Be Watchful and Resist

Dub McClish

The New Testament frequently urges vigilance toward things that would spiritually hinder us. One of the clearest of these warnings is from Peter:

Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

The word translated sober is a compound word, which means “do not drink or swallow down.” It literally refers to a mind unclouded by strong drink, then metaphorically, to a mind uninfluenced by anything that would prevent clear thinking. When one thinks clearly he does not ignore danger, but is alert toward it. These actions are necessary because of the devil, our “adversary” (literally, a lawyer who argues the case against one in court). Devil means “false accuser.” Thus, the Bible depicts the devil, by definition, as a lying lawyer who has prepared a false case against us. The book of Job so describes him (Job 1:6-12). As Peter described him above, he is also compared to a lion that ferociously roars because of a voracious appetite. He is seeking prey to devour (literally to “swallow down”).

Although he can be loud, the devil sometimes subtly and quietly lays temptation before us or introduces false doctrines and practices, “slipping up” on the gullible, ignorant, and immature (Eph. 4:14). However, Peter’s warning seems to refer particularly to the frontal attacks of increasing persecution the brethren were suffering (1 Pet. 4:12). Again, the devil was doing this back in the days of Job (Job 1:7)—and he still is.

What were they to do concerning their foe? They were to resist his attacks by the only means at their disposal—steadfastness in the faith. Brethren, we must not compromise when we face ridicule and opposition, or even fiery trials and death (Rev. 2:10). Satan cannot ultimately devour us by physical harm or even death (Mat. 10:28).

He will swallow us up only if we yield to fleshly lusts, compromise the Truth, or deny the Christ. We live in a day in which the pressures of Atheism, Humanism, immorality, sectarianism, theological liberalism, and even legislation are increasingly making the lot of faithful saints uncomfortable.

O so sadly, many preachers, elders, school administrators, and editors—and thousands in the pews—have refused to withstand the devil and have been devoured by him. What a short-range view of things such compromises represent. As long as we remain faithful to Christ, we are secure regardless of what the devil does to us. Let us also remember, when tried, that we are not by ourselves. Brethren all over the world are likewise persecuted, and always have been (2 Tim. 3:12).

Denton, TX
Violence

Brother Coats correctly stated, “Isn’t it strange that the first violence ever committed was brother against brother? Cain slew his brother and the murderous spirit has been on the rampage ever since” (174). God considered the nations of Edom and Israel as brothers. Consider the points made in the introduction and that Edomites came from Esau and Israelites from Jacob who were the sons of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25). Since they were brothers, God commanded Israel not to loathe an Edomite. “Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land” (Deu. 23:7). In spite of this instruction, there were continued hostilities between the two nations. The Edomites would look for any way they might find to harm the Israelites. Warren Wiersbe stated this concerning Esau and Edom’s hatred:

When their founder Esau discovered he was deprived of his father’s blessing, he determined to kill his brother Jacob (Gen. 27:41), and this malicious attitude was passed along to his descendants. If you had asked them, “Are you your brother’s keeper?” they would have replied, “No! We’re our brother’s killer!” (79).

The psalmist wrote of their encouragement of others to destroy Jerusalem. “Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof” (Psa. 137:7). Walvoord and Zuck point out:

Edom's crimes against Judah went beyond being spectators who rejoiced over Judah's misfortune. Because of wrong attitudes, sinful actions followed. Edom even entered Jerusalem’s gates, looking down (cf. v. 12) in arrogance on God’s people in their calamity. Edom looted their wealth, killed those who tried to escape, and handed over any survivors to the attacking armies (1:1457).

It was Edom's obligation as a brother to help Israel, but instead of offering help and assistance to Jerusalem and her inhabitants, Edom made her burden heavier.

Many are the ones who make living the Christian life difficult for the Christian. They will do anything within their power to place a stumbling block before the Christian. Those in the world will persecute, ridicule, mock, ostracize, and anything else they can do to get the Christian to return to the filth of the world. Peter mentions this as he writes: “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueteings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (1 Pet. 4:3-4).

Sadly, Christians are not exempt from such activities from other Christians. Members of the Lord’s church have often treated preachers in a way that is simply shameful.

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**Notes From The Editor**

Michael Hatcher

Email address: mhatcher@gmail.com

**Comfort for the Afflicted**

(continued from October 2018)

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Michael Hatcher, Editor
Most all preachers who have been preaching for any length of time can tell you some horror stories of how brethren have treated them. Elders have been another favorite of church members to denigrate. Elders have been attacked by those under their care. This might be the reason we are having a shortage of both elders and preachers in the church today. Why do these great works and subject yourself to such actions on the part of those you love? God will not overlook the actions on the part of those you work and subject yourself to such church today. Why do these great reasons we are having a shortage of under their care. This might be the elders have been attacked by those church members to denigrate. Elders have been another favorite of how brethren have treated them. can tell you some horror stories of preaching for any length of time. Most all preachers who have been prominent people or the most powerful as they determine power. There are those who simply look to those who are supposedly wise among brethren and follow whatever they state. They will not stand for the right and ultimately are the enemies of God.

Edom, by looting the goods of Jerusalem (Oba. 13), became partakers with the enemy and as such stood condemned by God. Many of our brethren need to learn the principle the Edomites learned. Many of our brethren will join in with the works of those who are evil. Paul wrote, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Some will have no fellowship, but they will not reprove them. Some will have fellowship with them in joint works such as a lectureship but deny it is fellowship. However, during the lectureship there will be no reproving done of the false teacher. These brethren need to remember what John wrote: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11). We should never be guilty of this type of evil.

Because of Edom’s hatred for and evil toward God’s people the prophets denounced them. “Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever” (Amos 1:11). “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land” (Joel 3:19). Violence against the people of God is not justified. Notice a couple of specific acts of violence Edom perpetrated against the children of Judah.

**Cut Off Israel’s Escape**

An enemy had come against Jerusalem. It is not certain and certainly debated as to which enemy Obadiah refers. Richards asks:

Which invasion? There were six invasions of Judah which might fit the book, though the last fits best. These are: By (1) Shishak of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25–28); (2) Arabs and Philistines (2 Chron. 21:16–17); (3) Syrians (2 Chron. 24:23–24); (4) Edom (2 Kings 14:7–14); (5) Several enemies during the time of Ahaz (2 Chron. 29:8–9), and Assyria in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18–19); (6) The Babylonians, who destroyed the city and its temple (2 Chron. 36:15–22) (545).

However, Keil states:

The warning in vv. 12–14 is only intelligible on the supposition, that Obadiah has not any particular conquest and plundering of Jerusalem in his mind, whether a future one or one that has already occurred, but regards this as an event that not only has already taken place, but will take place again: that is to say, on the assumption that he rises from the particular historical event to the idea which it embodied, and that, starting from this, he sees in the existing case all subsequent cases of a similar kind (10:243).

Whatever invasion it might have been, some of the citizens of Jerusalem tried to escape the city. A common tactic among the Jews would be to try and escape through the crossways into the desert and through Edom into Egypt.

The Edomites intercepted them, preventing their escape to safety. They killed some of the escapees, while they took others as prisoners and returned them to the enemy for them to destroy. “Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape;
neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress” (Oba. 14). Matthew Henry wrote:

One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion towards those who were thus basely abused, who when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they had got out of the reach of it, fell upon and fell by the sword of a treacherous neighbour, whom they were not apprehensive of any danger from. Nor can one read this without a high degree of indignation towards those who were so perfectly lost to all humanity as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion.

Some people (and it seems as if it is constantly increasing in numbers), like the Edomites, have difficulty determining who the enemy is. When Thomas B. Warren met atheists (first Anthony G. N. Flew then Wallace I. Matson, and lastly Joe E. Barnhart) in debate, some in the Lord’s church condemned the actions of brother Warren in debating these men. When I debated Baptist Bob L. Ross on mechanical instrumental music in worship to God, a member of the church of Christ served as his moderator. These types of events are nothing new; they have happened many times through the years because certain individuals cannot decide who is the enemy. These types of individuals are spiritually blind and eventually traitors to the cause of Christ. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Mat. 12:30). If you do not help the people of God, you do not help God; just as when you persecute Christ’s people, you persecute Christ (Acts 9:4). The Lord will turn their evil upon them taking retribution for us.

**Rejoiced Over Israel’s Disaster**

When the enemy came against Jerusalem and destroyed it, Edom sat on the sidelines and rejoiced over Jerusalem’s destruction. “But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress” (Oba 12). Obadiah reveals the Edomites true feelings toward Jerusalem. They hated their brother, the Jews. Thus, when this destruction came upon the Israelites, the Edomites rejoiced. Clark and Mundhenk write:

You should not have gloated over the misfortune of your brothers in Judah: the word gloated means rejoiced with bad motives or for wrong reasons. The repetition of brothers again underlines the treacherousness of Edomite behavior (22).

Clark adds:

It shows a malevolent heart to rejoice in the miseries of those who have acted unkindly or wickedly towards us. The Edomites triumphed when they saw the judgments of God fall upon the Jews.

Paul taught that in the body of Christ when one member suffers or rejoices the whole body should feel with the one member. “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). There is to be empathy one for another. This sympathy one for another is especially true of family relations. God has reminded Edom that they are brothers with Israel. Yet, when this invading nation came upon Israel, the Edomites acted worse than someone who was just neutral. The Edomites were too cowardly to actively and openly fight against Jerusalem themselves, but they stood on the sidelines and gloated over Jerusalem’s demise at the hands of someone else. They also gave aid and support to the enemy of Israel.

Christians need to rejoice over the right things and sorrow over the proper things also. We need to beware lest we rejoice over the wrong things. The Bible teaches we are to find our delight in spiritual things, things that are good and not evil. David, the sweet singer of Israel, wrote, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa. 37:4). Then we are to delight in God’s Word: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (Psa. 1:2). We are to center our mind on the good: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). Then we will delight to obey God’s Word as David wrote: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:8).

Our society no longer stresses thinking and doing right things, and many Christians have succumbed to the world in their thinking. Instead of thinking on that which is good, how often do we turn on the television and watch shows and advertisements that a few years ago would have made most people blush? When we read, many read these romantic novels
and other trashy material or get on the Internet and fill our minds with the easily accessible filth found there. Often we justify ourselves by saying we would never engage in such activities, yet they forget about Paul’s statement after naming all sorts of evil actions when he writes, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). Are our pleasures mainly centered around sports, politics, recreation, or other such worldly things? As Christians our pleasure must center upon that which is right and good according to God’s Word.

Not only must we center our minds on spiritual matters, we should not think those who simply stand on the sideline when the righteous are attacked by those who are evil will escape the judgment of God. Additionally, those who rejoice over evil and take joy when good men are attacked and have their characters assassinated (instead of coming to their aid), God will take vengeance upon them.

**ISRAEL’S COMFORT**

As much as Obadiah is a condemnation of Edom, it is also a message of comfort for the Israelites. Jehovah is one who provides true comfort. Paul writes, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). God gives comfort to His people when they have suffered from the evils of wicked people.

Paul was suffering unjust attacks and would tell the Corinthian brethren the coming of Titus comforted him. However, in addition to the comfort the coming of Titus gave him, he received greater comfort from God. “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 Cor. 7:6).

**Punishment for the Persecutors**

Here we have the situation of the Israelites being persecuted by their brethren the Edomites. God through Obadiah was giving them comfort. This is the importance of “the day of the Lord” (Oba. 15). That day took on a double application. “The day of the Lord” was a day of destruction for those who had not lived faithful to God. However, to the righteous, “the day of the Lord” was a day of deliverance.

God comforts the righteous by telling us He will take vengeance upon those who mistreat them. Notice Paul’s comments to the Thessalonians: “Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when 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; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thes. 1:5-10). Punishing those who cause the righteous to suffer is the righteous judgment of God. God will always do what is right including His judgment against those who afflict the righteous. The Edomites had afflicted the Israelites when they should have been coming to their aid. It was only right of God to punish them for such actions.

God will do the same for us in avenging us of the wrongs done to us. Thus, we do not need to try and avenge ourselves. Paul would state: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). Instead of taking vengeance upon them, our attitude is to be to love them (true love, agape love). Jesus said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mat. 5:44).

**Deliverance Through Christ**

Another way God comforts the Israelites is by reminding them of the great promise of deliverance that comes to all nations through Christ. “But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions” (Oba. 17). God had made a promise to Abraham that through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). So these Israelites had the promise that God would bring the Messiah through them, and God would be faithful to the promise. Israel should realize that even though a nation might conquer and afflict them, they
would not be destroyed at least until the fulfillment of the great Abrahamic promise.

We, like the Israelites, can take great comfort in the Messiah through whom true deliverance comes. When we obey the Gospel of Christ through our faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, we become a child of God. John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1). As His children, we are to take on the nature of our Father and He will be our God. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1). In having God as our Father, we have all the blessings that come from Him. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Some of these blessings would be that we are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), because we have been born into the family of God (John 3:1-7). We have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). In Christ we have the blessing of no condemnation (Rom. 8:1) and of salvation (2 Tim. 2:10). As a child of God, we have the promise that God will be with us:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

We have access to the Father (Eph. 2:18) so we can “[Cast] all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). What greater comfort than to know the God of the universe is our Father and will be with us, protect us, and care for us.

CONCLUSION

When we continue to the end of our lives in faithfulness to God, we receive the final comfort that God gives unto us. What a wonderful promise and comfort John gives us when he writes, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Christ says to the church at Smyrna, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). They were going to suffer unjustly for the cause of Christ (even as the Israelites were suffering unjustly at the hands of the Edomites). Some of the Christians in Smyrna would suffer death itself. They were to remain faithful even if it caused their death, but they had the comfort from Christ that they would receive a crown that is life itself. Paul at the end of his life could thus say, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). We have the promise that gives us great comfort that we too will receive the same crown of life if we fight the good fight, finish our course, and keep the faith. Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in
the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Our labor will not be in vain; we will receive the crown of life—a home with God in heaven. There is no greater comfort a person could receive.

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Have We Forgotten Christianity Is More Than Doctrinal Soundness?

Charles Pogue

What must one do to be saved? What are the specifics of the Scriptural organization, worship, and work of the church? It is imperative that we get these matters right in the local congregation to be pleasing to God. That being said, I see and hear things over and over again raising in my mind the question, have we forgotten there is more to Christianity than doctrinal soundness?

When one reads the New Testament beginning with Romans, there are numerous mentions of what we commonly refer to as the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. However, there are things written of in a far greater number of passages in those epistles than hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. These epistles were written to congregations or to individuals, and what is discussed the most is how the Christian remains in fellowship with God and thereby in fellowship with others who are also in fellowship with God.

The epistles are heavily given to the fundamental dos and do nots of Christian living. Over and over we are warned to stay away from greed, fornication, lying, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, foul language, and lewd activities of every sort. Parents are instructed on the how of rearing their children. Children are told to obey their parents. Christians are told how to treat one another and how to treat those who are outside of Christ. The list goes on and on.

In a word, the epistles are much given to the matter of morality versus immorality. The contrast made by the apostle Paul between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit is a passage that immediately comes to mind. In Galatians 5:16-26 the apostle Paul pens these words:

_This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 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. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit._

We spend a lot of our time in our writing and preaching addressing innovations in the church, corruption of fellowship doctrine, and practicing all sorts of activities for which there is no authority in the Scripture for the church to do. We should spend a lot of time on these issues. We should not, though, spend such a great portion of our time if we do not address matters such as dancing, immodesty, and foul speech. Because we are sometimes prone to severely limit the time we spend dealing with such matters, I fear many of us are either completely in the dark regarding either the affection for or participation in bad corrupt behavior.

It is bad when (as I have wit-
The Effects of Liberalism and Humanism on the Home

Introduction

The home is the foundation of society. The very fabric of an orderly, meaningful society is woven within the home and marriage unit. President James A. Garfield stated, "the sanctity of marriage and the family relation makes the cornerstone of our American society and civilization." The reason is that society is made up of people, and people are built in homes. When the home is threatened or destroyed, then people will not be built as God wants them with the result that society as a whole will suffer.

Our nation is in trouble. This is evidenced by the rising crime rate. People are literally afraid of leaving their homes for fear of being accosted, beaten, robbed, raped, killed, etc. Often there is no reason for this except they were walking on someone’s turf. Daily we read of drive-by murders (someone out to avenge themselves of some supposed wrong and killing anyone around). Then there is another type of murder that has become legalized in our nation—abortion. Some viciously rip, tear, and destroy humans who cannot defend themselves and should be protected because they are in a place that should be safe—the womb—but is now one of the most dangerous places in the world, and others love and insist to have it so. The homosexual community has continued to make inroads into America. They have convinced many Americans that this wicked perversion is simply an alternate lifestyle into which they were born. They continue to cry for their rights (see Rom. 1:26-27, 31-32) and have become one of the most influential groups in our nation. This list of evils within our nation could go on and on (drunkenness, fornication and adultery, witchcraft, hatred, disrespect for authority and those in authority, materialism, etc.).

Just about everything begins in the home including respect for authority and lawlessness. As the saying goes, "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." The Bible recognizes this principle in the commands of parents and specifically fathers to train up their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). When one is disobedient to the parents it will lead to all types of evil within the individual. “Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents” (Rom. 1:30). “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy” (2 Tim. 3:2). When children are not brought up with the proper teaching, then what the wise man wrote is true: “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother” (Pro. 30:11). That truly is the situation in America today.

The home is under attack today in America. Brother Winford Claiborne correctly observed:

Attacks against the home are so numerous and so vicious that it appears a conspiracy to destroy the home exist in our society. Some of those attacks against the home are theological; others are social, political and academic. Secular humanism has had a detrimental impact on everyone of those attacks against the home. It has provided the inspiration for sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, media personnel, liberal politicians and theologians (86-87).

Nations cannot long exist when they leave God. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). While God is longsuffering to people and nations, there comes a time when that patience comes to an end and God chastises that nation (Heb. 12:5-11).

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight,
that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them (Jer. 18:7-10).

We begin wondering how long God will put up with this nation that has turned against God. Since it begins in the home and the home is under attack, it is profitable for us to consider and study how these things (humanism and liberalism) affects the home.

**Humanism**

Sadly, many do not know and understand Humanism. Many will confuse Humanism with Humanitarianism. We should all be humanitarian—that is, we should do good to others, show compassion, be kind, and merciful. Humanism is not humanitarianism. The effects of Humanism will destroy the humanitarian attitude in people. If Humanism is not Humanitarianism, what is it?

Humanism is best defined by the two manifestos written by the Humanists to explain their doctrine. The first was written in 1933 and the second (a revision and update) in 1973. Let us consider some of the doctrines found within the two manifestos. The first and beginning point of both documents is the denial of the existence of God. Denying God’s existence, they then deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the existence of the soul and thus life after death. Notice some quotes from the Manifestos.

We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural. As nontheists, we begin with humans, not God, nature not deity.

As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproven and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival.

Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the “ghost in the machine” and the separable soul.” They not only disbelieve in an afterlife, they think it is damaging:

- Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.
- With the elimination of God, there is also the elimination of a purpose or value of life.
- But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.

The Humanist Manifesto 2 recognized this problem in the Preface referring to events since the first:

- Events since then make the earlier statements seem far too optimistic. Nazism has shown the depths of brutality of which humanity is capable. Other totalitarian regimes have suppressed human rights without ending poverty. Science has sometimes brought evil as well as good.... In the choice between despair and home, humanist respond in this Humanist Manifesto II with a positive declaration for times of uncertainty.

Since God does not exist, to the Humanist, there can be no absolutes, no right and no wrong. Morals are self-determined and situational (do your own thing as long as it does not harm anyone else). With this view they desire the removal of any distinctive roles between males and females. If there are no absolutes, then there can be no limits regarding sexual freedom between consenting individuals (regardless of age). They, therefore, advocate premarital sex, homosexuality and lesbianism, and incest. They also demand the right to abortion, because there is no respect of life and for those who grow old and a “burden on society” they affirm the need for euthanasia (mercy killing) and suicide.

In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitative, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered “evil.” Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyles as they desire.

The reason they view sexual expression in such a way is because they have rejected God’s standard of morals.

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life.

If this is true, then we are faced with some moral questions with the main question being: How can any act be considered wrong? If one dis-
discusses murder, euthanasia (mercy killing, or murdering the aged and infirmed), abortion (murdering babies in the womb), infanticide (murdering newborn babies), upon what basis would one consider any of these actions wrong. In the sexual realm there could not be anything wrong with incest, bestiality, or rape (while many would not place this within the subject no one can deny that there is a sexual aspect of rape). Discrimination of any form whether sexual, racial, social, or any other type, could not be considered wrong or evil.

If morals are from human experience, as Humanists claim, then whose human experience should we go by. Should we live according to the human experience of Hitler, Mussolini, or a Stalin or Khrushchev, or a Ted Bundy or some other mass murderer? They also say that morals are situational and autonomous, however this is a contradiction. Morals cannot be both situational and at the same time be autonomous. Autonomous means self-law; thus, one does what he feels is best—he is a law unto himself. In this case every man is his own law, and no one can impose their law on anyone else. If you believe it is wrong to rape and murder but I want to do it, you cannot say it is wrong, and I am under obligation to rape and murder.

If, however, morals are situational, then nothing is right or wrong on its own basis, it all depends on the situation. If the situation is of such a nature that rape and murder appears to be best, then I am under obligation to perform this action.

Liberalism

Modernistic and liberal theology is basically and essentially Humanist. One of the more renown liberals or modernists of our day is John Shelby Spong. Spong was the bishop of the Newark, New Jersey, Diocese of the Episcopal Church (now retired). Spong is a good illustration of what liberal theology is doing to the home and to morals in our nation. He wrote a book titled *Living In Sin?* in which he sets forth his views (and the views of those who are modernists and liberals). In noticing what Mister Spong advocates, we begin seeing a parallel between the modernist (liberal) and the Humanist. While the Humanist rejects the idea of God (they are non-theist), Spong does believe that God exists. Though he believes God is, he rejects the Bible as the inherent, infallible, verbally inspired Word of God.

A word of caution is in order here concerning the use of semantics in dealing with the Modernists and liberals. They will often speak of the same things we speak of and use the same terms we use. However, they do not mean what we mean by the terms. They will speak of the inspiration of the Bible, but they do not mean what we mean. They do not believe the Bible is verbally (word by word) inspired of God. What they might mean is that the Bible is inspired just like any good writing was inspired, or they mean that the overall teachings of the Bible are inspired but not the actual words and details. The writers wrote out of their own knowledge, feelings, and background. They will, thus, speak of the Bible's mistakes and contradictions. For example, they will speak of the resurrection of Christ, but they do not believe that the body of Jesus that was laid in the tomb was physically and actually raised from the dead. When they speak of the resurrection of Christ, they might mean that His ideas and teachings were brought back to people's thinking or were being taught again. Spong, like all Modernists and Liberals, affirms that the Bible is full of contradictions, anachronisms, and prejudices.

If the Bible is simply written from the writers own thinking, feelings, and background, then we cannot state that what is found in the Bible concerning morals and ethics can be applied to our lifestyles. Thus, Spong ridicules those who obtain their sexual norms from Scripture. Spong affirms that marriage is not the only relationship where the sexual privileges may be enjoyed, there is nothing wrong with premarital or extramarital sexual relations. He states that churches must have an encouraging word to those who are unmarried, divorced, and the post-married whether through death or desertion and any sexual relations they might want to engage in. He believes that those churches who condemn such actions are going to die out because they cannot relate to people of our society. Regarding homosexuality, Spong believes that churches cannot expect them to change in any way. We must accept them for what they are and that they are simply living an alternate lifestyle. He wants churches to embrace practicing homosexuals and even develop some ritualistic ceremony for homosexual unions. He states that our society has produced prejudice toward homosexuality and those committing such and it is the churches responsibility to bring about change in society to learn to accept such and recognize the posi-
tive good of such a lifestyle in some people's lives. He affirms the same thing concerning women and divorce. Ethically speaking there is no difference between John Shelby Spong and a Humanist, and he would probably agree completely with the Humanist on every point except the existence of God.

Some might ask at this point: Why talk about Spong? He is not of us, he is a part of a liberal denomination, why use him. The main reason is that the only difference between Spong and some of our liberal brethren like Rubel Shelly, Marvin Philips, Jim Woodroof, Steve Flatt, Andre Resner, Max Lucado, Joe Beam, Buddy Bell, Jeff Walling, Mike Cope, Terry Rush, and a host of others is simply a matter of degree. The underlying principle is the same: a rejection of the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, plenary (word by word) inspired Word of God, which is also the basis for what Spong believes and what Humanism affirms. A single example of this would be the article written by Andre Resner (a former Bible professor at Abilene Christian University) titled “Christmas at Matthew’s House” and published in Wineskins edited by Rubel Shelly and Mike Cope. In this article Resner denies the virgin birth of Jesus by opining that Mary (the mother of Jesus) was another sexually questionable woman, the exact same view as held by Spong and the Humanist.

This principle is also the basis for every denomination in existence. They will deny some aspect of God's Word. Read 1 Peter 3:21 or the first part of Mark 16:16 and see if they believe it. There is no difference (at least in principle) in rejecting these verses (or other verses) and in rejecting the Bible's ethic—its laws concerning morals and the home. To see how this affects the home, consider the statement the Southern Baptists made recently that said the wife was to lovingly submit to the authority of her husband and the furor that resulted. Yet, this is what the Bible has always stated. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Yet, the majority of people and denominations today (including our liberal brethren) refuse to accept such clear plain statements of the Bible.

Effects on the Home

It should be obvious to all that both Humanism and Liberalism affect the home as God has instituted and arranged. For homes to prosper, they must be built on God and His Word. The Psalmist wrote, “Except the L R D build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the L R D keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa. 127:1). God gave the principles of successful homes and marriages with His Word. He also gave principles that will lead to successful relationships between people (including husbands and wives). However, Humanism denies the existence of God and advances the idea that God’s Word is detrimental to society and the home in particular. Thus, it will lead to unhappiness and unfulfilled homes.

The basic idea of Humanism is self. Self is god to the Humanist. (Eventually the same is true of Liberalism. They dethrone God for self and selfish desires.) However, for marriages to be successful, each mate needs to be putting the will and wishes of the other above self. Marriage has never been a 50-50 proposition, it is a complete giving of self to satisfy one's marriage partner. It is none of self and all of mate. (We must understand that God comes first within our lives. Jesus said to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” in Mat. 6:33. However, when we are seeking God first—living and abiding by His principles revealed within the pages of the New Testament—we will be doing what is here advocated.) When one in the marriage relationship is more concerned with self than with their mate, it will lead to disaster within the marriage.

Humanists are determined to destroy the home as God intended. They realize that to destroy religion and have everyone yield to the Humanist Philosophy, they must destroy the home. To accomplish their goal, they use sex and undermine sexual fidelity within the marriage relationship. They begin in the school systems to accomplish their goals. Consider what James Dobson wrote:

Secular humanists, particularly the more radical activists, have a specific objective in mind for the future. They hope to accomplish that goal primarily by isolating children from their parents...It will then be relatively easy to “reorient” and indoctrinate the next generation of Americans. This strategy explains why their most bitter campaigns are being waged over school curricula and other issues that involve our kids. Children are the key to the future (Bauer and Dobson 35). Sister Rita Rhodes Ward adds: When the Christian mother leads her 6-year-old to the first grade room or her 5-year-old to kindergarten, she leads him from the sheltered environment of the home into
the cold, pagan environment of secular humanism. From that day on, the child will be taught two contradictory religions (520).

Lest some think that this is simply overreacting consider what Humanist Charles Pierce said:

Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to schools with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural Being, toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity. It’s up to you teachers to make all of these sick children well by creating the international children of the future (Thompson 24).

One of the major means Humanists use in the school systems to accomplish their goals is sex education.

Schools across the country are implementing liberal sex education courses into their curricula. They have tried to justify this by arguing that such courses will help reduce the dangers of teen pregnancy and AIDS. But these reasons only mask their true agenda. By opening the classrooms to frank discussions about sexuality, humanistic educators know they can subvert the values systems parents have tried to impress upon their children. Dobson lists three reasons that humanists have chosen child and adolescent sexuality as a battleground: (1) By teaching a different sexual ethic, they can drive a wedge between parents and children; (2) By undermining sexual fidelity on which marriage is based, the family can be destroyed; (3) By destroying religious values concerning sex, they can destroy children’s faith (Beard 184).

Conclusion

Brethren, we are in a war. It is not a war fought with guns and other types of physical armaments, it is a battle for the mind of man. This battle also has far greater consequences than that of a physical war, it has eternal consequences. It also has consequences for the nation. If we lose this battle, then our homes (as God intended) will be destroyed. Sadly, in many respects we are losing this battle. Consider the question as to what constitutes a family? It has been defined simply as two people who love each other (this includes homosexuals, pedophiles, etc.). The idea of a young couple “falling in love,” getting married, having children, and living together till death is becoming less common and this definition of family has disappeared. Let us beware and begin teaching the principles God has established within His Word. This is right, and it is for our good. “And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day” (Deu. 6:24).

Works Cited:

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A brother publicly speaks evil of your church, but just as bad when his wife holds an affection for the rock and roll dancing of her youth and is not hesitant to tell it to the world. The only thing worse is when brethren hold neither one of the two accountable. Where are we going? The answer, if we are not careful, is into absolute worldliness.

It is not only young people we need to be concerned with today. It includes the old grey hairs as well. We are living in the years when the people who were teenagers in the foul 1960s are in their 60s and 70s, and many of them have brought the behavior they engaged in as teens right along with them. Some never grew into adulthood and never matured as Christians. They have not done as Paul said he did when he grew to manhood. He put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11).

We need many more sermons based on verses such as James 1:27, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

False doctrine threatens the Lord’s church, but it is not one whit more threatened by error in teaching and practice than it is with members who have not separated themselves from worldliness.

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Some False Concepts of Truth

February 22 – 24, 2019

Friday, February 22

6:30 PM  CONGREGATIONAL SINGING  John West
7:00 PM  It Is False That Some Can Be Removed from the Truth and God Accept It  Danny Douglas
8:00 PM  It Is False That Scriptural Fellowship Can Exist Without Adherence to the Truth  Bruce Stulting

Saturday, February 23

9:00 AM  It Is False That Arriving at Truth Has Nothing to Do with Reasoning Correctly  Geoff Litke
10:00 AM  It Is Unacceptable to God for a Preacher to Teach Anything But the Truth  Wayne Blake
11:00 AM  It Is False That One Thing is the Truth to One Person But False to Another  Lee Moses
   Lunch Provided by Spring Congregation
1:30 PM  It Is False That Truth Does Not Need Defending  David P. Brown
2:30 PM  It Is Unacceptable to God to Believe That Truth Is Humanly Unattainable  Michael Hatcher
3:30 PM  It Is False That People Have the Right to Be Wrong about Truth  Bruce Stulting

Sunday, February 24

9:30 AM  It Is False That Truth Is Not a Powerful Force in Today’s World  Michael Hatcher
10:30 AM  It Is False That Truth Is Not the Exclusive Avenue to God’s Forgiveness of One’s Sins  Lee Moses
   Lunch Provided by Spring Congregation
1:30 PM  It Is False That Truth Can Be Diluted and God Accept It  Danny Douglas
2:30 PM  It Is False That Truth Can Be Perverted and God Accept It  Wayne Blake

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The Church and Liberalism

Lee Moses

The church of our Lord Jesus Christ, as glorious as it may be, is not without flaws. No, no flaw can be found in its Divine origin, design, or headship. Its flaws are found in its human membership, the “living stones” that comprise the church. When warning of apostasy to come, the apostle Paul had said to Christians, more specifically to elders of the Lord’s church, “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things” (Acts 20:30). The greatest threats to the church and within the church of recent decades are the “perverse things” sheltered under the umbrella of liberalism.

DEFINING LIBERALISM

Liberalism denotes a denial of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture. It denotes a denial of Christ’s virgin birth and other miracles recorded in Scripture. It refers to a diminishing of the significance of sin, the reality and eternity of hell, and the necessity of the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. Liberalism can also pertain to the “change agents,” who seek to reshape the church into something they find more pleasing. Nailing down a definition of liberalism can prove almost as difficult as getting a liberal to tell you precisely what he believes.

Pertinent dictionary definitions of liberal include, “Open to new behavior or opinions and willing to discard traditional values” and “(esp. of an interpretation of a law) broadly construed or understood; not strictly literal or exact” (“Liberal” 1006). Amending these specifically to define spiritual liberals, the first definition would then read, “Open to new behavior or opinions even when antithetical to Biblical teachings and willing to discard traditional values even when those values are based on Biblical teachings.” The second definition would read, “(esp. of an interpretation of the Bible) broadly construed or understood; not strictly literal or exact.”

Brother David P. Brown observes, “All false doctrines are either liberal or anti” (4). As the doctrines contrived and promulgated by anti preachers and teachers bind what God has never bound, so the doctrines contrived and promulgated by liberal preachers and teachers loose what God has never loosed.

Liberalism seeks to rob the Scriptures of the authority God has vested in them. This is the central attribute of liberalism. The religion taught and practiced by liberals may bear some resemblances to that of the Bible, but it is not derived from the Bible. Liberals do not approach the Bible as their true source of religion, as they fail to acknowledge the authority inherent in the Bible. Roy Deaver wrote:

Liberalism believes in God, but not in the God of the Bible. Liberalism believes in Christ, but not in the Christ of the Bible. Liberalism believes in inspiration, but not in the inspiration the Bible claims for itself. Liberalism believes in “truth,” but not in “truth” as presented by the Bible (5).

Within liberalism one can find such subcategories as modernism, ecumenism, and the “change movement”—each of which contain a select number of the liberal doctrines mentioned at the beginning of this section. What they all hold in common is a disregard for and loosening of the Divine authority of the Scriptures.

Continued on Page 3
Some Ways We Brought Famine

There are not many things worse than a famine. A shortage of food brings disastrous results. As bad as a dearth of food is, there are other types of famine that are far worse. A physical famine only has temporary results, but a spiritual famine has eternal consequences. We have a spiritual famine in our land. Notice some of the ways we brought this famine.

Quit Studying the Bible

The Scriptures warned us that not knowing God’s Word will bring disaster. The wise man wrote:

They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them (Pro. 1:30-32).

Because people would not have God’s Word and despised it, they went after their own ways leading to destruction. Thus, during the time of the prophets, they would tell the people of their destruction because they did not know God’s Word. Hosea states concerning the northern kingdom of Israel: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6). Isaiah states concerning Jerusalem, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst” (Isa. 5:13). Later, Jeremiah reiterates this about Jerusalem: “For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish [silly—NKJV] children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer. 4:22).

The Israelites had the responsibility of knowing God’s Word and teaching that Word to their children. They failed miserably with the result that they did not know. They stopped learning God’s Word resulting in wickedness and sin.

We have ready access to the Bible. Yet, today, how many even read the Scriptures. I can remember a time when at the beginning of Bible classes the teacher asked the question: How many daily Bible readers? Those numbers were then published (often in bulletins or announced), but those days are long past. I think most all realize that if that question was asked today in Bible classes, the responses would be embarrassing. However, that is simply reading the Scriptures, and as much good as that will do us, it is nothing in comparison to actually studying the Scriptures. There would be far fewer who study the Scriptures than simply read them. Thus, we observe the lack of knowledge in congregations and the world in general. The result of that ignorance in the world is the immorality and ungodliness that is so pervasive in our society. The result in the church is the growing apostasy and departures from the faith.

Through a knowledge of God and His Word, man will be saved. Jesus, in His prayer, said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Later, Paul would write to Timothy concerning God: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). In this construction the ultimate end is stated first and then the means to that end is stated. The way man will be saved is by coming to a knowledge of the truth.

We can only come to a knowledge of the truth and thus be saved by study of God’s Word. Paul’s words to Timothy are apropos and applicable to all of us: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Did Not Make Proper Choices

Each person’s life consists of making choices. When we are in our youth, our choices are greatly limited by our parents. As we grow and develop, our choices and the
importance of those choices increase. Some of those early choices might be as innocent as to what candy to buy when given the opportunity. As we grow up, we might have to decide whether to stay in school or drop out, then if we wish to go to college or a trade school. If we decide to go to college, should we go to a so-called Christian university or a state-run school (I do not endorse any of our schools and universities). While still in our youth, we make decisions of what we will do with our lives, the occupation we will pursue. Certainly, one of the most important decisions we will make is our life’s companion. Our lives are filled with choices and the decisions we make determine the life we live.

The most important choice we can make in our life is spiritual in nature: whether we become a Christian and then if we live the Christian life or not. Joshua made a decision for both himself and his family as he called the Israelites to make a choice: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Jos. 24:15). Likewise, Elijah told the people of his day that they needed to choose: “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kin. 18:21). Peter and the other apostles appealed and encouraged the Jews to obey the Gospel: “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

After one becomes a Christian, he is still faced with choices he must make. All through the day, one is making a choice as to live the life of a Christian in glorifying God or to choose to live for self. We make the choice as to whether we choose to honor God by

Continued from Page 1

LIBERALISM’S HISTORY OF RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND DEPARTURE

One can trace liberalism back to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The serpent denied that God truly meant what He said, which constituted an assault on the authority of God’s Word. Unwitting minions of that ancient serpent have followed his footsteps throughout history. Consider how shortly after receiving the Ten Commandments and agreeing to God’s covenant at Sinai the Israelites lost faith and violated those terms by descending into idolatry (Exo. 32:1–6). It was not long after the glory of the Lord sanctified Israel’s tabernacle for worship that the people refused to enter the Promised Land when God commanded them to enter. When God afterward refused them entrance for forty years, they insisted on invading the land of Canaan—when they had no Divine authority to do so (Num. 14).

It never takes long after the introduction of the religion of God to an area before malcontents begin casting doubt on the clear words of the Lord. Mere decades following the introduction of restored New Testament Christianity to the United States, the vast majority of brethren chose to reject Bible authority in favor of such innovations as the missionary society and mechanical musical instruments in worship. The preferred designation at that time was digressive, but their mind set was essentially the same as the liberalism of today.
The colleges that once provided the brotherhood with Scripturally knowledgeable preachers became the earliest incubators for liberalism.

**A SHAPE-SHIFTING THREAT**

One might speculate on where liberalism will go in the future—will significantly more liberal congregations quit calling themselves “churches of Christ”; will they become part of the Christian Church denomination or become another denomination altogether; what new doctrines will they conceive and embrace? It is difficult to know exactly what the liberalism of 20 years from now will be like. Liberals tend to be “wave[s] of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (Jam. 1:6). Like Proteus of Greek mythology, a liberal can change his shape mid-conversation.

T. S. Eliot astutely observes:

That Liberalism may be a tendency towards something very different from itself, is a possibility in its nature…. It is a movement not so much defined by its end, as by its starting point; away from, rather than toward, something definite (12).

What one writer observed about postmodernism also applies to liberalism:

He is not content to adapt to what he finds [in Scripture]; the postmodernist feels that he must be a change agent. He honestly feels that the traditional church cannot survive without his expertise and guidance (Sanders 208).

**ANGLES OF ATTACK**

Liberals have favorite angles of attack they like to take against sound brethren.

**You Are Outdated**

Liberals will call sound brethren “throwbacks,” “moss-backs,” “dinosaurs”; anything to assert their superior relevance. However, when apostasy has occurred, one must go back to the “first works” (Rev. 2:5). The “good way” is still found in the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16). Christians are not called to relevance; they are called to faithfulness.

**We Actually Practice Christianity the Way it Used to Be**

Liberals want to have it both ways. They claim they are doing something new, exciting, and revolutionary while sound brethren are stuck in the past. At the same time, many liberals claim they are practicing Christianity as intended, while conservatives practice a corrupted, Johnny-come-lately version of Christianity. Speaking of liberalism and fundamentalism within Protestant denominations, and even as he took jabs at the other side, Harvard professor Kirsopp Lake admitted:

It is a mistake often made by educated persons who happen to have but little knowledge of historical theology, to suppose that fundamentalism is a new and strange form of thought. It is nothing of the kind. It is the partial uneducated survival of a theology which was once universally held by all Christians. How many were there, for instance, in Christian churches in the eighteenth century who doubted the infallible inspiration of all Scripture? A few perhaps, but very few. No, the fundamentalist may be wrong, I think he is. But it is we who have departed from the tradition, not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with a fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the corpus theologicum of the church are on the fundamentalist’s side (qtd. in Gilley 14).

If only the liberals within professed “churches of Christ” would display the same honesty!

**You’re Unloving and Judgmental**

Liberals misuse and abuse select passages of Scripture to attack the Truth and those who love Truth. Select sugar sticks include Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Of course, Jesus was not prohibiting making judgments altogether, but specifically hypocritical judgments. As He went on to say, once a wayward soul had corrected his own sins, he would be much better equipped to address others’ sins (7:3-5). Later in the same sermon, Jesus warned His hearers to “Beware of false prophets…by their fruits ye shall know them” (7:15-20). They were to examine and identify false teachers—this clearly required a judgment to be made. Christ certainly condemned hypocritical judgment and false judgment (John 7:24), but the Christian today who correctly identifies a false teacher does just as Christ instructed. As far as the accusations of being unloving; rebuking sin is not unloving (Lev. 19:17; Luke 17:3-4). Neither is insisting on obedience to the commandments of Christ; for Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

**WHY OPPOSE LIBERALISM**

Faithful Christians must oppose liberalism because liberalism opposes the authority of God’s Word, and therefore liberalism...
opposes God Himself. The psalmist wrote, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psa. 138:2).

Faithful Christians oppose liberalism because liberalism causes churches of Christ to lose their identity, and to become a denomination (Rev. 2:5). Faithful Christians oppose liberalism because it causes people to lose their souls (Mat. 7:21). They also oppose it because liberalism unopposed has far greater success than when it is opposed.

Sadly, liberalism has had great success because watchmen, particularly the elders of the Lord’s church, have neglected their responsibility. It is up to today’s faithful to determine, “They shall proceed no further” (2 Tim. 3:9).

CONCLUSION

The church, as God designed it and as Christ rules it, is flawless. Yet, among its living stones fundamental flaws have arisen, and liberalism clearly comes of human origin. It can spring up and spread very quickly, shifting shapes with the winds of change. Liberalism is presently assaulting the souls of men, the Word of God, and the bride of Christ. Let faithful Christians arise to oppose this insidious threat!

WORKS CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.


Union City, TN

Errors Heard from Those Who Have Left the Church

Charles Pogue

Over the years there have been many who have abandoned the church of Christ. Some of those who have left the church and gone into indifference if not total unbelief. There may be a greater number who have left and joined forces with the denominational world. There are several videos posted on YouTube by some of the people who give their excuses for leaving the body of Christ and have joined themselves to religious error. Following are a few of the ones I have heard.

They say churches of Christ claim there must be authority for everything one does in worship. It is not the churches of Christ who made that rule, God did. Colossians 3:16-17 demonstrate the mandate is set in stone.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

It is God who has said we must have authority for all we do in worship, not members of the church of Christ. However, God not only set authority for what we do in worship but also in all that we do both word and deed.

Often, those who have left the church accuse us of overemphasizing doctrine. Let them consider a truth. No one can overemphasize anything God requires of man. So far as doctrine is concerned, the New Testament warns us not to be carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). In 1 Timothy 1:3 Paul reminds the younger preacher that he left him in Ephesus to charge some to teach no other doctrine. The apostle then lists some things contrary to sound doctrine (1:4-10; 4:1-5). In Romans, Paul expresses his joy those brethren obeyed from the heart the doctrine delivered to them to be made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). We all are to be nourished or brought up in the words of faith and good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6). Paul further instructed Timothy that until he came to give attendance to doctrine through reading and exhortation (4:13). In the oft-quoted 2 Timothy 4:2-4, Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word in season and out of season. He was to reprove, rebuke, and
exhort with all longsuffering and what else? Doctrine! How important is doctrine? The apostle John states it clearly. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Sound doctrine cannot be overemphasized.

Again, those who have left the church falsely accuse brethren of minimizing God’s grace. What in the world do they think teaching and preaching concerning the cross of Christ are if not maximizing the grace of God? We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is a gift from God. Why? Because none of us can save ourselves. We are all guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23), the wages of which is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord (6:23). We are not guilty of minimizing God’s grace, but rather those who have left seem to have forgotten that the grace that brings salvation has appeared unto all men, but it does not save all men. Instead, it teaches us. God’s grace teaches us how not to live and how to live (Tit. 2:11-15). How are we to live? As obedient children (1 Pet. 1:14-16). The point is grace and obedience to the doctrine of Christ cannot, they must not be separated. Faithful members of the church are not guilty of minimizing grace. Rather, those who have left the church have decided to minimize obedience.

Concerning the matter of grace, some who have left the church claim focusing on striving for perfection puts down grace. If such be the case the writer of Hebrews does the same thing. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1). We are all weak and erring. Yes, all of us sin, but over and over the New Testament warns us to stay away from sin and do what is right. Jesus, Himself, said not to minimize obedience. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24). Strive refers to a struggle, to contend for a prize with difficulties standing constantly in our way. Our English word agonize is a transliteration of the Greek word translated strive in the King James Version. The claim that focusing on striving for perfection puts down grace is the opinion of some, but an opinion is all it is. One wonders if such people are down on Paul who over and over (Gal. 5, Col. 3, and Eph. 4 in particular) contrasts the life of the new man with the old man. Was Paul wrong to tell the Romans when one rises from the watery grave of baptism he is to walk in newness of life? (Rom. 6:4). Peter sums this point up well in 1 Peter 4:15-16.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if **any man suffer** as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

The deserters who make this false charge against the faithful are the ones guilty of minimizing something. They minimize Scripture!

Many of those who leave the church claim it is a denomination among denominations. They tell us there are Christians scattered throughout the various churches of men. These are guilty of denying the oneness of the church. As in all the other excuses they appeal to, they ignore the Scripture. Jesus said He would (Mat. 16:18) and did (Acts 2) build His church. There is only one body which is His church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). Therefore, there is only one church. The New Testament describes all things concerning that body including its worship, mission, organization, fellowship and lifestyle. In other words, the New Testament is the pattern for the church ( Heb. 8:1-13). Paul instructed the Corinthians to speak the same things and for there to be no divisions among them. The apostle sent Timothy to Corinth to remind them of the things Paul taught them, which were the exact same things he taught in every congregation (1 Cor. 4:17).

Those who have left the church and who now claim the church is one among many denominations need to consider Paul’s writing to the Corinthians instructing both them and us to be of the same mind, to teach the same things, and for there to be no divisions among us (1:10). If the deserters are right in their belief that there are Christians in the different denominations is right, and there are divisions in all of them regarding the matters Paul listed, we are all lost. If not, why not?

Departures from the unity of doctrine, practice, and manner of life are reasons the Scripture gives us the clear command to practice the withdrawal of fellowship. John wrote concerning some, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would **not doubt** have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they
were not all of us” (1 John 2:19). Many of those who went out from us have proven themselves to have never really been one of us.

From the various ones I have heard speak who left the church at some point in their lives, I have concluded three things regarding their thinking. First, they have the wrong idea that we are full of arrogance when we insist that we can absolutely know the truth. What an attack that makes against Jesus Himself who said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth, shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The second thing is they have abandoned the necessity of being obedient in all things. Their condition is sad in that Paul wrote, “For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things” (2 Cor. 2:9).

Third, they seem to have bought into the popular Calvinist error of once saved always saved. If so, they need to return to the Scriptures and meditate on passages such as 2 Peter 2:20: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

Jesus died for and built one church, His church. He did not die for the denominations of men, the various community churches popping up all over the country, nor for those in the various world religions who do not honor the God of the Bible nor esteem Jesus as His only begotten Son, God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). No one outside the church of Christ will be saved regardless of whether they have never been members of it or if they have gone out from us.

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Pride and a Haughty Spirit

Charles Pogue

Solomon wrote: “Pride goeth before destruction, And an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro. 16:18). The Bible is replete with illustrations of the truth Solomon expressed. Cain thought he could sacrifice what pleased him and it would please God. It did not, and his pride led to the slaying of his brother.

Pharaoh knew not the Lord, neither would he listen to His voice to let Israel go. The entire Egyptian army perished in the Red Sea. Nadab and Abihu thought a fire of their choosing would be as good as what God required. They died before the Lord. The illustrations could go on and on, but these are sufficient to prove the point—pride does indeed go before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

As the above examples show, pride is not a bad attitude reserved for those who are aliens from God. God’s people can manifest a haughty spirit. Pride shows a lack of love because love is not puffed up and does not seek her own (1 Cor. 13:3-5). The pride of life is of the world, not of the Father (1 John 2:16). The lusts of the flesh, same category as thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, and foolishness (Mark 7:22).

All people must guard against pride. Pride has no boundaries. It can strike the poor or the wealthy, the ignorant as certainly as the knowledgeable, a follower as well as a leader, and the uneducated as surely as the educated. Pride may more often strike those who are higher up the ladder in the foregoing pairs, but it can strike the less affluent and influential as well as those who are more so. That is because pride is the condition of a person thinking more highly of himself than he ought (Rom 12:3), and no one is immune to that trap.

James wrote: “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is

Continued on Page 4
Some Ways We Brought Famine

A shortage of physical food (famine) is a disaster. However, a spiritual famine is far worse than any physical famine might be as the physical only has to do with this world while the spiritual has eternal consequences. We have not a physical famine, but we do have a spiritual famine in our land. In last month’s issue we noticed a couple of ways that we bring famine to our land: (1) quit studying your Bible, and (2) do not make proper choices. Let us notice some more this month.

Quit Exhorting One Another

Much of preaching the Word involves exhortation. As the apostle Paul was giving instructions to the young preacher, he stated, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Using the teaching of God’s Word with all patience we are to encourage others in our preaching and teaching. Paul also instructed another young preacher in the same manner by saying, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Tit. 2:15).

It should be no wonder then that after Peter convicting the Jews of crucifying God’s Son, informing them what they needed to do to have those sins removed (upon their faith, repent, and be baptized), it then tells us, “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). Peter knew there needed to be encouragement and appeal for these Jews to “save themselves” as they were in a lost condition and would spend eternity in torment. Peter, and the other apostles, had the desire for their physical brethren to be saved. Thus, he continued to appeal to them. As a result of those appeals, 3,000 souls were added to the church (2:47). How many rejected those exhortations, we do not know.

The apostles recognized this need of exhortation of brethren. In writing to the Thessalonian brethren, Paul stated, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thes. 4:1). Later in the book he urges, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (5:14).

Brethren needed to be encouraged to live the Christian life, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1). Often brethren are weak and struggling in their walk as Christians, and other Christians need to give them encouragement and to do so with patience. Jude wrote to exhort brethren to contend for the Faith: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). There were false teachers who perverted the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9) and faithful brethren had the need to contend. Contend is an intensive contest as a combatant and Jude intensifies it by adding earnestly. The intensity of the defense is in direct proportion to the intensity of the opposition. God knew that brethren would need to be encouraged to enter the fight and continue in that fight to destroy all false doctrine. This exhortation is needed today because so many have laid down their sword (of the Spirit which is the Word of God; Rom. Eph. 6:17) for preaching peace when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14).

We must also encourage one another. The Hebrews’ writer said, “But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (3:13). These Jewish Christians were in danger of leaving Christianity and returning to the dead system of Judaism. Thus, they needed to encourage each other to remain faithful to Christ, the only one who could save them. Likewise, we need to encourage each other as Satan attempts to deceive us into forsaking salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). There were false teachers who perverted the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9) and faithful brethren had the need to contend. Contend is an intensive contest as a combatant and Jude intensifies it by adding earnestly. The intensity of the defense is in direct proportion to the intensity of the opposition. God knew that brethren would need to be encouraged to enter the fight and continue in that fight to destroy all false doctrine. This exhortation is needed today because so many have laid down their sword (of the Spirit which is the Word of God; Rom. Eph. 6:17) for preaching peace when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14).

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Christ for the things of this world and as he tries to discourage us from remaining faithful. When we stop encouraging others, we bring a spiritual famine to the land.

**Forget to Train the Children**

It is each Christian’s (as well as the church) responsibility to teach and instruct. When Jesus gave His Great Commission to the apostles, that commission also passed on to all who became disciples of Christ. Part of that commission was to teach: “Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:19-20). However, God has placed children in the home (not the world, the village, or the church) with the parents having the responsibility to bring up and teach their children. In the Patriarchal Dispensation, God said of Abraham (the father of the faithful): “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19). God praised him for properly training his children. During the Mosaic Dispensation, God instructed the Israelites in the training of their children:

> And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

God knew the importance of parents (and especially fathers) teaching their children. We see the disastrous results when Israel failed in this teaching as we read through Judges. It points out to us: “And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel” (Jud. 2:7). However, they failed in their responsibility of teaching their children: “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (2:10). The parents knew, but their children did not know. The result is seen next:

> And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth (2:11-13).

Failing to teach just one generation led to Israel’s apostasy: doing evil and idolatry. This led to about 300 years of continued oppression until they cried to God for deliverance and God sending them a judge (a deliverer). Think of all the heartache that could have been avoided if the parents had properly taught their children.

During the New Testament Dispensation, Paul stated, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4) as well as giving the children the obligation to obey their parents. “Nurture and admonition” deals with the totality of teaching, training, and discipline necessary to bring a child up. It is primarily the father’s duty and responsibility to train and educate their children, so they grow up to know God’s Word. We learn with Timothy that his mother and grandmother are the ones who taught him the Truth (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) so they are vitally important in that training process. In so many cases today, the parents are almost absent from their children’s life as both mother and father work (daycare raises the children for them) and parents often pass the spiritual training to the church (is that why we have Bible classes—as if a couple of hours a week there will be sufficient—and then hire youth ministers?). Then if anything goes wrong and our children apostatize, we lay the blame squarely on the church, the preacher, the elders, and Bible class teachers.

**Fail to Indoctrinate One Generation**

There is an adage that accurately represents this point: “We are always just one generation from apostasy.” We are made keenly aware of it in the account of the generation after Joshua. Those of Joshua’s generation were faithful to God, but the next generation did not know God, forsook Him, did evil, and worshiped and served
idols. They had failed to indoctrinate the next generation.

Another illustration of the failure to indoctrinate just one generation is seen with Eli. He was a righteous priest and judge. He was judge over Israel for forty years, and we do not see any outward sin or evil in his life. His failure was to indoctrinate his sons (Hophni and Phinehas). His sons were wicked and Eli failed to restrain them. The Lord revealed unto Samuel what He was going to do and why: “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13). Eli knew the Law and what it taught and based upon his sons’ sins and what the Law taught, Hophni and Phinehas should have been put to death. However, Eli failed to restrain his sons. The result is that Eli shared in their guilt and in their doom. God said that Eli honored his sons above Him (2:29). Hophni and Phinehas died in battle against the Philistines and the ark of God was taken (4:11). When Eli was told about these events, Scripture records: “that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died” (4:18).

What sad endings to those who failed to indoctrinate the next generation. The Lord’s church in America was once known for its knowledge of the Bible. Members could defend the Truth in discussions with their friends, neighbors, work associates, etc. However, that is no longer the case generally speaking. While the one generation knew God’s Word and could effectively wield the sword of the Spirit, we failed to indoctrinate the next generation. As a result, we are seeing the continued erosion of Bible-based activities and authority for all we say and do. Many congregations are more interested in social activities and public relations than they are a “thus saith the Lord.” While the Lord’s church is not a denomination, many congregations of the “churches of Christ” are well on their way to becoming such. Why? We failed to indoctrinate the next generation.

Continued from Page 1

made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away” (Jam. 1:9-10). That is true because these verses are sandwiched between those making the point that all things come from God. Whether it is wisdom (1:5) or any other good and perfect gift (1:17). The Gospel, foreordained of the Father and executed by the Son, makes all men spiritual equals. The Gospel manifests the importance of the feeble in the eyes of God and exposes the weakness of the strong because he cannot save himself. Why then, should anyone glory in himself?

There is a growing problem in the brotherhood of both the presence of pride and its corruption. Some involved in works receiving financial support from individuals or congregations have come to believe they have no responsibility to give an account for what they do. They seem not to believe they need to give an answer to the concerns their brethren have, and not even to their supporters. The bigger and better known the work gets, the less accountability they recognize. When men persist in that attitude, are rebuked, yet refuse to repent of such pride, it is time for their works to fold or be taken over by others who are more humble.

What a contrast there is between men like the apostle Paul who considered himself the chief of sinners because he once persecuted the church (1 Tim. 1:15) and many of our preachers today who persecute it now. There is nothing wrong with advanced educational degrees, as such. It may be a coincidence, but it seems the higher degree of education our preachers achieve, their pride increases exponentially. As pride increases a willingness to give an account of themselves to their brethren all but vanishes. They speak over the heads of the rest of us about what this or that theologian has written and informing us of logical inconsistencies of this or that human philosopher. They dwell on the psychological imperfections that trip us up on a daily basis, but the Gospel and its requirements seldom pass their lips. They pride themselves on their tolerance to share podiums with those of questionable soundness. When challenged over their actions, they ignore it and pursue the path of stony silence or attack those who seek an explanation.

On the other hand, there is a necessary warning for the rest of us. We must be careful not to affix to another the charge of a haughty spirit when it may not be there at all. None of us can know the hearts of others, thus we must not judge on the basis of appearance (John 7:24) and presume we can discern the motivation of someone else’s heart.
Rather, as Jesus said, “ye shall know them by their fruits” (Mat. 7:16, 20). A man reveals if he is full of pride and full of himself by his words and deeds. Those words and deeds also reveal if he is humble before God and men and if the Truth of God is overflowing in him. They reveal if he has the goodness that accompanies righteousness with fear and trembling.

Jesus told a parable (Luke 18:10-14) of a Pharisee and a publican who went up to the temple to pray. We know the differences between the two men and the prayers they prayed. However, we sometimes overlook verse 9 which is the context of the parable. “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” One could hardly imagine a more complete description of this human fault of pride. We also notice the destruction that followed when the Pharisee went down from the temple unjustified. The publican, on the other hand, recognized he was a sinner. He manifested a spirit of humility and was justified in his prayer. Men need a good dose of humility for without it they will fall in judgment, and what a fall it will be!

With Respect of Persons

Lester Kamp

James cautions us, “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (Jam. 2:1). The discussion which follows this statement in James 2 condemns behavior towards individuals which is based on who or what those individuals are. Christians are not to treat some individuals differently from others simply because those individuals are richer, poorer, well-dressed, poorly dressed, our best friend, or just a casual acquaintance. In short, among Christians there is to be no favoritism; a Christian cannot have faith in Christ and at the same time practice respect of persons. Guy N. Woods observed, “Partiality, based on worldly or material considerations, is so far removed from the true spirit of Christ, that for any of the disciples to exhibit such is a violent perversion of the Christian religion.” The danger is clear, “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors” (2:9).

God is our supreme example. Man’s relationship with God is not determined by who he is (i.e., his race, wealth, skin color, etc.) for “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25). In this regard the statement is made, “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done” (Col. 3:25). This simply means that wrong will always be punished by God regardless of who may have done the wrong. The same standard of right and wrong applies to all whether king of Israel or common man. On another occasion the apostle Paul admonishes Christians, “observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Tim. 5:21). In this passage, Paul has under view the recognition of sin and the need for appropriate discipline because of the presence of sin. Right is right, wrong is wrong, and sin is sin for all men alike. God does not use a double standard, and neither should we.

In matters of doctrine: the rightness of a particular doctrine is not determined by who it is that advocates the doctrine. Anyone can be wrong, no matter how good and sincere he may be. To accept as gospel those views of any individual ignores the possibility of error in fallible men. When our esteem for an individual is such that we accept whatever that individual teaches without question, our esteem has gone too far. Our authority is the Word of God, and everything which we are taught needs to be compared to and evaluated by the Bible (Acts 17:11). When we begin to align ourselves behind individuals instead of God’s Word, we have divided the body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-12) and departed from the only true standard of right and wrong, the standard by which we will be judged (John 12:48). Such ought not to be!

In matters of sin: whether to condemn a particular sin is not to be determined by who is involved. Sin is still sin and needs to be reproved that those who are involved may repent and be forgiven. Sin is a serious matter because it separates man from God. This is true even if the sinner is a member of our family, the member of the family of some well-respected member of the congregation of which we are members (elder, deacon, preacher, Bible class.
44th Annual Bellview Lectures
Making The Case For
June 7-11, 2019

Friday, June 7
7:00 pm Establishing Your Case Terry Hightower
8:00 pm God’s Existence Gene Hill

Saturday, June 8
9:00 am Cessation Of Miracles Michael Hatcher
10:00 am Marriage Phil Smith
11:00 am Christianity Roelf Ruffner
Lunch Break
1:00 pm Singing Without Instruments Johnny Oxendine
2:00 pm The Work of the Spirit John West
3:00 pm Open Forum: Dinner Break
7:00 pm The Bible as God’s Word Lee Moses
8:00 pm Eternity Roelf Ruffner

Sunday, June 9
9:00 am The First Day of the Week Harrell Davidson
10:00 am Worship Of The Church Geoff Litke
Lunch Break
1:00 pm Basis Of Morality Terry Hightower
2:00 pm The One Church David Ray

Monday, June 10
9:00 am Sinfulness Of Denominations Gene Hill
10:00 am The Christian Home Johnny Oxendine
11:00 am Not Praying To Jesus Wayne Blake
Lunch Break
1:00 pm The Distinction Between The Covenants Bruce Stulting
2:00 pm How The Spirit Works on the Heart of Man David Ray
3:00 pm Open Forum: Dinner Break
7:00 pm Respect for Spiritual Matters David Brown
8:00 pm Water Immersion Harrell Davidson

Tuesday, June 11
9:00 am Christ’s Resurrection Lee Moses
10:00 am Roles in the Home John West
11:00 am Divorce And Remarriage Bruce Stulting
Lunch Break
1:00 pm Christian Fellowship David Brown
2:00 pm Providence Geoff Litke
3:00 pm Open Forum: Dinner Break
7:00 pm Future Resurrection and Judgment Wayne Blake
8:00 pm Conversion Phil Smith

Books-on-CD
The Bellview lectureship books (1975-1976, 1978, 1988-2005, 2007-2019) will be available on CD in PDF format. The price is $37.75 (includes postage). The CD also includes the Defender (1970, 1972-2018), Beacon (1972, 1974-2018), and other material. If you have a previous CD contact our office for the cost of an update.

Videos on the Internet
The lessons will be broadcast live on the Internet at:
www.bellviewcoc.com
Lessons will be archived at:
www.bellviewcoc.com/lectures.html

Meals
The women of the Bellview Church of Christ will provide a free lunch Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants will be available at the registration tables.
teacher), or a mature preacher who has had a full life of positive influence in the kingdom. When we fail to reprove sin in the lives of such individuals, we have developed the ungodly characteristic of partiality which will condemn our souls if this sin goes unforgiven and will allow the precious soul of someone we love to go on in his sin without the needed warning. The law of Christ applies to everyone alike. If we are sinning, we would certainly want someone to warn us concerning the impending danger of our condition (Mat. 7:12). We are not doing anyone a favor by withholding the rebuke, reproof, or warning needed because of sin. We sin when “we permit ourselves to become attached to some individuals in the church to the extent that we fail to do our brotherly duty toward others, or place them above the welfare of the cause of Christ” (Bales 45). Those who are overtaken in sin need to have their sin reproved, not ignored, so they might be restored (Gal. 6:1). Simply because the sinner happens to be one of our favorite people, or the child of some influential member, or a member of our own family, or one of the leaders of the congregation where we serve should not cause us to fail in our “brotherly duty.” If we genuinely love that person, Christ, His church, and the Word of God, we will not show partiality in applying the Word of God. “Become attached to no member of the body of Christ to the extent that you are blinded to the good of the cause of Christ, and thus stand with that individual or individuals regardless of truth or righteousness” (Bales 45-46).

Work Cited

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## The Church
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Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526
Teaching the Truth About the One Church  
Is Not Hatred, It Is Biblical  

Charles Pogue

Faithful members of the church of Christ are sometimes accused of being filled with hatred for believing and teaching the truth on the oneness of the church. That there is only one church to which one must belong to go to heaven is not hatred, it is Biblical. Furthermore, it is not hatred, because all members of the Lord’s church who are what they should be, do not hate anyone. What we want, as does God, is for all men to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4), obey the Gospel, and be added to the church of Christ, not a church of man.

Jesus informed His disciples that He would build His church (Mat. 16:18). It has been correctly pointed out over and again by faithful teachers of the Scripture that Jesus promised to build one church and it is His church. Other men have built their churches. Churches of men are easily identifiable because their names do not honor Christ. Most of those bodies wear names alluding to some point of their doctrine the founder of that church held, or a name honoring the man himself. The church Jesus built wears His name (Rom. 16:16), not the name Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Community, or Cowboy. Jesus purchased His church with His blood (Acts 20:28). Those who obey the Gospel do not go out and join a church, they are added by God to the church (2:47).

Additionally, churches of men are easily recognized by their failure to follow the New Testament in matters of worship, organization, and mission of the church. In worship, unauthorized mechanical instruments of music are used, weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper is ignored. In organization, the New Testament speaks nothing as to organization beyond the fact that Christ is the head (Col. 1:18) and every congregation is overseen by elders and served by deacons. The qualifications for both are given in 1 Timothy 3. There is no organization at all beyond that of each individual congregation. In mission, some bodies of men have as their mission to make men wealthy in the possessions of this life. Those who do have as their mission the seeking of men to be saved, do so by teaching a faith only doctrine which leaves out obedience to the commands God has given for one to have the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Faith only teaching will save no one.

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Announcement

As a result of previously unforeseen events, the Bellview Church of Christ eldership has decided to cancel the 2019 Bellview Lectures scheduled for June 7-11, 2019. As difficult as this decision was, we believe it is best at this time. We are expecting the lectureship to resume next year (2020).
Some Ways We Brought Famine

In this last installment of these articles, I would like to notice two other ways to bring a spiritual famine to the land. While famines are devastating from a physical standpoint, a spiritual famine is far worse. A famine is simply “an extreme shortage of food.” When we use spiritual famine, we are discussing an extreme shortage of spiritual food and thus the lack of nourishment that is necessary to grow and please God. I would refer you back to the March and April issues of Defender for the previous points.

Tell Us What We Want to Hear

When we find preachers and teachers that will only tell us what we want to hear, then we are going to end up bringing famine to the land. It is the duty of preachers to preach God’s Word. Paul charged his son in the faith:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

This is not a new problem as God noted the problem with the Israelites when Jeremiah wrote:

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord (Jer. 6:14-15).

The people of that day were engaged in all types of wickedness and sin, but they wanted the prophets to tell them “Peace, peace” or everything is all right and tell them what they wanted to hear instead of what they needed to hear. We also live in a wicked and sinful society and like Israel of old, we have a desire to be told “Peace, peace.”

However, a preacher/teacher has the responsibility of preaching God’s message. He has that obligation to “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” That is not telling them what they wish to hear but teaching them right from wrong and showing them the error of their way.

Preachers must preach all of God’s Word and not just some of it. Paul did such when he was at Ephesus as he stated to the elders of that congregation:

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house… For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27).

Only by teaching everything that was necessary was Paul innocent of their blood:

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men (20:26).

This finds its basis in the warning Ezekiel gave in Ezekiel 33 of the watchman.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.

So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die;

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Michael Hatcher, Editor
if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (33:1-9).

Thus, a great deal of preaching involves preaching things that some do not want to hear. Since they do not want to hear it and it reproves and rebukes them, they are often offended by what is taught. After condemning the Pharisees for making the Word of God of none effect by their tradition, Matthew records:

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into themouthdefilethaman;butthat which cometh out of the mouth, this defilethaman. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Mat. 15:10-14).

The Pharisees were offended by Jesus telling them the truth. It was what they needed to hear, but they did not like the message.

When Jesus taught the people some hard saying, John records:

Many thereforer of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6:60, 66).

This teaching took place after Jesus fed the 5,000 men. The Jews wanted to take Him and make Him a king over them (they did not understand the nature of the kingdom as many today do not). Thus, Jesus taught them some hard sayings with the result of the people leaving Him. Instead of conforming their desires and will to the Will of God, they get upset and leave to continue in their wicked ways. Also, Jesus as the teacher did not try to change God’s Word to conform to their understanding and life.

We need to learn that the intent of preaching is not to win friends but convict men of sin and show how they might be saved from their sins. Preachers today often tend to ignore this and have a greater desire to win friends and get a large congregation and big name instead of saving souls. They are of the view of never offend anyone and would not offend even Satan himself in their preaching. This is not the preaching of the prophets, apostles, and certainly not Christ.

Leave False Teachers Alone

In reading through the Old Testament, one cannot but be impressed with all the false prophets (especially during the time of the kings). These false prophets caused no little trouble for the Israelites and generally lead them away from God. Those true prophets dealt with the false prophets in a severe way and often executed them for their actions (consider Elijah after the contest with the prophets of Baal).

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, warned of false teachers when He said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). Likewise, the apostle of love says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). There were many false prophets in John’s day. Through New Testament history there have always been false teachers. It seems today we are inundated with them teaching every imaginable doctrine and some that would never have been imagined.

What false teachers do is to lead souls away from God with the result being their eternal damnation. Peter mentions this when he writes:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

We also learn what makes a false teacher. It is not something that is simply a differing opinion but heresies that are damnable and bring destruction upon those who teach such and those who accept such. These are doctrines that will lead to souls spending eternity in torment; not simply differing views relating to a passage or positions that do not have eternal consequences.

We also learn how these false teachers work: “privily [secretly—NKJV] shall bring in damnable heresies.” Zodhiates defines privily in the New Testament as “to lead or bring in secretly or craftily, to smuggle in. Used tran-
sitively in regard to heresies brought into the church.” False teachers do not come out in the open but do their work in private or secret so they lead souls into eternal destruction before their error can be known and openly opposed.

We also observe that these false teachers will lead many souls astray. Thus, the longer we leave false teachers alone, the longer they have to lead souls to damnation. During the days prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus warned, “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat. 24:11-12). Of course, the false prophets/teachers would not be limited to that time prior to Jerusalem’s destruction, but we continue to see that they would be able to “deceive many.” Those in the denominational world today are deceived by false teachers. Even in churches of Christ, we have brethren who are deceived by just about any and every damnable error that exists. When we leave all these false teachers alone, we simply give the false teacher an advantage to deceive more brethren and lead more to eternal torment.

Instead of leaving false teachers alone, we have been given the obligation to rebuke and expose them. Paul would encourage brethren:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Mark is defined by Thayer as: “to look at, observe, contemplate. to mark… to fix one’s eyes upon, direct one’s attention to, any one.” Zodhiates adds, “mark, goal, spy…. meaning to spy out, look towards an object.” Those who teach doctrines that are contrary to God’s Word (what they had learned) and doctrines which caused divisions, were to be continually watched and have everyone fix their eyes upon the false teacher so it directs everyone’s attention to him and then to avoid him. Leaving the false teacher alone is exactly the opposite of what we are under obligation to do and what we are to do in drawing everyone’s attention to him.

Paul also teaches we are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). While certainly not limited to false teachers, it certainly applies to them (see verse 6). Reprove carries the idea of refuting what they say but with the idea of shaming the false teacher.

Sadly, what we see today is that brethren have the desire to ignore the false teacher and leave them alone. Then when some begin to obey God in rebuking and drawing people’s attention to the false teacher, weak-kneed, spineless brethren defend the false teacher and attack the one obeying God in exposing the false teacher.

Elders have a specific responsibility along this line. In giving the qualifications for elders, Paul stated:

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

Since it is the obligation of elders to “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17) and to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2) which includes feeding them the proper food (Acts 20:28); they must make sure that those false teachers are exposed and their mouth stopped so the error that will damn the souls of the flock infiltrate the congregation.

Conclusion

We already have a spiritual famine in society. In most congregations of the Lord’s church today, we also have a spiritual famine. The seven points made in these three articles will help us to continue in that spiritual famine and make it worse. To turn around this spiritual famine in the churches of Christ, we must reverse these habits and (1) study the Bible, (2) make proper choices, (3) exhort one another, (4) train the children properly, (5) indoctrinate every generation, (6) have preachers and teachers who will tell us what we need to hear, and (7) rebuke and expose false teachers. No doubt there could be other points that could be made, but these have caused no little harm to the church and a reversal of these will begin ending that spiritual famine.

MH
The New Testament identifies the church as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). There is only one body, thus only one church (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12; Eph. 2:16; 4:4; Col. 3:15). Take special note when 1 Corinthians 12:13 says one is baptized into that body. In as much as there is one baptism (Eph. 4:5) and one body, one who is scripturally baptized (immersed) in water for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), and who arises from the watery grave to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4), was baptized into the one body, the church of Christ. Let it be understood the compilation of all denominations does not constitute the church of Christ!

Jesus informed His apostles that all power (authority) had been given unto Him (Mat. 28:18). The church is the body of Christ, and He is the head of it (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19). If the church is the body of Christ, He is the head of it, and as the head of it has all authority, pray tell how can one claim a church has any relationship to Christ whatsoever when it engages in worship, organization, mission, or work that is not commanded, exemplified, and approved of by the New Testament. If one engages in matters within these or any other area of the Christian life, using the statement the Bible does not say not to as his authority, it is to admit he is not a member of the church revealed by the New Testament of Jesus Christ! The church of Christ, on the other hand, is identified because it follows the New Testament pattern rather than the “I want to” or “I think” whims of man.

If teaching the foregoing about the church is hatred, then God is hateful because these facts come straight out of the Book of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). However, God is not hateful. God so loved the world, did He not? (John 3:16). God would not have anyone to be lost, but that all would come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus stated the day will come when all men will be judged and some, the majority (Mat. 7:13-14), will be sent away into everlasting punishment (25:46). In relation to that, He also said not those who call on Him as Lord would be saved, but those who do the will of the Father (7:21). In that passage, faith only advocates are identified as those who claim to have prophe‐ sied, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in His name (7:22) but did not do the will of the Father. Jesus will tell them, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (7:23). Some will be lost; Jesus identifies who they will be. Does that make Him hateful? Not at all. He issued the plea:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (11:28-30).

However, the benefits of this call are conditional, as we have already seen by one doing the will of the Father. One must come to Christ on His terms, and be added to His body, not a church of man identifiable by the failure to follow the New Testament pattern for the church.

The New Testament clearly points out how one is added to the church of Christ. He must believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God (John 8:24; Acts 8:36-37). One must repent of sins, that is, turn away from them and do them no more (Luke 13:3, 5). He must confess (as did the Ethiopian in the Acts 8 passage) belief in Christ, and then be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). He is not baptized to join a manmade church. He is not baptized as a sign that he has accepted Christ as Savior. Nowhere are those even suggested in the Scripture. By obedience to God’s plan, one is added to the Lord’s church. Following that initial obedience, one must live a life faithful in all things revealed unto us by Scripture (2:42; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 John 1:6-7; Rev. 2:10).

The foregoing words do not constitute a message of hate. They are a statement of love. God loved and loves the world (John 3:16). He would have all men to be saved, but not all men will be. Only those who follow the teachings of Christ; both the things He personally taught during His life and the teachings of His apostles and prophets who wrote the subsequent books of the New Testament. Let us not be of the mind that any doctrine or practice newer than those revealed in the New Testament have a part in the things pertaining to life and godliness for Peter wrote before the end of the first century that all such things were already revealed (2 Pet. 1:3). As Jude wrote, those who are Christians are to contend earnestly for those things—the faith (Jude 3). Those things are not hateful, they are indispensable matters associated with the love God has for all men, and which were prepared from the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20-23). Those things include, as the Scripture plainly teaches, the oneness of the church.

Continued from Page 1

Beeville, TX
Enemies Because of Truth

J. A. McNutt

The truth of God is man’s most precious possession. Rob any man of the truth and you have removed the light which illuminates the pathway of life and have destroyed his hope of heaven. The wise man said, “Buy the truth and sell it not,” and we can see the reason for his exhortation when we consider the power and value of divine truth. Here are some things which only the truth which is in Christ Jesus, can do for humanity:

Teaching the Truth
Paul believed that the preacher of the Gospel should, “prove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2) and this is not the path to popularity. Poor (?) Paul had not read Dale Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People, so he violated one of the rules for making friends by condemning the conduct of wicked men.

Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:8-10).

Such preaching lost the friendship of some people, but it also saved many souls from death. A man is known by his enemies as well as by his friends. They regarded Paul as their enemy, but he was the greatest friend they ever had because he was not ashamed or afraid to tell them the truth.

Examples of Opposition Aroused
Human nature is about the same in all generations and the teacher who condemns unrighteousness and opposes the errors of his day is likely to be hated and persecuted.

Noah tried to befriend his generation by proclaiming the coming flood and urging a reformation of life (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5), but he was despised and ignored.

The prophet Elijah was an enemy of idolatry and a friend to God and His people, but Ahab the King of Israel looked upon him and said, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” (1 Kin. 21:20).

John the baptizer preached the truth to Herod on the marriage and divorce question, but it cost him his head as soon as Herodias could contrive to have him slain (Mat. 14:1-12).

Jesus condemned sin and religious hypocrisy and taught the only system of perfect truth the world had ever heard, but they crucified Him.

Stephen did not tell the Jews anything except the truth which exposed their sinfulness and cut them to the heart, but they stoned him to death (Acts 7).

Attitude of Many Today
Thousands of people have no knowledge of simple New Testament Christianity in the present day. Their intentions are good and they are sincere, but they are simply uninformed as to the Gospel plan of salvation and have not been taught how to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). There are others whom Paul accurately described in the long ago as those who perish “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 The. 2:10).

My friend, and I hope that you will regard me as your friend, do you love the truth? Are you willing to ac-
cept the truth of God's Word when it contradicts some cherished religious opinion or idea? Do "I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Will you carefully consider these statements and test them in the light of New Testament teaching:

1. The church of Christ, which was purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28) and is spoken of as the body of Christ over which He reigns as head (Col. 1:18), is "One Body" (Eph. 4:4). This "One Body" is not a denomination, nor is it composed of all the denominational churches of earth, because it existed in the days of the New Testament as a perfect working organization, hundreds of years before the oldest existing denomination was born. The Lord's church is truly independent of any and all denominations and stands separate and apart from all sectarian alliances and invites you to be a Christian only (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16).

2. You are invited to become a Christian through humble submission to the New Testament law of pardon: (1) Believe in Christ (Acts 16:30; Heb. 11:6), (2) Repent of past sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), (3) Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and (4) Be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Obedience to these simple conditions will make you a member of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), free from any denominational entanglements or man-made creeds, and subject only to the will of Christ as it is declared in the New Testament Scriptures. Am I your friend or your enemy when I tell you these things? The real friend of humanity is the Gospel preacher who preaches the whole truth. Think on these things.

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The Right Kind of Preaching
Cled E. Wallace

Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of hard and soft are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be a difficult thing to determine the kind of both that should be done. A direct appeal to the New Testament, its preachers and its writers ought to settle any question that arises in such a connection.

Men who say the most about “the right method of approach,” “constructive articles,” etc., betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources, rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach. The main idea is getting there anyhow. I shall resort to the rather simple strategy of pointing some Scripture texts at some of the approaching methodists among us who never approach, or do so in such timid manner, they are useless after they arrive. They might as well have stayed at home.

Now, John the Baptizer, was a fairly acceptable preacher considering the time and circumstances of his activities. “There came a man sent from God whose name was John.” He was an austere man, simple in his tastes and habits. He was neither clothed in purple and fine linen, nor did he fare sumptuously every day. “Now John himself had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.” He preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and seemed to encounter no difficulty in approaching his subject. He got there a lot quicker than he would have, had he worn a scissor-tail coat and been called Dr. John. Preachers thus handicapped, seldom get there at all, for they are too busy talking about the method of approach.

John was not particularly worried, according to the record, about offending people. He demanded of all that they repent or burn. There were some “honorable men” in John’s audience who were highly connected and proud of their standing. They condescended to submit to John’s baptism, but John perceived that their motives were unrelated to the personal repentance he was preaching. He made a personal attack on them, called them “Ye offspring of vipers” and demanded of them “fruit worthy of repentance.” A questionnaire might have disclosed the fact that a goodly number of very nice people did not savor John’s “attacks on honorable men.” That did not bother John any. He was not preaching to please the people, but to please God by blasting sin and sinners and leading them to repentance. He even had an invitation to preach to king Herod. This intrepid man of God then said the wrong thing at the psychological moment and got his head chopped off. He told Herod that he was living with his brother Philip’s wife and that it was not lawful for him to have her. What would a modern perfumed and manicured preacher think of that method of approach? John was a constructive preacher! That word sounds familiar, doesn't it? He razed

Continued on Page 4
Joshua’s Respect

As Joshua took over the leadership from Moses, God gives him a duty or responsibility in leading the people of God into the Promised Land (Jos. 1:2-9). Amid this charge, God tells Joshua to have the proper awe or respect for His Word.

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (1:7-8).

Affection

Joshua would show his affection and respect by how he responded to God’s Word. This is true of us also. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments… If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (John 14:15, 23-24). There are many similar statements that we could add to these. We show our love for the Divine Three by our obedience to the Word of God.

Authority

Joshua would have that respect because of the authority of that Word. That word has authority because of its origin. It is “the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee.” This is what Moses commanded that God gave him; thus, it is God’s commands. Thus, those commands must be respected; Joshua must obey what God has authorized through Moses. We need to have respect for the authority of the New Testament today because it is the Word of God given through the Messiah.

Jesus said:
For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49-50).

That which Jesus spoke originated with the Father. That same word was given to the apostles (17:8, 14), and they were guided by the Holy Spirit (14:26; 16:13) to speak (1 Cor. 2:10-13) and write (Eph. 3:3-4) those words.

Thus, we, like Joshua, need to respect the New Testament and its authority because of its origin. We need to respect it to do all that God authorizes through that Word. Paul taught, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). We must do all that God authorizes and only what He authorizes. If we do anything other than what God has authorized, then we are not observing “to do according to all the law” but are turning “from it to the right hand or to the left.” The way in which God authorizes through the Word is by direct statements, examples, and implications.

Yet, many today do not have respect like Joshua. The denominational world has their denominational creed book as their authority instead of the Word of God. Thus, instead of doing “according to all the law,” they do what they desire to do. Others do not look for Bible authority at all (something that has crept into the Lord’s church). They decide to do whatever pleases them. There are also those who have rebelled against any and all authority. None of these have the respect for authority as did Joshua.

Attention

We also notice the attention Joshua was to give to that authoritative Word. He was to meditate on that Word day and night. When we have a true affection for the Word, there will be an eagerness to read, study, and meditate upon it. In the first Psalm, we find the blessed man is the man who meditates on the Word: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (1:2). Paul urged his...
son in the faith to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). It is only through study and meditation on God’s Word will we be able to give the proper attention to the Word of God to apply it to our lives.

This does, however, show that we can come to an understanding of that Word. If there is an impossibility of understanding, then there would be no need for study and meditation upon it as such would be a waste of time and effort. We can come to know God’s Word. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). We cannot be approved of God or made free (from sin) without knowing God’s will for us.

God tells Joshua that the law He gave through Moses was not to “depart out of thy mouth.” This again shows the type of attention Joshua was to give to the Law. One writer pointed out that this refers to the custom of muttering while study or reflecting. This action is in conjunction with meditating. The idea of meditating is not like the modern-day meditation of an emptying of the mind and concentrating on nothing or on self (something that originated from the Eastern mystic religions), but involves two things: (1) focus on God, His works, or His law, and (2) an activity that was done aloud. When one is continually muttering on the Law, then he is constantly thinking about it. Keil and Delitzsch add, “The law is in our mouth, not only when we are incessantly preaching it, but when we are reading it intelligently for ourselves, or conversing about it with others” (22-23). This certainly brings to our mind Peter’s injunction, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

God also states that Joshua is to meditate upon God’s Word according to Keil and Delitzsch “does not mean theoretical speculation about the law, such as the Pharisees indulged in, but a practical study of the law, for the purpose of observing it in thought and action, or carrying it out with the heart, the mouth, and the hand. Such a mode of employing it would be sure to be followed by blessings” (30). In the Lang commentaries, he adds, “a mature reflection upon the law by which Joshua penetrates more deeply into its meaning, and thus becomes qualified to speak more clearly, pointedly, and powerfully to the people” (42). Far too often today, we do not have people who will reflect upon God’s Word as they live their lives. Thus, when faced with decisions in their lives, they are ill-prepared to carry out that Law much less speak that Law to others. How we need to get back to giving God’s Word the proper attention it deserves.

**Actions**

Joshua’s actions were to be guided by that Word. He was to observe to do all that the Law stated. First, he must do the Law. He must apply in life what Moses wrote. We also must actually do what God has authorized in the New Testament. James commands, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jam. 1:22). We have far too many today who hear God’s Word, but they never put what they hear into action, thus they deceive themselves. Others talk a great talk, but their actions do not measure up to their talk. Joshua was going to have to put into action what Moses commanded, and we must put into action what God has authorized.

Joshua also had to do all that Moses commanded. Joshua did not have the right to pick and choose what God, through Moses, said. He could not omit those things he did not like. He had the obligation to do everything whether he liked it or not. So it is today. We must do everything God commands us to do. We have no right to change or alter God’s commands, nor do we have the right to omit those things we might not like. Many Christians today decide to do those commands of God that they like, but when it comes to those that do not sit well with them, they omit them. God does not give us a choice to obey only those commands we like, but we must obey all of God’s Word.

**Conclusion**

Only as Joshua would do these things would he be prosperous and successful. As we view the life of Joshua, he was faithful in all things God commanded, and as a result, he was prosperous and successful in his life. Toward the end of his life, he challenged the Israelites to “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Jos. 24:15), but his statement regarding himself was, “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (24:15). His life had demonstrated that choice. Yahweh was with him and brought him and the people he led into the Promised Land. When we observe to do all that God commands us, then God will be with us so we will
be blessed in our lives and God will bring us into the Promised Land. Let us determine to do all that God authorizes us to do.

the mountains, filled the valleys, and straightened the crooked and made “the rough ways smooth.” By his preaching, he built a highway in all the wilderness for the Lord. The constructive preaching described by the baby-talk of modern methodists among us would not have levelled any mountains, filled any valleys, nor constructed a highway for royalty. Softly spoken platitudes in religion, mainly designed to be inoffensive, generally true as they may be, are not constructive of what the Lord wants built up! When a sinner, even a dressed-up sinner, who belongs to “a respectable church,” hears a real constructive preacher, he does not feel like he had visited a beauty parlor.

Jesus is by common consent the greatest of all teachers and preachers. He astonished the men of His time and all succeeding time with the Sermon on the Mount. In it He exalted humility, purity of heart, meekness and mercy. He pronounced blessings on peacemakers and those who could rejoice under persecution for righteousness’ sake without compromising or surrendering their loyalty. While holding forth true standards of holiness, He condemns divorce, hypocritical praying, fasting and alms-giving to be seen of men, the love and selfish use of money, all hate and thirst for vengeance, harsh and hypocritical judgments on others, and voiced a stern warning-against “false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.” He was pointed in His definitions. A wise man is one who hears His words and does them. All others are foolish and will suffer a great fall. There is no compromise with or winking at sin, either personal or doctrinal, in the Sermon on the Mount. It is famous for the scope of its teaching and condemns as much as it applauds. Jesus was an iconoclast. He demolished the false that He might construct the true. Our present methodists of approach, who admit that they are the very sugar of the earth, are too squeamish to chop down the thorns of error. They expect their scanty scattering of constructive seed to choke out the thorns. “Preach the gospel and let others alone.” Jesus did not do it that way! Some of them are strong on letting others alone and preach very little Gospel.

Jesus aroused powerful opposition among “honorable men,” met them face to face in hot exchanges, answered their captious questions, directed parables against them, withered them into defeated silence by His repartee, warned His disciples and the people against their teaching, and when it was called to His attention that they had become offended at Him, He said: “Let them alone, they are blind guides.” He called their worship “vain worship” and their teaching “the doctrine and commandments of men.” He charged them with making void the Word of God because of their traditions. The last days in the temple area were hectic. He charged them with turning the house of God into a den of robbers. He did justice to His subject in highly descriptive language. He attacked some of these “honorable men,” chief shepherds of the flock, as whitened sepulchers, serpents, offspring of vipers, sons of hell and told them they could not escape the judgment of hell. He called them fools and blind gnat-strainers and camel-swallowers and charged them with all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the days of Abel. He said other nice things like this to them. What do you think of His method of approach? Anyhow, He approached! Yet, when some of us make a comparatively mild attack on the false doctrines of our time, long-faced mourners over the departed, journalistic glory of Zion, wail like children in the market places, that we are utterly void of the spirit of Christ! What a pity that Jesus could not have made a pilgrimage to New Jersey and learned something about the sweet freshness of a right approach! He did not even have the softening benefits of a brotherhood survey! Some of the loudest talkers about the spirit of Christ, know least about it. He was not doctrinally tolerant. “He that believeth not shall be dammed.” Would it not be better to preach “a positive gospel,” make heaven so inviting that nobody would want to go anywhere else?

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Jesus preached some hell-fire and damnation along with it, and it can be recommended to warm up the modern method of approach. We have the example of Jesus and apostolic precept for preaching the truth and exposing error.

Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Itching ears can be tickled with questionnaires followed up by “higher journalistic standards”: diluted to the formula of the proper method of approach. Such methods may please the sects and spoil the brethren. The right kind of preaching ought to convert some of the sects, agitate all of them, and put fight in the brethren. “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

If a man wants to be the right kind of preacher and writer, he should form the acquaintance of Paul and watch him approach. He might also make a side-study of Stephen with profit. Paul expressed a high degree of aversion for “some that trouble you. and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” He pronounced an anathema on all who preached any other Gospel than that which he received from the Lord and made known to the people. There is not anything in Paul’s record to show that he would be pleased with a man today, who for some twenty years was “lost” to loyal contenders for the faith, found the fellowship of digressives more satisfactory than that of “the alleged loyal church,” and gained sudden prominence among loyal churches by making a survey to find out what kind of preaching and writing the brethren wanted. “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10, 11). Paul’s preaching drew fire. Honorably connected men “contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.” Paul met the challenge boldly. “Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Instead of criticizing Paul’s method of approach, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” They did not rebuke Paul by saying, “peace, brother, peace!” Paul was charged with madness, teaching unlawful customs, being the ringleader of a sect, turning the world upside down, and being a pestilent fellow. If he lived today, he would not be sending out questionnaires and making surveys to feel the pulse of the brotherhood.

A study of Paul ought to toughen up some tenderfeet among us who tread about over Gospel principles about like a barefooted boy in a grass-burr patch. “Preach the word. Be urgent.”

Baptism and Salvation

Tim Smith

Much has been written and said about the matter of baptism and salvation through the years, but it still remains the center of much controversy in the minds of many. There are those who contend that baptism plays no role in the salvation of the soul and has no place in modern times. Some contend that one may or may not choose to be baptized in the course of his salvation, that it is totally optional. Some contend that one is saved first and then baptized to make known his salvation. Some contend that one is saved and then later is baptized to join the church of his choice. This article will demonstrate that each of these contentions is false. We will demonstrate, with the “oracles of God,” that baptism is the point at which salvation is imparted, the remission of sins granted, the washing away of sins takes place, and when the Lord adds us to His church.

In Matthew 28:18-20 we read: And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen

Mark’s account goes like this: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

Having announced that He received authority from His Father, He goes on to tell His apostles that...
they now must go into every part of the world and preach to everyone who will hear. Those who hear and believe are to be baptized. The result of this baptism is that they “shall be saved.” Now the words we have cited are the words of Jesus. He claims “all authority.” Who is there with more authority? Who is there who can negate the force of His words?

The command of Jesus to His apostles cited above was first obeyed on Pentecost of Acts 2 and may be summarized in brief as follows:

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost…. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (2:37-38, 41).

This was the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It was here that the apostles first did what Jesus told them to do a few days before. People who heard the preaching of the apostles and believed it desired to be released from their sins. This release was granted upon their baptism. It would here be good to note that what they did in Acts 2 was exactly what they were told to do in Matthew 28. They baptized people here in keeping with the command of Matthew 28 and Mark 16. If there is a difference in baptizing as per Matthew 28 and as per Acts 2, then we must concede that the apostles violated what Jesus told them to do. Some teach that there is a difference in baptizing “in the name of Jesus Christ” and baptizing “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” They say, “Where is the name in Matthew 28?” The words “in the name of” were chosen and used by Jesus. He said that men are to be baptized “in the name” of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He approved what was done on Pentecost also. The question is, what does “in the name of mean”? Is it something that must be said? I contend that “in the name of” here meant what it elsewhere meant, by the authority (power) of. We find it so used in Acts 4:7. It also makes much more sense; for, what are we doing when we act in the name of Jesus? Are we doing something and then pretending that Jesus did it? Or, are we doing something and then providing the authority for so acting? There is not a single passage in the New Testament that commands that the person immersing another into Christ say anything; there is not a single passage in the New Testament that contains an example of anyone saying anything as he immersed another. At best one might have a personal preference in this connection, more than that is sinful. What the person immersing another says is not a matter of Biblical concern, and it should not concern us either. It is wrong and sinful to refuse to extend fellowship to another because the wrong formula was uttered over him/her at the time of his/her immersion. To do such is to make a law God did not make.

That baptism is for the washing away of sins we learn in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” May one be saved who is still in his sins? Does not Revelation 21:27 tell us that those in sin cannot enter heaven? If one is still in his sins up to the point of baptism, can that one go to heaven should he die before baptism? Not according to the Bible.

That baptism puts us into contact with the death of Christ we learn in Romans 6:3-4:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

What happened at His death? His blood was shed. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. John tells us that His blood cleanses us from our sins in 1 John 1:7. Revelation 1:5 tells us that we are washed from our sins in His blood. If we contact the blood in baptism, can one be saved who has not been baptized? Not according to the Bible. That baptism puts one into the church we learn in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The body is the church (Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22-23). Therefore, to be in the body is to be in the church. Since it is the church that is sanctified and cleansed and shall be presented unto Christ at the last day holy and blameless (5:26-27), may one refuse baptism (and thereby church membership) and still be saved? Not according to the Bible.

That baptism puts one into
Christ we learn in Galatians 3:27: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and since salvation is in Christ (Acts 4:12), can one be saved who is not in Christ, having never been baptized into Him? Not according to the Bible.

Hear the words of Peter, the one whose sermon we have recorded on Pentecost of Acts 2, the one who taught that baptism was “for the remission of sins,” the one who could have responded to the question, “Men and brethren what shall we do” by saying “Faith only will save you” or “The grace of God will do all the work for you,” but did not. He chose rather to say, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Hear this same man’s frame of mind many years after Pentecost as he writes by inspiration: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). If baptism saves us, can one be saved without it? Not according to the Bible.

Now we have demonstrated that baptism is necessary to salvation, the remission of sins, entrance into the body, entrance into Christ, etc. The Bible teaches these things.

Men may disagree, men may mock those who teach the necessity of baptism, but remember the words of Jesus: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). The Bible says that one must be baptized to be saved, have you?  

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Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Mat. 7:15).

Increasingly the words of that true prophet Jesus Christ are being fulfilled in our own day. A whole generation of biblically illiterate Christians are being beguiled and spiritually plundered by self-styled “change agents.” Because of their ignorance of God’s Word, they fail to heed His warnings found in the Old and New Testaments concerning Satan’s servants. Consequently, if they do not repent, they will find themselves without a candlestick; dwelling “where Satan dwelleth” (Rev. 2:13).

In his last epistle, the apostle Paul warns the early church and us of the danger of false teachers. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Peter warns his readers this was neither a far off, futuristic warning, nor something which had only occurred in the dim past. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you” (2 Pet. 2:1). This is an ominous admonition to New Testament Christians of any age about the danger of ignoring God’s Word and “dancing with wolves.”

Yet, the Holy Spirit and Peter do not leave us dangling. Peter outlines for us the tactics, motivation, and destiny of false teachers.

**One Tactic of False Teachers—Secrecy**

False teachers do not march into a congregation of God’s people and announce, “I am here to teach and preach damnable heresies.” Like some stealth aircraft they come in often unnoticed. Many start out by claiming to be “loving and positive” in their teaching. They decry Bible-based, chapter and verse preaching as “out of date” and not meeting the “felt-needs” of modern man. After they have softened up the people on a diet of psychology, fables, and funny stories, they proceed to promulgate their secret agenda (2:1), by saying such things as:

1. “The church of Christ has been too harsh and legalistic in its methods of reaching the world. We need to change!”
2. “Our worship services are dull and not uplifting. We need to change!”
3. “Women need to take a more public role in the church. We need to change!”
4. “There are Christians in denominations, and we need to fellowship them. We need to change!”

When asked what they mean by change they are vague and noncommittal. However, if we decipher their words in the light of the Scriptures the heresies slip out:

1. They do not want plain, vanilla truth which convicts men of sin and causes them to purify their souls “in obeying the truth” (1 Pet. 1:22).
2. They want emotion-driven entertainment as worship, which appeals to the flesh rather than the spirit, like the religious world around them (i.e., solos, choirs, and mechanical instruments of music).
3. They have decided to ignore the God-ordained role of men and women in the church in

Continued on Page 5
do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.” (4:16). Often the rulers of the people were angry at Jesus, but never did they try to deny any of the miracles that occurred. They did, on one occasion, try to attribute the power by which He worked the miracle to Beelzebub (Mat. 12:22-30). After some told them of the raising of Lazarus, John states, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles” (John 11:47). No one who lived during the Bible times ever left any record as to whether a true miracle had taken place.

This cannot be said of miracle workers today. There has always been a cloud of suspicion around them. Consider the debate challenges to them to work a miracle, demonstrate the power, or the books exposing the frauds for their trickery. Hollenweger in speaking of Oral Roberts writes:

He holds firmly to his teaching, although he is realistic enough to admit that only twenty-five percent of the people with whom he prays are healed or improved. He says in many words: "No one in the whole world has prayed with more sick people who have not been healed than I have” (364).

What a contrast to the obvious miracles of the Bible.

**Acknowledged by Enemies**

Even the enemies of Christianity had to admit that miracles had been worked. After Peter and John had given a defense before the Sanhedrin for healing the lame man, it says of them, “And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it” (Acts 4:14). They sent Peter and John out of the room and said, “What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.” (4:16). Often the rulers of the people were angry at Jesus, but never did they try to deny any of the miracles that occurred. They did, on one occasion, try to attribute the power by which He worked the miracle to Beelzebub (Mat. 12:22-30). After some told them of the raising of Lazarus, John states, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles” (John 11:47). No one who lived during the Bible times ever left any record as to whether a true miracle had taken place.

This cannot be said of miracle workers today. There has always been a cloud of suspicion around them. Consider the debate challenges to them to work a miracle, demonstrate the power, or the books exposing the frauds for their trickery. Hollenweger in speaking of Oral Roberts writes:

He holds firmly to his teaching, although he is realistic enough to admit that only twenty-five percent of the people with whom he prays are healed or improved. He says in many words: "No one in the whole world has prayed with more sick people who have not been healed than I have” (364).

What a contrast to the obvious miracles of the Bible.

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pose of miracles being the relieving of illnesses and pain, remove suffering, and improve the physical condition of people. They have the mistaken idea that God does not want people to suffer, thus He heals them of these things. They fail to realize that the New Testament teaches there is a purpose to suffering. Suffering gives the individual the proper environment to grow, develop, and mature. God also promises that He will be with us during these times (1 Cor. 10:13) and He will give us grace to endure them (2 Cor. 12:9). While Jesus did demonstrate His compassion in the healings, it becomes obvious that His compassion is not the purpose of the miracles. If compassion was the purpose, then Jesus would not have left anyone sick and dying for He could have healed everyone. It would not be consistent with leaving Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12).

Surely, if compassion was the purpose of miracles, Paul would have healed Timothy’s stomach problems and oft infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23), and he would have healed Trophimus instead of leaving him sick at Miletum (2 Tim. 4:20). Why would Jesus say that the sick needed a physician (Mat. 9:12) if the purpose of miracles was simply to relieve sicknesses?

While compassion was involved in miracle working, and on occasion miracles did draw a crowd (excite the fancy), that was a by-product of the miracle-working—not the purpose. The purpose of miracles was to confirmatory.

Of a Concrete Nature

This is closely related to the first point we considered (genuineness). The miracles of the Bible were of such a nature that they could not be denied: Jesus turned plain water into wine (a non-alcoholic grape juice) which could be tasted (John 2); healing a man who had been impotent thirty-eight years (John 5); feeding five-thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes (John 6); healing a man born blind (John 9); raising a man who had been dead for four days (John 11); restoring an ear which had been cut off (Luke 22:49-51). The Bible miracles simply could not be denied because everyone could attest to the fact that a true miracle happened. Today, the miracles are some internal problem that no one can see. They must be because no one can do true miracles.

Unrestricted in Type

Consider the miracles listed above and it shows that there is no classification of miracles which was not worked. When certain miracle-workers today have certain types of ailments brought to them, they simply do not even try to cure the person because they know they cannot.

John’s account of the life of Jesus was written to produce faith in Him (John 20:30-31). To accomplish this John selects seven miracles of our Lord, each designed to show that Jesus was master over everything and, thus, the Christ. In John 2, Jesus turned water into wine (again it was a non-alcoholic beverage) showing He is Master of Quality. In John 4, Jesus heals the nobleman’s son who is twenty miles from the scene showing He is Master of Space or Distance. In John 5, Jesus heals the man who had been impotent for thirty-eight years showing He is Master of Time. John 6 records Jesus feeding the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes showing He is Master over Quantity. Later in the same chapter, Jesus walks on the water even though the wind and sea were boisterous showing He is Master of the Elements or Natural Law. There is a man who had been blind from his mother’s womb in John 9 to whom Jesus restores sight showing He is Master of Misfortune. Then Jesus shows that He is Master of Death by raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11. These seven elements are the sum total of our existence and John shows that Jesus could work a miracle over them, and thus He was master of each. Let us see the modern-day miracle-worker do these today!

Immediate

The miracles recorded in the Bible were always instantaneous. When Jesus healed a blind man the record states: “And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way” (Mark 10:52). When Peter and John healed the cripple man outside the temple it says that “immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:7). When Jesus heals Peter’s mother, He “lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them” (Mark 1:31, see also 5:41-42; 9:27; Luke 13:13). Never do we read of a cure which took place three weeks later. Yet, such are common among the fake miracles of today.

Complete

When these charlatans heal people today, many times it is an
incomplete healing or the person is only partly cured. The miracles of the Bible were never of such a nature. When Jesus healed the blind, they could see just fine. When Peter and John healed the man outside the temple, “he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:8). It was not a case of barely being able to stand up and walking with great difficulty, like the miracles of today.

Enduring
The people healed during the Bible times never reverted back to their ailment. Once healed they remained healed. That is not the situation today. “It had to be stated with sadness that in the healing campaigns, after the first rush of enthusiasm, those who remained healed were only a very small percentage” (Hollenweger 357). Hollenweger also records this event.

Someone who had received a temporary improvement wrote to Zaiss only the second day after her “healing”: “Everything is as before, I am deaf again, please help me, dear brother Zaiss.” But in Zaiss’s office records this person had already been registered as “healed,” and so, in spite of her disavowal, she could have read in Zaiss’s journal Mehr Licht! The thanksgiving she uttered in the first hours (362).

One Healed Could be Absent or Present
When Jesus was at Cana of Galilee, a nobleman from Capernaum came to Jesus asking Him to heal his son. The distance between these two cities is about 20 miles. “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth” (John 4:50). The nobleman started on his way home.

And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house (4:51-53).

When Jesus healed the Syrophoenician woman’s daughter, she was not present (Mat. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). Yet, the modern fake-healers must have the person to be healed present so they can get the person emotionally excited enough to heal them. They would not try to heal someone (except in vague terms) who is not present.

Did Not Require the Faith of the Recipient
Invariably Pentecostals demand that the person to be healed has enough faith. This is so the mind can do its work in healing the body (alleviating psychosomatic illnesses but also temporarily overcoming many real injuries and pains). The Pentecostal Walter Hollenweger quotes Mink as saying, “Healing does not fail because of the will of God, but because of the unbelief of his children” (358). What a cruel burden to place upon someone who has not been healed. “It is your own fault you are not healed; you do not have enough faith.” Hollenweger also writes:

If the healing of a sick person does not take place, this can be the result of one of ten, fifteen or twenty reasons why prayers are not heard (unbelief, sin, etc., on the part of the persons seeking healing) (357).

Notice that it is always on the “part of the persons seeking healing,” never upon the faith-healer.

Occasionally, faith was present on the “part of the person seeking healing” in the Bible. Prior to healing two blind men, Jesus asked them, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” (Mat. 9:28). After affirming their belief, Jesus “touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened (9:29-30).

Many individuals did not, and some could not have faith, but they were still healed. None of those raised from the dead possessed faith when they were raised. (While I realize that some may wish to quibble about this statement since the spirit does not sleep. The spirit of man returns to God—Ecc. 12:7—and thus would have faith. However, let someone ask a dead person the question Jesus asked, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” and see what type of response you get.) Jesus and others healed many who were possessed by demons (Mark 1:23-27; 5:2-13; 7:24-30; Luke 9:42; 11:14-15; Acts 5:16; 10:38). Surely, Pentecostals will not argue that the demons had the proper type of faith to be healed. Many of the recorded miracles give no indication whether the one to be healed had faith or not (Luke 6:6-11; 13:11-13; 14:2-4). There is also the case of Jesus healing a person based upon the faith of someone else (Mark 2:1-5; Luke 7:1-10). There were some individuals who were healed where they did not even know Jesus (John 6:13-14; 9:1-38 see especially verses 35-36).

Miracles, instead of being the result of faith, were done to produce faith according to John.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:
But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (20:30-31).

This is the opposite of what is necessary for the charlatans of today.

Conclusion
The miracles of the Bible are true miracles and were obvious to all. They were accepted by all during that time and were obvious that it could not have been but by the power of God. Nicodemus correctly observed, “we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). Those miracles that produced such knowledge does not exist with the charlatans of today. Their counterfeit miracles have been proven to be fake a multitude of times. The hospitals filled with actual sick people is a standing testament to their fraud. Let us never be deluded into accepting miracles today.

Work Cited:
follow their pernicious ways” (2 Pet. 2:2). Pernicious (lascivious—ASV) denotes “excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness” (Vine 353). In vivid language the apostle describes them: “count it pleasure to revel in the day-time” (ASV); “having eyes full of adultery, and they cannot cease from sin”; “they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness” (2 Pet. 2:13-14, 18).

While the escapades of false teachers such as Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggart are notorious, false teachers in the Lord’s church follow a similar vein. They may not be personally immoral but most refuse to preach against immodesty, lust, dancing, and the like. They consider these sins minor and tolerable. But the Lord does not! “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5:28).

They are also damaging when they fail to proclaim God’s law concerning marriage: “One man and one woman for life.” Many in this world have divorced their mates unscripturally or have entered into adulterous marriages. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (19:9). False teachers try to minimize the impact of this verse and others by all sorts of theological contortions which they use to explain away the commands of our Savior. They use words like mercy, compassion, and forgiveness but end up sending the beguiled down the “broad way” which leads to Hell (7:13). “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pet. 2:19).

**Destiny of False Teachers—Judgment**

Peter assures his readers that false teachers are not unnoticed by God. Just as God punished angels who sinned, the Antediluvian world, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, so He will punish the false teacher. Their rebellion will send them to torment at death and eventually to Hell on the Judgment Day (2:9—“unto the day of judgment”). Apostasy from the truth of the Bible has horrible, eternal consequences: “The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2:22).

Let us avoid false teachers; do not buy their books, do not encourage them in any way. Let us warn others about the dangers of dancing with wolves.

Be Nice to Him!

*Foy L. Smith*

I have held a number of Gospel meetings in a town a few hundred miles north of where we live. Through at least three of the meetings I stayed in a motel owned by one of the members. In the fourth, I stayed with one of the elders. This good brother is in the insurance business and has a lovely big house just off one of the main highways. He has, for all practical purposes, two houses in one. There is a large living room and on either end are bedrooms, private baths, etc. Brother and sister Foy E. Wallace, Jr., made their home with this Christian man and wife (their children have had their own homes now for several years), and the Wallace name is a dear and revered name in that household.

This good brother has a dog—I mean a real dog—a Doberman Pinscher, and he stands guard around the clock and people who have been there just once never forget it. His name is “Brutus,” and I think the name is in keeping with his character. Now Doberman Pinschers are not lap dogs as you well know if you know anything at all about this particular strain of doghood. People keep them for one reason only—to threaten anyone who dares invade the premises. With me, a threat is enough. The Dobermans are usually very vicious with strangers. They have a bite that can come down on man or beast with a one hundred forty-pound impact. That is almost enough to remove a limb.

When the elder led me out to his house after the first service—I had gotten there just prior to the service—he told me to stay in my car until he assured Brutus that I was okay. I did not argue the point. I stayed in my car. Brutus
heard us coming and knew that one car did not belong there. He came out with a friendly look toward the lead car and with a challenging look toward my car. My friend got out of his car and came over to my car with Brutus right by his side sizing me up. I had rolled the window down and that long cold nose was very close to the lower part of the opening. The dog was waiting for some instruction from his master. Then it came in these words. “Now Brutus, this is brother Smith. He will be staying with us for a week. He’s our friend and you must be nice to him!”

Does this sound crazy to you? Well, that dog seemed to understand every word his master said. His tail began to wag as he stepped back as if to say, “come on, Buster, get out. It’s okay!” Believe it or not, I got out without a bit of fear, bent down and put my arm around the dog’s neck. He laid his long nose and face against my face and from that minute until I left, we were bosom buddies! I would go in during the day and he would greet me as if I really belonged there. No matter how dark it was at night, I did not hesitate to call his name and get right out of the car. Here he would come, and I knew I was as safe as I could ever be. I spoiled him some through the week by letting him in the house a few times when he was not supposed to go in, and that just endeared me to him even more.

This is a true story. Now you possibly can see my main point in telling it. It is not just to tell a rather unusual dog story. The main point is taken from the introduction my friend gave the dog: “Now Brutus, this is brother Smith…he’s our friend and you must be nice to him.” As I look around over our brotherhood and observe all the trouble we have among us—hatreds, strife, divisions, petty gossip, slandering, and maligning of characters, I think we need to reintroduce ourselves to each other. “Now brother Smith this is brother Jones. He is our friend. Be nice to him.” We have some real human-Dobermans among us today! They have forgotten that we are brethren. They have forgotten how to love if they ever knew how. They have been completely negative so long all they know how to do is stand and bark, show their teeth, and bite.

The church is the family of God and we are told to “love one another” (1 John 4:7). What if God bared his teeth at us every minute of the day? He loves us. Oh, how much He loves us! He loved us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). He loved us enough to give the greatest gift of all—His Son (John 3:16). This does not argue for compromise. Love will not sell-out the truth. This does not argue against rebuking when we must. Love will rebuke. My point is this: we hear much about love and most of it is a distorted view and definition of what love is. We talk about it and then cut each other to pieces.

Have we forgotten that we are “members of the same body”? We often act like it. What a lesson I learned that night in that back-yard staring into the eyes of a Doberman! “Brutus, this is brother Smith…he is our friend and you must be nice to him!”

Deceased

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526
"They Will Not Give Me Anything to Do"  

W. A. Holley

“They will not give me anything to do.” Those are the words of a brother in Christ. He has been a member of the Lord’s church for many years. We have no reason to doubt his honesty nor his sincerity. His words represent a complaint that is heard by Gospel preachers almost daily. The they in the statement refers to the elders, and, somehow, he has concluded that they do not want him to do anything, because they have not assigned him a special task. He seems to be somewhat disillusioned and seems to want to place the blame for his inactivity on others. “They will not give me anything to do,” he laments.

We appreciate the fact that all Christians must labor in the kingdom of God (Mat. 20:1-16). Certainly, the Lord needs no idlers. We realize that the elders of the Lord’s church are its overseers and that they should endeavor to employ to the fullest extent, the ability or talent of the entire congregation (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 The. 5:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). We also appreciate the fact that our brother wants to be busily employed in the work of the Lord (he says he does), but is the lack of assignment on the part of the elders the real reason for his inactivity? Should he expect the elders to outline every step that he takes? Does he not have the ability to see some things that need to be done, and does he not have enough intelligence and initiative of his own to get on with his work?

The person who says, “They will not give me anything to do” should stop and take an honest inventory of himself. Let him ask himself these questions: “Why am I not doing what I want to do? Is it because I have set my sights too high? Do I insist on doing that which I cannot and refuse to do that which I can? Do I have an unhealthy attitude, ever grumbling and complaining no matter what happens? Am I harsh? Unkind? On good terms or bad terms with others? Have I demonstrated that I am anxious to develop my talents and to increase my knowledge and practice of truth? Am I really interested in finding the place in the kingdom of God where I can serve best? Or am I simply offering excuses, and do not truly want to work for the Master? Is my complaint really this: Since I cannot serve in some high place, I will not serve in a low place! I, therefore, sit back and say: “They will not give me anything to do!”

We believe that the correct answer to these and similar questions will aid us in finding that place where we can serve the Lord best. Let us be honest with ourselves. We might be attempting to hide our unwillingness to shoulder our duties and responsibilities when we cry: “They will not give me anything to do.” Again, it might be that we imagine that we have nothing to do, when, as a matter of fact, we do have assignments (and we know it), but just do not want to work with others in promoting the work of the Lord.

Furthermore, some seem to have the idea that they have nothing to do unless they can have “the chief seats in the synagogue.” They seem to think that they must be the elder, or the preacher, or the song leader, or the teacher, but if they are required to work with and for others, they have nothing to do. It is ridiculous to think that one must have the lead or he has nothing to do. An army composed of generals only would be a very poor army! A

Continued on Page 6
INTRODUCTION

A study of the Psalms is a wonderful study and much needed in our day. Homer Hailey wrote, “The Psalms express the deepest emotions of the human heart.” As such, there is no situation in life for which the Psalms does not provide guidance. It teaches us how to praise Jehovah as well as live for Him. The fifteenth Psalm, written by David as guided by the Holy Spirit, deals with the principles as to how to live.

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? Abide suggests a temporary dwelling place, to sojourn, abide, or stay, but always indicates only for a time or temporary. While tabernacle means “a nomad’s tent” it was more specifically the sacred tent of God which would be put up when the Israelites made camp. When it came time for them to move, the Levites would take it down and carry it upon their shoulders. Dwell means to settle down and abide, or to reside. Holy hill suggests to us the more permanent place of Jerusalem where the temple was built.

The Old Testament presents for our consideration types of those things found in the New Testament. In this typology, the tabernacle represented the church and the temple represented heaven—the permanent dwelling place of God. Thus, the questions asked by David, by inspiration of God, have application to who is a fit subject for membership in the church of Christ, and who shall be a partaker of God’s eternal glory in heaven’s home? This certainly is a marvelous question which deserves our rapt attention. The rest of this Psalm gives us the answer to these important queries.

THE QUESTION

David begins by asking the question: “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” Walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.

THE ANSWER

Walketh Uprightly

Walk is used throughout the Bible for one’s pattern of life and conduct. It indicates one’s pilgrimage through life. Uprightly is to be blameless or innocent. Swanson puts it: pertaining to a person or condition of moral goodness, with a focus of being guiltless and not liable for sin or wrong... pertaining to not having any moral defect.

To walk uprightly would be to live in such a way as to be morally right.

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To walk uprightly would be to live in such a way as to be morally right.

Paul informs us that God’s grace teaches us three things: (1) to deny, (2) to live, and (3) to look.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:11-13).

To walk uprightly one must deny ungodliness and he must deny worldly lust (cf., 1 John 2:15-17), then he must live soberly, righteously, and godly. This is the man who then can look for Christ’s Second Coming because he knows he has that home with God in heaven.

Another way Paul expresses the same thought is that we put off or mortify certain things and we put on other things.

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: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie
not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, long-suffering: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:5-14).

**Worketh Righteousness**

The one who is a fit subject for membership with the faithful and thus for that eternal fellowship with God is one who works righteousness. He recognizes that the lazy and indolent are not the type of person who is right with God. The Lord condemned the one talent man calling him lazy. “His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed” (Mat. 25:26). We are to be workers in the Lord’s kingdom. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1).

However, it is not simply working, but working righteousness. Some are always working evil, instead of righteousness. Notice what Swanson says about righteousness: “The act of doing what is required according to a standard...an act which is proper according to a standard, and not deviant in any way.” The question we are then faced with is: “What is that standard?” The standard is God’s Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist wrote, “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psa. 119:172). Thus, all of God’s commands are right-eousness, but also Paul reveals the same idea to the Romans concerning the Gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

John reveals, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). Thus, to be righteous, as God is righteous, we must do or work righteousness. The one who works righteousness is the one who is in fellowship with God and will receive His blessings. “But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

**Speaks Truth in His Heart**

David now moves to specific characteristics of one whose dwelling place will be with God, and the first thing he deals with is the powerful little member called the tongue. The one who dwells with God realizes that a part of God’s nature is truth. Falsehoods, deceptions, and lies are of Satan (John 8:44). God will not lie. “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent” (1 Sam. 15:29). “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). Thus, He is often spoken of as a God of truth (Deu. 32:4; Psa. 31:5; Isa. 65:16), and His Word is truth (John 17:17; 2 Sam. 7:28; Psa. 19:9; 119:151). Since God is a God of truth, one who dwells with Him must be one of truth also. If he is a person of truth, then when he speaks, he will speak the truth and lie not. “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). Those who do lie will receive condemnation from God (Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15).

This man is also a man who is sincere and there is no hypocrisy in him. What is on his lips is what is on his heart. There is a consistency about him. While he is not going to be tactless (because of his love for others) neither will he say something he does not believe. Adam Clarke writes:

He is a true man; in him there is no false way. He is no man of pretenses; speaking one thing, and meaning another. He professes nothing but what he feels and intends; with him there are no hollow friendships, vain compliments, nor empty professions of esteem, love, regard, or friendship. His mouth speaks nothing but what his heart dictates. His heart, his tongue, and his hand, are all in union. Hypocrisy, guile, and deceit, have no place in his soul.

The man who dwells with God is not self-deceived. This man does not lie to himself. God gives man the responsibility of examining himself. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5). That takes an honest evaluation of oneself; he cannot lie to himself. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to “let no man deceive himself” (1 Cor. 3:18). Each one must be honest with himself.

**Does Not Backbite**

*Backbite* is to be a tale-bearer or to slander someone. The word originates from someone going on foot to spy out or gain information. When being used of the tongue it
thus presents to us a person trampling on or kicking the character of another. Clarke mentions:

The words backbite and backbiter come from the Anglo-Saxon bac, the back, and [A.S.], to bite. How it came to be used in the sense it has in our language, seems at first view unaccountable; but it was intended to convey the treble sense of knavishness, cowardice, and brutality. He is a knave, who would rob you of your good name; he is a coward, that would speak of you in your absence what he dared not to do in your presence; and only an ill-conditioned dog would fly at and bite your back when your face was turned. All these three ideas are included in the term; and they all meet in the detractor and calumniator.

Brother Robert Taylor describes the backbiter by writing:

He refuses to kick about as a football the character of an absent person. This is what the backbiter, the gossiper and the slanderer majors in on an ever-widening scale. Embedded in this term are knavishness, cowardice and brutality. The backbiter is of extremely low breeding; no real character adorns him. He is cowardly in that he fears to say to a person’s face what he says to that person’s back. He is brutal because he maliciously murders or massacres the character of those he disdains (30).

**Does Not Do Evil to His Neighbor**

While the previous characteristic dealt with speaking evil, this one deals with one’s actions. He does not act in an evil way toward others. The original word—translated neighbor—has a meaning of friend or associate and sometimes simply as another or other. Evil is wickedness, mischief, trouble, hurt, or ill. Paul says that the fulfilling of the law is to love one another (Rom. 13:8). When we have love one to another, we will not be doing evil to our neighbor. Instead, we will be practicing the golden rule. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat. 7:12).

**Does Not Take a Reproach Against His Neighbor**

Reproach “in most instances the word is used in the sense of casting scorn” (McComiskey 325). Previously the psalmist noted that we are not to backbite, while here he shows we are not to receive such attacks against those who are near. Neighbor here is different than in the previous statement. This time it deals with personal relationships or kinfolks. Generally, those who accept such backbiting and gossip are swift to spread it to others. If the hearers would refuse to listen there would be no forum for the one who spreads such about others.

Jesus taught us to “take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.” (Mark 4:24). What we hear will affect us as to who we are and what we believe about others. When we fill our minds with garbage about others, it will destroy our love for them. Therefore, we must be careful what we hear.

**Despises a Vile Person**

Vile is one who is a reprobate or has been rejected. Swanson partially defines it as “pertaining to one for which another has feelings of aversion.” Despised (ASV, while the KJV has contemned) is to be considered worthless, to be despicable or despised, to hold in contempt. The one who dwells with God is not going to hold up as exemplary one who does those things which are opposed to God. That one who is an enemy of God because he lives contrary to God’s Word will be despised by the one who follows God.

Often, we get out of focus within our lives because of physical things. We view the rich man and honor him. This is not a new phenomenon as it is seen from James 2:1-9. We desire to be like the great sports star (remember the commercial: “Be like Mike”) and honor them. Hollywood turns many a head with all their glamor and glitz. Yet, these are often the most degenerate, morally perverted people in the world.

Smoking, drinking, immodesty, immorality, and worldliness of all sorts are encouraged by our society. These types of wickedness are what is expected of so many today, but especially our young people. The consequences of this lifestyle are never presented. The Christian will detest these and other sins and those who engage in them. The Christian’s fellowship is with the righteous, not the wicked. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

There is also the false teacher that so many will flock to because of their smooth and fair speeches. Often, the defense is along the lines that they are converting so many. Sadly though, they are not converting anyone to Christ. Inspiration teaches us that we are not to even bid false teachers a greeting (God speed) lest we become partakers of their evil deeds (2 John 9-11). We should never uphold the false teacher.

**Honors Those Who Fear God**

The one who loves God will love those who fear God. While fear can have the meaning of being afraid, it generally carries the idea of a reverential fear or respect shown to a superior. Probably within the context it is dealing with righteous behav-
ior. Andrew Bowling would write, “It is plausible that this usage of ‘to fear’ as a virtual synonym for righteous living or piety grew out of viewing ‘fear’...as the motivation which produced righteous living.” We should uphold that one who is living a faithful life. We should show that person honor or glorify him. Yet, many often speak evil of those who are righteous. Do you roast the preacher or the song leader on the way home? Do you have the elders for lunch? We often witness those who are righteous being torn asunder by unjust attacks, and then we wonder why young people are leaving the Lord’s church.

In this and the previous characteristic, David is showing that the person who dwells with God is the one who centers on character, not outward circumstances. Those outward circumstances are of little importance to this person. Riches, power, influence, money, or the opposites of all these things mean nothing to the Christian. If one is living a righteous life, the Christian glorifies or honors him. This is the type of person the Christian is going to fellowship. The one who dwells with God makes those who live for God his friends, not those in the world (Jam. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

Swears to His Own Hurt Without Changing

This is a man who keeps his word, even when keeping his word is harmful to himself or the result will be a loss for him. He does not need the courts to force him to keep his word, for his word is his bond. He takes to heart what Jesus said, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mat. 5:37). Robert Taylor points out:

Obviously, this psalmist is not speaking about one who vows to do wrong. To carry out an evil vow only compounds the problem as in the case with Herod Antipas, Herodias, Salome and John the Baptist (Mark 6:16-28) (30).

One person illustrated this principle to me by using the example of selling some land. The seller made a deal to sell his land for a certain amount. A little later another buyer offered him a substantial more amount of money. Many would break the deal with the first to get the additional money. The God-approved man will keep his word even if he must make a personal sacrifice to keep it.

Does Not Practice Usury

Among Webster’s definitions of usury is: “an unconscionable or exorbitant rate or amount of interest; specifically: interest in excess of a legal rate charged to a borrower for the use of money.” Swanson gives this definition:

interest, i.e., a charge for borrowing money as a gain to the borrower, with a focus on the improper, demanding way that the borrower may exact repayment, note: when the interest is considered excessive, translate “usury.”

Robert Taylor points out: “Usury here derives from a Hebrew term that means ‘to bite’” (31). Adam Clarke presses this point by saying:

The word neshch, which we translate usury, comes from nashach, to bite as a serpent; and here must signify that biting or devouring usury, which ruins the man who has it to pay.

While it was forbidden for the Israelite to loan money with interest to a poor Israelite (Exo. 22:25), charging interest was not inherently wrong. The lord in the parable of the talents even tells the man given one talent that he should have put his money to the exchangers so he could have his with interest (Mat. 25:27). Charging an interest rate on loans is not wrong but taking advantage of others is sinful. The man who dwells with God will not be like a money-sucking loan-shark. The man who has the right to reside with God is the man who is fair and honest in his dealings with others. This is also pointed out in the next point which the psalmist gives.

Takes Not a Reward Against the Innocent

The one who is approved of God and thus dwelling with Him will not take a bribe against the innocent. The Law of Moses forbade taking bribes to put an innocent person to death: “Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen” (Deu. 27:25).

The abuse of jurisprudence and the miscarriage of justice was of such frequent occurrence that it is especially mentioned in the ancient code of Hebrew law, the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 23:1-3, 6-8). This law is taken up again in Dt. 16:19. In fact the Old Testament abounds with allusions to the corruption and venality of the judicial bench (Lev. 19:15; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 17:23; Is. 1:23; 5:23; Am. 5:12; Mic. 3:11; 7:3; Zeph. 3:3) (Fensham 1166).

The righteous man is a man of justice and integrity, not someone who is for sale to the highest bidder. The Law also stated:

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous (Deu. 16:19).

Many of our politicians should take heed what God stated here concerning the taking of gifts blinding the eyes. The God approved man will not sell truth for anything. “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and un-
understanding” (Pro. 23:23).

**CONCLUSION**

The one who lives in this way will never be moved. He must be a doer of these things. James states, “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therefore, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jam. 1:25). There has always been continued stress upon man’s doing or acting upon God’s Word. Upon man’s doing God’s Word, he will then be blessed by God. Jesus taught that the one who has entrance into the kingdom of heaven is the one who does the will of the Father (Mat. 7:21–23).

Jesus also stated that the one who heard his sayings and does them is a wise man:

*Continued from Page 1*

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In the light of these passages, how can anyone say that he has nothing to do? “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Deceased

A Reminder:
Among the items Paul lists as being contrary “to the doctrine which is according to godliness” is “evil surmisings” (1 Tim. 6:3-4). In the ADL 2001 lecture book (208) we find these words which should serve as a good reminder for all of us:

Not all suppositions are evil, but those in the context of 1 Timothy 6 are clearly defined as such.

Hence, evil surmisings are unfounded suspicions and uncharitable assumptions toward our brethren. How many times have we been suspicious of the motives and intents of our brethren, and without any factual foundation for doing so? “It is always very hard to do justice to the motives of one who seems to us to be living in sin, or to believe it to be possible that he acts from right motives” (Barnes Notes). May we ever remember that love will cause us to think the best first, and not the worst (1 Cor. 13:7). This is not to say that we should wear blinders and ignore those who are clearly documented to be false teachers. It is to say that we should believe the best about someone until there is clear evidence for believing otherwise! (Emphasis added.)

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