

众里独行

乔·克鲁斯 牧师 著



跟着感觉走或者跟着人群走	2
传扬真理轻而易举吗?	3
“尊贵”的危险	4
跟着感觉走的谬误	5
行动，还是回应别人的行动	5
应对攻击	6

最近我发现一些非常有趣的事情——关于一种很不起眼的小型海洋生物。这类污浊的小虾有一种最奇特的生存方式，就是每年都要通过蜕皮更换六或八次皮肤。显然一套新皮肤总是在原有的皮肤里面就开始产生并成长。然后它们在岩石上磨擦，外层皮肤逐渐被磨碎并变得疏松，很快就完全蜕掉脱离身体，露出了里面那层漂亮的新衣。

每一次的蜕变过程中有一个更加奇妙的现象：为适应某种内在的原始本能，每只小虾都会故意在它头部的某个特别部位放置一粒沙子。每个蜕变周期这粒小石头都会随着旧皮肤被丢弃，但是每次都会有新的沙粒被小心翼翼地放回到那里。

这些因其独特的功能被称为“定位石”或者直立石的小石头，与这种顽强的海洋动物的生存息息相关。如果没有定位石，这群小虾就会时常迷失方向而处在混乱之中。潮涨潮落的冲击下，它们一次又一次翻着筋斗然而又都会再直立起来，就是通过感觉头里的这块石头微弱的重力引力来辨别自己的上下方向。

拥有大爱和无限智慧的上帝提供了这个装置来帮助卑微的小虾在动荡的生存环境中保持高贵的平衡。

你也许想知道这奇妙的信息从何而来，因为没有小虾会向我吐露这些真相。几年前一位海洋生物学家在一个大玻璃缸里进行了几项相关的实验。他在水缸底部放了一些钢铁的碎屑而非沙子。蜕皮时，每只小虾都取了一粒碎钢屑放进自己的头部，替代了石头。

然后生物学家取了一块强力电磁石放到玻璃缸顶部。所有的虾都立刻翻转身体开始倒置游泳。磁条的引力大于地球引力（重力），所以它们相信上就是下而下才是上。为使实验更加生动，科学家又从海里取来一只小虾放进玻璃缸。这位新移民自然地按着正确地方向畅游。

你能想象吗？缸中出现了这只特立独游的小虾很可能引起了恐慌！在动荡的水界很可能开始传播一些卑鄙肮脏的流言：“这个傻瓜以为自己是誰？他想引起誰的关注呢？这个古怪的家伙是不是以为自己要教我们一种更好的游泳方法？为什么他要上下颠倒呢？”

你看，只因头脑里的一小片钢屑，迷失了方向的群虾绝不会想到这位新近来客才是唯一正确游泳的虾。它们永远只依据两件事来验证对或错——自己的感觉；和周围的群众在做什么。但是现在它们的定位石已经被偷换了，它们被欺骗着因而深信着从那两种依据验证而来的一个谎言。

跟着感觉走或者跟着人群走

回想着这个故事，我越发意识到所有在这个世界生活的人们都正处在这样的一个玻璃缸里。各种强大诱惑的磁铁环绕在我们身边，试图打破我们与上帝之间的平衡来扰乱我们的方向。那些相信感觉和从众（跟着人群走）的人很容易被外界的强大诱惑力影响而颠倒是非。他们聊以自慰的是，身边那么多人在做同样的事情，因此开始习惯于用已经被扭曲了的观点看待一切。他们将所有的标志颠倒过来为了更便于阅读，并据此坚信自己的平衡与正确性，与自己不同即是错误。最终他们以错为对并且以对为错。任何与自己的感觉反向而行的人都立刻被盖上极端狂热者或者挑剔的捣蛋分子的烙印。——由此显明一条伟大的真理：**我们不能将自己的感觉或者大多数人在做什么作为判断对错的依据！**我们需要一些自身之外的信息来告知真理和谎言在何处。我们的本能冲动也许正如磁铁的吸引力，但也有可能那只是误导；我们很多的朋友也许是非常高尚而虔诚的，但也有可能，他们的定位石已被敌人巧妙地破坏而联接了错误的导向系统。

对基督徒而言只有一个真实无误的定位石，就是圣经。上帝的话一旦驻足于我们的思想，就为我们提供了一个可以永远依靠的真理标准。我们当以之检验每一次感觉冲动。我们全部的生活，包括语言、行动和思想都必须处于该主导控制中心的监督之下。毫不夸张地说，现今大部分背离上帝旨意的行为都是源于**跟着感觉走或者跟着人群走**的心理。

研究撒旦以邪恶的手段所惯用的这两种强大的武器对我们来说至关重要。两种武器都根植于人类最深层的心理需求之中。我们属灵的敌人已经对人类的本性研究了大约 6000 年——比今天最成功的在职精神病专家工作时间都长，但我们对此却往往对此视而不见。这个敌人也针对我们情感弱点的做了很多实验，并据此在我们最易被诱惑的时刻来扩张他自己的力量。

有多少人已被这种操纵装置所掠食？清晰地看一眼我们肉欲横流的社会就不难得出答案了。耶稣早已预见这一切，并把这些攻击的杀伤力警告给门徒和我们，他说，“**引到永生，那门是窄的，路是小的，找着的人也少**”（太 7:14）。

在另一个场合夫子提出这个意味深长的问题，“我告诉你们：要快地给他们伸冤了。然而人子来的时候，遇得世上有信德吗？”（路 18: 8）。在同一篇经文他说，“挪亚的日子怎样，人子的日子也要怎样”（路 17: 26）。

显然地球上的居民只有小部分能从末世这场强势的骗局中逃离并且获救。总是只有少数的余民，会更加关注于做正确的事情而不是为了取悦自己、取悦公众或者其他某些个体。一小群人敢于拒绝从众（跟着人群走）的安逸享受，历史也一向只爱将这些反对者们的故事编入史记。大多数人似乎从来不那么迫切地寻求真理，他们更追求一种平稳、安逸、简便的宗教，可以允许他们按自己喜悦的方式去生活。对他们来说，任何宣扬自我否定或自我约束的生活方式的教义都是坏消息。

传扬真理轻而易举吗？

毋庸置疑，今天的大部分教会所传福音都只是片面之词。大家总是很乐于传扬那些被欣赏并能被欢喜接受的道理。没有一位上帝的使者会迟疑不决地不敢去宣讲“只要信和接受就可获得上帝赦免与丰富恩典”这一宝贵的真理。然而福音还有另外一层含义：关于“圣灵的果子与善行”。这被称为圣化的过程。即宣讲各种生活情境中的顺从与基督式的行为。这是如今对因信称义的理解中鲜为人知的那一面——要有行动和顺从。

是否有些传教人因为害怕被拒绝和嘲笑而不敢去传播这些朴素的真理呢？是否因为亲见了其他忠实的守望者为遵守律法和接受审判而遭到攻击，他们就怯步不前了呢？你们可以按自己的观察回答这些问题。先知约拿的例子就是生动的证据：宣讲这样的真理绝非易事，没有人愿意接受这样的任务。

站在深陷于各种各样罪行里的人面前并向他们传达耶稣的最后警告，“**去吧，从此不要再犯罪了**”，有没有比这更简单易行的方法呢？作为上帝的使者我可以告诉大家，对那些吸毒、酗酒和行淫者表示同情而降低放弃罪行的必要条件，是非常可怕的试探。我们想对他们宽容温和。我们不想让他们因为“必须彻底改变原来生活方式”的观念而失去信心。至少，不是立刻改变。某种程度上我们想容纳一点点肉体的本性，以使信仰生活更易于被他们接受。

可是，问题在于：有没有任何真正的宗教允许任何程度上的继续犯罪？全部圣经有没有一处陈述传达“我们只要**减少**犯罪数量”的观点？基督赦免和转变我们的恩典是否能遮盖我们明知故犯的罪？保罗指明：“**因为情欲和圣灵相争，圣灵和情欲相争，这两个是彼此相敌，使你们不能作所愿意作的**”（加 5:17）。

如果上面的陈述还不能清晰地解答这些问题，我们再来读一段使徒的话，**罗马书 8:13**，“你们若顺从肉体活着必要死，若靠着圣灵治死身体的恶行必要活着”。就是这样！我们可以做二者之一，却不可能二者兼顾。我们可以顺从肉体活着或者顺从圣灵。保罗说，“这两个是彼此相敌。”已经足够清楚了。这两种势力之间没有一点儿可以分享的权力。我们必须克制自己肉体的行为或者妥协。事实将是，二者永远不能兼容。

让我们回到关于从众（跟着人群走）的话题。我们已经发现大多数人往往是错误的，而他们又不愿意被别人告知自己的罪。我们也已经意识到要告诉众人他们错了是多么困难的事。此刻我们是时候该读几句耶稣的话了，“你们是在人面前自称为义的，你们的心，上帝却知道；因为人所尊贵的，是上帝看为可憎恶的。”（路 16:15）。

“尊贵”的危险

上面最后一句话包含着给我们今日世人一条最珍贵的法则。法利赛人不知羞耻地论证自己的不义为义，因为他们调整自己去遵守当时社会所接受的准则。耶稣这样对他们演说。他明确指出对几乎所有的问题，大多数人的观点会立足于错误的那一面。他已经公开告诉人们走大路的人必将走向毁灭。他们的观点和行为指向的是错误的人——将会被丢弃的人。尽管这边人数众多——与窄路上的“少数人”形成鲜明的对比。令人震惊的是，那些在大多数人中“尊贵”的事在上帝眼中却是可憎的。

看看当今社会我们所遵循的准则就不难领会这条真理。无论是衣着、饮食、娱乐还是教育的标准，世俗的方式和上帝的理想都大相径庭。有时我们也像以色列人一样恼火，因为自己无法融入身边的部落联盟，但是上帝已经赐给我们一个更好、更高标准的居所。

很多人对圣经所详细阐述的要与世俗隔离修行的教义感到好奇。上帝为什么要禁止他远古时期的子民与异教徒混居或通婚？新约作者们也反复地呼召属灵的以色列民“出来”与他们叫做“世俗”的系统隔离。那些被呼召出来的人们被称为“教会，”这个词总是与“世俗”对立。最初教会这个单词源于希腊语：ek 意为“出来”，kalleo 指“被召唤的”——eklesia：教会，被呼召出来的人们。

上帝为什么不赞成他的“少数”追随者们与大路上的“很多人”保持亲密的联系？为什么大多数人选择了沉湎于世俗？撒旦怎样诱使这么多人跟从他的计划？这些问题的答案也正是在解释众先知和福音作者们为什么坚持不懈地呼唤教会要与大多数人隔离。

有这么多人被邪恶者俘获的原因就是：它的友善交往的阴谋以人们心目中所公认的一条准则为基础，即我们要逐渐去适应身边所交往的人。耳濡目染对方语言和生活方式产生的无意识的影响使他们对一度反感的事物慢慢地容忍赞同。这种影响渐渐成形后，就会爆发出来，并瓦解了道德的自我克制，最终导致了与罪同流合污。

整个计谋是致命的，因为潜移默化的过程发生得如此微妙。共同交往的人根本无法意识到自己正在无意之中被身边的人操纵，没有一点儿预警的信号。正义之心逐渐屈服于一种新的宽容的思想装置。这就是属灵的“定位石”被偷换的方法。从圣经的法则慢慢地转向大多数人的主张，常常伴随着最小化的属灵的争战，因为这种变化是渐近的自然过程。

一次次调查揭示出道德标准因为环境的影响已经被怎样地降低了。与不圣洁亲密的混居不可能成为圣洁。我们不可能将自己的思想时常置于可憎事物之中而无须尝其苦果。圣灵催促我们与世俗情欲隔离是完

全正确的。当我们放肆的选择观看诱人的罪的场景与收听堕落的言语和声音时，即使祷告和查经也不能持续保护我们！

跟着感觉走的谬误

我们现在确实更明白：为什么懂得小虾的教训如此重要。盲目从众（跟着人群走）总是不安全的。不过我们还要来看看错误的定位石所带来的第二个危险。小虾相信自己对来自定位石的外界影响力的感觉，显然这些感觉是不正确且不可信赖的，因为头里面的石头已经被掉换了。

请注意：跟着感觉走并不比从众（跟着人群走）更安全。不管小虾自以为磁铁的引力多么可靠，却终被引至错误的行径使自己像个傻瓜。撒旦也会因诱使我们产生这样的行为而欣喜若狂。大多数人已被诱骗，去相信别人的“直立石”而不是上帝的话语，通过这种方法魔鬼已经成功地让众人误入歧途。利用光怪陆离的社会风俗文化，撒旦已创造了一些非常愉悦人但却是自欺其人的感觉。数百万人被诱入一套虚假的安全设施里面，他们荒谬地自认为安全其中，他们仿佛已经被催眠因而执行着别人的意愿而非自己的。

是不是恍恍惚惚中这个世界大都已在真实地运行于撒旦的催眠控制之下？没人会怀疑精神学家们拥有几乎可以对任何观看或者听从他们的人进行催眠的能力。但在该过程中必然会有某个接触点，即提问中被试验者必须将精神高度集中于一盏灯或某种其他物体上。没有这种刻意的专注谁也不会陷入催眠的控制。

撒旦为了将人引入自己的管辖，是不是也必须得到某种类似的关注？他也使用某种接触点，通常是一个放肆的喜好，一种肉体的诱惑，或其他一些领域的陷阱。唯一能保守我们平安的方法就是决不容许自己或看或听那些被用来引诱我们的诡计。

当感觉成为检验真理的标准时，就会产生一种不可理喻的自卫态度。大多数真诚的人都确信对于所有的问题，他们自己是正确的而任何其他观点则完全错误。在主观感觉无须忧虑的慰藉下，他们反对所有以自身之外的客观事实为依据得来的逻辑或推论。

这种感觉或情绪对一个基督徒来说会不会很危险？事实上，撒旦正是利用这些来催毁我们理智行动的能力。试想你就坐于一间没有通风设备的小屋里。一台燃油灶已持续消耗了一些氧气。逐渐地你开始昏然欲睡，大脑几乎无法思考。你并不想离开你的椅子。尤其是你并不想起身去打开门或窗。然而你不想移动的感觉是个危险的信号，你必须强迫自己立刻行动让更多的氧气进屋，否则你将再也无法挪动自己的身体。

你是否曾经有时觉得没有心情祷告或者不想读经？当然会有这样的时刻，我也有。我们是否应该屈服于那种感觉？注意，祷告是我们心灵的气息就像氧气是我们身体的气息。我们不想祷告或学习的情绪就是一个信号：我们最好快点儿行动因为我们的灵命正在受到威胁。我们应该在密室里曲膝与自我争战了，祷告时，属灵的渴望就会开始重回我们心中。很快祷告就会恢复成为上帝所赐的喜乐实现中的特权。但是除非我们拒绝与撒旦有任何的接触点，打碎其“感觉”催眠魔咒的陷阱，否则我们会置身于巨大的属灵的危险之中。事实是我们必须行动，或者回应别人的行动。

行动，还是回应别人的行动

由此展示出一个奇妙的现实：我们每个人的一生不是基于行动，就是基于回应别人的行动。我们对自己的人生方式或是自主抉择，或仅仅是对他人对我们的态度进行回应。对于后者，我们把自己的人生方向

交给别人选择，并允许他们来决定我们成为什么样的人。

请注意我们仍在谈论关于撒旦对我们感觉的操纵，但在这种情形下，他在通过他人对我们实施控制。或许没有一个人不会在某种程度上受他人行为的影响，而绝大多数人仅不过是周遭环境的棋局中一枚小卒而已。他们没有把最重要的决定建立在慎重地思考和祈祷上，而是因被他人激怒的情绪，冲动地朝某个方向甚至四面八方发动攻击。

亨特博士是一位患有冠心病的英格兰心脏外科医生，某天他对一位同事说，“我的生命掌握在任何一个想要惹恼我的混蛋手里。”他的自我预言应验了。不久后他因某人对待他的态度大发雷霆，心脏病突发而倒毙。这不正是一个生动的例证吗？——教育水平和才智无法保护我们远离堕落人性驱动下的愚蠢行为。亨特博士因学识而获得的种种殊荣都不能帮他控制自己的情绪，他竟全然允许另外一个人决定自己的生死。

然而与那些让他人决定自己永生命运的人相比，博士的错误不过是小巫见大巫罢了。每一天我们都看着一幕幕毫无意义的戏在自己身边拙劣地上演，而我们教会的信徒也常常身处其中。在报复世界对待他们的态度时，人们准许自己易变的情绪随之波动，他们所犯的一些最隐秘的罪也已被铭录在天国的册上。许多人将丧失自己的灵命因为他们拒绝承担自己在行动过程中的责任。事实上，他们根本没有行动；他们只不过在回应别人的行动。我们可以毫不保留地说，那些没有抓住神圣的大能去自律自控地生活的人，都在直接或间接地被撒旦控制。没人在自身之内拥有这种力量。只有藉着上帝的恩典，才能获得抵抗每一次来自或敌或友的挑衅而自主生活的能力。

从保罗给腓利比人的忠告中，我们找到了保护自己不去回应别人行动或态度的秘诀，“**你们当以基督耶稣的心为心**”（腓 2：5）。想耶稣所想会使人无懈可击。基督在十字架上没有一点要报复、愤怒或以恶治恶的意思。他这样祷告，“**父啊，赦免他们！因为他们所作的，他们不晓得。**”

活在情欲中的人也能获得这种心智吗？事实上，耶稣拥有所有孩童从父母身上遗传而来的同样的堕落人性。但他从未对任何一次故意地粗暴回绝或傲慢侮辱进行还击。对每一位相信并愿意去传扬耶稣所表现出的那种平和力量的上帝子民，这种力量也同样应许给了他们。保罗在林后 10 章 5 节说道，“**将各样的计谋，各样拦阻人认识上帝的那些自高之事一概攻破了；又将人所有的心意夺回，使他都顺服基督。**”千万不要相信不经艰苦争战和放弃自我，就可获得这种与基督心思意念的联合。通过两种与圣灵联合的方式——**人的意志和行动**，道德力量转变成为神圣的典范。上帝不会为我们成就这两个步骤。每个人必须自己**决定脱离罪，然后开始与罪反向而行**。若无圣灵所赐的能力相伴，哪一步都无法实施。没有动力让人停下而不去回击别人对待自己之方式的愤怒脚步，但人却有权力选择不做出回应。他也有能力开始反抗去回应的冲动。这两个步骤能带来胜利吗？实际上，就像呼求应许的救恩那样，这两步也为我们提供了真实信心的生动证据。而信心，信心挪动了上帝大能的臂膀，以粉碎性的力量预防任何罪的实施。

应对攻击

因着信，对那些似乎正在攻击我们的人展示我们的理解也是非常重要的。众多问题的滋生源于不愿意或者无法考虑到为什么那个人会有那样的行为。

我们自己对侵犯者的态度很大程度地上决定了我们会对他的攻击做何反应，这是已经被论证过的事实。不幸的是，当一个人遭遇身体或语言的攻击时，很难细心理智地思考。我们被冲动的怒火牢牢攫住，为了自卫而盲目地反击。我们能不能将过分敏感的情绪保持在最高点？再给自己一点儿时间求问他人的动

机。哪怕仅仅几分钟理智的思考，都能让我们想到进攻者可能只是被错误的信息操纵，并很认真地做他们所自认为对的事。这种思考当然会改善我们对他的回应。

几年前我听的一个故事让我深受启发，我经常在教会服务中与大家分享。很多次我要一遍遍地给自己讲述这个故事，来帮助自己缓解遭遇人身攻击的压力渡过特别艰难的时期。故事是这样的：一天，希腊老哲学家菲利普和一个朋友沿街步行。菲利普的一个敌人从一扇高处的窗户观望到他越来越接近。二人经过时他将一桶水浇到了这位智慧的长者身上。菲利普对这样的侮辱没有一点儿反应，好像什么也没有发生一样继续和他的朋友交谈。他的朋友停下来要去帮他惩罚那个无礼对待他的家伙，菲利普安静地答道，没有人对我做错了什么。朋友惊愕地抗议，“但是那个人浇了你一身水。你全都湿透了！”“不，”哲学家回答，“你错了。他并没用水浇我。他只是用水浇了他心中所想像、所以为的那个人。”

多么豁达的态度！如果每个人都有这样心胸尊重他人的感情，将会创造出一个与现在完全不同的世界！如果大家都能像哲学家菲利普这样，大多数的人际疏远、种族问题和国际纷争都会顷刻间迎刃而解。

前一段时间我在准备为一位年轻的母亲施洗。按教会的规定我去拜访她，进行最后一次评定，她突然泪如泉涌。“我不能受洗，”她哭泣着。“昨晚我妈妈来看我，她提醒说既然我仍然记恨自己的哥哥就不能接受浸礼。”在我温和地鼓励下，卡罗尔（Carol）第一次同意讲述为什么多年来她一直憎恨自己唯一的兄弟。即使她母亲都不知道这个隐藏在痛苦的心灵深处的原因。七岁时，她的十几岁大的哥哥开始对她施加暴力性行为并恐吓她永远不许告诉任何人。大约八年的时间她一直在这个残暴兄长的魔爪下忍受着难以想象的虐待。

我完全可以体会卡罗尔怨忿的怒火和对哥哥的仇恨。我也被她因遭受非人虐待与侮辱而自然产生的憎恨感情所淹没。我能说些什么，可以跨越那些深刻的心灵创伤改变她的情绪？然后我想起了那位年长的希腊哲学家的故事。讲完这个故事，我询问她更多关于那个可恶兄长的信息。他是否曾经是个基督徒？“不，”卡罗尔说，“他是基督教的反对者。他似乎一直在魔鬼的掌控下，而且现在仍然这样。”

我说，“卡罗尔，你哥哥的人生从未认识上帝的大能和恩典，这不是一个悲剧吗？事实上他所做的一切都在撒旦的掌控下。因为生命中没有上帝，他没办法抵挡撒旦通过他行恶。他被魔鬼操纵和利用。只要他曾经认识主耶稣，他就绝不会那样做的。他就会以爱和尊重来对待你。你告诉我他现在还不是基督徒。他仍然被魔鬼掌控而无力反抗。如果他能认识并接受耶稣会有怎样的不同呢！他会拥有你在基督里找到的同样的喜乐。我们该为他祷告，卡罗尔，希望通过某种方式他能脱离一直在利用他的邪恶的权柄。”

我谈话时她的泪水又一次涌出来，但这次是悲伤同情的泪，为迷失的哥哥更多地送上同情和祈祷而不只是憎恨。那天卡罗尔双膝跪立请求上帝拯救她的哥哥脱离撒旦权柄的悲惨桎梏。泪水洗净了她心底的恨，第二天我高兴地见证了旧的卡罗尔被埋葬在水墓。当她开始认识到自己的哥哥其实并不认识她——不是真正的认识，她的人生已被改变了。如果他曾经感知她是一个人，他不会那样地对待自己的妹妹。他的理解力已经被罪恶扭曲了。

我们是否可以相信生活的道路上恶待我们的那些人也是这样？如果他们完全理解自己正在做什么，他们仍然会这样做吗？可不可以假设他们并不真正了解我们完全的信息，不明白我们的感情，也不知道我们究竟是谁？只要我们可以借此疑问使他们得益处，并说，“他们并未将这事做在真正的我身上。他们只是做在他们**以为我是那样**的那个人身上。”那我们应该为他们感到难过，因为他们不能更好地认知。甚至最好我们能开始为他们祷告。

由此我们又回到了头里装沙的小虾所带给我们的两个重大的教训。我们不能仅凭自己的主观感觉或者大多数人在做什么来判断对错。我们的直立石只能是上帝的话。不要顾虑群众；不要顾虑我们的情绪或感

觉；也不要顾虑别人怎样对待我们，我们必须选择将自己的生命置于上帝启示的神圣法则之下。正如保罗所说，“我已经与基督同钉十字架，现在活着的不再是我，乃是基督在我里面活着；并且我如今在肉身活着，是因信上帝的儿子而活，他是爱我，为我舍己。”（加 2：20）

ALONE IN THE CROWD

Recently I discovered some very interesting things about a little sea creature that rates rather low on the Biblical scale. The unclean shrimp has a most marvelous manner of changing clothes six or eight times a year through a process called molting. Apparently a new suit begins to grow underneath the old skin. By scraping around on the rocks, the shrimp begins to shred and loosen the older outer layer which soon sloughs off completely, revealing the classy new covering underneath.

At the time of each molting, another fascinating phenomenon occurs. In response to some built-in primitive instinct every shrimp deliberately places a grain of sand in a special place in its head. At every molting cycle the little rock is discarded along with the old skin, and a new grain of sand is put carefully in place.

Because of the unique function of those rocks, they have been named "status stones" or stones of standing. They are absolutely necessary for the survival of these hardy marine animals. Without them the shrimp would be constantly confused and disoriented. In the wake of surging tides and currents they are tumbled over and over and upside down. It is only by feeling the slight tug of gravity on the rock in their head that they can recognize whether they are upside down or right side up.

In His great love and wisdom, God provided this mechanism to enable the lowly shrimp to keep a dignified balance amid the turbulent elements of its habitat.

Since it is obvious that no shrimp confided these facts to me, you might wonder how this amazing information came to light. Several years ago a marine biologist conducted an experiment on several shrimp which had been placed in a large aquarium. In the bottom of the aquarium the scientist placed steel filings instead of sand. When molting time came, each one of the shrimp picked up a piece of steel, instead of a rock, and placed it in its head.

Then the biologist brought a powerful electromagnet and placed it over the top of the aquarium. Immediately all the shrimp flipped upside down and began to swim around in an inverted position. The pull of the magnet on the steel sliver was stronger than the tug of gravity and they believed that up was down and down was up. To make the experiment more dramatic the scientist then brought a shrimp from the ocean and placed it in the aquarium. Naturally this newcomer on the scene was paddling around in the proper upright position.

Can't you imagine the consternation that probably was provoked by the appearance of this oddball in the tank. It seems highly likely that some nasty whispers began to circulate within those troubled waters. "Who does this nut think he is? Who is he trying to impress? Does this weirdo imagine that he is going to show us a better way to swim? Why is he doing it upside down?"

You see, that steel-in-the-head, wrong-way crowd had no inkling that the recent visitor was really the only shrimp who was swimming correctly. They had always depended on two things to prove they were right side up—their feeling, and what the majority around them were doing. But now that their status stone had been tampered with, they were deceived into believing a lie on both counts.

Following Feeling Or

Following The Crowd

The more I thought of that story, the more I realized that all of us are in an aquarium as we make our way through this world. Powerful magnets of temptation are all around us trying to disturb our spiritual balance and turn us upside down. Those who trust in feeling and majority opinion are easily up-ended by the strong attraction of outside forces. Consoled by the presence of so many others about them doing the same thing, they soon begin to see everything in relation to their distorted view. They reverse all the signs in order to read them better, and develop a firm conviction that they are balanced and correct, while everyone differing from them is wrong. Eventually they see wrong as right and right as wrong. Anyone who goes contrary to their perceptions is instantly branded as a fanatic or a critical troublemaker. This points up one great truth: *We cannot measure right and wrong by our feeling or by what the majority are doing!* We need something from outside ourselves to tell us where the truth lies. Our impulses may be just as real as the pull of the magnet, but they could also be just as misleading. Our numerous friends may be most respectable and religious but their status stone could be linked to the same false guidance system, cleverly sabotaged by the enemy.

There is only one true, infallible status stone for the Christian, and that is the Bible. When that Word is placed in the mind, it provides a standard of truth which is always dependable. Every impulse of feeling should be tested by it. The total lifestyle, including words, actions and thoughts must be brought under the supervision of that one great directional control center. It is no exaggeration to state that most deviations from God's will today are based upon either *following feeling or following the crowd.*

How important it is for us to study these two powerful weapons that Satan utilized with such devilish expertise. Both of them are rooted within man's deepest psychological needs. We often overlook the fact that our spiritual enemy has been studying human nature for almost 6000 years—quite a bit longer than the most successful psychiatrist in practice today. He has also experimented with our emotional weaknesses, using these to exploit us in our most vulnerable moments.

How many have fallen prey to his manipulative devices One clear look at our flesh-oriented society provides the answer. Jesus saw it long before it happened and tried to warn his disciples and us about the strength of those attacks. He said, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

On another occasion the Master asked this significant question, “When the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8). In the same discourse He declared, “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man” (Luke 17:26).

Obviously only a small proportion of earth's inhabitants will escape from the overwhelming deceptions of the last days and be saved. A little remnant, as always, will be more concerned about doing right than pleasing self, the crowd, or some other individual. The record of history consistently chronicles the story of that small company of dissenters who dared to reject the comfortable appeal of the crowd. The majority seem never to be searching for truth so much as for a smooth, easy, convenient religion which will allow them to live as they please. To them any doctrine which demands self-denial or a disciplined lifestyle is bad news.

Is It Easy to Preach The Truth

This is undoubtedly why there is such a one-sided gospel being preached in most churches today. It is pleasant to speak things that are appreciated and well received. No messenger of God is hesitant to declare the precious truths about justification and free grace which require only faith and acceptance. Yet there is another side of the gospel which is concerned with fruits

and good works. It is called sanctification. It speaks of obedience and Christ-like behavior in every life situation. That is the aspect of righteousness by faith which is very unpopular with the masses today. It demands action and obedience.

Are some preachers afraid to deliver the unadorned truth on this subject for fear of rejection and ridicule? Have they been intimidated by seeing other faithful watchmen attacked as legalistic and judgmental? You may answer that question on the basis of your own observations. The example of the prophet Jonah provides dramatic evidence that it is not easy to tell it like it is. No one would welcome his assignment.

Is it any easier to stand before practicing sinners of every hue and variety and deliver the ultimatum of Jesus, “Go and sin no more”? As an ambassador for God, I can tell you that there is a terrible temptation to feel sorry for those drug addicts, drunkards and prostitutes, and to tone down the requirements to give up the practice of sin. We want to be easy on them. We don’t want to discourage them with the thought that they must change their lifestyle. At least, not immediately. Somehow we want to keep accommodating the carnal nature just a little bit to make religion more comfortable for them.

Question: Is there any true religion that endorses the continued practice of sin in any degree whatsoever? Is there any statement in the entire Bible which conveys the thought that we should only *diminish* the amount of sin we commit? Can the justifying, converting grace of Christ cover the practice of any deliberate, known sin? Paul declares: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17).

If that statement is not strong enough on the subject, read the further word of the apostle in Romans 8:13, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” There it is! We can do one or the other, but we cannot do both at the same time. We either live after the flesh or after the Spirit. Paul said, “These are contrary the one to the other.” That is plain enough. There can be no sharing of authority between these two forces. We must mortify the deeds of the body or accommodate them. Which will it be? It can’t be both.

But let’s return to our point about following the crowd. We have discovered that the majority is usually wrong, and that they do not want to be told about their sins. We have also considered how difficult it is to tell that crowd how wrong they are. Right here it seems appropriate to read the words of Jesus, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

Hazards Of The “Highly Esteemed”

The last sentence contains a priceless principle for all of us today. Jesus spoke it to the Pharisees who were shamelessly justifying their unjust ways because they conformed to the acceptable codes of the day. He clearly indicated that the majority opinion would be on the wrong side of almost every question. He already had declared that most people would enter the broad road to destruction. Their views and practices would represent those who are wrong—those who will be lost. Yet it would be held by the largest number—in contrast to the “few” in the narrow road. The shocking thing is that those things “highly esteemed” among the majority of men are abominable in God’s sight.

It is not hard to see the truth of this statement when we look at the principles upon

which society operates today. Whether we are looking at dress, diet, entertainment, or educational standards, there is a vast difference between the world's ways and God's ideals. Sometimes we chafe, like the Israelites, because we cannot be like the nations around us, but God has given us a better, higher standard to live by.

Many have marveled at the almost ascetic doctrine of holiness by separation which is expounded throughout the Bible. Why did God forbid His ancient people to mingle and intermarry with the heathen nations The New Testament writers also make repeated calls for spiritual Israel to "come out" and be separate from a system which they called "the world." Those called-out ones are identified as "the church," which is always set in opposition to "the world." The original word for church comes from two Greek words, *ek* meaning "out of and *kalleo* meaning "called" — *eklesia*: the church, the called-out ones.

Why does God not approve a close relationship of His "few" followers with the "many there be" in the broad road And why do the majority choose to be lost How does Satan draw them in such masses to follow his program The answers to those questions will also provide an explanation for the insistent call of prophets and gospel writers to separate from that majority.

Here is why so many have been captured by the evil one: his fraternization scheme is based upon a recognized law of the mind which decrees that we gradually adapt to the people we associate with. The unconscious effect of hearing and seeing their words and lifestyle is to slowly build toward an acceptance of what was once repugnant. The molding influence of such exposure breaks down the moral reserve, and eventually leads to a conciliatory attitude toward sin.

The whole scheme is deadly because the leavening process takes place so subtly. At no point is the collaborator aware that he is being imperceptibly manipulated by the people around him. No danger signals are raised. The conscience bends by degrees toward the new tolerant mindset. This is the way spiritual "status stones" have been altered. The slow shift from Bible principle to majority opinion is usually made with a minimum of spiritual conflict because of the gradual nature of the change.

Survey after survey has revealed how moral standards have been lowered under the deadening influence of environmental input. There is no way to be holy while mingling closely with the unholy. We cannot expose the mind constantly to abominations without suffering the consequences. The Spirit of God made no mistake in urging separation from the world of the flesh. Even prayer and Bible study cannot continue to protect against a presumptuous choice to watch alluring sinful scenes and listen to corrupting words and sounds.

The Fallacy Of Following Feeling

Surely we can now better understand why the lesson of the shrimp is important for us to understand. It is never safe to follow the crowd. But now let's look at the second dangerous consequence of a faulty status stone. The shrimp trusted in feelings which were produced by powerful outside forces working on the status stone. Obviously these feelings were inaccurate and undependable because the stone in its head had been changed.

Mark it down well: it is no more safe to follow feeling than it is to follow the crowd. No matter how secure the shrimp felt about the tug of that magnet, it led him to act wrongly and make a fool of himself. Satan would be delighted to lead every one of us into doing the same thing. He has already done it to the majority by causing them to trust some other "stone of

standing” than the Word of God. Using the powerful magnet of a glamorous, glittering society, Satan has created some very pleasurable but deceptive feelings. Millions have been lured into a state of false security in which they feel ridiculously overconfident and safe. It is almost as though they have been hypnotized and are obeying the will of some other mind than their own.

Does most of the world actually operate under a trance condition brought on by Satan’s hypnotic powers None can doubt the ability of mind scientists to produce such a state in almost anyone who will look at them or listen to them. There is always some point of contact used in putting a subject under hypnosis. Attention must be focused upon a light or some other object as well as the words which are being spoken. Without this deliberate attentiveness no one can be brought under the power of the hypnotist.

Does Satan have to get a similar attention to order to bring anyone under his control He also uses a point of contact, usually an indulged weakness, an appeal of the flesh, or some other area of temptation. Our only safety is to never allow ourselves to watch or listen to his appealing attention devices.

When feelings becomes the criteria of testing truth, an unreasonably defensive attitude is generated. The most sincere people are convinced beyond all question that they are right and everyone else is totally wrong. In the secure comfort of their subjective feeling they resist all logic or reason based on objective truth outside themselves.

Can such feeling or moods be dangerous for a Christian Indeed, Satan uses them to destroy the ability to act rationally. Suppose you are seated in a small room with no ventilation. An oil burning stove has been consuming the oxygen for some time. Gradually you become so drowsy that your brain is barely able to think. You do not feel like moving from your chair. Especially, you do not feel like getting up to open a window or a door. Yet your feeling against moving is a danger sign that you must make yourself act immediately to get more oxygen into the room or you will never move again.

Have you ever been in the mood not to pray, or not to read your Bible Of course you have. So have I. Should we yield to that feeling Listen, prayer is the breath of the soul just as oxygen is the breath of the body. Our mood not to pray and study is a signal that we had better make ourselves do it quickly because our spiritual life is being threatened. That is the time to force ourselves into the closet, onto our knees, and as we pray, the spiritual desires begin to return. Very soon prayer is restored as a joyful, fulfilling privilege. But unless we break the hypnotic spell of Satan’s “feeling” trap by acting against his point of contact, we are placed in great spiritual jeopardy. The truth is that we must act or be acted upon.

Acting Or Reacting

This brings us to the fantastic realization that every single one of us is either living a life based upon acting or reacting. We make our own independent decisions about the kind of life we will live or else we simply react to the way other people treat us. In the latter case we turn the direction of our life over to someone else and allow them to determine the kind of person we shall be.

Please take note that we are still talking about Satan’s manipulation of our feelings, but in this case he is working through some other person to exercise his control. It is likely that no one is beyond being influenced to some degree by the actions of others, but the vast majority are actually the pawns of whatever circumstances happen to develop around them, Instead of basing their most important decisions upon deliberative reason or prayer, they impulsively strike out in any or all directions, depending on the way their emotions have been stirred by

others.

Dr. Hunter was an English heart surgeon who was himself afflicted with coronary disease. One day he commented to a colleague, "My life is in the hands of any rascal who chooses to annoy me." His self-prophecy proved to be true. Later on someone dealt with him in a manner that made him furious, and he dropped dead of a heart attack. What an illustration that education and high intelligence cannot protect us from the folly of our fallen human nature! All his honorable degrees of learning did not give Dr. Hunter control of his own spirit. He literally allowed another individual to make the decision as to whether he would live or die.

But the doctor's mistake is minuscule compared to that of those who let others actually determine their eternal destiny. All around us every day we observe the dreadful playing out of an unnecessary drama and often church members are involved in it. People permit their volatile emotions to surge out of control in retaliation for the way they are treated, and some of the darkest sins are recorded against them in the books of heaven. Many will lose their souls because they refuse to assume the responsibility for their own course of action. In fact, they don't act at all; they merely react. We can say without reservation that those who do not lay hold of divine power to live a disciplined, controlled life will be ruled by Satan, either directly or indirectly. Not one person has that kind of strength within himself. The ability to control one's own life by resisting every provocation of both friends and enemies must come from God's grace within.

The real secret of protection from reacting is found in Paul's counsel to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). No one can strike back if he is thinking thoughts of Jesus. On the cross Christ gave no sign of vengeance, irritation or retaliation. His prayer was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Is that state of mind accessible to men in the flesh Indeed Jesus possessed the same fallen human nature that all children inherit from their parents. Yet He never reacted to a single needling rebuff or insult. The kind of serenity that He exhibited is promised to every believing child of God who will claim it in faith. Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Let no one believe that this kind of integration with the thoughts and mind of Christ can come without both struggle and surrender. The character is conformed to the divine pattern by two things operating in conjunction with the Holy Spirit—man's will and man's actions. God will never do these two things for us. Each person must make the decision to turn from sin, and then he must begin to act against the sin. Neither of these steps would be effective were they not accompanied by the enabling power of the Spirit. No man has the power to stop reacting in anger to the way he is treated, but he does have the power to choose to stop reacting. He also has the ability to start resisting the impulse to react. Do those two steps bring the victory Indeed, when taken after claiming the promised deliverance, they provide dramatic evidence of true faith. And faith, in Him, moves the omnipotent arm of God to intervene with shattering force against the practice of any sin.

Dealing With Offenses

Along with faith it is also very important to develop a philosophy of understanding toward those who may seem to be giving offense. Much of the problem stems from an unwillingness or inability to consider why that person is acting in such a manner.

It is a demonstrated fact that our own attitude toward the offender determines to a

large degree how we react to what he does against us. Unfortunately there is very little inclination to be thoughtful and reasonable when one is under physical or verbal attack. Impulsive anger takes control and we strike out blindly in self-protection. Were we capable of keeping on top of those oversensitive feelings it would give us time to ask and answer a few questions about the other person's motives. Even a few moments of rational thought could suggest the possibility that the offender might be operating under false information, and be very sincere in what he is doing. This could certainly ameliorate our own reactions toward him.

Years ago I heard a story which has been such an inspiration to me that I have shared it often throughout my ministry. Many times I have needed to tell myself the story again to help ease through some especially difficult time of personal stress. It concerns an old Greek philosopher by the name of Philip who was walking along the street with a friend one day. It so happened that an enemy of Philip was watching him approach from an overhead window. As the two passed by he threw a bucket of water onto the wise old man. Without the slightest reaction to the outrage, Philip continued his conversation as though nothing at all had happened. His friend stopped and offered to help him find and punish the man who had treated him so rudely, Philip quietly replied that no one had done him any wrong. The friend remonstrated in amazement, "But the man threw water all over you. You are soaking wet." "No," replied the philosopher, "you are mistaken. He did not throw any water on me. He threw it on the man he thought I was."

What an attitude! And what a world of difference it would make if everyone had such a spirit of selfless regard for the feelings of others. Most of the personal alienations, racial problems and international disputes could be settled in a moment if everyone practiced the philosophy of Philip.

Sometime ago I was preparing a young mother for baptism. As I visited her for a final review of the doctrines of the church, she suddenly burst into tears. "I can't be baptized," she cried. "Last night my mother visited me and reminded me that since I hate my brother it would not be right to enter into baptism." Under my gentle prodding, Carol agreed to share for the very first time why she had hated this only brother for all those years. Not even her mother knew the reasons behind that bitter spirit. When she was seven years old her teenage brother began to force her sexually and threaten her if she ever told anyone. For eight years she suffered unimaginable abuse at the hands of that cruel brother.

I could truly understand Carol's festering anger and hatred toward her brother. I was overwhelmed by her justified sense of being dehumanized and demeaned. How could I say anything that could possibly change her feelings over those deep psychological pains and scars. Then I remembered the story of the old Greek philosopher. After sharing it with her, I asked for more information about that despised brother. Was he ever a Christian "No," said Carol, "he was the opposite of a Christian. He seemed always to be under the control of devils, and he's still the same way."

I said, "Carol, isn't it a tragedy that your brother never knew the power of God's grace in his life. He was indeed controlled by Satan in all he was doing. Without God in his life there was no chance for him to resist the things Satan was doing through him. He was manipulated and used by the devil. If only he had known the Lord Jesus, he would never have been that way. He would have treated you with love and respect. Now you tell me that he is still not a Christian. He is still being forced to do evil things and has no power to resist. What a difference it would make if he could learn about Jesus and accept Him. He would have the same joy you have found in Christ. We need to pray for him, Carol, that somehow he can get out from under this evil power

that has been using him.”

As I talked the tears began to flow again, but this time they were tears of sorrow and compassion for a lost brother who was more to be pitied and prayed for than to be hated. Carol ended up on her knees that day asking God to save her brother from his miserable captivity to Satan’s power. Her own personal hatred was washed away in those tears and the next day I had the joy of seeing the old Carol buried in the watery grave. Her life was transformed when she began to realize that her brother did not even know her—not really. If he had been sensitive to her as a person, he would not have treated her that way. His understanding was distorted by sin.

Can we believe the same thing about people who mistreat us along the road of life Would they act the same way if they fully understood what they were doing Can’t we assume that they don’t really have the full information about us, about our feelings, and who we really are If only we could give them the benefit of that doubt and say, “They didn’t do it to the real me. They did it to the person they thought I was.” Then we can feel sorry for them, because they don’t know any better. And best of all we can even begin to pray for them.

So we are brought back again to the two great lessons taught by the shrimp who have rocks in their heads. We cannot measure what is right and wrong by our subjective feelings or by what the majority are doing. Our stone of standing must be the Word of God. Regardless of the crowd; regardless of our moods or feelings; regardless of the way people treat us, we must choose to order our lives on the basis of divine principle. Like Paul we say, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live, I live by the faith of him who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).