its blessings on obedience and curses on disobedience (Dt. 27-28).

Jeremiah mentions God's punishment on Judah in the context of Genesis 15:

And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant . . . which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof . . . I will give them into the hand of their enemies . . . their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth." (34:18-20)

However God's real intent in the law and sacrifices was that they would *break* our hearts through *revealing* the hardness of our hearts, then *restoring* them into their original capacity for love and relationship—a tender "heart of flesh," *real* humanity!.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ez. 36:26-27)

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise. (Ps. 51:16-17)

Just how this would be accomplished is hidden in the symbolism of this strange sacrificial ritual in Genesis 15 where the key to understanding, I believe, lies in the splitting of the larger animals.

His deep sleep

And so not only would Abraham's sacrifices be ripped apart, but so would Abraham as God first put him into a "deep sleep" and then "horror and great darkness" (15:12).

The deep sleep is like anesthesia; without it we would not only experience pain but would attempt to interfere in the operation in some way.

But why would anyone want to interfere with God cutting covenant with Himself

(unilateral covenant), letting us in on it only to *enjoy the benefits*?

Because we can't see what God sees and can't let go of the security we feel from what we do see. What we fail to realize is that most of our behavior is motivated by our need to feel good about ourselves and to maintain the acceptance (security) we *think* we get from God and friends.

God wants to replace this foundation of sand with one of Rock. But we won't let Him without a struggle, that is, we hard-heads, because we have *too much to lose*, too much "wealth" in many forms—performance ("works"), ability, friends, family, material things (Rom. 3:27-28, Mk. 10:17-31).

God made an awesome promise to Abraham and then seemed to abandon him like he did after Abraham cut the sacrifices in half. If Abraham could have fixed his gaze on that promise and kept the vultures of doubt and fear away long enough to finally relax and drift off to sleep in the arms of a faithful Covenant-keeper, he could have saved the trouble he got into in the very next chapter.

In Genesis 16 he listened to Sarah's suggestion to have Ishmael through her Egyptian servant, Hagar, and the result was a child "born according to the flesh" (Gal. 4:29). God wanted to do something so completely of Himself (unilateral covenant, where God keeps our part of it) that Abraham would forever be weaned from the *insecurity* caused by human weakness and failure.

So God kept waiting until Abraham was "as good as dead," not to mention Sarah, who was barren anyway (Rom. 4:19). Abraham's falling into a "deep sleep" in Genesis 15 was a picture of his future struggle learning to *surrender* and trust God completely.

For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect. . . . Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (Rom. 4:14,16)

Horror of great darkness

But why the darkness? Because Adam's fall consisted simply in "lighting his own fire," a phrase Isaiah used to describe what we do when we can't stand the uncertainty and darkness and end up doing something to create our own light without trusting and waiting for God (Is. 50:10-11).

The result for Adam and Eve was hiding behind fig leaves, typical of what we've been doing ever since in one form or another. Why? To escape the darkness God uses to empty us of

self, to rip our masks off and make us transparent.

What we actually fear is that when God and others see who we really are, they'll cut us off from relationship and fellowship. This is the ultimate *horror* of life—the "fear of death" (Heb. 2:15), keeping us in "bondage" all our lives.

God knew that Abraham, like the rest of us, would have to learn "the hard way" to *trust God in the darkness*. And in the process he would learn not only the faithfulness of God, but the *deceitfulness of his own heart*. It would be as though part of him trusted God completely, but another part of him would rely on his own "schemes" (Ecc. 7:29).

We tend to think of Abraham as the flawless "father of faith." But Abraham *learned* to walk by faith through the faithfulness of God in the face of his *own failure*. When he fled to Egypt from the famine he passed off Sarah as his sister for fear of Pharaoh (12:10-20).

Apparently he didn't learn his lesson, because even after his mistake with Ishmael and God's mercy afterward in promising him Isaac, Abraham *again* failed to own up to Sarah as his wife through fear of Abimelech (ch. 20). Can you believe it?!

One might wonder how God could call Abraham his *friend* (2 Chr. 20:7, Jas. 2:3) when he was so *flawed*! Abraham's faith was developed not through his own faithfulness, but through *God's faithfulness in the face of his own failure*. *His weakness made him cling to God even closer*.

part two

Walking in Balance

Living out of our real identity

The above statement is the *secret of every man of God* and is seen clearly in the lives of those well-known for their failures, especially Jacob, Judah, Moses, David, and even Elijah (Gen. 38, Num. 20, 2 Sam. 11, 1 Ki. 19).

It is the mystery of the split hoof—that part of us is "born of God" and "cannot sin," and the other part of us is "born in sins" and "cannot please God" (1 Jn. 3:9, Jn. 9:34, Rom. 8:8).

Those who "love the world" *live* out of the "sin that dwells in [them]," whereas *those* who "love the father" *live* out of "*Christ in [them], the hope of glory*" (1 Jn. 2:15, Rom. 7:17,20, Col. 1:27). [Selah—stop and meditate on this.]

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). It's that simple, but *only after God has*

“split us apart” to reveal the two halves inside us.

Two kinds of sacrifices for our breaking

God revealed to Moses two classes of sacrifices: those which produced a “sweet aroma” before Him, which included the *burnt* offering, meal offering, and the *peace* offering (Lev. 1:9; 3:5); and those without a sweet aroma—the *sin* and *trespass* offerings (Lev. 4-6).

When Jesus presented Himself to John the Baptist for water baptism, God spoke from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). God offered His Son as our Burnt and Peace Offering, to be consummated in full surrender at the Cross.

The Son of God yielded Himself as a Son of Abraham in that “deep sleep” (Heb. 2:14), refusing to act “of Himself” (His deity), doing only what He saw His Father do” (Jn. 5:19).

But the Cross also expressed God’s displeasure—His wrath toward and judgment against sin. And as our Sin and Trespass Offerings, Jesus experienced the ultimate “horror and great darkness”: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mt. 27:46).

The full requirements of God’s Covenant were once and for all met in His Son—for us (Rom. 4:25)! Why? Because *God values our fellowship and longs for us to go fearlessly and confidently in Him*, doing the things He did on earth to bring restoration and the dominion of His Kingdom.

This truth should be enough for us to “trust and obey, for there’s no other way.” But, again, most of us are too hard-headed. And so the length of the Bible increased as we learned over and over how to *walk* sure-footed in the heights.

Learning to rest the hard way

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, His plan was to bring them into “rest,” which the “Promised Land” symbolized (Heb. 3:11-4:11). Rest implies complete *trust* in the midst of every kind of difficulty and challenge so that God can do all the work and thus get all the glory.

In preparation for this rest God wanted to develop their faith. So He brought them into a “great and terrible wilderness” (Dt. 8:15). He attempted to “cut covenant” with them through the afflictions of the wilderness and the wilderness diet—manna! How?

First He wanted to reduce them to weakness and helplessness (“deep sleep”), and to reveal the deceitfulness of their own hearts (“horror and darkness”), that of *themselves* they could *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 8:2).

Second, He wanted to teach them the solution to their helplessness and depravity—to live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth

of the Lord” (Dt. 8:3), to do only what they saw the Father do (Jn. 5:19).

God wanted to push them beyond their own strength in hopes they would learn to live by His revealed, Spirit-breathed Word. This—*not* keeping external laws—is living in *covenant* relationship with God. For “if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18).

But in effect, they failed to drive the vultures away and keep their eyes on the sacrifices which God had provided to instruct them in humble dependence.

They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert” (Ps. 106:14).

Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.” (Heb. 3:10-11).

Learning to rest the easy way

The exposure of our nakedness combined with the revelation of God’s grace is spiritually like being split in half between soul and spirit. Living out of our soul is *living out of what we see in the natural*, the “carnal mind” (Rom. 8:7). “But to be spiritually minded is life and peace” because we live by what God says, the Word from His mouth.

Once we learn to operate in the Spirit, we’ve learned the secret of rest, because the Spirit is divine energy, the same power that created the universe and raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). To function in the Spirit means staying dependent on God—to move when He moves and stop when He stops.

But because we can’t handle, in many cases, the embarrassment of looking un-spiritual, we often continue in our flesh (self) what we began by the Spirit (Gal. 3:3). Add to that the carnal weakness we’re trying to overcome, some of which might be pretty serious, and it seems like the “sun” has gone down completely.

The result is that we lose our rest, that deep level joy and inner “laughter,” which is what Isaac (“laughter”) represents when Abraham finally gave up and saw God’s pure gift of grace in this miracle child (Gen. 17:17-19).

To remain at rest, to continue walking in the Spirit, those of us with a lot of “soul power,” a lot of natural ability and drive, have to undergo the splitting process. And it can be a long and difficult process.

But God had done everything possible through the *New Covenant* to make it clear. And if we’re really willing to “take His yoke,” it can even be *easy* (Mt. 11:29).

Hebrews 3 and 4 clarify the purpose of “wilderness” testing, revealing God’s *ways* (Ps. 103:7) so that even our “darkness” can be light around us (Ps. 139:11). And for this purpose it reveals the mystery of the split hoof, enabling us to *walk* and *run* through trials with joy and strength (Hab. 3:18-19, Is. 40:31):

Hebrews 4:12 and 13 says the Word separates our soul from our spirit, ripping the phony away from the real, leaving us “naked and open” before God. But that’s only the beginning.

Verses 14 and 15 bring us to our “great High Priest” Who “was in all points tempted as we are” and who pleads with us to “*come boldly* to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

He is the remedy for our nakedness! How can anything be clearer and easier?

Split by the Word

The Greek for “word” here is *logos*. It is not the same as living by every *word* from God’s mouth. That word is *rhema*, the Spirit-connection that creates faith by the (heart) *hearing* of the word (Rom. 10:17).

Logos refers to the written word, or rather the ultimate meaning behind the Word. The reason it divides between soul and spirit is that it penetrates our inner motives, revealing what is real and what is phony by measuring us against God’s ultimate Kingdom standards, the *Logos*.

For example, reading the life of David and how he refused to spare himself even in the face of losing everything again and again can reveal our own motives and love of self-preservation.

It was Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and Paul’s teaching on victory over the flesh (Rom. 8:13, 1 Cor. 9:27) that finally made me cry out in exhaustion—“O wretched man that I am; *who* will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24).

God’s *Logos*, His Word, split me in half, separating my soul—what I could do “of myself”—from my spirit—what I could do *only through His Spirit*.

But still I had no answer as to *how* it applied in practice until God gave me a *Rhema*—a revelation *from His mouth* concerning His provision in Romans 7. There I saw that the part of me that had been *exposed by the Logos* as naked and wretched, “sold under sin,” was incredibly “*no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me*” (7:17, 20).

When I first began to see this in my spirit, my mind could not accept it. It seemed too easy, too good to be true. What if I took it literally and did whatever I felt like, blaming it on “sin that dwells in me”?

No telling what I might do, because by this time my depression (trying to live up to God’s standards) had surfaced as rage. I was afraid I

might kill somebody if I “let go” of my rigid self-discipline.

So I spent many months searching other scriptures, listening to the Spirit as He tried to teach me through them, to see how this could possibly agree with God’s command to walk in obedience and not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Eventually it began to come together through another *Rhema* from Romans 7:25 and its relation to 8:1-14. Romans 7:25 says simply that with our minds we serve the law of God, but with our flesh the law of sin. And 8:1-14 begins with *therefore*.

Therefore what? Therefore since it’s our *flesh* that serves the law of sin, *everything depends on whether we set our mind “on the things of the flesh” or “the things of the Spirit.”*

Faith, not sight; fellowship, not guilt

Now again it sounds too easy, as though it’s no problem to keep our minds on the Lord. When we read it in the Bible, we often don’t foresee the endless “warring against the law of my mind . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (7:23).

On the other hand, however, if we’re in the middle of the warfare as we read these wonderful truths, we don’t see how on earth they can possibly work. Because we forget it is a walk of *faith*, walking in what we don’t yet *see* in the natural, but only in the spiritual.

Humble believers find it much easier to simply obey what God says. But for hard-headed believers, those too accustomed to living in the strength of our soul, God gives us a different approach designed to help us get our *minds* off the flesh.

He says there’s *no condemnation* to those who are “in Christ Jesus” (8:1) who keep standing on who they are in Him, which is being “spiritually minded.” Because the law with its condemnation and guilt makes us “carnally minded,” keeping us *preoccupied* with our failure instead of God’s grace.

However *the secret is not in being free from guilt as an end in itself, but rather freedom from guilt in order to remain spiritually minded!*

Freedom from guilt without being spiritually minded will literally *turn us over to the carnal mind* and eventually a deceiving spirit which will *justify* our sin (Mt. 13:15, Rom. 1:24-27, 2 Thes. 2:10-12, 1 Ki. 13:11f; 22:22). If we use our freedom to enjoy fellowship with God, His love and power will slowly but surely transform us into His image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 sums up the entire process: “But we all with *unveiled face* [transparent, ripped apart, naked] *beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord* [setting our mind on the Spirit] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The importance of the cud

If you read the introductory scripture from Leviticus 11, you noticed that a clean animal needed to have *both* the split hoof *and* be a cud chewer. The absence of one entirely nullified the value of the other. While the spiritual meaning of the split-hoof is not that widely understood, that of the cud is a universal principle of *meditation*.

In the context of Romans 8, it clearly applies to meditating or focusing on spiritual things. This *guarantees* that the liberty involved in the split hoof—not worrying about the failures of the sin nature—will not lead to *carnality*, but to *humility and life in the Spirit*.

But on the other hand, the benefit of meditating in the Word and of focusing on spiritual things is of no value without revelation of the two natures, the *old man* and the *new man* (Eph. 4:22-24). The exception, as I've said, is "dove Christians," those humble and childlike enough to *respond* to the Word from God's mouth (*rhema*) without question (Mt. 11:25).

In fact, focus on the "spiritual" without the *balance of understanding* the weakness of the flesh can lead to spiritual pride.

How easy it is to experience great victory through the revelation of God's promises in His Word, only to turn around and do something stupid, like Elijah running from Jezebel after his mighty triumph on Mt. Carmel (1 Ki. 18-19). Or like Peter speaking on behalf of Satan immediately after his divine revelation of Who Jesus is (Mt. 16:13-23).

We quickly forget that it's "not of him who wills (focus), nor of him who runs (split hoof), but of God who shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

The cure comes when "the eyes of our understanding [are] enlightened" (Eph. 1:18) to grasp how God sees our two natures—one "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and the other "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Only then are we able to enjoy "the hope of our calling" and "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18).

If we live out of the latter, the New Man in Christ, then the failure of the old man can no longer drag us into condemnation, but instead serve to "cleanse" us of pride and self-righteousness. This is the balance of the cud and split hoof—being *spiritually minded*, living by His Living Word, and reckoning our old man "dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Recognizing my weakness, taking *responsibility* for it, but refusing to get sucked down in the mud of guilt over it, is walking on a divided hoof with the flexibility and agility of a mountain sheep or antelope, leaping over the mountains of difficulty and challenge, free from condemnation.

Union with Christ and His Church

But an added benefit, equally important, is that through understanding my own dual nature, I learn to understand that of others. I'm no longer surprised at the failures of others. What happens as result of this new insight is something entirely unexpected, yet the very thing for which we were created, in addition to intimacy with God. It is *intimacy with others*.

The bottom line is that the same dynamic which builds intimacy with God also works to build intimacy with others, *whether they realize and accept it or not!* I don't know how to describe it except to tell you what happens to me when I see clearly, "with open face" my own wretchedness, and at the same time see myself as "crucified with Christ" and "perfect in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. 3:18, Rom. 7:24, Gal. 2:20, Col. 1:28). When these two opposites come together inside my spirit, suddenly it's as though I become an organically *real* part of everybody else, as though I *know* them as I know myself.

I believe intimacy in sex is should ideally be the outcome of this inner spiritual intimacy. "And Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived . . ." (Gen. 4:1) It is *union based on mutual vulnerability!* When I *know* my wife as I *know* myself in this kind of transparency, it's as though I merge and become one with her. But when I see her weakness and fail to see mine, there's a barrier, and sex is reduced to a mere physical release, hardly defined by the word *intimacy*.

(This is why long-term commitment in marriage provides the foundation for getting to know one another in our vulnerability, rather than letting our vulnerability lead to divorce.)

But the exact thing happens when I see others this way. It's as though when I *know myself*, I *know* them. The empty hole in my heart that appeared because of the Fall, my need for relationship, becomes filled. If Hell is ultimate *separation*, heaven is ultimate *union*. And in these times of clear insight into what God has done in us through Christ, I experience *heaven on earth*.

I believe it is the closest thing on earth to *knowing "just as also I am known"* (1 Cor. 13:12), and as such, a foretaste of the glory to come. Because in those experiences it is sheer *glory, like being in heaven!*

Even toward the unsaved or those who might hate me, it's as though I finally "understand" them, and realize how much alike we all are, and that "there go I except for God's grace." This insight for the disobedient sets up a responsibility, an indebtedness in me toward them, providing the motivation for ministry and intercession.

It is what makes ministry to jail and prison inmates such a joy, a time of *participation in our mutual humanity*, and *washing ourselves* in His

redeeming, healing Word. And, of course, "the washing of water by the Word" is part of the mystery of how a husband's care for his wife is like Christ's care for His Bride, His Church (Eph. 5:22-32)

And so it must begin inside God's own family, my brothers and sisters in Christ. It's not enough to feel love for them, as fulfilling as that is. I must also bear a priestly responsibility toward them as Moses and Aaron did toward Israel, even in their rebellion (Ex. 32-34, Num. 18:1f), for God has called us to be a *royal priesthood* (1 Pet. 1:9). This explains what is perhaps one of the most valuable and least utilized verses in the Bible:

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. (1 Jn. 5:16)

This verse is difficult to understand without grasping the reality of the weakness of the flesh in true believers who strive on one hand to please God, but who slip into carnal weakness occasionally or even frequently.

Until we understand our own similar ups and downs (split hoof) and learn to see ourselves in Christ consistently (chewing the cud), we'll not exercise the amazing power of this verse to lift our brothers and sisters out of their weakness and into the glory of God.

Intimacy and compassion

As we have seen, vulnerability and transparency combined with unconditional love and acceptance are the foundation for intimacy. If God is *near to* and *dwells with* those who are *broken and contrite* (Ps. 34:18, Is. 57:15), then the awareness of our weakness in the light of His mercy and grace can be our most important link to *intimacy* with Him.

This is why we *know Him* in the "fellowship of His suffering and the power of His resurrection" (Php. 3:10). And out of that intimacy in the face of our own unworthiness, God will find through us a channel of compassion for the lost in *their* helplessness and darkness.

There are no words to describe the deep-level fulfillment, a kind of eternal, fathomless, spiritual, but profoundly real pleasure through His Spirit, that comes through losing our own identity in the passion of God for His hurting people, saved and unsaved. And this *because we understand that we are no different than they are!*

As surely as God has created us for *His* pleasure (Rev. 4:11), our pleasure will find its true fulfillment in "knowing the love of Christ

which passes knowledge, that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19).

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¹ Wenham, Gordon J., *The Book of Leviticus, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1979, print.

² Clark, Adam, *Commentary on the Bible*