

Worldliness

Michael Hatcher, Editor

1999 Bellview Lectures

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PREFACE

God demands that men live pure lives. “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). Paul instructed Timothy: “Neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). Yet, today it seems as if living pure lives is increasingly difficult. The world is full of evil and seemingly growing worse daily. The leadership in this nation has also hindered the situation. The revelations of the President’s actions and the inaction of the senate have put a stamp of approval on worldliness. All types of worldliness are being accepted as normal. What happens in the world soon makes it way into the Lord’s church; thus worldliness is now seen in many churches. Many Christians, being desensitized by the wickedness of the world, no longer recognize worldliness. Therefore, we saw the need to have a series of studies dealing with this great evil. We express profound appreciation to the men who are speaking and writing for this book. Their soundness and stand against the lust of this world (1 John 2:15-17) is the reason they have been selected. We commend each for their time in preparing and delivering of these lessons.

Appreciation is also conveyed to the elders of this congregation: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancliff. Without these men this lectureship would not exist. These men have the foresight needed as overseers of the Bellview congregation and are sound in the faith. This congregation and the church universal are greatly blessed by their work. Without a congregation which will follow the lead of faithful men, the work they set out will not be accomplished. Thus, thanks are also expressed to the members of this congregation who work so diligently in the lectureship and the publication of this book. Many spend a great amount of time and money to ensure the success of the lectures. They do so, not to receive a corruptible crown but an incorruptible one (1 Cor. 9:25), that fades not away, reserved in heaven for them (1 Pet. 1:4).

A special thanks is extended to Gary Summers who did much of the proof-reading and for his suggestions. We want to thank him for taking the time out of his busy schedule and using his ability to aid in producing this book. Thanks is also given to the secretary (Denise Mowery) for her countless hours. We now send this book forth in the prayer that it will help precious souls to avoid the pitfalls of *Worldliness*.

Michael Hatcher, Director
April 2, 1999

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LIVING SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY

John W. Moore



John Moore is a graduate of Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas (B.S., and M.Ed.), and he has studied in Israel at Jerusalem University College, where he earned the Certificate in Historical Geography. A specialist in New Testament Studies, he has conducted further graduate work in the field of New Testament textual studies, as well as in the Greek language at Austin Theological Seminary and at the graduate school at Abilene Christian University.

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He currently serves as an instructor in the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas, a position he has held since May, 1995. John is a frequent speaker at gatherings of Christian young people and is a speaker on lectureships throughout the brotherhood. In addition, he holds several gospel meetings each year.

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INTRODUCTION

Titus is a wonderful letter from an experienced gospel preacher to his son in the faith. After leaving Titus on the island of Crete, the apostle Paul penned this letter instructing this young evangelist in his work and life as a gospel preacher. Titus had been given the divine mandate to set the church in order (Tit. 1:5). He must do so by ordaining elders (Tit. 1:5), correcting the unsound (Tit. 1:13), speaking sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1), and putting the brethren in remembrance to perform every good work (Tit. 3:1). Titus is also instructed to command various groups (e.g., the aged men and women, young men and women, and servants) to adhere to the Christian principles which govern the various stations in life (Tit. 2). Among each of these stations, the principle of moral purity and godliness is demanded.

These demands are revealed through the gospel of Christ, known as “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Tit. 2:11).¹

The grace of God is an “unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15). It is God’s mercy being granted to a totally unworthy people who alone are unable to save themselves. Apart from God’s kindness and love, man would be forever separated from the blessings of heaven; he would be without hope and alienated from Christ. This grace is bestowed freely upon all who obey the gospel (Tit. 2:11; Rom. 6:17-18). Whether they are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, light-complexioned or dark-complexioned, tall or short, big or small, it makes no difference to God, for He is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11). **All** have the opportunity to benefit from the grace of God.

The grace of God, however, does not exclude obedience to the approved law of God. God has done His part by providing a sacrifice for sin and a plan by which man can acquire the benefits of the eternal sacrifice. Man must do his part through faith and works to be justified (Jam. 2:14-26). He must accept and obey the terms of pardon whereby it can then be said that he or she is a child of God. As children of God, men and women must walk in the light of God’s Word, confess sin, repent, and pray to **remain** in the grace of God (1 John 1:7f; Acts 8:22). Truly, God’s grace saves the sinner, but it also *teaches* (Tit. 2:12) that **man must not be worldly**. Can it be said any plainer? God’s grace requires, expects, demands that man **do** something to be a beneficiary of the blessings of salvation. God’s grace requires a denial of all that is **ungodly** and a demonstration of that which is sober, righteous, and godly (Tit. 2:12).

Those who are recipients of God’s grace must live according to a higher standard. They are called to a nobler purpose as a “peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14). Having obeyed the gospel (i.e., through faith, repentance, confession, and water baptism), the believer is to live a new and different life. Paul said, “If any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). If we are risen with Christ, we should “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). Those who have been made alive in Christ must walk in “good works” (Eph. 2:10). As living stones of God’s house (1 Pet. 2:5), the Christian is to show “forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”

(1 Pet. 2:9). The child of God is to be a holy person with peculiar convictions (1 Pet. 2:9). His or her mind is to be renewed by the transforming power of the gospel instead of being conformed to the world and its fleshly lusts, which war on the soul (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:11). His or her life is to be characterized by the light in contrast to the satanic forces of darkness. Their lives should reflect true holiness as they “walk worthy of the vocation” by which they are called (Eph. 4:1). Their calling is different and vastly greater than any human endeavor. It requires first and foremost a life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness.

DEFINING SOBRIETY, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GODLINESS

Sobriety:

“Sober” translates the Greek *sophronos*, which belongs to a group of words with similar roots which have the meaning of “reasonable, sensible, and prudent.”² These synonyms are, in the Greek language, largely derived from extra-biblical literature and thus do not entirely represent the full concept of sobriety, though they come close. The stem *sophronos* is found in Mark 5:15, Luke 8:35, Acts 26:25, Romans 12:3, 2 Corinthians 5:13, 1 Timothy 2:9, 15, 3:12, 2 Timothy 1:7, Titus 1:8, Titus 2:2, 4-6, 12, and 1 Peter 4:7; it expresses the attitudes of sound mind, self-discipline, self-control, sensibility, and rationality. Living soberly, therefore, means that one should have his/her life under control of the mind.³ The desires of the flesh, such as “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), are constantly warring on our souls by tempting us to indulge in the flesh. The mind must be in control of the body so as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (cf., Gal. 5:16f), but the mind must be governed by the Word of God. Paul wrote:

The weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity **every thought** to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Controlling the mind is essential to living the Christian life, and the mind can only be controlled when it has been trained and exercised by the Word of God.

The Christian must be in control of his/her mind. Peter wrote that we should “gird up the loins” of our minds (1 Pet. 1:13). Here the imagery is clear if we think of a long, flowing garment of the first century hanging down to the ankles. On a journey or during manual labor (e.g., washing the disciples’ feet, cf., John 13), a man might bind his garment up and out of the way of his feet so as not to be tripped or ruin the clothing. The garment was tied instead of loosed. It was “gathered up” instead of flowing. Similarly, the mind must be girded or bound. It must not be loose or free to think anything it wants. The thoughts of the mind are to be harnessed and brought under the control of God’s will. The mind must possess pure and wholesome thoughts that are characterized by justice, truth, honesty, virtue, and goodness (Phi. 4:8).

What a person **thinks** is exceedingly important. The Bible says, “As he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he” (Pro. 23:7). Whatever one harbors in his heart will most likely be acted upon. Jesus taught that adultery comes when we lust; murder, when we hate; and theft, when we covet (Mark 7:21f). If, therefore, behavior is the result of our thoughts, it behooves every Christian then to think on good things. Living soberly demands that our thoughts be controlled and influenced by the right kind of information, stimuli, etc. If we read, hear, and see the filth of the world, our minds will be tainted and desensitized to sin and all ungodliness. I realize that on some occasions we cannot escape hearing curse words in the workplace or occasionally witnessing immorality, but we can and must prevent our lives from being inundated by evil. The Christian must not willingly subject his or her mind to immoral behavior or speech. The more evil we hear by means of the television, books, newspapers, evil companions, etc., the less likely we will be to blush at our sins. Like the Jews of the pre-captivity in Jeremiah 6, we can also become calloused to sin so as not to be ashamed about unrighteousness. We, too, can fail to see the problems and proclaim, “Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace” (Jer. 6:14). We behave on the basis of what we think. We *think* on the things we see, hear, and read. It follows then that if we desire to be in control of our minds (i.e., to be sober), we must absorb and embrace that which is good and true.

The differentiation between good and evil is done on the basis of a sober mind. As mentioned earlier, sobriety involves rationality and

sensibility. Being able to determine what is right or wrong is dependent upon a mind that is spiritually rational and sensible. This spiritual rationality can only come from a properly exercised mind. In Hebrews 5:12-14, we learn that minds are to be exercised by the Word of God. One can never be sober without a proper training in God's Word. The study of God's Word will mold and shape our thinking, thus enabling us to make proper decisions and choices. Therefore, regular Bible study is absolutely essential to thinking soberly.

The meaning of *sobriety* is also stressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Religious leaders during the Lord's public ministry were puffed up about their religious heritage and demonstrated this by an outward manifestation of religiosity. They were more concerned about how they looked and what people **thought** than with a true **inward** character of righteousness. Jesus called their religion hypocrisy, for they were white and garnished on the outside, but like a tomb on the inside—they were dead. Inwardly they were full of extortion and excess. In Matthew 5, 6, 7, 15, 22, and 23, Jesus stressed the essential nature of proper thinking. He emphasized that our minds be controlled, disciplined, and rational. He demanded that all believers stop the adultery and murder taking place in their hearts and to practice a righteousness which is pure and deeply imbedded in the inner part of a man (Mat. 5:20). Indeed, a child of God must be sober. He or she must be in control of their thoughts, making certain they are spiritually sensible and pure.

Righteously

Like *sober*, *righteously* is an adverb. Adverbs qualify or modify verbs, and in the context of Titus 2:12, the verb *live* is qualified by *righteously*. The Christian life (i.e., the behavior and manner of an individual) should be qualified or characterized by righteousness. *Righteousness*, in early Hebrew, had the meaning of "straight" or "right." "The corresponding Greek term is *dikaïos*, and in Greek society referred to that which is in accordance with law or social norm."⁴ Homer⁵ used it with regard to

one whose behavior fitted into the framework of his society and who fulfilled his rightful obligations toward the gods and his fellowmen, his observance of such obligations serving to differentiate him from the unrighteous.⁶

In the New Testament, *dikaïos* is variously translated depending upon the context and part of speech. English terms such as “righteous, just, equity, acquittal, and innocence” are used by translators and expositors to convey the meaning of *dikaïos*. In rabbinic Judaism, the concept of righteousness was completely wedded to the “importance and essential nature of keeping the law.”⁷ The Pharisees in the New Testament represented this kind of righteousness as per their strict concern and observance for even the *small* things of the law (cf., Mat. 23:23). Their righteousness, however, was on the part of many, only an **outward** appearance of righteousness (Mat. 23:28). While they were greatly concerned with observers knowing of their righteousness, they failed in true righteousness on two accounts: (1) They did not possess an inner righteousness of a pure heart shaped by truth and love; and (2) they went about to establish “their own righteousness” (Rom. 10:3; cf., Phi. 3:9) by legislating and observing man-made traditions. Consequently, they did not submit to the righteousness of God (cf., Rom. 10:3). The Pharisees “omitted the weightier *matters* of the law,” such as “judgment, mercy, and faith” (Mat. 23:23) and thus failed to be **truly** righteous.

The righteousness expected under the New Testament, and by Jews before the testament went into force, is to be a righteousness based on God’s terms. True righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Mat. 5:20). In the gospel accounts, the writers reveal the Lord’s true intent regarding righteousness. It is God’s righteousness which must first be sought: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and **his** righteousness” (Mat. 6:33; cf., Jam. 1:20). A man-made system of righteousness will not bring about God’s grace, care, or mercy. Today, there are many religious groups who have established a system of laws, creeds, faith, etc., which are foreign to the Bible. These groups are teaching multitudes upon multitudes that one can become righteous by merely believing in Jesus or by submission to a catechism or by an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament system of righteousness involves many important elements. These elements can be summarized as follows: (1) The Source of Righteousness; (2) the Servants of Righteousness; and (3) The Son and Righteousness. First, to understand the **system of righteousness**, man must know of the **Source of righteousness**. Jesus revealed in His intercessory prayer that God is righteous (John 17:25).

Indeed, the Bible is replete with references about God's righteousness. He, above all of creation, is truly righteous. Observe the following Scriptures about God's righteousness:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments (Psa. 119:137).

The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works (Psa. 145:17).

Not only is God righteous, but His judgments and statutes are righteous. Consider the following biblical truths:

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments (Psa. 119:7).

Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments (Psa. 119:137).

Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever (Psa. 119:160).

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 (2 The. 1:5).

Truly, God is righteous. His righteousness and His plan to make **man** righteous is revealed in the Bible. The Source of righteousness, God, has given us the informational source by which man can become righteous. The psalmist said that "thy commandments *are* righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). In other words, the means to achieve righteousness is to be found in the Sacred Text. Remember what Paul told Timothy: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness**" (2 Tim. 3:16). The source informing man about true righteousness is to be found in God's Word. For man to become righteous, he or she must first study God's system of righteousness revealed to man through the apostles and prophets by means of God's

Spirit. The Holy Spirit, known as the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13), revealed the written Word. This Word “will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Man cannot know righteousness apart from the law of God. We are completely dependent upon God’s revelation for our becoming righteous. Thus, **God is the Source** of all righteousness.

The second element of righteousness involves what men must do to become righteous; or, as Paul says, to become “**servants of righteousness**” (Rom. 6:18). No sinner will ever become righteous apart from the “**law of faith**” (Rom. 3:27). After having heard the gospel, a man can then believe unto righteousness (Rom. 10:10). However, *unto* differs from *into* and thus a man is not made righteous by simply believing. If one is nigh *unto* death, he is not yet dead but close to it. Similarly, one who believes *unto* Christ is near to salvation but not yet righteous. Righteousness results when one believes and obeys. For example, Paul reveals that the recipients of the Roman epistle became righteous **when** they “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered” (Rom. 6:17). Not until they **obeyed** the gospel (i.e., faith, repentance, confession, and water baptism) were these individuals considered righteous. They became righteous because they had been buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). Occasionally, some object to this conclusion, believing that faith alone will appropriate the righteousness of God. These individuals often cite Romans 4:3 as proof for their assertions: “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”

It is true that Abraham was counted righteous when he believed God, but this passage says nothing about faith only. Abraham’s faith was an active, obedient faith. He was not counted righteous until he acted upon what God said. For example, on one of the three different occasions in which Abraham was pronounced righteous, it is said that this pronouncement came “**when** he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar” (Jam. 2:21). It is only through faith and works of God that a person can be declared righteous (cf., Jam. 2:14-26). “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). *Justified* in this reference is translated from the Greek word *dikaïos*. This is the same word from which righteousness is translated.

Once an individual has become a servant of righteousness, he or she must realize that the Christian is to **work righteousness** in order

to be accepted with God (Acts 10:35). Working righteousness is an identifying mark of one who is born of God (1 John 2:29). He that “doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). We therefore conclude, that to maintain our righteous status, we must do the will of God. The new man in Christ is “created in righteousness and true holiness” and must therefore put away all uncleanness (Eph. 4:24f; cf., all of Ephesians 4). He has been created to walk in good works and to be an instrument of righteousness (Eph. 2:10; Rom. 6:13, respectively). He must follow righteousness and be filled with its fruits (1 Tim. 6:11; Phi. 1:11, respectively).

Further, to maintain righteousness, the child of God must arm himself with the “breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14). This is an implied reference to arming ourselves with the Word of God. The sum of God’s Word is righteousness (Psa. 119:172), and the Christian must know these sacred words to perform the works of righteousness. We would never know how to act righteously apart from the Word of God. Herein lies the information about sowing the righteous fruits of peace, longsuffering, pure speech, clean living, wholesome thoughts, loving parents, faithful spouses, honest employers, obedient children, faithful stewards, and watchful shepherds. If a Christian will study, rightly divide, and obey the Word of God, then he can be approved of God (2 Tim. 2:15). Conversely, if one does not arm himself or herself with the implements of righteousness, then he or she will be doomed to a life of ungodliness and worldly lust. The acceptance of materialism, humanism, and postmodernism will be their guide. The sinful practices of partaking of alcohol and other drugs, homosexuality, covetousness, gambling, lying, dancing, gossip, pornography, hedonism, denominationalism, abortion, euthanasia, fornication, theft, adultery, etc., will permeate the life of the one who is ignorant of the Word of God. True righteousness demands that we renounce these vices and philosophies and put them far away from our sight (Pro. 4:14-15). We must not walk “in the counsel of the ungodly,” nor stand “in the way of sinners,” nor sit “in the seat of the scornful” (Psa. 1:1). Our delight is to be “in the law of the LORD,” upon which we must “meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2).

The third element of righteousness must involve our recognition and admiration for *the Son and righteousness*. The Son of God is a great example of righteousness. He both taught and lived righteous-

ness. His righteousness was first witnessed by man when as a young boy Jesus was going about His heavenly Father's business as He conversed with the scribes at the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2). As He grew, the Lord "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). The Lord's righteous behavior was once again demonstrated just before the inauguration of His public ministry. On the banks of the Jordan River, Jesus found John the baptist, who was preparing the way for Christ by calling people to repentance and announcing that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Mat. 3:2). There, before John and his disciples, the Lord was baptized so as "to fulfil all righteousness" (Mat. 3:15). As a Jew, Jesus lived under the Mosaic economy and was thus required, at the command of the true prophet, to be baptized. Jesus was obedient to the prophetic message and thereby obedient to God (cf., Heb. 5:8-9). His life as a whole was one of righteousness. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi. 2:8). In all things, He was sinless and perfect. Not even deceit could be heard from His wholesome lips (1 Pet. 2:22). Indeed, the Lord "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity," and therefore He was given a throne forever and "a sceptre of righteousness" (Heb. 1:8-9).

Realizing that the Lord is righteous and that we should walk "even as he walked" (1 John 2:6), *our* lives should reflect and exude righteousness. The Lord was courageous, pure, loving, convicted, sincere, and sinless. He taught the importance and necessity of true righteousness. If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we will strive to maintain a righteousness that comes from God.

Godly

"Godly" is used to translate the Greek word *eusebeo*. Its most basic meaning has reference to being pious or devout. W. E. Vine says that it "denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well pleasing to Him."⁸ The Greeks often used this word to refer to deference displayed to a sublime and exalted being.⁹ The stem *seb* from *eusebeo* "meant originally to step back from someone or something, to maintain a distance" because of fear or reverence.¹⁰ It connotes that one should step back from his own selfish pride and desires, and reverence almighty God in all that we do or say. Indeed, all of creation should be aware of their Creator and live life out of respect, fear, and love for the exalted and sublime

God of heaven and earth. This is not to say that all one does in life is worship, but rather that the whole of one's life should be characterized by reverence and respect. If one is said to be godly (pious), then we are simply stating that **as a whole, or in a general way**, our life reflects the characteristics of true religion.

Piety must be based on truth. In Acts 17, it is recorded that the apostle Paul, while waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, confronted the philosophers and religionists of the Athenian community on Mars Hill. There, Paul exposed their idolatrous worship and ignorance of the one true living God. He made the following remarks: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23).

Worship in this context means reverence or piety; it is the Greek word *eusebeo*. Thus, their professed reverence, by means of an erected altar, was vain and meaningless. This suggests and demands that piety or godliness should be based on truth. One cannot live acceptably before God if he or she is ignorant of His laws and precepts. Jesus revealed this truth in John 4:24 when He said that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." Whether it be an act of worship or a specified element of religious service, reverence must be predicated on an awareness and knowledge of God's Word. To worship or demonstrate true godliness, one must do so on the basis of truth. Jesus said that His Father's Word was truth (John 17:17); and we, therefore, conclude that godliness must reflect a knowledge of God's Word.

Piety also involves several important attitudes and behaviors. In Acts 10:2, Cornelius was said to be *devout*. *Devout* comes from the same Greek word found in Titus 2:12. Evidently, Cornelius, a Gentile, followed what Jews call today the Noahide laws. As a Gentile, he practiced the basic principles of piety under the patriarchal dispensation. How was his piety evident? His piety was demonstrated by: (1) his attitude (i.e., he feared God); (2) his practice (i.e., he gave much alms to the poor); and (3) his worship (i.e., he prayed to God always)—Acts 10:2. Similarly, our godliness must be evident by our attitude of respect for God and His Word, by our doing authorized acts of service, and by our worshiping God in a scriptural manner.

Further, piety will save our souls. One cannot go to heaven without living a godly life. Paul, by inspiration of the Spirit, revealed to us this truth when He wrote:

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).

Paul also revealed that when we “live **godly** in Christ Jesus,” we will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). However, we must always remember that if we live godly and thus suffer persecution, God will deliver us, for He “knoweth how to deliver the godly” (2 Pet. 2:9).

CONCLUSION

The sin of worldliness is a constant problem facing the church. Obviously, during the first century the church fought vigorously against the immorality and licentiousness that tempted the brethren. Today, these battles continue. As long as Satan remains the prince of this world, there will be temptations and those that fall prey to his temptations. As faithful children of God, we must not allow him to gain the upper hand. We ourselves must live soberly, righteously, and godly. We must call upon our brethren to be a holy people, zealous of good works. We must remind ourselves that all that we see around us will one day be dissolved and melt with a fervent heat (2 Pet. 3). Considering this, “what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness?” (2 Pet. 3:11). The answer is clear. We must embrace and abide in the teachings of God, “For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:24-25a).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 3:501.

³Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 654.

⁴Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 952.

⁵Homer, *Odyssey*, pp. 13, 209.

⁶Brown, 3:352.

⁷Ibid., 3:358.

⁸W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981), p. 162.

⁹Brown, 2:94.

¹⁰Ibid., 2:91.

DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible places a tremendous amount of importance on the world and our relationship to it, not because it is conducive to Christian living but because it is an extremely dangerous enemy (Jam. 4:4).¹ It has therefore become tremendously important for the Christian to understand the world and what the Bible teaches about it. We are informed by reputable lexicons that *kosmos*, translated “world”, has passed through several significations, such as “ornament,” “arrangement,” “adornment,” as well as “the sum total of the material universe.” There is therefore an abundance of evidence to show that the *kosmos*, the world, is “that external framework of things in which man lives and moves, which exists for him and of which he constitutes the moral centre.”² It is to the Christian’s advantage to recognize that the world has its cares (Mat. 13:22); its sons (Luke 16:8); its rulers (1 Cor. 2:6, 8); its wisdom (1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6); its fashion (Rom. 12:2); its character (Gal. 1:4); and its god (2 Cor. 4:4). The word *worldly*, which appears in Titus 2:12, is used in an ethical sense. In the King James Version the passage is rendered: “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” In the American Standard it is:

“instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.” “Denying” is the translation of *arnesamenoī* which Berry renders as “having denied.”³ If this is the case, then the denial of which Paul speaks is not something yet to be done, but something that has already been accomplished. The thought would then be: “Having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly.” Nestle renders *arnesamenoī* as “denying.”⁴ Dean Alford suggests that *arnesamenoī* should be translated

denying, not “having denied...” *Arnesamenoī* is, as so often, not prior to, but contemporaneous with...The whole life being summed up...*Arnesamenoī* must be so rendered, as to extend over all that sum, not as if it represented some definite act of abnegation anterior to it all.⁵

At any rate, the process of denial must be contemporaneous with our living in this world. As we live in this world, we must at the same time, be denying the ungodly and worldly lusts which are so much a part of it.

What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity today? Atheism? No, it is the abuse and mis-use of Christianity...It is not, therefore, unusual that a skeptical world observing Christians as they drink socially, lie, curse, and give themselves over to licentious living should denounce the standard that supposedly brought on such a condition and encourage time-saving theologians to provide a substitute. Even in the Lord’s church some have assumed that the truth has failed in its influence upon the world and have substituted a social gospel which neither elevates man spiritually nor pleases God.⁶

The obligation of this chapter is to affirm that the denial of ungodly and worldly lusts accompanies sober, righteous, and godly living. It is impossible to practice the latter without a perpetual denial of the former. In harmony with the lectureship theme this year, which is *Worldliness*, this chapter will deal with “Denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts.”

TEXTUAL DEFINITION

Word Origin

Deny comes from the Latin prefix *de*—(completely) + *negare* (to refuse, say no), which also gives us *negate* and *negative*.⁷ Deny involves “contradict, disavow, disclaim, refute.”⁸ *Deny* means “refuse, disallow, withhold from.”⁹ It also means “refuse to acknowledge, not

recognize; contradict, declare untrue.”¹⁰ New Testament Christianity cannot be lived without paying a price, but this should not come as a surprise since we often measure the value of a thing according to the price we pay for it. Christianity is valuable because it demands that we rid ourselves of things which are detrimental to our souls. Such things as ungodliness and worldly lusts must be denied because they are sinful, unprofitable, and destructive. The apostle Peter put the matter in perfect perspective when he encouraged abstinence from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). This point will be more fully developed later.

Biblical Definition

Deny, according to Vine, is from *arneomai* which

signifies (a) to say...not, to contradict, e.g., [“And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, *even* Jesus. But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them. But he again denied it. And after a little while again they that stood by said to Peter, of a truth thou art *one* of them; for thou art a Galilaean.”] Mark 14:70; John 1:20; 18:25, 27; 1 John 2:22; (b) to deny by way of disowning a person, as, e.g., the Lord Jesus as Master, e.g., [“But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven”] Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9; John 13:38...(c) to deny oneself, either in a good sense, by disregarding one’s own interests, Luke 9:23, or in a bad sense, to prove false to oneself, to act quite unlike oneself...

Aparneomai a strengthened form of No. 1, with *apo*, from, prefixed (Lat., *abnego*), means (a) to deny utterly, to abjure, to affirm that one has no connection with a person, as in Peter’s denial of Christ.¹¹

“And he said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). “Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Mat. 26:34-35).

UNGODLINESS

Ungodliness is simply a failure in our duties toward God. An ungodly person is one who does not revere God; a person given over

to fleshly pursuits. In fact, the ungodly withholds from God what is His rightful due. The Gentiles, who lived antecedently to the gospel dispensation, withheld from God two tremendously important things which were rightfully His, viz., they (1) exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and (2) worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Paul said that “law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners” (1 Tim. 1:9). Peter says, “And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18). Lawlessness is disregard for, or defiance of, God’s laws. Ungodliness is the same towards God’s Person. As Trench points out:

The *asebes* and the *diakios* [ungodliness and righteousness] are constantly set over against one another (thus Gen. xviii. 23), as the two who wage the great warfare between light and darkness, right and wrong, of which God has willed that this earth of ours should be the scene.¹²

“The word ungodliness in Titus 2:12, means all that would be included under the word impiety; that is, all failure in the performance of our proper duties towards God.”¹³ Paul says to the Romans: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). To deny ungodliness is to renounce all connection with sin. Peter said, “Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1 Pet. 2:1). The denial of ungodliness would also involve denial of the sinful lusts of the flesh. “Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). The denial of ungodliness begins in the heart, and if it is rejected here, it will not be practiced in deed.

(a) Ungodliness includes impiety, blasphemy, and infidelity. (b) It includes all living without relation to God, whether we are blasphemers or not. Thus a man may be ungodly who seeks his own pleasures, or distinction, or happiness in the world. (c) It implies the deeper enmity of the heart to God (Rom. 8:7). (3) It is the denial of worldly lusts; including the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and vain glory of life—“all that is in the world”—which embody the enmity to God. Thus it denies (a) sensual lusts (2 Tim. 2:22); (b) the inordinate desire of worldly things, which may be lawful in themselves.¹⁴

The object of the loving discipline of our Father in heaven is that we, having done with those things in life which are offensive or dishonor-

able to God, having put aside as worthless all inordinate desires for the things of this world—all those things which exclusively belong to this life and have nothing to do with the life to come—having denied all this, that we should live as righteous men the remainder of our lives here.¹⁵

All things contrary to God; whatever would lead us to doubt his being, deny any of his essential attributes; his providence or government of the world, and his influence on the souls of men. Every thing, also, which is opposed to his true worship; theoretical and practical atheism, deism, and irreligion in general.¹⁶

Consists, not only in denying the existence of God, but in denying his perfections, his government of the world, and the retributions of a future state. Also, it consists in neglecting to worship God; in worshipping him by images; in blasphemy, or speaking disrespectfully of his providence, in perjury; in profaning the name of God by cursing and swearing; and in disregarding the manifestation which he hath made of his will in the gospel revelation.¹⁷

Jude 7-19

Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed. Woe unto them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever. And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage. But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; That they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly

lusts. These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

WORLDLY LUST

“Lust” is the translation of the word *epithumia*, which, according to Trench, includes “the whole world of active lusts and desires, all to which *the sarx* [flesh], as the seat of desire and of the natural appetites, impels.”¹⁸ Thus we have *kaken epithumian* (evil desire, Col. 3:5); *sarkikon epithumion* (fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. 2:11); *neoterikas epithumias* (youthful lusts, 2 Tim. 2:22); *anontoi kai blaberei epithumias* (foolish and hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. 6:9); *kosmikas epithumias*, (worldly lusts, Titus 2:12); *epithumia miasmou* (lust of defilement, 2 Pet. 2:10); *anthropon epithumia*, (lusts of men, 1 Pet. 4:2); *epithumias apates*, (lusts of deceit, Eph. 4:22); *epithumia tes sarkos*; *epithumia ton ophthalumon*, (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, 1 John 2:16). In none of these references is the word *epithumia* used in a good sense. Like ungodliness, worldly lusts must be denied.

REASONS FOR DENYING UNGODLINESS

AND WORLDLY LUST

War Against the Soul

Ungodliness and worldly lusts must be denied, not only because they are sinful, but because they “war” against the soul. The lusts of the flesh are not compatible with the needs of the spirit. There is extreme opposition between the two. The latter is willing, but the former is weak (Mat. 26:41). These two entities can only be understood and dealt with as God’s Word instructs and guides us. Paul, the apostle, put this matter into perfect perspective: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12). Reign is from the Greek *basileueteo* which is a present

imperative from *basileuo* meaning “to be king, to rule as king.” Sin must not be allowed to be king, or to rule as king in our lives. “Sin is regarded as a sovereign...who demands the military service of its subjects, levys their quota of arms...and gives them their soldier’s-pay of death.”¹⁹ As one commentator put it: “The word ‘war’ implies active aggression, not simply a state of antagonism.”²⁰ “So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13). Concerning the lusts that war against the soul, Albert Barnes remarked:

The meaning is, that indulgence in these things makes war against the nobler faculties of the soul; against the conscience, the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the exercise of a pure imagination. Comp. Notes on Gal. 5:17. There is not a faculty of the mind, however brilliant in itself, which will not be ultimately ruined by indulgence in the carnal propensities of our nature. The effect of intemperance on the noble faculties of the soul is well known; and alas, there are too many instances in which the light of genius, in those endowed with splendid gifts, at the bar, in the pulpit, and in the senate, is extinguished by it, to need a particular description. But there is one vice preeminently, which prevails all over the heathen world, (Comp. Notes on Rom. 1:27-29,) and extensively in Christian lands, which more than all others, blunts the moral sense, pollutes the memory, defiles the imagination, hardens the heart, and sends a withering influence through all the faculties of the soul.²¹

MacKnight remarks:

As sojourners and travellers [sic] abstain. The settled inhabitants of a country are anxious to acquire riches, to purchase lands, and to build houses. But they who stay but a few weeks in a country, or who travel through it, are not commonly solicitous to secure to themselves accommodations which they are so soon to leave. In the same manner, believers being only sojourners on earth, and travellers [sic] to a better country, ought not to place their happiness in the enjoyment of those objects by which the lusts of the flesh are gratified, and which are peculiar to this earthly state, but in securing themselves possessions in the heavenly country, the proper habitation of the righteous.²²

Ellicott observes:

This clause is no specifying of the particular fleshly lusts to be guarded against, as though there were some of them which did not war against the soul; but it is a description of the way in which all fleshly lusts alike act. It means not merely a general antagonism between soul and body, but that the lusts are on active service, en-

gaged in a definite campaign against the immortal part of the man... “Abstain” cannot mean merely “be on your guard against.” It runs rather thus: “You Christian Jews are dwelling as sojourners in the midst of jealous Gentile foreigners, and must, therefore, be particularly observant of moral conduct; for though I know that you usually are so, yet the fleshly appetites are actively engaged against your soul all the time; and if you should in any degree let them get the better of you, the heathen neighbors will at once take advantage of you.”²³

Peter Lang comments:

In a narrower sense it [abstinence] denies all desires and impulses that seek pasture in sensual thoughts and gratification—in eating and drinking, and obscenity and incontinence. The primary reference may be to these, but that there is also an ulterior reference to those lusts whose seat is rather the soul than in the body, e.g., hatred, idolatry, wrath, conceit of knowledge, avarice, cf. Gal. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 8:6; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:18. Consequently all manifestations and motions of the selfishness of man in general. They are said to war against the soul; they go out against it, surround and assault it.²⁴

Adam Clarke points out:

As ye are *strangers* and *pilgrims*, and profess to seek a heavenly country, do not entangle your affections with earthly things. While others spend all their time, and employ all their skill, in acquiring earthly property, and totally neglect the salvation of their souls; *they* are not *strangers*, they are here *at home*; they are not *pilgrims*, they are seeking an *earthly possession*: Heaven is *your home*, seek *that*; God is your *portion*, seek him. All kinds of earthly desires, whether those of the *flesh* or of the *eye*, or those included in the *pride of life*, are here comprised in the words *fleshly lusts*.²⁵

Concerning these things which war against the soul, Clarke further says:

Which are *marshalled* [sic] and *drawn up in battle array*, to fight against the soul; either to slay it, or to bring it into captivity. This is the object and operation of every earthly and sensual desire. How little do those who indulge them think of the ruin which they produce.²⁶

Tuck says:

The Christian’s first and greatest difficulty is with himself. He has bodily passions which men around him are in no sense holding control, and to which he has given power because once he did not hold them in control. When a man becomes a Christian he virtually pledges himself that henceforth he will “hold the vessel of his body in sanctification and honour.” But fulfilling that pledge he finds to be most serious and anxious work. Sins of the flesh, of sensual indul-

gence, are usually thought of as Pagan, Gentile sins, they are the sins of humanity. And no forms of sin so directly, or so ruinously, affect the spiritual life. They “war against the soul.” “The lusts are on active service, engaged in a definite campaign against the immortal part of the man.”²⁷

Arrests the Development of Holiness

God said to Moses, “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). He further instructed, “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am Jehovah your God” (Lev. 20:7). The book of Leviticus sets forth three great premises: (1) God is holy, (2) He wants His people to be holy, and (3) He teaches them how to be holy. The various sacrifices mentioned in Leviticus were intended to teach the people to be holy, e.g., the **meal** offering (Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-23) was an offering for the lowliest worshiper. The **peace** offering (Lev. 3:1-17) was for fellowship with God. The **sin** offering (Lev. 4:1-35; 6:24-30) acknowledged guilt. The **trespass** offering (Lev. 5:1-6:7) was for the intentional offender.

The first 16 chapters of Leviticus provide instruction in (1) the way of access to God through the various sacrifices prescribed. The last 11 chapters are concerned with (2) the way to maintain fellowship with God. The sacrifices were gifts brought to a holy God, serving the twofold purpose of illustrating the need of atonement for sin and consecration to God. They were object lessons in holiness, given to the people during a stage in their spiritual development when they could best learn by having the abstract concepts of righteousness and purity acted out before them in beautiful ceremony and symbolism. The utter abhorrence with which God views sin and pollution, the sublime truth that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins, and the absolute necessity of scrupulous holiness on the part of those who would worship Jehovah are all set forth in most striking fashion. The key to Leviticus is *holiness*, a word not used until after the crossing of the Red Sea. The demand for holiness is expressed in a key verse, “Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (19:2).²⁸

Holiness cannot be perfected in the life of a Christian until he cleanses himself from all defilement of flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1), and this includes the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts. “Having therefore these promises,” or “These then being the promises that we have” indicates that the promises made by God to believers, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, are already in possession of the

Christian, but these promises can be forfeited through carelessness and indifference. The life of a Christian, having begun in the Spirit, cannot be perfected in the flesh (Gal. 3:3). The Christian is obligated to turn away from everything that is wrong, whether of the body or mind, and purify himself. He subsequently will live in a life of reverence as he continually offers his body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). The “cleansing” of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 7:1 is an action which must unquestionably be initiated by each Christian. It is something that we must do for ourselves, and until it is done, holiness can never be perfected in our lives (cf., 1 John 3:3; Jam. 1:21).

F.C. Cook says:

Holiness of the flesh would exist, if all its principles were only instruments of righteousness, as in Christ, and holiness of spirit, if conscience were free from all sense of sin committed, and its cognate faculties were spiritualized into the very highest form of their activity. But sharp lines cannot be drawn between holiness of spirit and holiness of flesh, nor between the defilement of each other, because they act and react upon each other. The atmosphere in which holiness moves on to perfection is the fear of God...It was most applicable to the Corinthians, and, so long as man is liable to sin cannot be dispensed with.²⁹

Prevents Adoption of the Mind of Christ

To allow ungodliness and worldly lusts to influence personal behavior is to prevent the Christian from the possession and development of the mind of Christ. Paul taught the Philippians to look upon “the things of others” rather than upon their own things (Phi. 2:4). In contemplation of this statement, Paul then said, “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 2:5). This is an imperative sentence; it carries the force of a command. In weight and in importance this statement is equal to Acts 2:38. The “mind” (*phroneite*) of which Paul speaks refers to an habitual way of thinking, a disposition. “In you” (*en humin*) means in your spirit, in your life. There is no room for Christ in a life that is filled with ungodliness and lust. While it sometimes takes a considerable amount of time to develop the mind of Christ within us, especially when one is adding to his life what is commonly called the “Christian Graces” (2 Pet. 1:5ff), this procedure cannot be accomplished if the mind is saturated with fleshly desires. Concerning the development of the mind of Christ, Barclay says:

It would be true to say that in many ways this is the greatest and the most moving passage that Paul ever wrote about Jesus. With Paul this passage states a favorite thought. The essence of it is in the simple statement which Paul made to the Corinthians that, although Jesus was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). But here that simple idea is stated with a fulness and a richness which is without parallel. Paul is here pleading with the Philippians to live in unity and in harmony, to lay aside their disharmonies and their discords, to shed their personal ambitions and their pride and their desire for prominence and prestige, and to serve, which was the very essence of the life of Christ.³⁰

Makes Spirituality Impossible

Spiritual is a Bible word and is used many times in the New Testament (cf., Rom. 1:11; 7:14; 12:1; 15:27; 1 Cor. 2:13; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3; 12:1; 14:37; 15:44; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 2:2, 5). For the most part it is descriptive of the miraculous age where spiritual gifts (gifts of the Spirit) were possessed and used to confirm the faith and bring the church to a state of maturation (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3; 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:11-14). However, *spirituality* does not appear in the New Testament, hence it is not defined. Therefore, it is not necessarily true that spirituality refers to a person who is thought to have “more of the Spirit” than another person. Spirituality is a fact of being spiritual, and there are those who are said to be spiritual. A spiritually minded person is one who uses the vocabulary of the Bible correctly (1 Pet. 4:11); one who develops the fruit of the Spirit as opposed to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-22); one who imitates Christ in all things (1 Cor. 11:1), and one who has the “mind of Christ” within him (Phi. 2:5). Currently, a “spiritual” Christian would be one who walks (lives) according to the guidance of the Spirit manifested through the Word of God (Rom. 8:14) e.g., one who had been overtaken in a trespass was to be restored by one who is spiritual (Gal. 6:1). “This is really an appeal to those among the Galatians who really had a true appreciation of the religion of the gospel, that they should be tenderly considerate of others.”³¹ Spirituality, however, cannot exist if one falls into a life of ungodliness and lust because they “war against the soul.” The Corinthians, for example, were allowing themselves to be controlled by fleshly appetites; they therefore had to be addressed as carnal. Carnality is a characteristic of ungodliness. Paul taught to follow the dictates of the flesh is to be

ungodly. “Flesh is the outlook orientated toward the self, that which pursues its own ends in self-sufficient independence of God.”³²

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able *to bear it*: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

The Mind of The Flesh is Death

In Romans 8:5, it is stated: “For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. ” This can only mean “they that are according to the flesh” (*oi gar kata sarka*). In verse 6, Paul says, “For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.” The two key words here are *mind* and *death*. “Mind” is from *phronema* (*phroneo*) and

signifies minding in the sense of giving attention to, pursuing, being devoted to...“The things of the flesh” can not include all the wants of the flesh; for many of these are lawful, and is it therefore right to gratify them. The phrase then must signify only those evil desires and tendencies which lead to sin.³³

To mind the things of the flesh is to live a life of perpetual sin. “Death” is from *thanatos* and most assuredly refers to eternal death. The living (whether good or bad) know that they shall die (Ecc. 9:5). The person who pursues a life dictated by the Spirit will die, because it is appointed unto all men once to die (Heb. 9:27), but the death of the righteous will only be a physical death, not an eternal one. The person whose *mind* is of the flesh is an ungodly person because he is withholding from God what is rightfully His. Here we must guard against what has been called “dementia praecox” or “split mind,” better identified by us as schizophrenia (*schizo*, split and *phrenia*, mind) which is a behavioral disturbance suffered by many. Paul, in discussing the “mind of the flesh” as opposed to the “mind of the spirit,” is not suggesting that the flesh has one mind and the spirit has another:

Paul next refers to the results, the consequences, of the two different attitudes. He says: “For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace.” These verses do not teach that the flesh has one mind and the spirit of man, another; rather, that there is one mind which can be concerned about either matters fleshly, or about matters spiritual. The mind of the flesh is death. Reference is to

spiritual death, for one dies physically regardless of his attitude. The mind of the flesh not only results ultimately in spiritual death, but Paul says: "...is death." The person who has the mind of the flesh is spiritually dead. Paul says (1 Tim. 5:6): "But she that giveth herself to pleasure is death while she liveth."³⁴

The Flesh is Enmity Against God

In pursuance of our study of ungodliness and worldly lusts, which must be denied, we have: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Rom. 8:7). W. E. Vine informs us that enmity (*echthra*) is from the adjective *echthros*, meaning "enemy," and denotes hatred and hostility; it describes one who is opposed to righteousness, one who is alienated from God. Hence we have, "and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Gen. 3:15). "And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day: for before they were at enmity between themselves" (Luke 23:12). "Having abolished in the flesh the enmity...having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:15-16). "Friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jam. 4:4). These passages show (1) people who were at odds with each other, (2) things which were contrary to one another, and (3) "causes" which are in opposition to each other. For sure, people who are ungodly and lustful are not only given to fleshly pursuits, but are God's enemies as well, which is the best reason for denying them.

Those who have the mind of the flesh are at enmity against God. The reason is: the mind of the flesh is not—and cannot be—subject to the law of God. It is impossible for the mind of the flesh to be subject to God's will. That is, so long as the person has the mind of the flesh he will not be, he cannot be, subject to God's will. This certainly does not mean that the person cannot change his/her mind. He can change his attitude, and submit to God's will. The individual is personally responsible, and is obligated to listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵

Prohibits the Development of Righteousness

The need to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts exists perpetually because they prohibit the development of righteousness in our personal lives. One's life cannot be filled with the fruits of righteousness and the works of the flesh. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). To put it more literally, "There is not a righteous man, not one." This statement proved the guilt of the Jews. With regard to sin the Jews were no better than the Gentiles. The word *righteous* or

just, in this passage, means that there are none who are absolutely just. Here *just* means to be wholly free from sin, free from it in the sense of never having committed it.³⁶ Not one, not in the first century or now, has ever been free from sin in the sense of never having committed it. Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God (Luke 1:6), but they were not sinless. Joseph was a just man, but he was not sinless (Mat. 1:19). Simeon was a just man also, but he was not sinless (Luke 2:25). Hence, we are not now sinless, but we can become “just” or “righteous” by being forgiven.

But the word “just” has, besides, a popular, current sense in which we must be careful not to understand it here. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was a “just” man, current sense, but not wholly so; he was not sinless. Simeon was “just” but not perfectly free from sin; and so of others. Paul does not here use the word just in this sense, but in the one stated in the preceding paragraph.³⁷

We cannot invent our own method for obtaining righteousness. We must take advantage of the “righteousness of God” which refers to the way He makes men righteous (cf., Rom. 1:17; 10:1-3). Righteousness, as a description of character, can never be achieved as long as the sins of the flesh, such as ungodliness and lust, characterize our behavior.

CONCLUSION

The Christian is in the world. The world is the sphere of physical life; in it we move, live, and have our being. Jesus said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil *one*” (John 17:15). We are **in** the world, but we are not **of** the world because we have been “called out of it” in a spiritual and moral sense (1 The. 2:12; 2 The. 2:14). We must live apart from it. The ungodliness and the lusts which are such a part of the world must be denied. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world, and it is all passing away (1 John 2:16-17). As Trench said:

All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral, atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale,—all this is included in the *aion*, which is, as Bengel has expressed it, the subtle informing spirit of the *kosmos*, or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.³⁸

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

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³George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), p. 556.

⁴*The Nestle Greek Text with Literal English Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), p. 848.

⁵Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968), p. 418.

⁶James W. Watkins, Jr., *The New Morality*, quoted in *Living Soberly, Righteously and Godly* (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 1977), p. 187.

⁷“Family Word Finder,” *Reader’s Digest* (Pleasantville, NY: nd), p. 213.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1981) [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

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¹⁴T. Croskery, “Titus” *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 21:33.

¹⁵Charles John Ellicott, *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), 8:258.

¹⁶Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press), 6:654.

¹⁷James MacKnight, *Apostolical Epistles* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 491.

¹⁸Trench, p. 324.

¹⁹Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Cleon Rogers (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), p. 362.

²⁰F. C. Cook, *The Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 192.

²¹Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the New Testament*, “James—Jude” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), p. 144.

²²MacKnight, p. 615.

²³Ellicott, p. 405.

²⁴John Peter Lang, *Lang’s Commentary on the Holy Scripture*, “James—Jude” (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 38.

²⁵Clarke, p. 853.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Robert Tuck, *The Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary*, “1 Peter-Revelation” (London, England and Toronto, Canada: Funk & Wagnalls, 1896), 30:71-72.

²⁸W. T. Purkizer, *Exploring the Old Testament* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill), pp. 128-129.

²⁹F. C. Cook, *The Bible Commentary*, “Romans—Philemon” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, n.d.), p. 433.

³⁰William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 42-43.

³¹Cook, p. 533.

³²Rienecker, p. 393.

³³Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Romans* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, n.d.), p. 253.

³⁴Roy C. Deaver, *Romans* (Pensacola, FL: Austin McGary and Company, 1992), p. 260.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁶Lard, p. 108.

³⁷*Ibid.*

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CAUSES OF WORLDLINESS

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INTRODUCTION

There are many dangers facing the Lord's church in our present society. After careful study, I am confidently convinced that worldliness is our greatest threat. If people were honest in evaluating the current condition both within the world as well as within the church, the findings would convince us that many of our problems, collectively and individually, are rooted in worldliness. I have observed through the years that this is the very tap root to attendance problems, Christian growth and development problems, and to just about every kind of *ism* that has plagued the church.

NEED FOR THIS STUDY

Worldliness, far too often, is so narrowly defined that it is no wonder that people are not convicted that they are worldly. Worldliness is from the root word *world* and "is a sphere or cosmos of evil, an order which is opposed to God, and to whose pursuit those who abandon the Lord have dedicated themselves."¹

Worldliness is "world likeness." Worldliness is a wedge that sin drives into the heart of the Christian, dividing his own will from God's will, making his actions incompatible with his spiritual goal, because he allows selfish interests to usurp the place of God in his life. Therefore, worldliness is sin! Worldliness is conforming to the

world. Worldliness is a cancer which creates an indifference to moral values, reflecting in one's attitude about right and wrong. It makes a person insensitive to real abiding values and contributes to unsteadiness in the Christian's life. Worldliness splits an individual's loyalties, making him selfish, spiritually indifferent, careless, near-sighted, and complacent. The above are all qualities or traits that are unbecoming to the Christian's attitude, thus they belong to the **world**.

AN ETHICAL/MORAL ISSUE

The Bible teaches that God has all authority, and we must go to Him for our standard of right and wrong. We can trace authority for making moral decisions back no further than God. Going back to God means we have gone back to the original source, the fountainhead of all authority. Because some are prone to legalism, it is difficult for us to think of right and wrong coming from God in any form other than through rules and regulations like the Ten Commandments. The actual standard for right and wrong is not some rule written in human words, but God Himself. The question of the hour is: are certain actions right or wrong because God has said they are, or does God command certain things because they are already right or wrong? If we say God commands certain things because they are already right or wrong, then God would no longer be God. It would imply a higher authority above God to which He is subject. God Himself would be submitting to some other standard.

Right and wrong are not arbitrary decisions made by God. Neither does God command certain actions because they were already right or wrong. Right and wrong are determined by the nature of God. What God is, is right. What God is not, is wrong. Repeatedly in the Sacred Scriptures we read, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).² Holiness is right because God is holy. God did not arbitrarily declare holiness to be right. Neither did He declare it to be right due to some higher standard. Holiness conforms to the nature of God—thus it is right. Since God is eternal, holiness was right before creation; it is still right today!

Since the essence of God Himself is the ultimate standard for morality, a code of ethics based upon the nature of God will not grow old or be outdated. Thankfully God does not change: "For I *am* the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with

whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). Therefore, He will always be loving, forgiving, and holy. If the Christian is willing to give up and forsake worldliness, he can be the recipient of God’s love and forgiveness. The passing of time may bring forth new situations requiring thinking and godly devotion to determine right conduct, but there will always be light and understanding from what we can know about God and His revelation to us.

THE CAUSES OF WORLDLINESS

The first principle that causes worldliness is a “love of the world.” Inspiration recorded:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

How are we to understand this passage in light of Christ’s statement in John: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)? Does the **world** which He loved differ from the **world** which we are not to love? The world which John wrote was forbidden to be loved was not the material universe, God’s original creation (Rom. 1:20). The *world* was not the people who inhabited it (John 3:16), and it was not the earth (John 1:9). It did not include the sunshine, rain, mountains, seas, sunset, stars, flowers, or the dust from which our bodies are composed (Ecc. 12:7). The world is the sphere of evil which man has given himself to covet after. And the *love* that is here embraced has to deal with evil or selfish desire and worldly pride. What a contrast: on God’s part, His love is divine, compassionate, and redeeming; on man’s part it is selfish and greedy. God loves mankind, whereas man loves an evil order.

The prohibition as stated here in John is not limited to the world but includes the “things of the world.” Emphatically, we are not to love the world, nor anything that may be in the world. Inspiration caused John to write and make a unique distinction: between the general (the world) and the specific (the things of the world). We are forbidden to love even a specific or a particular part of the world. Thus, love for the world and love for the Father are wholly incompati-

ble; they cannot exist in any heart at the same time. The Scriptures speak: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). This principle is also seen in Romans: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). Paul exhorted,

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 (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

The Christian cannot be ignorant concerning the devices of the devil. In summary form John states the three avenues that Satan uses in his course of seduction. He appeals through carnal desires, desires awakened through the appeal of objects of sight, and vanity, pride, or worldly honor. This course is not new, he has for ages appealed to mankind this way.

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

This also is the same avenue pursued by Satan in the temptation of Christ. In Matthew 4, the tempter comes to Christ in verse 3, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

John wrote in view of two spheres: the temporal (world) and the permanent (one doing the will of God). In view of the temporal nature of the world, literally, it is passing away, the Christian does (literally, keep on doing) the Father’s will.

A second cause of worldliness can be found in the principle of “friendship.” James wrote, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). It is of interest how James employs the figure of marriage to indicate the relationship of men to God. The application of the truth James wrote must be observed and applied. A woman who is an adulteress is unfaithful to her husband; hence the one exhibiting friendship for the world demonstrates unfaithfulness to God and is figuratively guilty of adultery. The use of the word *world* carries with

it the idea that the people's heart was alienated from God and centered in things below. For example, Paul wrote, "If [since] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). Jesus correctly stated, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). Hence, we have *world* employed by inspiration to represent all that is opposed to God in a spiritual and moral sense.

We all are embraced in James' conclusion; to be a friend of the world is to cast oneself in the role of an enemy of God. Germane to our topic is the expression "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world" (*will be* means to purpose, to will). One need not actually participate in the things of the world to be worldly, the purpose, the will, the desire to do so constitutes worldliness in the eyes of God. Worldliness is a state of mind as well as a manner of life. It follows then that people may refrain from a life of worldly activity; but if the desire, the will, the inclination is there, such a person is worldly!

The third principle or cause of worldliness is "conformity to the world." The peerless Paul wrote:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

The Word of God enjoins upon Christians that they shall be nonconformists. The American Standard Version reads: "And be not fashioned according to this world." The New English Bible renders the passage: "Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world." The New Berkley Version reads: "And do not conform to the present world system." The Phillips Translation reads: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold."

The case is Christians may be conformists where no truth is compromised, or where no integrity is violated, or where no morality is degenerated, or where no consecration is modified. A Christian must be known for his spirit of peace, his tranquility, his serenity, and his amity.

However, it is generally recognized that the world is in the church. We know that moral degeneracy has been taking place on our national level, the church is also surrendering its influence or resistance to the immoral and downward course of man. The world is strongly influencing the church downward, but the church has little strength to influence the world upward. The world is in the church in a firm way, but the church is in the world in only a feeble way. Many in the church would have the church to relate to the world rather than to have the world relate to God.

The fourth principle or cause of worldliness is being “spotted with the world.” James declared:

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion *is* vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself [one-self] unspotted from the world (Jam. 1:26-27).

The nature of true religion is portrayed through the beauty of unpoluted purity. The idea of pure religion is twofold: it consists of doing right and refusing wrong. James contrasts *pure* and *undefiled* as an approved kind of religion with the *vain* religion characterized by the individual with an unbridled tongue and a deceived heart. Pure religion denotes that which is clean; undefiled is that which is without contamination. According to Christ: “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). There must be purity in religion. This is also true with religion in the Old Testament: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8).

The second aspect of the religion that is pure and undefiled involves the Christian to keep (literally, keep on keeping) himself/herself unspotted from the world. This concept is interesting and challenging as well. As children of God, we are members of the church, and have been called out from the world, and are forbidden to love the world (1 John 2:15-17) or to have friendship with it (Jam. 4:4). One keeps unspotted from the world by not allowing the spots of the world to be transferred to him. One cannot come into contact with oil, without becoming oily; in like manner, it is impossible to participate in the things of the world, without being worldly. We are admonished: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,

but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). The literal idea is we are to have no joint participation with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose and bring them to light. Christians are to “keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). Certainly this admonition applies to saints today! The faithful ones will endure and, as a result, see God (Mat. 5:8). The motivation is provided in Scripture: “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. 7:1). Hence, pure religion and undefiled before God demands that we accept His teachings and, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

The fifth principle or cause of worldliness is “worldly wisdom.” To the Corinthians, Paul stated:

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:17-21).

Paul states unequivocally that God’s wisdom is supreme. In comparison, man’s wisdom is nothing. Therefore, there is no substance or validity to man’s glorying before God. And yet, because of the inflated ego of so many multitudes of people, pride disallows the acceptance of the gospel. The gospel is too simple. The message is quite foolish in man’s eyes. Thus, man rebels. Signs are sought by the Jews, and the Gentiles prefer the output of human intellect over the Divine message. This is the very reason the apostle Paul gives as to why few who are mighty, noble, and wise, accept the gospel. Human pride gets in the way. The self-inflated mind of man just cannot conceive of, or assent to, a crucified Savior. As pertaining to the Corinthians, this was the crux of the conflict between God’s wisdom and man’s wisdom. The confrontation revolved around the salvation God had provided for humankind through His Son. Involved in the gospel is the salient point of man’s helpless plight: he is lost in sin and spiritually decimated by its ravages. However, God intervened and provided the only

way of escape from man through the atoning sacrifice of His Anointed upon the cross. Yet, the enigma of being crucified on a cross was so disturbing to the mental faculties of man that it was looked upon with disdain. How could salvation result from such a despicable death? God's plan for saving man through the cross of His Son confounded man's wisdom. To man's way of thinking, the message of the gospel was foolishness. It just didn't fit into his sense of dignity and propriety. Those who occupied positions of prestige and importance in society would be subjected to ridicule and mockery if they were to accept it, and because the glory that comes from men meant more to them than being right with God, they rejected it.

There is a very strong appeal made by Paul to those who will heed. Not wanting any of those to whom he wrote to fall into the pit of hopelessness, dug by trusting human reasoning and judgment, Paul pleads:

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness (1 Cor. 3:18-19).

The individual who will indeed be wise is the one who refrains from glorying in men, but rather glories in the Lord Jehovah. When we divorce from us worldly wisdom, then we will accept with joy the wonderful grace/gift of salvation made possible through the Lord's vicarious death upon the cross.

The wisdom of Naaman caused him to remain a leper until he was willing to receive and do the Lord's will (2 Kin. 5:13). Naaman was infuriated with going to the Jordan and dipping seven times. It was not until he came up out of the water the seventh time that he saw demonstrated the power of the wisdom of God! "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Paul's own Jewish brethren demonstrated a worldly wisdom when they said:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness,

have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

As Micaiah stated long ago, “what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak” (1 Kin. 22:14)!

The sixth principle or cause of worldliness is partaking of “the works of the flesh.” The Galatians epistle warns:

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 (Gal. 5:19-21).

The works of the flesh are manifest i.e., obviously, clearly, and unmistakably wrong. They are easily recognizable as of the flesh, and, therefore, contrary to the Spirit.

The first four are sins against purity (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness). *Adultery* is unlawful sexual intercourse of a married individual with another. *Fornication* is unlawful sexual intercourse in general. *Uncleanness* is lustful living. *Lasciviousness* is unbridled manners including filthy words, indecent bodily movements, and the unchaste handling of males and females. The Christian must strive for purity, therefore, there will be a severing of these from life.

The second two are sins of atheism or irreligion. *Idolatry* is the worshiping of false gods. *Witchcraft* is the pretense of communication with invisible powers.

The third grouping includes eight sins that deal with one’s disposition. *Hatred* is bitterness or feelings of animosity. *Variance* is a quarrelsome attitude. *Emulations* are feelings of resentment because of advantages accruing to others. *Wrath* is the anger expressed at others. *Strife* is the promotion of a party spirit that creates contention. *Seditions* is the breaking of fellowship within the congregation. *Heresies* is the results from the breaking of fellowship within the congregation. *Envyings* is the unhappiness or resentful begrudging of the good fortune of another.

The fourth grouping of three deals with sins of excess. *Murder* is the unlawful killing of a life and is never justified. *Drunkenness* is the condition of stupor brought on by the consumption of intoxicating

beverages. *Revellings* is the wild partying that takes place in the night involving drinking, music, and dancing.

It is rather obvious that Inspiration did not attempt to present an exhaustive catalog of the works of the flesh. Rather, after enumerating the more common ones, the phrase *and such like* was stated to include all others of the same character. So important was it that the Galatians be informed of the dangers involved in such matters, the apostle had warned them of such before, and now repeats the warning. He solemnly points out to them that those who practice such things cannot enter into the everlasting kingdom which awaits at the end of the age (2 Pet. 1:5-11). It is not possible for a Christian to live in any one of these (states or fleshly indulgences) and go to heaven when this life is over!

The seventh principle or cause of worldliness stems from the influence of the new morality. The most popular present-day alternative that is a leading cause of worldliness is the so-called “new morality.” Many religious leaders, as well as educators, sociologists, and philosophers, have endorsed it and tried to defend it. But just what is the position of the individual who claims to believe the new morality? Is his position radically different from the posture a Christian is led to take by the Scripture? Are not both, biblical morality and the new morality, based on love?

In the book *A Church Without God*, Ernest Harrison wrote:

The New Moralist does not accept at all the notion that there are moral standards which are revealed by God. He does not believe that God laid down laws which are for all men, at all times, under all conditions. He is, therefore, a relativist.³

Joseph Fletcher stated in regards to the new morality: “No action is good or right in itself. It depends on whether it hurts or helps people, whether or not it serves love’s purposes—understand love to be personal concern—in the particular circumstances.”⁴

John A. T. Robertson said:

Nothing can of itself be labeled as wrong. Sex relations before marriage or divorce may be wrong ninety-nine cases, or even one hundred cases, out of one hundred, but they are not intrinsically so, for the only intrinsic evil is lack of love.⁵

This type of thinking is becoming more and more popular in our country, especially so among young people. It is the logical outcome of the general rebellion against established authority which has been

going on for some time and serves as the philosophical justification for even more rebellion against what little authority there seems to be left. It has served to create a whole new world of personal non-accountability. Cal Thomas observed, "The lack of any personal accountability to a moral code has made immorality respectable in our nation."⁶ May we understand that when we abandon the notion of moral law and substitute a morality where each act must be judged in the light of its specific circumstances, there is no way to hold a man accountable for his misconduct. For, even though he stole or murdered, he will be able to argue that there were circumstances which drove him to it and that he therefore should not be held accountable to an inflexible standard which forbids those actions.

Moral law and love do not conflict but, to the contrary, they compliment each other (1 John 5:3). Loves purposes cannot be fulfilled without submission to the principles of morality set out in the New Testament (2 John 6). Our Lord made it clear that there could be no clash between the moral law of God and the love which comes from God. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). Love to the new moralists is nothing short of lustful conduct in a cloak of licentious living.

CONCLUSION

Dear friends, Christians can live fully in this present world and enjoy rich and rewarding days without surrendering to the world or forsaking faithfulness to Christ Jesus. Inspiration recorded: "For he that will love life, and see good days" (1 Pet. 3:10). The Christian life is the best life. However, it requires that we make a distinction between Christianity and the world.

ENDNOTES

¹Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1973), 7:238.

²All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

³Rubel Shelly, *Young People Make Moral Decisions* (University of Alabama: Youth In Action, Inc., 1976), p. 18.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Cal Thomas, *The Death Of Ethics In America* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1988), p. 22.

HEDONISM

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B. J. delivered his first sermon at age 9 and has been involved in several youth rallies, gospel meetings, and lectureships. In 1985, he was selected as one of the Outstanding Young Men of America. In 1987, he held a public debate on Baptism and Apostasy. B. J. was a member of the adjunct faculty of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions from 1989 to 1990. He now serves as editor of *POWER* published by the Southaven Church of Christ and directs the annual *POWER* Lectureship.

INTRODUCTION

Again, a tremendous theme has been chosen for the annual Bellview lectureship. The Lord's church faces many difficulties and challenges in this present age, and the problem of worldliness is right near the top of the list. In fact, the late and esteemed brother Franklin Camp once said that, in his judgment, worldliness is the greatest threat to the Lord's church today.

This is not to say that worldliness is the **only** threat to the church of Christ today. The infiltration of the philosophy and practice of denominationalism is also a major threat to the well-being of the body of Christ today. However, many members of the church, who would never dream of yielding to denominationalism, are guilty of yielding to the lusts of the flesh. For example, some parents, who will not back down one iota on whether baptism is essential to salvation, see nothing wrong with forsaking the assembly of the saints to spend a relax-

ing weekend at the lake or the beach. Moreover, their attire at these places is often immodest and provocative.

Again, some parents, who staunchly defend the idea that there is only one true church, will also defend the decision to ship their sons and daughters off to the prom, without the slightest concern for the worldly atmosphere associated with such an activity. For further proof of just how much worldliness has infiltrated the church, just scan the list of topics which make up this lectureship and think of how many times you have seen brethren in the local church struggle in these areas. This lectureship is sorely needed!

My particular assignment, within the framework of the overall theme, is to examine the philosophy of hedonism. The plan for investigation is as follows: (1) **Define** the philosophy of hedonism; (2) **Demonstrate** hedonism, i.e., give examples of men and women who have practiced the philosophy of hedonism; and (3) **Defeat** hedonism, i.e., show the destructive consequences of practicing hedonism. In our conclusion we will point the way to a better way of living which will lead ultimately to the greatest pleasure of all!

HEDONISM DEFINED

Since the word hedonism is not a part of our everyday vocabulary, it is necessary to define the term. In *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, hedonism is defined as “the principle that happiness (defined in terms of pleasure) is the sole and proper aim of human action.”¹ The hedonist believes that the ultimate purpose of life is to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. Years ago, a commercial on television reminded its viewers that you only go around once in life—therefore “Go for the gusto!” Get all of the pleasure you can while you can! That, in a nutshell, is the definition of hedonism.

Actually, hedonism is not new. Its origin can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, as we will amply demonstrate in the next section, the practice of hedonism is vividly depicted upon the pages of Holy Scripture. In the formal discipline of philosophy, hedonism finds its roots in the ancient Greek culture, particularly in the school of the Cyrenaics in the latter part of the fourth century B.C. The Cyrenaics were full-fledged hedonists, living their lives with total and reckless abandon. Their philosophy was “Total Indulgence—Zero Guilt.”

Eventually, the Greek philosophers elevated the philosophy of hedonism to the level of being a religion. They argued that one who was in a normal state of consciousness could never find the knowledge necessary to live a fulfilled life. Hence, one had to turn to the Greek god Dionysius to find release from the limitations of human knowledge. The method for accomplishing this goal was to drink oneself into a drunken stupor until he became free of all inhibitions. R. C. Sproul explains:

People believed that in a drunken stupor they could make contact with the supernatural world during their mystical experience of “euphoria,” an experience called not “getting low,” but “getting high.”...Added to this was an array of sexual involvements including temple prostitution. The prostitutes were able to help a person break down his inhibitions so that he could make contact with the gods and experience the feeling of ecstasy that was the release of the soul.²

The above-described obsession with alcohol and sex sounds all too familiar, does it not?

A more refined form of hedonism (but no less dangerous) developed with the Greek philosopher Epicurus, and his followers, the Epicureans. Like the Cyrenaics of a century before him, Epicurus promoted the pursuit of pleasure as the chief aim in life. Consider the following words of Epicurus, contained in a letter he wrote to Menoeceus:

Wherefore we call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge every good thing.³

The above words seem to mirror the very same belief of the radical hedonists who preceded Epicurus. Yet, there are important differences between Epicurus and the Cyrenaics. Epicurus advocated a more *dignified* approach to seeking pleasure. Rather than living life with reckless abandon, Epicurus advanced the idea that one could enjoy life by pursuing a more sophisticated level of pleasure. He and his followers sought to obtain pleasure without losing all control of their faculties. In fact, the dictionary defines an *epicure* as “a person who cultivates a refined taste, esp. in food and wine; connoisseur.”⁴ *Epicurean* is defined as someone who is “fond of or adapted to luxury or indulgence in sensual pleasures; having luxurious tastes or habits, esp. in eating or drinking.”⁵

Hence, the Epicurean form of hedonism advocated indulgence, but with certain limitations. Accordingly, in the same letter to Menoecus mentioned above, Epicurus wrote:

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal, or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some, through ignorance, prejudice or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul.⁶

Thus, Epicureans viewed excess as something to avoid because of the pain that would come after the pleasures of certain activities had evaporated. Whereas the Cyrenaics argued that the pleasure of the moment is always to be sought, the Epicureans affirmed that cultivating a total life of pleasure is superior to living for the pleasure of the moment. This is not to say that the Epicureans were strict moralists. On the contrary, they encouraged the pursuit of pleasure, even if it meant participating in activities defined by Paul as “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21).⁷ The Epicureans believed that the action that is morally right is the one that produces the most pleasure. However, an action is morally wrong if it produces pain rather than pleasure. Again, Sproul elaborates:

The Epicureans understood that if you indulged in too much wine, the result would not be exquisite enjoyment of fine-tasting wine, but the awful hangover of the next day. Likewise, if you overindulged in sexual activities, the odds were greatly increased that you would add venereal disease to your future misery....Recognizing the price paid for pleasure, the Epicureans tried to create a more balanced enjoyment of pleasure and pain. For example, they believed that one should keep pleasure at a moderate level; just a little bit of adultery is enough to spice up life and keep the excitement flowing in the human heart.⁸

Therefore, “the most virtuous person is he who can most often ascertain and choose the most satisfying pleasures while, as far as possible, avoiding painful experience.”⁹ For the Epicurean, the avoidance of pain was as important as the pursuit of pleasure.

With the Epicurean emphasis on the pursuit of earthly pleasure as the ultimate goal of life, and their corresponding stress of the need to avoid pain at all costs, it is easy to see why the Epicurean philosophers vented their hostilities toward the apostle Paul in Athens (Acts 17:18ff). After all, the very basis of Paul’s inspired message contradicted every aspect of their philosophy. He taught that God had

become flesh (1 Tim. 3:16) and that, in the ultimate act of self-denial, “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:5-8).

Furthermore, Paul describes the pain and suffering of the cross as the prelude to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, at which time He received the ultimate pleasure of being exalted by the Father (Phi. 2:9). Not only that, but worst of all in the Epicurean view, Paul taught that Jesus would return to judge all men according to their deeds and either reward or punish them accordingly (Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10).

HEDONISM DEMONSTRATED

Although *hedonism* does not appear in our English Bibles, “pleasures” in Luke 8:14 and Titus 3:3 is a form of the Greek word *hedone*. A similar form of the word is translated “pleasure” in 2 Peter 2:13 and as “lusts” in James 4:1, 3. Moreover, the English word hedonism does not have to appear in the Bible for us to be able to find hedonistic conduct in the Bible, i.e., those who were pursuing their own selfish pleasures at the expense of obeying God.

1. **Adam and Eve.** Long before the Greek philosophers advanced the notion of hedonism, one hedonistic act by Eve (and Adam) in the Garden of Eden introduced sorrow and pain into our world. While Adam and Eve are never on record as advocating the hedonistic idea that the chief aim of life is the pursuit of pleasure, there is absolutely no doubt their sinful actions were motivated by the desire to experience pleasure. In fact, the text declares:

When the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that **it *was* pleasant** to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

Centuries later, John summarized worldliness as “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Eve was motivated by the lust of the flesh when she saw “that the tree *was* good for food.” She was motivated by the lust of the eyes when she saw that the fruit upon the tree “*was* pleasant to the eyes.” She manifested the pride of life when she partook of the fruit because of her desire to be wise, like God. Adam succumbed to her influence and participated in this transgression against God. Consequently, they were expelled from the Garden, and life on earth took a dramatic turn for the worse.

Their story reminds us that it does not take a life of unceasing hedonism to bring about disastrous consequences. One isolated act of pleasure-seeking can bring about a lifetime of consequences, not only for the thrill seekers but also for those who are affected by their decisions. How many times has someone, seeking the pleasure of an alcoholic high, brought devastating and permanent consequences into his/her life (and the lives of countless others) by deciding to get behind the wheel and drive while intoxicated?

2. **The residents of earth before the flood.** With the exception of Noah, and his family, the human beings dwelling upon the earth before the flood were thoroughgoing hedonists, so much so that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). Moses described the antediluvian world as *corrupt* and *filled with violence* (Gen. 6:11). "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12). Tragically, mankind's obsession with worldly pleasure came at a great price: destruction in the flood and loss of the soul (Gen. 6:13). In contrast, Noah was "a just man *and* perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9). He found grace in the eyes of the Lord; he and his family were spared by God.

3. **The residents of Sodom and Gomorrah.** According to Genesis 13:13, "The men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." The Lord described their sin as *very grievous* (Gen. 18:20). The description of their tawdry behavior is recorded in Genesis 19. Their hedonism came in the form of homosexuality. Their destruction was the consequence (Gen. 19:24-29).

4. **Esau.** A classic example of seeking the pleasure of the moment is Esau's decision to exchange his birthright for the immediate gratification of a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:29-34; Heb. 12:15-17). In essence, Esau was willing to forfeit the blessings of the future for the pleasure of the moment. He was so consumed with satisfying the hunger pangs of the moment that he lost all sense of reason as to what mattered most. Esau may very well have enjoyed that bowl of pottage, but his pleasure was short-lived.

Similarly, there are millions of men and women on earth today who possess the spirit of Esau. An African tribe elects a new king every seven years. It is understood that during his seven-year reign the king of the tribe possesses all power over the tribe. All of his wishes

are granted. He has access to all wealth. Any woman of the tribe he desires is required to satisfy his urges. One other thing is understood about the seven-year reign of the king: at the end of his reign the people of the tribe will, in accordance with tribal custom, surround the king and kill him. Now, you would think that upon seeing this savage event just having taken place that no one would step forward and volunteer to be the next king. Yet, there is never a shortage of men desiring to become king. In essence, these men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of life's expectations if they can have anything they want for seven years. We are tempted to write off their attitude as the result of being raised in a savage and barbaric climate. However, the same malady of the mind affects countless *civilized* Americans. They want what they want, and they want it right now—even if it means forfeiting the future blessing of a home in heaven.

5. **Judah and Tamar.** In Genesis 38, we find the sordid account of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, dressing up as a harlot and making herself available to Judah. Judah, not knowing it was his daughter-in-law, solicited her services as a prostitute (Gen. 38:15-18). Later, when Judah tried to send payment to the harlot, he was informed that she could not be found.

Eventually, word came to Judah that his daughter-in-law Tamar had "played the harlot" and was, consequently, with child. Judah ordered that she be brought forth and burned. However, when she came forth, she exhibited Judah's signet, bracelets, and staff as proof that he was the man who had been with her in this act of prostitution. Judah's thirst for sexual pleasure brought great heartache and embarrassment to him and his family. His hedonistic act stands in sharp contrast to that of Joseph who, in the very next chapter, refused the daily advances of Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7-10). Joseph found more pleasure in faithfully serving God, and his master Potiphar, than he did in enjoying the temporary pleasure of fornicating with Potiphar's wife.

6. **Achan and Gehazi.** Although God had expressly forbidden the Israelites to personally partake of the spoils of victory over Jericho (Jos. 6:18-19), Achan's thirst for the pleasure of being rich outweighed his passion for pleasing God. As he looked at the spoils of victory he saw "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" (Jos.

7:21). He coveted these items, took these items, and hid them in the earth under the middle of his tent. He knew that he was doing wrong, but the pleasure of the moment became more important to him than the threat of punishment in the future.

As it turns out, Achan learned what so many pleasure seekers have learned—the temporary pleasure of the moment is not worth the enduring pain and consequences that come in the future. He and his family were stoned and burned to death (Jos. 7:25). If Achan could speak to us from beyond the vale, what would he say about the hedonistic motto of living for the pleasure of the moment?

A man of kindred disposition to Achan was Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. After the leper, Naaman, was cleansed of his leprosy, he offered Elisha a gift (2 Kin. 5:15). However, Elisha refused the gift and sent Naaman on his way. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, could not believe that Elisha had allowed Naaman to get away without receiving the riches Naaman had to offer. So Gehazi decided to run after Naaman and “take somewhat of him” (2 Kin. 5:20).

When Naaman saw Gehazi running, he stopped the chariot and asked if all was well. Gehazi lied, saying that his master had sent him to retrieve some money and raiment from Naaman to assist two young men of the sons of the prophets (2 Kin. 5:22). Although Gehazi only asked for one talent of silver, Naaman generously gave him two talents of silver. He also donated the two changes of garments Gehazi had requested.

When Gehazi returned home he took the money and the merchandise and hid them in his house. Then he went in and stood before Elisha. When Elisha asked him where he had been, he lied again, saying that he had not gone anywhere. However, little did he know that Elisha was aware of what he had done. Elisha rebuked him and pronounced a curse of leprosy upon him and his seed forever (2 Kin. 5:26-27).

How sad, inexpressibly sad that Gehazi’s future, and the future of his offspring, was determined by one hedonistic moment when his hunger for the pleasure of being rich motivated him to lie and steal. He, and Achan, will go down in history as victims of the philosophy of hedonism.

7. **David.** At the time of year when kings went forth to battle, David sent Joab instead. One evening he arose and walked upon the

roof of his house and happened upon a beautiful woman who was bathing. Rather than turning away from the sight, he gazed, and he longed. He set about to discover the name of the woman, and it was not long until he sent his messengers to retrieve her to come to his house. He committed adultery with her, and she conceived a child.

Knowing that it would be difficult to explain how Bathsheba had conceived, with her husband Uriah miles away on the battlefield, immediate arrangements were made to bring Uriah home for a short leave. However, Uriah's integrity was more than David had bargained for in his little scheme. Uriah refused to enjoy the comfort of his comfortable bed while his comrades were encamped in the open fields. Undeterred from his plot to cover up his sin, David ordered Uriah to be placed on the front lines of the hottest battle, and then abandoned, so he would be killed. After all, David knew that a dead Uriah could never testify that he was not the father of Bathsheba's baby. Just as planned, Uriah died in battle.

This remarkable story teaches us how the yearning for a moment of pleasure (the essence of what hedonism is all about) is often the first step to a host of other transgressions and tragedies. If David had not been so intent on fulfilling his lusts with Bathsheba, then he would have never dreamed of conspiring to murder her husband. Although it is wonderful that David later repented of his sins (Psa. 32; 51), his passion was the prelude to life-lasting problems!

8. **Amnon.** The sick story of Amnon raping his sister is just one more reminder that hedonism is nothing new to mankind. The text declares that Amnon was so vexed that he fell for his virgin sister Tamar, but he could not figure out how to do anything to her. His *friend* Jonadab, a very crafty man, told Amnon to pretend to be sick and to request that his sister be sent to him with some food to nourish and strengthen him.

Amnon carried out the plan and asked his father David to send Tamar unto him in his time of illness. She went to his house, took flour, kneaded it, made cakes, and baked the cakes right before his very eyes. However, when she brought the cakes to him to serve him, he refused to eat and ordered everyone to leave the room except for Tamar. He encouraged Tamar to bring the cakes into his bedroom so he could eat them there.

When she brought the cakes in unto him, he grabbed hold of her and asked her to lie with him. She refused, saying, “Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly” (2 Sam. 13:12). He refused to listen to her pleas and “being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her” (2 Sam. 13:14). After he raped her, he looked at her in disgust and hatefully sent her away.

Radical hedonism argues that man’s chief goal in life is pleasure and that he is to do whatever is necessary to feel pleasure. In the story above, Amnon wanted to enjoy the pleasure of having sexual relations with his sister. Therefore, according to hedonism, he was totally within his rights when he forced her to gratify his quest for pleasure.

Some hedonists might interrupt at this point and say, “That is not true. We do not advocate hurting other people to gain our own individual pleasure.” In reply, we would point out that by so arguing they have given up the fundamental premise of the philosophy of hedonism—“If it feels good, do it.” They cannot have it both ways. Either we are permitted to seek pleasure or we are not. What absolute standard would the more dignified hedonist use to try to control the pleasure-seeking escapades of someone else? What is pleasurable to me might not be pleasurable to you; but who do you think you are to tell me that I must seek your brand of pleasure and not my own?

This is the *ungetaroundable* dilemma for hedonists. If they argue that certain pursuits of pleasure are out of bounds, they are going to have to point to some objective standard to prove their assertion. If they point to the Bible as the objective standard to condemn rape, then they are going to have to accept all else that the Bible condemns. This would include some of their own brand of hedonism, so they cannot afford to turn to the Bible to condemn someone else’s behavior. But if they cannot turn to the Bible to regulate human conduct what other objective standard can they turn to? There is none! Hence, to be consistent with the philosophy of hedonism, they cannot condemn someone else’s form of pleasure-seeking just because it does not coincide with their own style of pleasure-seeking. Consequently, all human conduct is acceptable as long as pleasure is its ultimate goal. What would a world be like, in which everyone pursued his own pleasure without regard to how it affected others? Unfortunately, as

we look at our own nation, and its increasing hedonistic tendencies, it is not that hard to imagine.

9. **Solomon.** The life of Solomon proves that hedonism is manifested in many different forms. One does not have to be a rapist like Amnon to be classified as hedonistic. In Solomon's inspired diary, the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives us a glimpse at some of the things he had pursued in an attempt to find happiness. By his own admission, he had lived as a hedonist. Consider his words: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore **enjoy pleasure**" (Ecc. 2:1). In his quest for fulfillment in life, Solomon immersed himself in pleasure. Like the Epicurean hedonists described earlier, he did not live in total abandon, but he did pursue pleasure. He tried to find it in wisdom and knowledge only to find that the more he knew the sadder he became (Ecc. 1:16-18).

He experimented with alcohol to see if it could give him the pleasure that he was desperately seeking. He said, "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom" (Ecc. 2:3). Notice that, like the Epicurean hedonists, Solomon did not set out to become an alcoholic. Rather, he wanted to drink socially while maintaining his dignity and wisdom.

He became a workaholic, spending all of his time building houses, planting vineyards, gardens, orchards, and pools. He populated his palace with servants, maidens, and children born to these servants and maidens. Men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men serenaded him. Moreover, he became wealthy beyond all description, owning staggering amounts of cattle, silver, gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. He was so wealthy that he could purchase anything upon which he laid his eyes. In direct opposition to God's instruction, He surrounded himself with hundreds and hundreds of beautiful foreign women (1 Kin. 11:1-3).

What did Solomon's hedonistic frenzy leave with him? Listen to his words:

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit...Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun (Ecc. 1:14; 2:11).

Solomon's pursuit of pleasure left him empty and dissatisfied. Moreover, his wives turned away his heart from God and cost him his kingdom (1 Kin. 11:4-12).

10. **Two Rich Fools.** The book of Luke records the stories of two men who failed to learn that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). To prove this point, Jesus told the parable of a certain rich man whose wealth continued to grow and grow. However, rather than glorifying God for the abundance of blessings he had received, the rich man took all of the credit for what he had done. Furthermore, instead of being rich in good works, and ready to distribute his surplus to the needy (1 Tim. 6:17-18), the rich man adopted the Epicurean philosophy of keeping it all for his own pleasure, and saying to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry" (Luke 12:19). God pronounced the man a fool due to his arrogance and shortsightedness. He also announced that his soul would be required of him that very night. Accordingly, all of his earthly riches would be left behind for someone else to enjoy.

Another prominent rich man in the New Testament is described in Luke 16:19. He "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." His life was one of lavish extravagance while Lazarus, the beggar, lived in the depths of poverty. Although the text does not explicitly label the rich man of Luke 16 "a fool," his conduct is no less foolish than that of the rich man of Luke 12. He hoarded all of his wealth for his own selfish pleasures, completely oblivious to the needs of the beggar who was laid at his gate.

When the rich man died, he found himself in *torments* (Luke 16:23). Meanwhile, Lazarus, who had also died, found his fortunes reversed. No longer was he hungry and in pain. Rather, he was in the comfort of Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). The rich man was no longer rich. In his spiritually impoverished condition, he was now the beggar. He begged Lazarus to "dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue" (Luke 16:24).

In reply, Abraham reminded him of the pleasures he had enjoyed in his lifetime upon the earth (cf., Jam. 5:5), and of the pain Lazarus had received, pain which the rich man could have helped to alleviate. Now, however, the rich man's pleasures had come to a screeching and irreversible halt. Never more would he know joy; pain would be his eternal companion. Was it worth it? Were all of the earthly pleasures

he had known worth this unceasing torment? One of the biggest falsehoods associated with hedonism is the idea that we will never suffer any consequences for pursuing earthly pleasures. Two rich fools tell us a different story.

11. **The Prodigal Son.** Jesus, in Luke 15, paints one of the more vivid pictures of hedonism in the Bible for us. He tells the parable of two sons. The younger of two sons had grown weary of waiting for his father to die and pass on his inheritance. So he boldly asked his father for immediate distribution of the goods he had coming to him. Then the text declares: “And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living” (Luke 15:13).

Abandoning all sense of responsibility, the young son pursued pleasure with a ravenous appetite. He was so obsessed with his quest for pleasure that he paid no attention to how quickly his wealth was evaporating. Soon, “he had spent all” (Luke 15:14). To make matters worse, a mighty famine arose in the land, and he was completely broke. He had nothing. In desperation, he took on a job feeding swine in the fields. When he observed that the swine had more food than he did, the harsh reality of his hedonistic binge, and its consequences, came crashing down around him. He remembered that even the household servants back at his father’s house had more than enough food, while he was starving. Hence, he made the decision to go home and beg for no more status than that of a hired servant. However, the father would give him far more.

Upon his return, he received the compassionate welcome and embrace of his father. Moreover, his father clothed him with the *best robe* and put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Furthermore, the fatted calf provided more than enough food for this hungry son. Like so many hedonists before him (and after), he learned that the pleasures of sin last for only a season (Heb. 11:25). On the other hand, the pleasures available to us in the Father’s house are the purest and most permanent of pleasures!

12. **Demas.** No lectureship on worldliness, and no lecture on hedonism, would be complete without a reference to Demas. One of the saddest statements in the entire Bible is recorded in 2 Timothy 4:10. Therein, Paul wrote, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having

loved this present world.” A co-worker of Paul in the ministry of the gospel (Col. 4:14; Phm. 24), Demas exchanged it all for the fleeting pleasures of the world. Paul does not give us all of the details as to how Demas apostatized. When did this love affair begin? Did it happen abruptly, or gradually? We are not told, and it really does not matter. Paul does tell us that the root cause of his departure was that he fell in love with the present world. The result is the same.

Apparently, Demas was blinded to the fact that the joy of worldly pleasures can never equal that of heavenly treasures. Sadly, the spirit of Demas is alive and well today. How many times have we seen a once-faithful member of the Lord’s church fall away because of the lure of worldly pleasures? Hopefully, this lectureship, and this lectureship book, will do much to dissuade some in the Lord’s church today from following the path of Demas.

13. **Various New Testament Passages.** Hosts of passages in the New Testament demonstrate the practice of hedonism to one degree or another. Paul mentioned those who were “serving divers lusts and pleasures” (Tit. 3:3). He described some as “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). In fact, “Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts” (2 Tim. 3:6). He also foretold of a time when some would not endure sound doctrine but would instead, “After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). Like those of Isaiah’s day, they would say, “Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10).

The apostle Peter also described the hedonistic conduct of those who have “walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). He also mentioned those who “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government” (2 Pet. 2:10). These same individuals “count it pleasure to riot in the day time” and “allure through the lusts of the flesh” (2 Pet. 2:13, 18). Numerous Scriptures describe various individuals as “walking after their own lusts” (2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 16, 18).

14. **Modern day demonstrations of hedonism.** Obviously, an entire book could be written to chronicle the episodes of modern day hedonism. All one has to do to see a demonstration of modern day hedonism is to turn on the television. Whether it is the outrageous,

vulgar, and blasphemous antics of Howard Stern, or the misleading emphasis of the show “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous,” the television airwaves are saturated with hedonistic inducements. Certainly, modern media has become one of Satan’s greatest servants in accomplishing his goal of keeping our minds on secular matters.

Through modern television programming, Satan’s henchmen (television producers, scriptwriters, etc.) constantly assault and bombard the very foundations of our faith. The airwaves are full of “electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual and narcotic that childhood itself appears to be under siege” (*U. S. News and World Report*). Analyst and columnist Michael Novak wrote, “Our own public moral culture formed preeminently by television, cinema and music is a disgrace to the human race.” Even the *Ladies Home Journal* published an article entitled “Living In Truly Tasteless Times,” in which the author asserted:

The American people appear to be unshockable now, desensitized even to genuine brutality—not to mention simple civility—and possessed of an insatiable appetite for whatever might once have been thought unsavory, crude, crass and even decadent...our popular culture is becoming flashier, trashier, more vulgar and exploitive.

And how did this happen? How did television get from where it was in the 1950s to where it is in the 1990s? The answer is quite simple. Slowly, but surely, Satan’s servants in the media have pecked away and chipped away at our sensitivities, steadily seducing us into the surrender of our moral convictions until we have practically lost our ability to blush (cf., Jer. 6:15). Like the frog in the kettle, we have been imperceptibly boiled, hard-boiled towards sin, one degree at a time.

For example, contrast the attitude towards homosexuality today with that of a few years ago. There is unquestionably more tolerance towards homosexuality today than in the past. And why? Again, it is because Satan has utilized his servants in the media to *soften* our moral objections. In 1991, the television program *L. A. Law* introduced its audience to the bisexual character C. J. Lamb. Amanda Donohoe, who played C. J., said, “C. J. is as close as you can get to my personality in a fictional role. What I’ve decided to bring to C. J. are my sensibilities, my political views, and my morals.” What are Donohoe’s *morals*? She once starred in *Lair of the White Worm*, a movie in which her character spits on a crucifix. Commenting on this

scene in the film, she said, “I’m an atheist, so it was actually a joy. Spitting on Christ was a great deal of fun—especially for me being a woman...I can’t embrace a male god who has persecuted female sexuality throughout the ages.” This servant of Satan was shown kissing another woman on the mouth during the February 7, 1991, episode of *L. A. Law*. It is just one more example of the devil attempting to depict as normal that which God has decreed abnormal.

Modern songwriters promote hedonism in lyrics that Satan himself could have written. A popular singing group known as Salt N’ Pepa has a song entitled, “None of Your Business.” The song contains the following lyrics: “If I wanna take a guy home with me tonight, it’s none of your business; if she wanna be a freak and sell it on the weekend, it’s none of your business.” This author knows of more than one *Christian* mother who has purchased the compact disc containing this song as a present for their teenage daughters.

For more evidence of hedonism, read. Look at the headlines on the magazines located next to the checkout stand at the supermarket and you will see hedonism personified. One of the popular authors of articles for “women’s magazines” is Helen Gurley Brown. In one of her articles, she redefined the meaning of *promiscuity*. It used to be that *promiscuity* meant “having sexual relationships with more than one person, outside of marriage.” However, Helen Gurley Brown wrote that *promiscuity* is: “Having sexual relations with more than one person **in the same day**.”¹⁰ This philosophy of romance is not just confined to the magazine rack. With just a quick peek at some of the book titles at the local bookstore, one will see the influence of hedonism. Furthermore, books like *Heather Has Two Mommies* target children to accept the homosexual agenda. The book seeks to explain that a little girl named Heather has a family just like other kids do; she just has two mommies. In other words, Heather has two lesbians for parents. The book goes on to *explain* to its young audience that Heather’s family is not freakish or deserving of censure. Indeed, hedonism is alive and well on planet earth!

Even in the modern church, there are examples of members who seek pleasure more diligently than they do the things of God. The “lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). Our recreations, vacations, and vocations often preoccupy us from our God-given purpose. Satan does not mind

an occasional visit to the church pew if we sit in our easy chair the rest of the time.

The plain truth of the matter is that we have all too regularly put the Lord's work on the back-burner while we selfishly pursue our own pleasures. Looking at the middle letter of *sin* captures the thrust of sin. The middle letter is "I." That is precisely where the problem lies. I will do what I want to do, when I want to do it, but I will not inconvenience myself to walk across the street to talk to my neighbor about Jesus.

A preacher can call a member of the church and ask him to assist in a Bible study one evening for approximately an hour and receive a negative answer on the basis that the church member is just too busy. Yet, the preacher can call this same member and invite him to play a round of golf or go to a ball game, or go fishing/hunting, activities which all take much longer than an hour, and suddenly the busy church member can find an immediate opening in his schedule. Why? Because he loves the world more than he loves the spiritual.

HEDONISM DEFEATED

The philosophy of Hedonism can be defeated, both philosophically and biblically. The philosophical weakness of hedonism is seen in what is known as "the hedonistic paradox." R. C. Sproul explains:

If the hedonist fails to achieve the measure of pleasure he seeks, he experiences frustration. Frustration is painful. If we fail to find the pleasure we are seeking, the result is frustration and pain. The more we seek pleasure and the more we fail to achieve it, the more pain we introduce into our lives. On the other hand, if we achieve all the pleasure we seek we become sated and bored. Boredom is the counterpart of frustration; it is also painful to the pleasure seeker. Again, the paradox: if we achieve what we want, we lose; if we don't achieve what we are searching for, we lose. The result of hedonism is the exact opposite of its goal. Its only fruit is ultimate pain.¹¹

From a biblical standpoint, hedonism is defeated by the constant reminders in Scripture of the result of pursuing the pleasures of the flesh. The reason that the Holy Spirit led John to write, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world" (1 John 2:15) is two-fold. First, we should not love the world because "all that *is* in the world...is not of the Father" (1 John 2:16). If we love the world, we make ourselves enemies of God (Jam. 4:4), and the love of the Father is not in us (1 John 2:15). The second reason we should not love the

world is because “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17).

In Psalm 73, the psalmist admitted his envy of the hedonistic man who prospers in the world and increases in riches, despite the fact that he has no concern for God (Psa. 73:1-10). Whereas the wicked man appears to be immune to suffering, the psalmist laments the fact that, although he has been trying to serve God, he is plagued and chastened all the day long. This was a painful and perplexing dilemma for the psalmist until—until he saw the end. The psalmist learned that the ungodly man, who lives in the lap of luxury in this life, will receive his just desserts in the next life (Psa. 73:22). Contrariwise, the godly man will receive the privilege of leaving this painful existence on earth to live in glory with God forevermore (Psa. 73:23-24). Therefore, it is worth it to live for God in this life, even if such a life requires sacrifice.

The apostle Paul knew something about the pain and sacrifice involved in serving the Lord (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Yet, instead of seeking the worldly pleasure around him, he took “pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor. 12:10). He did this because it made him spiritually strong. The Psalmist declared, “*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes*” (Psa. 119:71).

Why did Paul buffet his body and keep it under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27) rather than allowing sin to reign in his mortal body? He answers: “Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul said, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). No wonder Paul was willing to fight the good fight of faith and pour himself out as a drink offering. He never took his eyes off of the crown of life that awaited him (2 Tim. 4:6-8; Jam. 1:12).

Sometimes our thirst for a certain pleasure is the prelude to our downfall. For instance, monkey trappers in North Africa have a clever method of catching their prey. They carve out an opening in a number of gourds, fill them with nuts, and fasten them to a tree branch. The opening is just large enough for the monkey to stick his forepaw into it. However, when the hungry monkey grasps a handful of nuts, the hole is too small for him to withdraw his clenched fist. Greatly agi-

tated, the monkey begins to wail at his inability to partake of what he has in his clutches. The trappers merely follow these wailing sounds right to their prey. The monkey could, of course, let go of the fistful of nuts and draw his hand out of the gourd, but his lust for these nuts is so great that he loses all sense of reason and allows himself to be brought into bondage.

Is not this a picture of many today? With his crafty devices, the devil appeals to certain appetites of the flesh. As long as we hold on to the worldly bait we cannot escape from Satan's trap. Satan keeps on urging, "Do not let go! Enjoy the pleasure of your sin just a little bit longer!" This is the essence of hedonism. However, let us never forget that "to be carnally minded *is* death" (Rom. 8:6). For that reason Paul described the one living in pleasure as "dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6). Hedonism is a deadly philosophy! We need to recognize that when lust has conceived it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, will bring forth death, the second death which is the eternal lake of fire (Jam. 1:13-15; Rev. 21:8). Thus, we need to take heed lest our hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and we be found unprepared on the day when God will judge us (Luke 21:34).

CONCLUSION

As we stand against the wiles of the devil, let us remember the following admonitions from Holy Scripture:

- Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof (Rom. 6:12).
- *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh...they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:16, 24).
- Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22)
- But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof* (Rom. 13:14).

In addition to the above admonitions, the following words from Peter seem so fitting as a conclusion to this lesson:

Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

ENDNOTES

¹Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 138.

²R. C. Sproul, *Lifeviews: Make An Impact on Culture and Society* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), p. 130.

³T. Rees, "Epicureans," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 2:964.

⁴*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, NY: Gramercy Books, 1996), p. 652.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Rees, 2:965.

⁷All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁸Sproul, pp. 131-132.

⁹William S. Sahakian, *History of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Books, 1968), p. 45.

¹⁰Sproul, p. 136.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 131.

HUMANISM

Daniel Denham



Christ in Pensacola.

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The Greek philosopher Protagoras (c. 490-410 B.C.) wrote, “Man is the measure of all things; of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not.”¹ Protagoras is often considered to be the father of humanism as it is most commonly conceived to be. His statement that “man is the measure” is also taken to be the classical depiction of humanism. The actual notion of man as god goes back to the lie of Satan to Mother Eve in the beginning (Gen. 3:5). According to Protagoras, man is the pinnacle of universal development and order. He, according to his dictum, is also the relative standard by which the existence or non-existence of things is measured.

It is the scope of this study to examine briefly the subject of humanism and to provide a basic overview of its peculiar history, tenets, and objectives. Every faithful child of God needs to be aware of the threat that is posed to our religious rights and freedoms by this system of belief. Every American needs to be awake to the real dangers and destructive effects this system is now pressing upon our society. Humanism is a threat to every institution that has served so well to make our nation great. Our system of government, our schools, our medical institutions, our law enforcement agencies, our churches, and even our homes are targeted for either drastic change or utter destruction by humanism’s adherents.

DEFINITION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANISM

Humanism is philosophically “employed in contrast to an opposing term e.g., ‘absolutism,’ ‘theism,’ in which human values and appreciations are presumably less central.”² The doctrine of Protagoras was principally (though not entirely) concerned with the lack of absolutes as pertained to epistemology, the study of how one knows something to be or not to be the case. Protagoras himself was more an “absolute” agnostic than an atheist.

However, “In more recent centuries [especially since the time of the Enlightenment] the term has been often used in contrast to theism, locating in man the source of goodness and creativity.”³ It philosophically involves the rejection of all absolutes, not only those pertaining to epistemology. It especially rejects the idea that divinely-appointed absolutes exist. In so doing, it is essentially *atheistic* in nature. It is often, thus, preceded by the modifier *secular* (hence “secular humanism”) to stress a worldly connection for the philosophy as distinct from a heavenly or sacred one. The emphasis is upon what man is, thinks, feels, and does; not Deity, which the humanist considers to be a figment borne of ignorance and superstition. Corliss Lamont, a humanist of some standing, writes, “There is no place in the Humanist worldview for either immortality or God in the valid meanings of those terms.” He then adds, “Humanism contends that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination, created the gods.”⁴ The famous psychotherapist and father of “modern psychology,” Sigmund Freud, contended that religion is an illusion, “the projection of a wish.” He held that there really is nothing “out there”—no God. He postulated that man invented the concept of God (or the gods) in order to explain the puzzling and often terrifying phenomena of nature.⁵ This view of the origin of theism lies at the heart of humanism.

Secular humanism, according to Whitehead and Conlan writing in *Texas Tech Law Review*, is itself a religion in that “it directs itself toward religious beliefs and practices, that are in active opposition to traditional theism.”⁶ They note, “Humanism is a doctrine centered solely on human interests and values. Therefore, humanism deifies Man collectively and individually, whereas theism worships God.”⁷ The humanist and positivist philosopher, August Comte (1789-1857), thus, “formulated an ecclesiastical framework for ‘the worship of

humanity.’”⁸ He maintained, according to W. L. Reese, that “to bring intellect and feeling together a religion of humanity is needed.”⁹ So Man becomes his own “god.” This is the essence of humanistic thought!

In the development of modern humanism the English philosopher F. C. S. Schiller (1864-1937) played a prominent role. He authored a book titled *Humanism* in 1903. Calling himself both a pragmatist and a humanist, he maintained: “Truth was relative both to the evidence and to the purpose of the investigator.” Though in later years he professed belief in a finite God, the main focus of his philosophy was upon the human person, his freedom, and creativity.¹⁰

Another prominent figure in the development of humanistic thought was John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey called his particular view of philosophy both “instrumentalism” and “naturalism.” By the former he meant, “Ideas are instruments that lead to action and are to be understood in terms of the actions to which they do or may lead.”¹¹ The latter expression reflects his personal belief in naturalism. Dewey held that nature is all there is. He consequently believed, “Values, as well as facts, can be discovered in, and sanctioned by, experience.”¹² The result is a form of “ethical naturalism.” Human experience becomes the key to discovering values and *truth*. The means that most efficiently works to accomplishing the desired end is sanctioned by the experience. Hence, both empiricism and pragmatism form key aspects of his philosophy. Dewey exerted the most profound influence on Western educational thought in general and on American thought in particular in the 20th Century!

The 1930s were seminal in the growth of the influence of Humanism. In 1930 Charles Francis Potter authored his *Humanism: A New Religion*. Potter declared, “Education is the most powerful ally of humanism. What can theistic Sunday schools, meeting for an hour once a week, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching?”¹³ 1931 saw the publishing of Curtis Willford Reese’s book titled *Humanist Religion*, which led to the formation of the *American Humanist Association* (or AHA).¹⁴

In 1933 thirty-four humanists drafted and published *Humanist Manifesto I*, which sets forth the basic tenets and aims of humanism. Since that time it has garnered the signature of over two hundred prominent humanists. Its original signers included John Dewey and

Charles F. Potter. In 1973 on the 40th anniversary of the aforementioned document, *Humanist Manifesto II* was published and signed by one hundred and forty-four humanists. It re-emphasized and expanded upon the matters discussed in the first manifesto. Among its signers were: Isaac Asimov, John Ciardi, Francis Crick, Albert Ellis, Antony Flew, Sidney Hook, Paul Kurtz, Corliss Lamont, Lester Mondale, Andre Sakharov, and B. F. Skinner. Others later added their support to the second document. These included: Alfred Ayer, Joseph Fletcher, Betty Friedan, Sol Gordon, Sir Julian Huxley, and Herbert J. Muller.¹⁵

HUMANISM IS A RELIGION

Legally, humanism has been recognized to be a religion. In 1961, in *Torasco v. Watkins*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that secular humanism is indeed a religion, and in 1965 Daniel Seeger was granted by that court status as a conscientious objector because of his religious beliefs, secular humanism.¹⁶

The writings of humanists themselves identify humanism as a religion. The *Humanist Manifesto I* reads expressly, “Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant....The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.”¹⁷ One should also remember the books of Potter, *Humanism: A New Religion*, and Reese, *Humanist Religion*, as well as Auguste Comte’s foundational philosophy of a “worship of humanity.” John J. Dunphy in the January/February 1983 issue of *The Humanist* wrote:

These [humanists] teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—preschool day care or large state university. The classroom must and will become an area of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with its adjacent evils and misery and the new faith of Humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian idea of “Love Thy Neighbor” will finally be achieved.¹⁸

There exists compelling evidence, which proves that even humanists consider secular humanism to be a religion, despite their protests to the contrary. When it suits their needs, it is a religion, but when the term is viewed as a *stigma* or impedes their circumvention of the

United States Constitution, then it is denied! Ethics and morality indeed!

ATHEISM IN A NUT-SHELL

James Curry, past president of the AHA, has said bluntly, “Humanism is a polite term for atheism.”¹⁹ Ronald Nash in his excellent book titled *The Closing of the American Heart* details the influence of John Dewey upon American education, and quotes Dewey as having written:

Faith in the prayer-hearing God is an unproved and outmoded faith. There is no God and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes.²⁰

Julian Huxley, former secretary of the United Nations department known as UNESCO, wrote:

The time is ripe for the dethronement of gods from their dominant position in our interpretation of destiny, in favor of a naturalistic type of belief system. The supernatural is being swept out of the universe in a flood of new knowledge of what is natural. It will soon be as impossible for an intelligent educated man or woman to believe in a god as it is now to believe that the earth is flat, that flies can be spontaneously generated, that disease is a divine punishment, or that death is always due to witchcraft.²¹

The humanist in exalting man seeks to dethrone the God of heaven! The Word of God declares, “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*” (Psa. 14:1).²² The humanist imagines himself as too sophisticated and educated to believe in God. He believes that those who believe in God are superstitious and foolish, but in his own arrogance he becomes the real unreflecting and morally vapid fool. The atheist willfully and blithely closes his eyes to the abundant evidence that God has given in the created realm which He made (Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). He scoffs at the three basic arguments (teleological, cosmological, and anthropological) for God’s existence and gives them but short shrift.²³ The principal reason is that he does not desire a God who will “talk back to him” and impose upon him some standard of conduct. Thus, he rejects God “out of hand.” He assumes that nature is all there is, and that rules God out of the picture.

Humanism, based on naturalism, is therefore rank, blasphemous atheism! Arthur Davison Ficke, a humanist, has written, “Humanism’s

central ideas, if I understand correctly, are...that nature alone, out of its finite evolutionary complexity, gave rise to man, and that there exists no supernatural powers."²⁴ Harold R. Rafton boasted, "I propose to meet the issue squarely by fostering Humanism, a rationalistic religion based on science, centered in man, rejecting supernaturalism but retaining our cherished moral values."²⁵ And as to the possibility of wedding humanism to Christianity in some fashion, Paul Kurtz writes:

Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe. Christian humanism would be possible only for those who are willing to admit that they are atheistic humanists. It surely does not apply to God-intoxicated believers.²⁶

Time and space prevent a thorough discussion of the question of the existence of God. A number of fine works have been written addressing this matter thoroughly.²⁷

THE DOGMA OF EVOLUTION

As observed in Fickes's quotation above, belief in the dogma of macro-evolution is essential to humanism. Wendell Thomas concurs by stating:

As one endeavoring to work out a humanistic naturalism, I agree with the humanist belief in continuous emergent evolution, in the creative life for all, in a socialized and cooperative economic order. With humanists I protest against dualism and supernaturalism.²⁸

Noted scientist Carl Sagan has asserted, "Evolution is a fact amply demonstrated by the fossil record and by contemporary molecular biology. Natural selection is a successful theory devised to explain the fact of evolution."²⁹ Sagan frequently boasted of his confidence in evolution, especially the Darwinian model, but declined Thomas B. Warren's invitation to debate the subject (the historical account of which is quite eye-opening in itself).³⁰

George Gaylord Simpson, the father of modern evolutionary thought, has written, "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned."³¹ He then went on to add, "He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is matter."³²

Kurt E. M. Baier, a humanist, affirmed:

Biology teaches us that the species man was not specially created but is merely, in a long chain of evolutionary changes of forms of life, the last link, made in the likeness not of God but of nothing so much as an ape.³³

Thus, you have it. Man is but a little more advanced form of Bonzo the chimp!

Darwinism is the model most preferred by humanists, though some will from time to time postulate some form of saltation theory like that of Goldschmidt's "hopeful monsters" or Gould's "punctuated equilibrium," which is really a reincarnation of the former. (The saltationists tend to "run for cover" when their Darwinist and Neo-Darwinist cousins whip out their pens and go to writing!) Phillip E. Johnson has documented extensively the close-minded philosophic adherence to the naturalism of Darwinism on the part of evolutionists like Sagan, Asimov, and company.³⁴

Even the absurdity of spontaneous generation is entertained in defense of a godless origin for man and the universe. Biology affirms the law of biogenesis—life comes from life. But Darwin's children are compelled to resurrect the medieval ghost of spontaneous generation, or abiogenesis, life from non-life. Asimov brazenly asserted in 1984: "Simple forms of life came into being more than three billion years ago, having formed spontaneously from nonliving matter."³⁵ Sagan defends the same basic premise in his book *Cosmos*.³⁶ This defense of spontaneous generation is necessary from the perspective that naturalism really affords no other ground on which evolutionists can stand by virtue of their discarding the supernatural *en toto*. It is surprising that they would "own up" to its defense by using the actual language they do, given their penchant to rail against the medieval version as in the quote given earlier from Julian Huxley. The same fundamental principle of biogenesis that defeats the one repudiates the other. It is especially interesting that Asimov defended spontaneous generation in the quote from 1984, while calling it bad science in 1960 in his book *The Wellsprings of Life*.³⁷ He even cited the Bible as being opposed to the notion of spontaneous generation and praised its accuracy on this account! He wrote therein: "In fact, the Bible seems to speak out clearly against the notion of spontaneous generation." He then forcefully added:

I would like to go into detail about this, not because the Bible is, or ever was intended to be, a scientific textbook, but because the Bible

has so often been used to combat some of the ideas of modern science, that I think it would be refreshing to show that it can also be used to support some of these ideas.³⁸

Many excellent materials exist which thoroughly refute the evolutionary presuppositions of humanism.³⁹ For the sake of our youth, congregations should devote considerable time to the study of origins, the defense of creationism, and the refutation of evolution. Apologetics Press and National Christian Press, especially, provide much needed sound and sensible materials to these ends.

ETHICS, MORALITY, AND HUMANISM

George Gaylord Simpson held that “good and evil, right and wrong, concepts irrelevant in nature except from the human viewpoint, become real and pressing features of the whole cosmos as viewed morally because morals arise only in man.”⁴⁰ Thus, morality (as well as ethics) involves no absolutes, according to atheism: for it is purely a human construct.

The issue has been expressed by humanist Max Hocutt, who wrote, “The fundamental question of ethics is, who makes the rules? God or men?” He then added, “The theistic answer is that God makes them. The humanistic answer is that men make them. This distinction between theism and humanism is the fundamental division in moral theory.”⁴¹

The *Humanist Manifesto II* affirms:

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction....In areas 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 recognize. While we do not approve of exploitive, 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 be considered in themselves ‘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.⁴²

The logical consequence of throwing God out of the picture is that man must determine for himself what is morally and ethically “good.” *Good* takes upon itself a transient, situational, and arbitrary meaning.

Under secular humanism all actions are morally neutral. It is only the personal perception or values of the individual that determine for that individual whether the action is *good* or *evil*. Objective good and evil do not exist according to humanism. Subsequently, the humanist/atheist has no real or objective basis on which he can raise the argument from evil against theism—while at the same time, under humanism anything goes!

Winford Claiborne provides an excellent summation of this latter point in an article in *Embattled Christianity*. Brother Claiborne writes:

The application of humanistic ethical values allows men to do precisely what they wish to do. If there is no God, there are no ultimate values. If there are no ultimate values, how can one call any act wrong? Euthanasia, infanticide, suicide, abortion, rape, incest, and bestiality [sic] are simply matters of personal preference. If there are no absolute values, why was it wrong to kill six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of German old people, because as Hitler said, the old people are “useless eaters?” On what basis can one condemn racial, social, sexual, or any other kind of discrimination or abuse? Dostoyevsky once wrote, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.”⁴³

The humanists do insert certain provisos, which infer the notion that an action can be validly deemed as good and moral providing that it brings no harm to others or compels them to engage in activities against their will. The problem with the provisos is that they are void of any real substance. If ethics and morality are not objectively based, then they must be subjectively based. This in turn means that they are *relative* to the individual’s own personal feelings and situation. Therefore, one cannot attach an objective meaning to: *harm*, *exploitive*, *denigrating*, etc. If one *feels* that his action does no *harm*, or even if one feels that there is really no such thing as *harm*, then on what grounds could his action be condemned or punished. The provisos also fail to observe that actions do not occur in a vacuum. The consensual sex between two men affects more than the participants. The current “AIDS” pandemic is sufficient proof of that! Furthermore, who is to determine whether one’s actions or choices are *normal*? The sadistic, ritual murders committed by a Ted Bundy or John Wayne Gacy could qualify as being as *normal* as a walk in the park or an act of kindness under the banner of moral relativism. In fact, *kindness* in a real and meaningful sense could not exist. Morality

would simply not exist in any real sense either! As Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl conclude, in their excellent book dealing with the problems of moral relativism:

In the end, we must accept one of two alternatives. Either relativism is true or morality is true. Either we live in a universe in which morality is a meaningless concept and thus we are forever condemned to silence regarding any moral issue, or moral rules do exist and we're beholden to a moral God who holds us accountable to His law.⁴⁴

The statement cited from the *Humanist Manifesto II* also strikes not so subtly at the key area of ethics and morals which concern humanists most—the subject of sex. Their fixation on the *need* to justify their own “sexual proclivities,” which is euphemistic for adultery, premarital fornication, homosexuality, bisexuality, group sex, bestiality, incest, or any other possible deviancy, serves to motivate certain adherents in the humanist movement. In his book *Why I Am Not A Christian*, humanist philosopher Bertrand Russell harped upon what he termed the *superstitions* of Christianity in particular on the subject as justification for rejecting the notion of God.⁴⁵ Aldous Huxley, who later would dabble in drugs and occultism, wrote:

For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation...from a certain political and economic system and...from a certain system of morality.

He then confessed: “We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.”⁴⁶

Humanism, thus, becomes a religion of license. Hedonism, which holds that sensual pleasure is the ultimate good, is a natural consequence of this system of ethics. Albert Ellis, a signer of *Humanist Manifesto II*, is a psychotherapist who has written numerous books and articles on sexual matters. In his book *Sex and the Liberated Man*, Dr. Ellis held that any kind of sexual behavior that appeals to one is to be encouraged, whether it is living with other men, living as a Trappist monk, or living with one's dog.⁴⁷ He encouraged his readers to experiment with various expressions of human sexuality, including promiscuous heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bestiality.⁴⁸ The experiencing of sensual pleasure becomes the end within itself, and everything else flows from that premise.

The humanist in very vivid and dramatic tones depicts man as an autonomous being, which appeals to every man's sense of freedom. However, humanism, being dependent on raw naturalism and its stepchild of evolution, holds likewise that man is but "matter in motion." Even man's *free* thoughts are derived from the chance combination of the molecules that compose and actuate the chemical processes in his brain. The brain itself is only matter and nothing more. All that man is or can ever hope to be is a corporeal mass of atoms and molecules that will one day disperse, and the totality of the human persona will return to the constituent elements from whence it is derived. This is a form of determinism. Under determinism, man is not free in any meaningful sense. Freedom and autonomy are mere illusions. His entire life, actions, and even his most highly organized thoughts and cherished dreams are predetermined by the accidental and random combination and positioning of the atoms and molecules that compose him and his environment! The universe is a closed system. This involves necessarily a self-contradiction. Its crass materialism makes all of life utterly meaningless. This is the fatal futility of humanism. It is a religion of despair. Life becomes as one writer put it "a tale told by an idiot."

Theodore Jouffroy expressed this sense of hopelessness in writing of his own conversion to atheism:

I knew then that at the bottom of myself there was nothing left standing, that all I had believed about myself, about God, and about my destiny in this life and that to come, I now believed no more. This moment was frightful; and when towards morning, I threw myself exhausted on my bed, it seemed to me as if I could feel my former life, so cheerful and complete, die away, and before me there was opened another life, dark and dispeopled, where henceforth I was to live alone, alone with my fatal thought which had just exiled me thither, and which I was tempted to curse.⁴⁹

The skeptic Renan sighed: "We are living on the perfume of an empty vase."⁵⁰ The seemingly indefatigable skeptic Col. Robert Ingersoll, on the occasion of his brother's funeral at which Col. Ingersoll delivered the eulogy, moaned: "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry."⁵¹ Given his humanism, the French philosopher Albert Camus conceded: "There is but one truly serious philo-

sophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.”⁵² Woody Allen is a disciple of Camus, and that explains a lot!

There are many other moral and ethical ills that attend humanism. The books, *Embattled Christianity* edited by Terry Hightower and *Understanding the Times* by David A. Noebel, which deal with these matters in a more thorough and systematic way, cannot be recommended too highly.

THE AGENDA OF HUMANISM

In a chapter titled “Sound the Alarm: The Goals of Humanism” in *Embattled Christianity*, brother Robert L. Waggoner devotes several pages to a discussion of the long-range agenda of secular humanism. The basic goals, which he so ably analyzes and documents, shall be briefly listed, along with a few observations on one of them. Waggoner shows:

1. Humanists want to replace religions based on supernatural beliefs (like Christianity) with a religion based only on natural beliefs.
2. Humanists want to replace biblical ethics with Humanistic ethics.
3. Humanists want to replace the family as the basic unit of society with the autonomous individual.
4. Humanists want to replace our republican form of representative self-government with a democratic socialist government.
5. Humanists want to replace multi-national governments with a one-world government.⁵³

The third goal of the humanist agenda listed above refers to the threat which it bears for the home. Humanists are not at all happy with the nuclear family. They love to poke fun at the “Ozzie and Harriet” and “Father Knows Best” type of families depicted on-screen in the early days of television. Humanistic psychotherapy is doing its best to convince everyone that all families are inherently dysfunctional and that individual expression of one’s self should not be stilted by authority figures of any kind, which includes Mom and Dad. Children are to have authority as well as parents. Amazingly, the humanistic psychologists, philosophers, and educators posit them-

selves to be the authorities to be heeded in all matters. The result is a new oligarchy headed by them.

Marriage itself is even under attack. Homosexual activism and radical feminism are willing allies of humanism. For example, Betty Friedan, the god-mother of radical feminism, was one of the signers of *Humanist Manifesto II*. Paul Kurtz states: “The feminist movement was begun and has been nourished by leading humanist women.”⁵⁴

The connection between the destruction of the nuclear family and the desired sexual freedoms envisioned by humanists goes hand in hand. Lawrence Casler charges:

Marriage and family life have been largely responsible...for today’s prevailing neurotic climate, with its pervasive insecurity, and it is precisely this climate that makes so difficult the acceptance of a different, healthier way of life.⁵⁵

This “different, healthier way of life,” Casler’s article shows, involves marital infidelity! He says, “Marriage, for most people, has outlived its usefulness and is doing more harm than good.”⁵⁶ He opines, “The solution is not to make divorce more difficult to obtain, but to recognize the so-called divorce problem for what it is: a symptom of the marriage problem.”⁵⁷

Some humanists advocate a complete end to marriage as we know it. Otto Gross, a student of Freud and a pioneer of the field known as “sexual politics,” saw early in the Twentieth Century that marriage and theistic religion stood as the biggest deterrents to the kind of “sexual revolution” he advocated. He maintained that their destruction was necessary to this end.⁵⁸

The homosexual activists also are desirous of sweeping changes in both the home and the church. According to George Grant in his book *The Family under Siege*, Steve Warren, spokesman for the militant homosexual group known as ACT UP, boasts:

Now the tide has turned. We have at last come out and in so doing we have exposed the mean-spirited nature of Judeo-Christian morality. You have been narrow-minded and self-righteous. But with the help of a growing number of your own membership, we are going to force you to recant everything you have believed or said about sexuality.⁵⁹

Grant records a synopsis of an article by Steve Warren in the pro-homosexual magazine, *The Advocate*. The points outlined are startling. Observe, what Warren and his homosexual friends demands are:

- “Henceforth, homosexuality will be spoken of in your churches and synagogues as an honorable estate.”
- “You can either let us marry people of the same sex, or better yet abolish marriage altogether, since it will give the lie to everything you have said or done about sexuality.”
- “You will also instruct your young people in homosexual as well as heterosexual behavior, and you will go out of your way to make certain that homosexual youths are allowed to date, attend religious functions together, openly display affection, and enjoy each other’s sexuality without embarrassment or guilt.”
- “If any of the older people in your midst object, you will deal with them sternly, making certain they renounce their ugly and ignorant homophobia or suffer public humiliation.”
- “You will also make certain that all of the prestige and resources of your institutions are brought to bear on the community, so that laws are passed forbidding discrimination against homosexuals and heavy punishments are assessed.”
- “Finally, we will in all likelihood want to expunge a number of passages from your Scriptures and rewrite others, eliminating preferential treatment of marriage and using words that will allow for homosexual interpretations of passages describing biblical lovers.”⁶⁰

Warren, according to Grant concludes, his article with the following warning:

If all these things do not come to pass quickly, we will subject Orthodox Jews and Christians to the most sustained hatred and vilification in recent memory. We have captured the liberal establishment and the press. We have already beaten you on a number of battlefields. And we have the spirit of the age on our side. You have neither the faith nor the strength to fight us, so you might as well surrender now.⁶¹

Grant comments simply, “This is no bluff,” and then proceeds to document some of the tactics already employed by homosexual activists to effect these changes through publicity, intimidation, and violence.⁶² Brethren, it is later than we think!

Humanism is a dire threat to the survival of the home as God would have it to be. Under humanism Christ is not the head of the

man, and the man in the home is not the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23-26). Under humanism children are not obligated to obey their parents “in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1), and fathers are not to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Under humanism the marriage bed is dishonorable and whoremongers just do not exist (Heb. 13:4). Infidelity in religion is mirrored by infidelity in marriage. Under humanism Adam has Steve instead of Eve, while Eve takes up with Myrtle! Under humanism marriage is abolished and every conceivable vice is now sanctioned for the sake of the god of Sex! Abortion, eugenics, and euthanasia, incidentally, will take care of all *undesirables*.

CONCLUSION

We have examined briefly certain aspects of the doctrine of humanism, and have noted some of the grave dangers that it poses for the church, for the home, for society at large, and even for the world. These threats are real and are already being manifest through the use of the media, the liberal influences in academia and government, the dominant culture itself, and by the old-line modernist churches combined with the new post-modern and new age groups sympathetic to many humanistic goals.

The desire for a Utopia, where there exists no consequences for the kind of lives humanists wish to lead, is what ultimately drives the movement, as Gary Summers has astutely noted.⁶³ Should the humanists have their way, we all might wonder with brother Summers: “What kind of ‘Brave New World’ we are headed for: what will be the price tag for Utopia?”⁶⁴ If history is our teacher, it warns of Russian gulags and of Stalin’s contrived Ukrainian famine, of German death-camps, and Mengele-like eugenics, of Cambodian “killing fields,” of Communist Chinese “re-education” camps, and of cultural changes like Mao’s “Great Leap Forward.”

The theory of social-Darwinism, propounded by Herbert Spencer and others of “the survival of the fittest” as the social application of evolution, played a pronounced role in preparing the Germans for a Hitler, as Dusty Sklar and Heinz Hoehne remind us.⁶⁵ The roads to Dachau and Auschwitz led, at least in part, through the German biology classrooms! Now is the time for action before it is too late for our nation and our families.

ENDNOTES

¹As quoted by W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 464.

²*Ibid.*, p. 235.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1982), p. 145.

⁵Cited from Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, in *Class Notes on Apologetics*, ed. William S. Cline (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Preacher Training School), pp. 5-6.

⁶John W. Whitehead & John Conlan, "The Establishment of the Religion of Secular Humanism and its First Amendment Implications," *Texas Tech Law Review* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Law Review, 1979), X:1:29.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Reese, p. 235.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 99. Comte is probably the true father of modern secular humanism. He believed in the secularization of the sciences and was influenced heavily by both utilitarianism and English deism. Cf., Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, "Secular Humanism," *Handbook of Today's Religions* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1983), p. 460. McDowell & Stewart postulate that the Renaissance was a catalyst in the formation of modern secular humanism by its emphasis upon human achievements.

¹⁰Reese, p. 512.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Quoted by B. K. Eakman, *Cloning of the American Mind: Eradicating Morality through Education* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1998), p. 130.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁵Cf., not only the foregoing work by Eakman on the section cited above, but also Darrell Conley, "The Rise of Modern Humanism," *Embattled Christianity: A Call to Alarm the Church to Humanism*, ed. Terry Hightower (San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1989), pp. 22-23; and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), pp. 32-33.

¹⁶Noebel, pp. 33-34.

¹⁷*Humanist Manifestos I & II*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 9.

¹⁸Noebel, p. 33.

¹⁹Quoted by Darrell Conley, "The Rise of Modern Humanism," p. 19.

²⁰Quoted by Ronald Nash, *The Closing of the American Heart: What's Really Wrong with America's Schools* (Probe Books, 1990), p. 91.

²¹Quoted by Dick Sztanyo, "Humanism: History, Definition, and Doctrines," *Spiritual Sword*, January 1982, p. 4.

²²All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²³One should examine carefully brother Thomas B. Warren's debates with humanists Antony Flew, Wallace Matson, and Joe E. Barnhart. The first two concerned the existence of God, while the third was on ethics. It is interesting that Flew & Matson wound up defending agnosticism rather than blatant atheism for which

their propositions called. Barnhart attempted a defense of utilitarianism and utilitarian ethics, that pleasure was the deciding factor as to whether an act was good or evil in any meaningful sense. Thomas B. Warren has also written an outstanding book dealing with atheism: *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?* These books were all published in Jonesboro, AR by National Christian Press. The debates evidence that when atheists' feet "are held to the fire" they can only but squirm. The presumptive bias of humanism is seen clearly in the following statement made by Isaac Asimov: "I am an atheist, out and out. It took me a long time to say it. I've been an atheist for years and years, but somehow I felt it was intellectually unrespectable to say one was an atheist, because it assumed knowledge that one didn't have. Somehow it was better to say one was a humanist or an agnostic. I finally decided that I'm a creature of emotion as well as reason. **Emotionally I am an atheist. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn't I don't want to waste my time**" (emphasis added). Notice also that Asimov implicitly admitted that his decision to be an atheist was more visceral than intellectual. He was not an atheist because the logical evidence demanded that conclusion, but because he emotionally could not handle the idea that God exists. He rejected the imperative of the law of rationality, while trying to pose as being quite rational in his view of things!

²⁴Quoted by David A. Noebel, p. 61.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 57.

²⁷Cf., Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978); Patrick Glynn, *God: The Evidence* (Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1997); Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Science of God* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997); Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1986); Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996); *Cosmos, Bios, Theos*, ed. Henry Margenau & Roy Varghese (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1992); *The Creation Hypothesis*, ed. J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994); William Lane Craig, *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979); Fred Heeren, *Show Me God: What the Message from Space Is Telling Us about God*, revised edition (Wheeling, IL: Day Star Publications, 1997); *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, ed. Roy Abraham Varghese (Dallas, TX: Lewis & Stanley Publishers, 1984); as well as the debates and book by Thomas B. Warren mentioned earlier.

²⁸Quoted by David A. Noebel, p. 61. Note: Dualism holds that man possesses both a physical, corporeal body and an immaterial, spiritual entity called the soul or spirit, and that therefore man is both mortal in flesh and immortal in soul or spirit.

²⁹Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden* (New York, NY: Random House, 1977), p. 6.

³⁰Garland Elkins, "Skepticism Concerning the Second Coming," *Studies in 1, 2 Peter and Jude*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1998), pp. 252-256.

³¹George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 345.

³²Ibid.

³³Quoted by David A. Noebel, p. 267.

³⁴Cf., Phillip E. Johnson's books, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1995); *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1993); and *Defeating Darwinism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1997).

³⁵Isaac Asimov, *Science and Creationism*, ed. Ashley Montagu (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 182.

³⁶Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York, NY: Random House, 1980), pp. 30-31.

³⁷Isaac Asimov, *The Wellsprings of Life* (London, UK: Abelard & Schuman, 1960), p. 14.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁹Cf., Bolton Davidheiser, *Evolution and the Christian Faith* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969); John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Darwin's Leap of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998); R. L. Wysong, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (Midland, MI: Inquiry Press, 1984); Scott M. Huse, *The Collapse of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986); and Bert Thompson, *The Scientific Case for Creation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, n.d.); as well as the other fine works addressing this subject and cited in this thesis.

⁴⁰Simpson, p. 179.

⁴¹Max Hocutt, "Toward an Ethic of Mutual Accommodation," *Humanist Ethics*, ed. Morris B. Stover (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980), p. 137.

⁴²Kurtz, pp. 17-18.

⁴³Winford Claiborne, "How Humanism Destroys the Home and the Family," *Embattled Christianity*, p. 95.

⁴⁴Francis J. Beckwith & Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 170.

⁴⁵Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not A Christian* (London, England: Unwin Paperbacks, 1982), pp. 29-31, 56-58, et.al.

⁴⁶Aldous Huxley, "Confessions of a Professed Atheist" (1966), quoted by Bert Thompson, in *Reason and Revelation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 1996), XVI:8:62.

⁴⁷Albert Ellis, *Sex and the Liberated Man* (Seacauscus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1976), p. 21.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁴⁹Quoted from English translation of *Les Nouveaux Melanges Philosophies*, in Class Notes on Apologetics, ed. William S. Cline (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Preacher Training School), p. 9.

⁵⁰Quoted from English translation of the Preface of *L'Avenir de la Science* by James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989), p. 67.

⁵¹Quoted in *Mistakes of Ingersoll and His Answers*, ed. J. B. McClure (Chicago, IL: Rhodes & McClure Publishing Co., 1904), p. 243.

⁵²Quoted in Class Notes on Christian Evidences, ed. William S. Cline (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Preaching Training School), p. 5.

⁵³Robert Waggoner, *Embattled Christianity*, pp. 65-85.

⁵⁴Paul Kurtz, "Fulfilling Feminist Ideals: A New Agenda," *Free Inquiry*, Fall 1990, p. 21.

⁵⁵Lawrence Casler, "Permissive Matrimony: Proposals for the Future," *The Humanist*, March/April 1974, p. 5.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Eakman, p. 129.

⁵⁹Quoted by George Grant, *The Family under Siege* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1994), pp. 156-157.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 157.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 157ff.

⁶³Gary Summers, "Does Truth Exist? Is Truth Dead?" *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1997), p. 557.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Dusty Sklar, *The Nazis and the Occult* (New York, NY: Dorset Press, 1977), pp. 13ff.; Heinz Hoehne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (London, UK: Pan Books, 1981), p. 300.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Mark McWhorter



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He and his wife, Teah, homeschool their six children. They are on the Board of Roundhouse—an annual get-together for members of the church who homeschool. They are administrators of a cover school in central Alabama for members of the church who homeschool. They own and operate a brotherhood and homeschool bookstore, Chula Vista Books. Mark co-directed for two years the Ashville Road Church of Christ Lectures. He writes a weekly e-mail column for children, “Wisdom’s Corner.” He also writes for *The Electronic Gospel Herald* and *Contending for the Faith*. He has taken mission trips to Ukraine, Europe, and Belize.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a hot topic today. Almost everyone has an opinion regarding the education system in America. Much has been said in recent years about the declining standards. Newspapers and television news programs frequently tell about moral and character problems associated with the schools.

Legislators constantly come up with new laws to govern the educational system. They appropriate funds to increase spending on all sorts of educational programs with the hopes of correcting past problems. Professional education administrators, professors, and philosophers constantly proclaim new theories on teaching children. They lobby the public and the politicians for support for new programs and even new systems of teaching.

It is unfortunate that many members of the church (not to mention most individuals in today’s society) have a poor understanding of what are the true definition and purpose of education. They have lost sight of the fact that a world view determines what direction one takes in education. This chapter is not an attack on those who send their children to public school nor on those who teach there. It is a refutation of wrong thinking which pervades our society. The philosophies

inherent in this thinking have a foothold on many in the church. It affects those in public school, private school, and homeschool.

Because these philosophies are now the predominate thinking of teacher training programs at most universities, it is nearly impossible for a person being trained in the field of education to come through unscathed and unconvinced on some aspects. Because these philosophies now undergird most schools, nearly every adult now living has been exposed to them throughout their education. For these reasons, even many Bible school programs are being directed to some extent by the underlying philosophies.

DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

We find the following definition of education in the 1828 edition of *Webster's Dictionary*.

The bringing up, as of a child; instruction, formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to:...1) Enlighten the understanding, 2) Correct the temper, and 3) Form the manners and habits of youth, and 4) Fit them for usefulness in their future stations.

Notice that the teaching of facts alone is not considered education by Mr. Webster. The facts must be supported by the teaching of the proper use of those facts. This is only accomplished by instilling a proper world view. The Christian's world view is obviously centered on God. The use of all facts must have as its main goal the honoring and glorification of God.

There is no such thing as moral and value neutrality in the instilling of education in our children.¹ Gordon Clark makes an interesting point regarding this question of neutrality. He states:

Let no one fail to see the point: the school system which ignores God teaches its pupils to ignore God, and this is not neutrality but the worst form of antagonism, for it judges God to be unimportant and irrelevant in human affairs.²

Philip H. Phenix, professor at Columbia Teachers College, made this observation:

Religion as ultimate concern...provides the large framework within which education occurs. It determines perspective and basic orientation. It governs emphasis and fixes trends. Religious concern (whether or not recognized and designated as such) is the motive which actuates the educator and produces the general pattern of his work.³

Well-known educator and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said, “The essence of education is that it be religious.”⁴ Another writer adds, “Ultimately education is a spiritual process. It goes beyond technology; it transcends sensate satisfaction; it views life and man under the aspect of totality.”⁵

The reader will notice that some of the above quotes are not from individuals who could even be accused of being professed Christians. To further demonstrate our point let us use a quote from none other than UNESCO (the education arm of the United Nations—hardly a professed Christian organization): “The educational system...embodies and transmits the values, attitudes and norms of the society.”⁶

THE ALTERNATIVE OF A CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW IN EDUCATION

A viable alternative (to Christianity) must be sought. I am convinced that the battle for human-kind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as proselytizers of a new faith: A religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to carry humanist values into what they teach, regardless of the education level—preschool, day care or large state university.

The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of “love thy neighbor” will finally be achieved.⁷

The gentleman who wrote the above is a professed humanist. His statement has been well known since he made it in 1983. What is amazing is that so many people have considered it as an idle threat. Yet all one has to do is read the *Humanist Manifestos 1 & 2*, compare what is being taught today in the schools, and one will see that his was a very calculated statement. In fact, the takeover had been in process for many years before his statement.

Major advances in Humanistic Education are not likely to come simply from the proliferation of methods, training, teacher-curriculum-developers or the creation of self-renewing schools, although each of these tasks are worthy. We need guiding visions of the ‘good and honorable man’ and utopian models for the places

where we live. Human abilities are strengthened, integrated, balanced and given meaning only in the pursuit of those goals. The continuing attempt to discover “divine and golden images” and to draw forth the “good and honorable man” is the mission of Humanistic Education.⁸

“It may be that humanistic education can only exist in a humanistic society. But it might also be contended that we can only achieve a humanistic society by developing a humanistic educational system.”⁹

Listen to what another professed humanist had to say in 1976. “Our schools may not teach Johnny to read properly, but the fact that Johnny is in school until he is 16 tends to lead toward the elimination of religious superstition.” In the same article: “The average American child now acquires a high school education, and this militates against Adam and Eve and all other myths of alleged history.”¹⁰

The American people have slowly allowed biblically based values and morals to be replaced by humanistic values and morals as the foundation for education in the schools. This did not happen overnight. It has been a very gradual process but quite calculated. The individuals behind this change were motivated by a desire to move man away from dependence on God.

WHO AND WHAT

It would be impossible to discuss fully all the individuals and organizations involved in the change. Only a few will be briefly discussed.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) believed that the development of the mind follows evolutionary processes. The child passed through different maturity levels which mimicked the phases of human evolution. Spencer believed that educational curriculum should adapt the student to the contemporary world rather than promote the child to terms of an ideal. The student should be prepared to live completely in accordance with evolutionary processes.¹¹ For the three decades following the Civil War every teaching student was required to master Spencer’s theories.

Granville Stanley Hall (1844-1924) was another leader in the early modern education movement. Hall believed fully in Darwin’s biological evolution theory. He applied Darwin’s theory to sociology by stating that culture follows the evolutionary pattern of race. His was a belief in psychological recapitulation much as Spencer had put forth. Thus, the child should be reared in a very lenient and permissive

environment. Any socially unacceptable behavior was actually only “natural” behavior. The behavior was “only a stage and will pass.”¹² (Does that sound familiar? How many parents today realize that this statement and belief is rooted in anti-biblical, evolutionary thinking?)

William James is a well-known philosopher. He opposed all absolute values and denied an absolute God. According to him, teachers must beware of an absolutist attitude. Under no circumstances was the teacher to be concerned with salvation, redemption, or a trinity.¹³

Any discussion of the history of modern education would be incomplete without mentioning John Dewey. Dewey is considered the father of the modern education movement. He was an ardent believer in the theory of evolution. Nature should be the standard of our values. Philosophy as a subject did not deal with absolute values. Morality was an exercise of spontaneity, not following dictates from the past. Truth cannot be separated from our experiences. Religious ideals must be universalized. Knowledge and virtue are relative rather than absolute terms. He was opposed to inhibitions which prevailed in so many educational circles. The three R’s stood for cultural regression. The ideal of discipline which prevailed in the traditional school was contemptuous.¹⁴

Dewey wrote about a broad spectrum of topics. He was well versed in many fields and had a vision for a new society. Dewey’s work “has tended both to psychologize and socialize American education” and “to interpret to the child the new social conditions of modern society by connecting the activities of the school closely with those of real life.” He believed that “public school is the chief remedy for the ills of society.”¹⁵

Dr. George Counts was also a major role player in education in the first part of this century. He envisioned America as a coordinated, planned, and socialized economy. He praised Soviet Russia where he said “new principles of right and wrong are being forged.”¹⁶ He thought so much of the system that he translated a textbook into English for use here in the States. His goal for America can be fully seen in the following quote.

This cultural revolution possesses a single mighty integrating principle—the building of a new society in which there will be neither rich nor poor, in which the mainspring of all industry will be social need rather than private property, in which no man will be

permitted to exploit another by reason of wealth or social position, in which the curse of Eden will be lifted forever from the soul of woman, in which a condition of essential equality will unite all races and nations into one brotherhood.¹⁷

A major conference was held in Cleveland in 1915. The major personalities within the educational field attended and together they formulated major premises upon which education in America should be directed. The four major premises were: (1) Absolute faith should be placed in science and evolutionary theory, (2) Children can be trained much like animals using the new behavioral psychology techniques, (3) Religion and traditional values are an obstacle to social progress, and (4) Socialism is morally superior to capitalism.¹⁸

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) is a famous psychologist renowned for his Third Force theory of self-actualization.¹⁹ Maslow's theory has become an accepted fact not only within the education community but within society as a whole. Even many conservative professed Christians state concern regarding their children's self-actualization. They should better understand exactly what is inherent in Maslow's conception of this process and what he saw as the self-actualized individual.

Self-actualizers have what Maslow calls "psychological freedom"... He claims that self-actualized people all have clear ideas of right and wrong based on their own experience rather than blind acceptance of revelation. A characteristic of the self-actualized person is the low degree of self-conflict. He is not at war with himself, his "personality is integrated." In other words, the self-actualized person has had his conscience destroyed. He is completely free because he is not bound by Biblical moral laws. He does not have to resist satanic temptation because he no longer recognizes temptation. This man is, as Maslow says, "his own God."²⁰

RESULTS

From what we have covered so far, it is not hard to see that the educational results would not be good if indeed these individuals were successful in implementing their desires and plans. The difficulty lies in getting people to understand that this is what has happened. Since the general education system in place today is different than it was in the century before, most people living today were educated under the modern system. Initially there was major resistance to this movement,²¹ most of it from religious leaders. But eventually as more

individuals were graduated from under the system, the system was accepted.²²

We have evolved these fundamental principles of action, as has been said, only after long public discussion and conflict. Time was required to set forth the arguments and convince a majority of our people as to the desirability of accepting them, and still more time to permit the necessary extension from an acceptance in principle to an acceptance in reality.²³

This was written over 70 years ago. Is it so hard to conclude that things have changed for the better? Are not the fruits of our society enough to prove that a godless system of education has taken firm hold?

With a God-centered education comes a belief in creation, law and order, morality, principles of life, discipline, supply side economics, right of private ownership, stewardship, catastrophism, man's dominion over the earth, and proper family roles to just name a few.

Compare this to a humanistically-centered education which produces a belief in evolution, existentialism/liberalism, situation ethics, values clarification, permissivism, Marxism, collectivism/communism, materialism, uniformitarianism, environmentalism, and feminism, just to name a few.

The outgrowth of worldliness from the humanistic world view brings selfishness, easy divorce/family breakdown, irresponsibility, immorality/amorality, homosexuality, drug/alcohol abuse, rape, depression, doomsdayitis/nihilism, suicide, rebellion to authority, hostility to traditional religion, abortion, ignorance, Keynesian economics, inflation, big government control and censorship, and a host of other problems that space does not allow mention.

If our children do not think like Christians when they study history, math, or science, then they are not obeying the command to love God with all their minds. The child must be taught how to love the Lord God with all the mind. If parents fail at this, a child may pick up a non-Biblical worldview from someone else. At some point, the child will see the conflict between the two views and reject one teaching and accept the other, or he will become intellectually schizophrenic in his worldview. He will throw a little switch in his mind when he goes to church and he will believe this, and when he goes back to the office or to the college classroom, he will flip another switch in order to believe that.²⁴

It is unfortunate that

in ignorance, Christians are aiding and abetting anti-Christianity in America. More than any other factor, it is the weakness of Christian character and scholarship that is responsible for this country's apostasy from its founding Christian principles of education, government and economics....The dissolution of Christian character has resulted from generations of unbiblical education among Christian institutions of teaching and learning.²⁵

No matter what the choice of schooling, the parent must be diligent to see that the proper world view underpins the philosophy of education. Any aberration from such will only bring problems in the child's spiritual life. It is easy to readily accept modern psychological education theories, particularly when one has been taught it exclusively. But one must study and compare everything presented with Scripture as the Bereans in Acts 17:11.

Martin Luther once remarked:

I am much afraid that the schools will prove the gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt.²⁶

Consider the following Scriptures and examine whether these are applicable to your choice of educational schooling, to your educational/child rearing philosophies, and/or being instilled in your child: Psalm 127:3-4; Proverbs 22:6; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Judges 17:6; Isaiah 53:6; Proverbs 19:18; Ephesians 6:4; and Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

Can your child truly say:

Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For thy lovingkindness *is* before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked (Psa. 26:1-5).²⁷

Do you truly take the following seriously: "He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Pro. 13:20)?

Have you properly applied this Scripture to your child's education?

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

And finally, remember the admonition of our Lord in Luke 6:40, "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." A child will emulate the teachers and philosophies to which he has been most exposed—and which has not been refuted strongly enough.

We must do our part in making sure that we arm ourselves with the knowledge to recognize false theories, philosophies, and systems that our children will be confronting. If we do not, our children will be exposed to worldly influences which will possibly lead them to live worldly lives.

May the Lord bless each of us and give us wisdom to make the proper decisions with our children. May He give us the strength and will-power to combat the ever-pervasive humanism in our educational system. And may He give us the fortitude needed to bring up godly children rather than worldly children.

ENDNOTES

¹Ray E. Ballman, *The How and Why of Home Schooling* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), p. 75. He points out that true education integrates faith in Jesus Christ and the content and process of learning. True education seeks to train not just the mind but also the heart and soul.

²Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1988), p. 207.

³Philip H. Phenix, *Religious Concerns in Contemporary Education* (New York, NY: Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959), p. 19.

⁴Quoted in John F. Gardner, *The Experience of Knowledge: Essays on American Education* (Garden City, NY: Waldorf Press, 1975), p. 211.

⁵Frederick Mayer, *Foundations of Education* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, Inc., 1963), p. 169.

⁶From a UNESCO document quoted in Caroline F. Ware, K. M. Panikkar, and J.M. Romein, "The Twentieth Century," *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966), 6:897.

⁷John J. Dunphy, *The Humanist* (January/February, 1983), p. 26.

⁸Alfred S. Aluschuler, "Humanistic Education," *Humanistic Education* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 71.

⁹David C. Davis, *Model for Humanistic Education: the Danish Folk High School* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1971), p. 105, as quoted by Aluschuler, p. 225.

¹⁰Paul Blanshard, "Three Cheers for Our Secular State," *Humanist* (March/ April, 1976), p. 17.

¹¹Richard Pratte, *Contemporary Theories of Education* (Scranton, OH: Intext Educational Publishers—College Division, 1971), pp. 78-81.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

¹³Mayer, pp. 91-94.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 94-102.

¹⁵Ellwood P. Cubberly, *Public Education in the United States* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), p. 359.

¹⁶John A. Stormer, *None Dare Call It Treason...25 Years Later* (Florissant, MO: Liberty Bell Press, 1992), pp. 156-158.

¹⁷George S. Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America* (New York, NY: The John Day Company, 1931), pp. 304-305, quoted in Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *N.E.A.: Trojan Horse in American Education* (Boise, ID: The Paradigm Company, 1984), p. 187.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 58-62.

¹⁹Robert F. Biehler, *Psychology Applied to Teaching* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), p. 334.

²⁰Eleanor Howe, *The National Educator* (Fullerton, CA: Educator Publications, 1975), p. 16.

²¹Interesting reading is Zach Montgomery, *Poison Drops in the Federal Senate: The School Question From a Parental and Non-Sectarian Standpoint* 1886, (Houston, TX: St. Thomas Press, reprinted 1983). Mr. Montgomery wrote this book against the growing federal secular education movement. He served as the United States Assistant Attorney-General.

²²Cubberly, p. 83. "The first half-century of our national life may be regarded as a period of transition from the church-control idea of education over to the idea of education under the control of and supported by the State. It required time to make this change in thinking. Up to the period of the beginnings of our national development education had almost everywhere been regarded as an affair of the Church, somewhat akin to baptism, marriage, the administrations of the sacraments, and the burial of the dead."

²³*Ibid.*, p. 496.

²⁴Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 48-49.

²⁵James B. Rose, *A Guide to American Christian Education for the Home and School: The Principle Approach* (Palo Cedro, CA: American Christian History Institute, 1987), p. 11.

²⁶Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says: A Practical-in-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1987), p. 449, quoted in Gregg Harris, *The Christian Home School* (Brentwood, TN: Woglemuth & Hyatt, 1988), p. 32.

²⁷All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

THE MEDIA

Jerry Murrell



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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this year's lectureship, *Worldliness*, is vital for the church today. Worldliness has invaded the church. Many in the church have surrendered to the world. Even as far back as 1970, Rex Turner, Sr., said, "Many in the church would have the church to relate to the world rather than have the world relate to God."¹

One area where the invasion of the world into the church is most evident is in the Christian's attitude toward the media. Since we will be judged by the words of Christ and His apostles (John 12:48; 14:26) we should ask how well we measure up to the following passage:

Love not the television, neither the things that are in the television. If any man love the television, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the television, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the television. And the television passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17, my paraphrase).

Do you love your television or do you love God?

Having answered that question concerning the worldliness in ourselves, we are ready to discuss the worldliness in the media. First, we want to define the media. Second, we want to describe the media. Third, we want to see how the worldliness in the media can be defeated.

THE MEDIA DEFINED

It is important to define terms to help clarify issues. When I refer to the media in this chapter, I refer to the television, movies, newspapers, and magazines. In the course of this chapter I will “cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa. 58:1).²

However, it is not my intent to condemn everyone in the media. My Daddy is a faithful elder and chief engineer at a television station.³ Garland Elkins’ daughter, Jan, is a faithful Christian and a television reporter. Unfortunately, just as when it comes to preachers and lawyers, most people who work in the media do not share our passion for truth. This has led to worldliness overtaking the media as a whole. Satan always fills the void when men do not love the truth (2 The. 2:10-11).

THE MEDIA DESCRIBED

The Media Are Powerful

The media are the major force that has reconstructed the post-modern world in which we live. The elite who have led us into this *Brave New World* have done so through the media.

Richard Rorty’s post-modern philosophical emptiness consists of essentially the same stuff as Madonna’s post-modern philosophical emptiness, and Carl Roger’s psychological narcissism is essentially reduplicated in such magazines as *Self* and *Seventeen*.⁴

The power that the media have is not new on the scene in late twentieth century America. Andrew Fletcher said in the eighteenth century that “if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.”⁵ He recognized the power of the media even that long ago.

The major power that media wield is in selection of the images to which we are exposed. While we know what the parents of Jon-Benet Ramsey had for breakfast on the day of the murder of their daughter, we do not even know the names of most other young murder victims. “CNN founder Ted Turner once told the Radio and Television News Directors Association ‘News is what you News Directors interpret it as. The people of this country see the news we think they oughta [sic] see.’”⁶

There are hundreds of unsolved murders in the United States each year. Yet most Americans know more about Jon-Benet Ramsey than

they do all the rest combined. We know almost nothing about other murder victims that could easily be *spun* into being famous. For example, most people have never heard of Jerry Parks, owner of the security company that guarded Bill Clinton's campaign headquarters. He was hit by ten bullets on September 26, 1993, coming out of a Mexican restaurant in Little Rock. His murder is still unsolved. Why do we know Jon-Benet Ramsey but not Jerry Parks? The difference is one was covered by the media and one was not.

The media have the ability to cause news as well as to report it. The 1960s were a time of great turmoil in our nation. There were many protests at college campuses from Berkley to Boston. Robert Bork, who was on the law faculty at Yale during the 1960s, reported:

Students would notify the press of a scheduled demonstration, but if the television cameras failed to appear, the protest was promptly canceled. The ferocity of demonstrations was in direct proportion to the number and importance of the news outlets present. CBS News was a great prize, the *New York Times* slightly less valued, and interest in the *New Haven Register* was negligible. Once when the press failed to show up, the law students posted a notice reserving their right to disrupt at a later time, thus nicely combining the fervor of revolutionaries with the caution of legal draftsmen.⁷

The Hollywood elite understand the power that the media have. A recent study was made based on interviews with 104 of Hollywood's most influential television writers, producers, and executives. Among other things, they were asked to rank which "leadership groups" had the most influence in America. They ranked the media as having the most influence among "leadership groups." Incidentally they ranked religion as seventh and intellectuals as eighth.⁸

They are not afraid to (mis)use their power either. Of this same group 66% think "TV should promote social reform" to "move their audience toward their vision of the good society."⁹ In the next section we will see just how dangerous these values are that they want to inflict on America to promote "the good society."

The Media Are Perverse

This section is almost superfluous. To paraphrase Paul, "time would fail me to tell" you just how perverse the media are. This is not a new situation. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, in the seventh century, the arts became so depraved that the Catholic Church refused burial to anyone connected with them.

It should be obvious to anyone who is familiar with the movie industry that most of the movies made today are filth! Even movies that could be good seem to think they have to include at least one nude scene to attract an audience. One of the companies that is getting an abundance of filth into American culture owns movie studios, record labels, theme parks as well as one of the “big three” networks. Of course this is the Walt Disney Company, which owns ABC. Note the following Disney facts:¹⁰

- ABC’s *Relativity* has shown what is perhaps the most passionate lesbian sexual encounter so far on network TV.
- *Danzing*, an occultic rock band, was signed to a Disney record label. Their music is laced with Satanic themes.
- Disney helped underwrite the 1993 Hollywood benefit for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
- Disney signed Martin Scorsese, director of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Casino*, *Taxi Driver*, and many other hard-edged films to a four-year contract.
- Disney hired a convicted child molester to direct its movie *Powder*.
- Mark Gill, the president of Miramax Films, a wholly-owned Disney subsidiary, admitted that his company thrives on racy, often violent promotion for its movies.
- *Priest* (Miramax) is a pro-homosexual movie which depicts five Catholic priests as dysfunctionals and blames their problems on church teachings. One priest is a homosexual; a second, an adulterer; a third, an alcoholic; a fourth, demented; and the fifth just plain mean and vicious. The film is blatantly anti-Christian.”¹¹
- Other objectionable films from Disney subsidiaries included *Dogma* (homosexuality), *Chasing Amy* (lesbianism), *Pulp Fiction* (sex and violence), *Color of Night* (sex), *Clerks* (graphic language), *Chicks in White Satin* (lesbianism), *Lie Down with Dogs* (homosexuality), *The Year of Yes* (incest).
- Disney/Miramax originally purchased and intended to distribute *Kids*, the pornographic movie about early teen sex and drug abuse. They backed off temporarily from releasing it because of public outrage. Miramax later formed an independent company to distribute the film. It was rated NC-17 (formerly X) by the MPAA.

Unfortunately Disney/ABC is not the only major network that is interested in putting filth before the American people. Other networks also put profit above morality. One source said of CBS president Mel Karmazin that he “doesn’t care [about image]....If he thinks he can get ratings and sell it and make money, then it’s going on the air.”¹²

This attitude has led CBS to put shows like *The Howard Stern Show* on the air. In the past he has had skits on his TV program like the “Lesbian Dating Game,” “A Tribute to Breasts” and one in which he portrays Mary the Mother of Jesus smoking pot before giving birth.¹³

One of the most dangerous concepts of post-modernism is the Virtue of Tolerance. The media is particularly concerned that America becomes more tolerant of homosexuality. Tolerance of this perverse lifestyle (or death-style)¹⁴ is being promoted in basically two ways. One is through the news divisions, and the other is through the entertainment divisions. The news division carries stories asserting that homosexuality is based not on choice but on genetics.

For example, the newspaper where I live ran an Associated Press story with this headline: “Study finds new evidence biology influences sexual orientation.”¹⁵ The first line of the story reads: “A key passageway between two parts of the brain may be bigger in gay men than in heterosexual men, according to a study that offers new evidence that sexual orientation is at least partially a matter of biology.”¹⁶ If a person reads the whole article, which most people do not, he eventually comes to the last sentence which reads: “But some of the gay men had a thinner isthmus than some of the heterosexual men, so an individual’s isthmus size cannot reveal his sexual orientation, Witelson said.”¹⁷

No matter how many times the media repeat the lie that homosexuality is based on biology and not choice, it remains untrue. Experience teaches that people who were homosexuals can change. Hundreds of people have been documented as having changed their sexual orientation. Even the ultra-liberal Masters and Johnson report a 71.6% success rate in helping men and women cease their homosexual practices.

Much more important than what we can see with our physical eyes is what we can see with the eye of faith. Paul said that there were some in Corinth who were homosexuals but had ceased to be so (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Paul is right and the media reports are wrong.

A second and more subtle way that the media promote tolerance of homosexuality is through their entertainment division. Almost everyone knows about the famous *Ellen* coming out of the closet episode on April 30, 1997. In fact, many people seem to think that Ellen was

the first openly gay character on television. But the homosexual movement only reached a new height on *Ellen*, having a homosexual character with the lead character in a highly-rated prime time series.

It took twenty-six years for the entertainment media to bring America to *Ellen*.¹⁸ In 1971, Norman Lear, founder of "People for the (Liberal) American Way," depicted a gay character for the first time on a television sitcom. Archie mocked Mike's effeminate friend Roger. It turns out that Roger is straight, but Archie's macho bar buddy Steve is homosexual. Later in the same *All in the Family* series Archie would give CPR to a transvestite and find out that Edith's lesbian cousin had left her estate to the woman with whom she lived.

In 1977, Jack Tripper moved in with Chrissy and Janet on *Three's Company*. Their landlords, the Roper's, agree to let them live together because they believe Jack is homosexual. By 1981 the media felt that America was ready for the first openly homosexual star in a prime-time series. Tony Randall starred as an openly homosexual commercial artist in the short-lived sitcom, *Love, Sidney*.

By 1989 television would give us the first instance of two openly homosexual characters appearing in bed together. On the show *Thirty-something* Russell and Peter were shown in bed together the morning after. Fortunately, the episode lost more than one million dollars in advertising and was not rebroadcast during summer reruns. The first homosexual "marriage" on television came on MTV's *The Real [Strange] World*. Pedro Zamora and Jean Sasser would exchange rings in 1994. Pedro would die of Aids one month later. In 1996 on *Friends*, network television has its first homosexual wedding. Ross' ex-wife Carol marries Susan in a wedding officiated by Candace Gingrich, Newt's lesbian sister.

Finally in 1997 Ellen DeGeneres began to promote her homosexuality on every talk show that would let her. There was a huge build-up to her coming out episode on April 30. It was the highest rated television show of the week. However, without the promotional blitz, the rating of future episodes fell, and *Ellen* was canceled. Since then Ellen has actually argued that Hollywood has not supported her enough and has threatened to move to a city that is more "homosexual friendly." Unfortunately, for her, Sodom has been destroyed; so she is having a difficult time finding a city in which to live.

Unfortunately, in twenty-six years the media have been relatively successful in changing America's view toward homosexuality. Who would have thought in 1970 that homosexuality would be viewed as a "normal lifestyle" while those who hold to what the Bible says about it are called bigots. Recently, Trent Lott referred to homosexual behavior as sinful, and the media attacked him in a way reserved for Adolph Hitler. Things have changed.

The Media are Prevaricators

The fact that the media are prevaricators is seen in two ways: spin and salacious lies. The media engages in spin because of its overwhelmingly liberal views. Between 1964 and 1976 there was no year when journalists voted for the Democratic presidential candidate at a rate less than 81%.¹⁹

First, consider this illustration of the effect that the spin the media place on a story can affect the way people think about the story. On September 20, 1988, NBC's Lisa Myers reported that "it's this kind of rhetoric [Bush on the Pledge of Allegiance] that leads some to recall Samuel Johnson's observation that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Imagine the different reactions if Myers instead reported that "It's this kind of rhetoric [Dukakis on the Pledge of Allegiance] defending himself from the charges that he is not sufficiently patriotic, that leads some to say he 'doth protest to much.'"

One particular area where media spin is especially egregious is in the abortion debate. In the abortion debate their biased spin is seen in at least five ways:

1. *One side is presented as ideological, the other is not.* A survey of 1,050 news stories in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* in 1995-1996 showed pro-life groups labeled as "conservative" in 47% of the stories while abortion advocates were labeled as "liberal" less than 3% of the time.

2. *The abortion issue is presented as divisive in only one political party.* In the three months before the 1996 party conventions the three major networks had 60 morning and evening news stories on the struggle over abortion language in the Republican Party platform. Only ABC showed the other side as they did one story on the efforts of pro-life Democrats.

3. *Reporters have shown little interest in the facts behind partial-birth abortion.* On network television from November 1,

1995, to the end of 1996, there were 97 stories. Of the partial birth abortion stories almost one-third of these stories (28) contained disinformation including the claims that the procedure was *rare* and only done in medical emergencies. On February 26, 1997, *The New York Times* reported that Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the *National Coalition of Abortion Providers* recalled the night in November 1995 when he appeared on *Nightline* and “lied through my teeth” when he said the procedure was used rarely and only on women whose lives were in danger or whose “fetuses were damaged.” These remarks in a taped interview, were not aired on *Nightline*.

4. *Pro-life protests and activities are not news.*²⁰ Sixty thousand people came to Washington in January 1996 for the annual March for Life, protesting the Supreme Court’s *Roe-vs.-Wade* decision. CBS and NBC gave it 19 seconds. ABC did not cover it. However, in May 1998, there was a “silent march” for gun control (*The Washington Post* counted 109 participants); it drew stories on all three networks.

5. *Pro-Abortion violence is not news.* Violence committed against abortionists or clinic personnel inspired more than 500 network television stories from January 1992 to mid-1995. In the same five year span there were five stories devoted to violence by abortion advocates or abortionists themselves. In the print media, three anti-abortion shooting incidents drew more than 1100 stories in seven national print and network outlets in the same period. By contrast, 13 documented cases of pro-abortion violence attracted only 59 stories in the same outlets. In addition, none of the three networks reported that David Benjamin had become the first physician in New York to be convicted of murder because of a botched abortion (he killed Guadalupe Negrón in July 1993).

Maybe even more dangerous to the cause is the spin that the entertainment division puts on people of faith. Most “Christians” on network television are pictured as hypocrites. The Parents Television Council has found that 78.9% of the portrayals of the “Christian laity” is negative. For example, on a January 4 *Profiler* (NBC) we learn that a murder suspect went bad because he was “abused by very traditional religious parents.”²¹ On a May 20 installment of a mini-series, *True Women* (CBS), a woman comments that “religious slave-holders were the cruelest.” On a November 4 *Soul Man* (ABC) a “bishop” worries

that a “minister” will “alienate the entire congregation, particularly the fornicators, and they’re some of our biggest contributors.”

The media also involve themselves in salacious lies. There have been many famous examples of outright lies in the media lately. For example CNN recently reported that the U.S. Military used sarin gas on former American soldiers in operation Tail Wind. Since this claim was proven to be false, CNN has already made a cash settlement with one of the men involved, Admiral Thomas Moorer. They have offered \$250,000 to former army Captain Eugene McCarley, but he turned the offer down and is suing for six million dollars.

In another recent high profile case ABC news had a judgment of 5.5 million dollars go against them for their shoddy reporting in a story on the *Food Lion* grocery chain. ABC sent some of their “journalists” undercover to work for *Food Lion*. They were trying to prove that *Food Lion*, who had failed to be organized into a union shop repeatedly by the source of their story, United Food and Commercial Workers, was running an unsafe operation. One of the ways they attempted to prove their case was by showing a dirty meat saw. It was dirty because a supervisor had told the undercover “journalist” Susan Barnett to wash it and she failed to do so. ABC argued that the first amendment allowed them to deceive the public in this way. Luckily the court saw otherwise, though *Food Lion*’s business has never completely recovered.

These lies are not limited to secular matters. Virtually every time the media report on matters concerning Christianity it lies. This can be seen in any article that deals with Moses. He is always dated in the time of Rameses the Great (1290-1224 B.C.) rather than in the time of Amenhotep II (1447-1421 B.C.).²² This can also be seen anytime the media deal with Jesus. The “Christian” viewpoint is always represented by someone from the Jesus seminar. Unfortunately many people believe whatever they see on television.

THE MEDIA DEFEATED

The church of Christ is not a denomination. This means that there is no central headquarters to order a boycott of any advertisers or networks. In the past a gospel preacher started a clean-up TV campaign that was widely participated in by Christians. However, when one compares television then and now, one would at least be forced to say that the results were short-lived.

This season *Ellen* did not return to television; but it was not due to any organized protest. The reason was that the ratings were too low. People chose not to watch the show. Apparently, America was not ready for a show like this—yet. If Christians would not watch the filth on television, ratings would go down, and most of it would be canceled.

If Christians are going to defeat the powerful enemy of the media it will be because they have read and obeyed their Bible. Consider Paul's words from Ephesians 5. In this section, Paul will tell us what Christians need to do to defeat the devil and all of his devices.

We Need To Wake Up (Eph. 5:14a)

The indifference to the evil going on around us is amazing! Just look at all the evil that we have already documented in the media. Yet many Christians do not even realize what is going on. There seems to be a lack of concern on the part of many.

When Paul wrote the Ephesians, many of them had gone to sleep spiritually. We all know the difficulty of recognizing what is going on around us when sleeping. Ira Rice has been trying since the late 1960s to wake up brethren about liberalism; how he failed to be discouraged enough to give up is a mystery. It seems that in the past few years more Christians are beginning to listen to his warnings and wake up, but in too many places it is too late.

We Need To Get Up (Eph. 5:14b)

It is one thing to wake up; it is another thing to get up. Some mornings I call my daughter to get ready for school and she tells me she is awake. A few minutes later when I come back, she will be asleep again. The problem is she woke up without getting up.

How many times has a sermon on a particular subject come at just the right time? Many resolve to do better. Maybe some were awakened by a sermon on evangelism. We must not wait too long to talk to a particular person about his soul, or we may go back to sleep. Too many people spiritually hit the snooze button on God's Word.

Paul was telling the Ephesians they needed to not only wake up but get up. How many times have churches been woke up during a meeting only to be sound asleep two weeks later. The problem is they did not get up.

We Need To Clean Up (Eph. 5:3-5)

The general moral atmosphere of our day is getting worse. One of the main problems the church faces today is maintaining its moral and pure stance with all the pressures around it. One of the biggest pressures to compromise our integrity comes to us from the media.

What if the people that we watch on television were not trapped in the little box? Would we let the two people that sleep together on the soap opera come to our house and use our couch? For most people the only difference is about ten feet. Would you let the “stars” use the language in front of your children that they use every night? Many of us are letting them already.

Paul told the Ephesians not to even let most of what we watch on television be named among them. It has an influence. I have an uncle that retired from a paper plant. He cannot even smell that plant. It makes my eyes water to go near it. He is used to it. Have we allowed the world, through the media, to press us into its mold (Rom. 12:1-2)? Have we reached the point that we do not even see the sin in the media anymore? If so, we may be past feeling (Eph. 4:19).

Can you imagine what preachers of the past would think of our viewing habits? If Moses Lard, Foy Wallace, or Gus Nichols came to our house Tuesday night, would we be ashamed of what we are watching?

We Need To Buy Up (Eph. 5:15-16)

Redeeming means “buying up.” It was used of a man going down to the market, looking here and there, and taking the time to buy whatever he needed. We need to buy up our time and opportunity because they will run out on us. We live as if we will have all the time we need to do what we need to do. That is not true. We need to work for God while we can (John 9:4).

We Need To Wise Up (Eph. 5:17)

It is amazing how unwise we can be. The reason we are unwise is we are not willing to study the Bible to learn what it says. Jesus called on His followers to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mat. 10:16). Sometimes even when we know what it says we are not willing to do it. The only true wisdom comes from God’s Word.

We do not really believe the Bible. Today, in many places, people do not believe what Paul said about cleaning up (Eph. 5:3-5). People

live in violation of God's Word in these matters and still maintain fellowship with the church. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6). Yet, we call ourselves a "Restoration Movement." If someone wants to be a "change-agent," here is a list of things to change that would be very pleasing to God (Gal. 1:10). Let us restore biblical, love, fellowship, evangelism, and discipline. Why do "change agents" not work to restore these matters? The reason is that they are men-pleasers instead of God-pleasers.

We need to wise up and keep up with what is going on in the church. It is amazing how many members of the church, even elders, that have no knowledge of, or interest, in what is going on in the church. Take a paper like *Contending For The Faith* and read it. When I was a student inside David Lipscomb University, I could tell most people what is really going on in the church, and they would not believe me. They would think I did not know what I was talking about. But the Bible says we need to wise up and keep up with what is going on.

We Need To Empty Up (Eph. 5:18a)

We need to empty some refrigerators. You might not believe it. You would be amazed at how many "Christians" practice social drinking today. A big influence on this practice is the beer commercials. They believe that if people will watch these commercials, they will buy beer. Yet, I have overheard Christians, in the church building, discussing how good the latest beer commercial is. When my kids and I watch sports on television, they know that the remote control is in my hand to miss those beer commercials. Katherine and Corinne know we hate beer, and we hate "mercials."

We Need To Fill Up (Eph. 5:18b)

In the first century they received their revelation through spiritual gifts. We have the written Word today. Paul encouraged the Ephesians not to engage in the pagan practices around them but to fill up on God's revelation. With the time that some spend on the media, it is no wonder that there is a general ignorance of the Word of God. We need to refocus our priorities.

We Need To Speak Up (Eph. 5:18c)

We need to speak up for the truth. We need to tell others what we believe and why we believe it (1 Pet. 3:15). We cannot let the media

foist its idea of tolerance upon us. We should never tolerate any teaching or practice that will send anyone to hell! Anything worth believing is worth standing up for.

We Need To Tune Up (Eph. 5:18d)

We need to tune up our lives in order to worship God. One reason that people do not enjoy worship is due to the way they live during the week. How many of us prepare to worship before we get to the building? Do we try to get our minds away from the worldly things and focus them on God? Some say **no** and then blame the elders and the preacher for the “tired old act we call worship.” When Rubel comes along, he exploits this carnal man by giving him a “more meaningful worship.” This is a way to worship that puts feeling over faith and symbolism over substance (Col. 2:23). Instead, we need to go back and study what Isaiah had to say about “meaningful worship.” We need to cleanse our hands to approach God in prayer (1 Tim. 2:8).

We Need To Sing Up (Eph. 5:18e)

The very first song in the Bible is a song of redemption (Exo. 14). Redeemed people sing. One reason we do not sing is that we do not recognize the value of our redemption.

We Need To Wash Up (Eph. 5:26)

There is only one element that will wash away sins—the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:1-6). That is what Paul contacted when he was baptized (Acts 22:16). When we were baptized, we contacted the blood and became Christians. We need to keep washed up through confession (1 John 1:7-9).

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have defined the media, described the media, and shown how we can defeat the media. Christ did not come to bring social reform. We cannot redeem the institutions around us with a social gospel. Christ gave us a gospel to apply to each individual. When we begin to preach and teach the gospel the way God intended us to, the worldliness in the media and in all institutions will become less prominent (though like the poor, worldliness will be with us always). May God give us the boldness to carry His Word to the world (Acts 4:29).

ENDNOTES

¹Rex Turner, Jr., *Fundamentals of the Faith* (Montgomery, AL: n.p., 1972), p. 202.

²All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

³TV-33/40, which is the station that refused to carry the famous *Ellen* coming out of the closet episode, and came under fire from other media outlets. He had nothing to do with the decision, though he endorsed it.

⁴David Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 93.

⁵Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, *Conversation Concerning a Right Regulation of Governments for the Common Good of Mankind*, 1704; cited in John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, ed. Justin Kaplin (Boston, MA: Brown and Company, 1992), p. 285.

⁶Randall Murphee, "Distrust in Media Growing," *American Family Association Journal*, Nov/Dec 1998, p. 10.

⁷Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York, NY: Regan Books, 1996), p. 37.

⁸L. Brent Bozell, III, and Brent Baker eds., *And That's the Way It Is(n't): A Reference Guide to Media Bias* (Alexandria, VA: Media Research Center, 1990), pp. 273, 281.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁰American Family Association, "Why American Families Should Boycott Disney," [on-line], available from <http://www.afa.net/disney>.

¹¹Though Catholics are not Christians, they are to Disney, and they intend to discredit Christianity by attacking the Catholic Church.

¹²Parent's Television Council, *Parents TV Alert, August 21, 1998*, [on-line], available from <http://www.parentstv.org/publications/cyberbites/ecyb19980821.htm>.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴The average age of a homosexual at his death is 41. Buster Dobbs, "Editorial" *The Firm Foundation*, Oct. 1992, p. 3.

¹⁵Wire story, "Study Finds New Evidence Biology Influences Sexual Orientation," *The Leaf-Chronicle*, November 18, 1994.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸The following is based on "A 26-Year Emergence From the Closet," *USA Today*, April 30, 1997.

¹⁹Bozell, p. 20.

²⁰This is not intended to be an endorsement of the protests that take place. The merits or propriety of this method of achieving change is not being discussed here. The point is that the media show bias in their coverage of protests concerning abortion.

²¹I do not know if Gayle Napier is a consultant for the show or not.

²²David Van Biema, "In Search of Moses," *Time*, December 14, 1998, pp. 80-88.

OCCULTISM

Harrell Davidson



Harrell Davidson was born in Gibson County, Tennessee. He began leading singing for meetings at twelve years of age and was encouraged to preach the gospel. He attended Freed-Hardeman University, Harding University, and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He preached his first sermon in 1955 and began preaching every Sunday in October, 1958. Harrell preaches in several gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He has preached in most of the 50 states and in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He has written one study book on *Marriage and The Christian Home* (out of print). Harrell is the son of a former elder and preacher. He has worked with the church in

Obion, Tennessee for the past 16 years, which is only 20 miles from where he was born and raised.

Harrell is married to the former Carrielyn Spurlock and they have four children, three boys and one girl.

Occult means to hide from sight or to conceal something that is not revealed or secret. Webster says it means mysterious, that it deals with supernatural agencies. *Occultism* is “a belief in or study of supernatural powers and the possibility of subjecting them to human control.” Our study of the occult will include mysterious, out of sight, unrevealed, so-called “supernatural” agencies. It shall be my purpose to make some general remarks that deal with many cultic practices and later make some specific applications.

Witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, augury, and many other “black arts” have been with us for many years. Old Testament writers had much to say about these practices. Occultism has enjoyed a revival today due to the worship of Satan and the illusion that there is an escape from realism. Some say that the Vietnam conflict is partly blamed for this revival because the occult is oriental in nature.

Sybil Leek is perhaps America’s leading witch; she claims to have 400 witches as her personal friends. She thinks that eight million witches are cooking their brew over the whole world and that there are probably 100,000 witches in the United States today. Oneida Toups of New Orleans says:

Witches believe that God is in everyone, that God shares his power with all beings, and that God has gifted each and all of us the use of his power...witches believe that they are reincarnated. We consider that reincarnation is proof of one's failure to have achieved godliness in the previous life. Therefore, in this life we hope to achieve higher wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.¹

There are three basic kinds of witchcraft practiced today. They are white, black, and Gardnerian. Those who practice white witchcraft claim to get their powers from God. Those who practice black witchcraft claim to get their powers from evil spirits. Gardnerian witchcraft, started by a man named Gardner, stresses the amassing of secret knowledge as its principal goal.

God forbade His people to use witchcraft or enchantments (Lev. 19:26), which drove His people away from true worship. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exo. 22:18).² Witchcraft is an abomination unto the Lord (Deu. 18:10-12). There could be no peace in Israel as long as Queen Jezebel continued her ways. Her "witchcrafts *are so many*" (2 Kin. 9:22-24). Manasseh used enchantments and practiced sorcery (2 Chr. 33:6). His practice caused Israel to suffer. The people of Ephesus at one time practiced "curious arts," but they repented (Acts 19:18-19). If witchcraft was evil for God's people in both Old and New Testament times, it is still evil and wrong today.

Fortune telling is gaining greater acceptance today. Gypsy tea rooms are thriving in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, and at some county fairs. You can buy a crystal ball in an occult shop for \$20. You can also get Tarot cards from four to ten dollars. After a forty-year depression, over three million Ouija boards were sold in 1971. The basic belief of fortune telling is that a person emits *vibrations* or *psychic waves*. These in turn leave their imprint in the "tea-leaves," on the cards, or in the "crystal ball." In tea leaf reading, the dregs around the cup give the reader a picture. For instance, the symbol of a dog means that you are to receive help from a friend. A snake indicates that you are headed for trouble. A number means a period of time. The articulate reader can weave all of the signs into one prophetic utterance.

Cleromancy is another form of fortune telling. This has to do with the spots on dice or dominoes. The client holds three dice or dominoes and blows on them. They are cast into a circle drawn on a board that is divided into twelve segments. Each segment is a part of man's

life. One segment represents man's travel; another represents finance and so on. The number of spots showing is also important: six represents loss, nine represents marriage, eleven represents love, and so on. Moses stressed that God's people should follow Him and not divination (Num. 23:23). Isaiah further warned people against those purported to know the future (Isa. 8:19). God alone knows the future.

Augury is the practice of reading the signs or omens in the heavens. It is also refuted in (Lev. 19:26) where the writer says, "neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times." Moses, in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, warns of people such as our modern day Jeanne Dixon. Some of the things that she has predicted have happened. It is believed, in fact, that about 25% of her astrological visions come to pass, yet she completely misses the mark at times. She said that Russia and China would go to war in 1958—they did not. She said that Jackie Kennedy would never marry again—she did. We believe that Jeanne Dixon is a tool of the devil. Notice her statement: "I had a dream that a child born somewhere in the Middle East, on Feb. 5, 1967, will revolutionize the world, before the close of the century. He will bring together all mankind in one all-embracing faith." She could never be declared a prophet from God, because she is wrong. She did not receive her gift from God or her predictions would be true. She did not receive it from Bible study. In Deuteronomy 17:1-5 such a person was to be put to death.

When men ignore these warnings of God and enter a forbidden realm, they may witness all kinds of experiences, trances, and magic phenomena. These practices do not make these things miraculous. They represent the operation of the devil within a certain sphere tolerated by God (2 The. 2:9-11). When we leave biblical truths, ignorance will flourish. Ignorance breeds gullibility. Deception occurs when we are not taught the Word accurately. When men violate the spiritual and moral laws of God, they subject themselves to the realm of occult powers such as evil supernaturalism (something that cannot be explained by common sense experience or the scientific method), called lying wonders (2 The. 2:9-11).

Other reasons why occultism and the *black arts* are enjoying a wide revival can further be seen in people departing from Christ. This produces a spiritual vacuum, and people look for fulfillment in such things as witchcraft, magic, sorcery, card reading, seances, table

lifting, ESP, and other psychic practices and experiments. Spiritual lawlessness, in which occultism and false religionism flourish, goes hand in hand with moral lawlessness. Occult revival starts and prospers in a morally and spiritually sick society.

What can man do? First, study the Bible on the occult. Show that occultism contradicts the Bible and that the occult appeals to the base elements in man. Warn of the dangers of curiously playing around with the occult. Be well informed about the presence of the occult in the local community. Last, teach the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Spiritually insecure people are those most affected by the occult. There is no greater power and no greater message than the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Let us study some specific situations.

ASTRONOMY VERSUS ASTROLOGY

Astronomy is a legitimate scientific study. Astrology, as we use the term in this study, is not a synonym for astronomy. Astrology is a *religion* of the solar system whereas astronomy is a study of the solar system. One could be a Christian and be an astronomer. No one could be a Christian who practices astrology. Astrology is a pseudo-science which treats of the influences of the stars upon human affairs and of foretelling terrestrial events by their positions and aspects; the divination of the supposed influences of the stars upon human affairs. *Pseudo* is a sham, or something that is feigned, or something not true. Astrology is tied to our birth date. We are said to be born under one of twelve different signs of the Zodiac calendar. There are an estimated 40-plus million people who depend upon looking up their sign in the daily newspaper before they begin their workday. They do this in order to plan their specific activities. However, there is much more to astrology than this. Here is a listing of books that are available that this author has seen the titles of and has read some parts of one or two of them. These are books on the market: *Astrological Birth Control*, *Astrology and Horse Racing*, *Your Baby's First Horoscope*, *Astrology for Teens*, *How to Find Your Mate Through Astrology*. There is even a book called *Your Dog's Astrological Horoscope*. Cat owners should be outraged; bird lovers should yell out with discontent. Those who have pet snakes...well, there is no hope for them anyway (pun intended). This false craft sets aside the Word of God as being the only safe guide through this life. It is believed by those in the know that there are at least ten thousand professional astrologers and another

175,000 part-timers in our society. Astrology is well over a two hundred million-dollar per year business.

Astrology was a frequent and dangerous threat to God's people thousands of years ago. The worship of Baal was directed to a sun god. Isaiah gave a stern warning as he said:

Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be* a coal to warm at, *nor* fire to sit before it (Isa. 47:12-14).

By astrologers Isaiah meant the viewers of the heavens. By monthly prognosticators the eighth-century prophet to Judah referred to those "that give knowledge concerning the months." There can be no doubt that astrology is a religious movement. Daniel came in contact with astrologers during his day. They could not look up at the heavenly bodies and interpret the Babylonian monarch's dream of the metallic image recorded in Daniel 2. It took a revelation from God to Daniel for him to be able to tell the king his dream and what it meant. We learn from this incident that inspiration should be followed and not some astrological forecast. The Bible says in Daniel 1:17-20,

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams...And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.

In one of her books, *My Life and Prophecies*, Jeanne Dixon identifies herself as a modern prophetess capable of foretelling the events of one's life. On page 154, this horoscope specialist gives prophetic advise for Barbar Streisand's marital future and the future of her money investments. She prophesied that the late Frank Sinatra (then living) best be careful lest his fortune melt before his eyes. She pretended to pick the winner of the Kentucky Derby and name certain football coaches that would be appointed to guide certain teams. In an Associated Press release it is stated, "Jeanne Dixon, author and self-acclaimed psychic, predicted the second coming of Jesus in this century at a Body, Mind and Spirit Worship sponsored by the ESP

Foundation in Little Rock, Arkansas.”³ She also said that the earth would collide with the sun in another 5,000 years. There is much more about this false religion. She and those like her are false prophets. Even if ten percent of the things they say comes true, they would still be false prophets. The true prophet **never** missed “the mark.” That was one of their credentials.

In astrology you do not find a rigid code of right and wrong. There are no moral imperatives. There are no demands to obey the gospel. There is no soul winning. There is no Christ or His church. There is no salvation. No one will ever get ready to go to heaven by looking at the Zodiac. The church in Ephesus should be an example for us all in these matters. Brother Luke records the following:

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 19:19-20).

There needs to be a big book burning in America today.

TAROT CARDS

The author, in preparing material for this subject, was able to get on various mailing lists, and somehow for free we were able to receive the *Gnostica News* which is a tabloid of some 32 pages. We also were sent *Earth Religion News* which sates in its masthead: “This is the official organ for Gardenerian Wicca, Inc. in the United States.” We received these until we were ashamed for the postmaster to be continually putting these in our post office box. Both papers were weird. One such issue came with “Four Garderian Witch Queens dividing up the World” with a caption that said, “Skyclad Ain’t Bad.” They were naked! We thought that we should be getting these things no longer. Along with these there started coming a monthly magazine with a solid black cover. In the middle of the cover was a white cloven hoof. The name of the magazine was *The Cloven Hoof* and it was the official publication of the “First Church of Satan” written by Anton S. LaVey. However, getting off the mailing list grew into a task that we will never forget. It got to where it was down right scary. Every week or so we would get something else. We finally found out that those people thought that this must be a Coven of witches and they just were not content in dropping our name from all those lists.

Finally, we began receiving less and less until some years later it finally stopped. What an experience to say the least.

In each issue there was information needed for our study for exposing these strange kinds of things. We have before us as we write, a copy of the *Earth Religions News*. In this issue there is an article entitled “An Introduction to the Tarot,” written by Rolla Nordic. “The Tarot is a teaching that is so old that it is for ever new,”⁴ said Nordic. Tarot card readings, then, are always up to date and go back to the dawning of time.

Since the beginning of time man has had problems and does not seem to know the best way to handle the situation without the help of someone who can see beyond the fog of worry, despair, confusion of mind to the realization that there is a solution and a way to find it.⁵

Nordic goes on to show how:

Man has always needed success in achieving what ever action he has needed for survival of himself and those dependent on him for their happiness and comfort. Hunting for food, fishing for the treasures of the sea, growing of crops, health of domesticated animals, love to outwit an enemy, wealth, all these problems are still to be solved in one way or another today.⁶

“We can always consult,” says Nordic with “The Medicine Man, the Druid, the High Priest who was counselor, the Astronomer, the Astrologer, the Architect. In other words, the One who understood the Tarot—the Wise One.”⁷ The Wise One was the one that was reincarnated to give his wisdom to man. “Originally there was one teaching and everything was contained in it. This was and is the teaching of Tarot.” Nordic tells of the rituals that were performed over and again. The Druid was consulted as to the best time of sowing and reaping. Others were in touch with the sun, moon, and the nine planets belonging to the moon. These in turn were worshipped as the powers over success, and the progress of understanding came from these bodies in the sky.

That which we sometimes fail to understand is that all these cults in the occult are connected even though they may be in competition for the dollars involved. From these stacks of papers and books that we have before us we could give enough information to fill this entire lectureship book, and it would all be entwined. All the occult (the black arts) feed off of the same frenzy. None of them have an understanding of the Word of God. Some of them do not deny God but look

at Him through eyes that are tinted. They do not see a loving benevolent God. There is an escape from realism which in turn sometimes leads to fatalism. Life is cheap to most in the occult.

WITCHCRAFT: A NONPROFIT RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION?

As mentioned in preliminary considerations, High-Priestess Mary Oneida Toups claims to be the world's leading witch. This writer has before him just now the Articles of Incorporation of "The Religious Order of Witchcraft which is domiciled at New Orleans, Louisiana, Parish of Orleans." She avers that this order is: "A corporation organized....papers filed and recorded on February 2, 1972 in the Record of Non-Profit Corporation book 42." These papers feature Toups picture on the front page of the ordination papers and are attested to by Wade O. Martin, Jr., Secretary of State of the State of Louisiana. He affixed the Seal in his office at Baton Rouge on February 2, 1972, and thus "The Religious Order of Witchcraft" became a nonprofit religious organization and recognized as such by the state of Louisiana. This, then, sets the precedent for the other forty-nine States in our Union.

The terms of this ordination procedure are:

To promote the Old and Original Religion of Witchcraft. To accord Witchcraft recognition of the evolution and revolution of Godliness fathered by the Craft.

To dedicate oneself to the ultimate achievement of Godliness through search, study, application, learning, perfecting and mastering the universal elements by and through which acceptance into the Kingdom of God is achieved. To exercise the same Constitutional guarantees as Established Churches, Faiths and Sects have been granted. To pursue Witchcraft as our Religion in accordance with the 1st Amendment and the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.⁸

Thus was issued into time Witchcraft as a nonprofit religious institution just as much recognized as such by the laws of our land as the Lord's church. Read it and weep!

Further articles state:

Membership applicants must establish themselves with the High-Priestess. They must exhibit sincerity attuned to personal dedication and application of themselves towards the extreme achievement of Godliness. They must be a minimum of 18-Years of Age. A candidate

“must” possess knowledge of Books concerning Holy and Religious acumen.⁹

They would never approve the Bible being taught.

While Toups is perhaps the world’s leading witch, and as such, she is in charge of all other witches, witchcraft has certain other laws that show how large they are in numbers. These papers show that a witch is over a coven. A coven is a group of thirteen. Once the coven establishes that number they must branch out and start another coven with another witch appointed by Toups. While Toups says that there are 100,000 witches in America, multiply that number by 13 and you have how many are practicing witchcraft. We are not talking about a small number. This religion, yes, religion, is very large, and it lurks in places that we think not. We may laugh it off at Halloween, but this is a serious misrepresentation of God’s Word that they claim to want to follow. Be it remembered in the ordination papers before this writer that they refer to this order as the “revolution of Godliness fathered by the Craft.” On her personal letterhead she says to this writer, “Witches believe that God ‘is-in’ everyone, that GOD ‘shares’ his power with ‘all-beings’ and that GOD has gifted each and all of us the ‘use-of’ his power.” In the next sentence she says, “Witches believe that they are Reincarnated, as well as all human beings are.”

Surely the student of these lines can see the seriousness of this movement. Moses, the sage of the ages, says, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exo. 22:18). Later he wrote by inspiration:

There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee (Deu. 18:10-12).

Capital punishment is serious business. God announced from heaven that a witch should be put to death.

DEMONOLOGY

Satan means the “hater” or the “accuser.” *Devil* means literally “slanderer.” *Demon* may either refer to Satan the Devil or to one of the evil spirits Satan has within his power. *Demonology* is a study of demons and their work.

Satan makes his first appearance near the beginning of time. In Eden, in the form of the serpent, he tempts man and woman (Gen. 3:1-15). His very first struggle was to overthrow the seed line to Christ. The introduction of Satan into the world has brought much theory and fantasy to man.

Theory says that demons are humanistic in nature, meaning that demons came into being with the rise of different gods. It says that these gods are nothing more than the spirits of dead men and that people who are alive worship these spirits out of dread. Another view is the animistic theory. This theory says that everything in nature is alive and has a personality of its very own. All hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and fires are nothing more than personal agencies taking out their wrath against weaker beings. Pagan gods arose as a result of this theory. Another theory is the astral view. This theory holds that demons began when worship of the heavenly bodies was prevalent. People worshipping the sun, moon, or stars attached personality to them. The lesser bodies in the firmament were called lesser deities or demons.

The biblical view is the only one that we will entertain. Theory has caused the writing of books and the making of many movies. All of these movies and books are nothing more than the devil’s tools to deceive the multitudes, which is one of the ways he works today (1 Tim. 4:1).

Some congregations will not allow, nor will some preachers preach on sin and Satan anymore. Sin is too negative. Regardless of what sin may seem to be to modern man, sin and Satan and/or demons are still the same. New Testament writers knew the reality of Satan and/or demons. They spoke of their existence (Jam. 2:19; Rev. 9:20); they described their character (Luke 4:33; 6:18); they mentioned their works (1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 16:14); they wrote of their being cast out (Luke 9:42); they suggested that demons get their power from Satan himself (Mat. 12:26; Eph. 6:12); they even told of their abode (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:11). Jesus gave power to His disciples over demons

(Mat. 10:1; Mark 16:17). He gave power to the seventy over demons (Luke 10:17, 20). Christ cast out demons (Mat. 15:22-28).

Satan and demons are spiritual in nature. People were brought to Jesus who were “possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word” (Mat. 8:16). The seventy brought back the report that the “demons are subject unto us in thy name” (Luke 10:17—ASV). Jesus told them that they should not rejoice that “the spirits are subject unto you” (Luke 10:20). Mark records the story of a boy who had a “dumb spirit.” Jesus told the “dumb spirit” to come out of the boy (Mark 9:17-25). Paul asserted in Ephesians 6:12 that our warfare was not fleshly but spiritual. *Principalities* is the key word which means Satan. Again, in Ephesians 2:2 (ASV) in talking about the “prince of the powers of the air” the inspired writer tells us that the ruler of the principalities is Satan, the prince himself. Therefore, we must conclude that demons and evil spirits are one and the same thing. With this observation proven by the Word of God, we note that Satan is more than a mere influence—he is an evil spirit. A spirit hath not flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Demons are spirits (Luke 10:17, 20). We should note further that Satan has knowledge. The demons knew Jesus (Mark 1:24). They bowed before Christ (Mark 5:6) and recognized Christ as being the Son of God (Mark 5:7). They also knew their own doom (Mat. 8:29).

Demons have a moral nature also. Today they inflict man and make his members “instruments of unrighteousness” (Rom. 6:13). Demons cause men to teach false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1) and “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1). Satan today may corrupt man’s mind (2 Cor. 4:4) and man’s flesh (1 Cor. 7:1-5). Man has the same temptations today that Adam and Eve had in Genesis 3. We also have the same temptations that Christ had in Matthew 4:1-11—namely, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the vain glory of life (1 John 2:16).

Does Satan enter us today and possess us in the same way that he did in New Testament times? We answer unequivocally, **no**. We admit that he is alive and well on the planet earth. We admit that he tempts us today and even controls the lives of many thousands, but not in the same manner as he once did.

If Christ were destroyed, Satan would have free reign on the earth. Satan, in the beginning, tried to destroy the seed line to Christ. Zechariah spoke the words of God when he foretold of Christ’s coming. He

told that the coming was for the establishing of the Kingdom, that it would be for “uncleanness” (Satan and his angels), and that the unclean spirit would pass out of the land (Zec. 13:1-2). As surely as Christ came (Mat. 1), He was victorious over Satan (Mat. 4:1-11); and as surely as He died (Mat. 27), and arose (Mat. 28), and ascended (Acts 1:9-11); and as surely as the church or the kingdom was established (Acts 2), Christ did away with the unclean spirits as such.

All the examples of demon possession that we know should be understood in light of the miraculous age. Jesus did miracles and signs to prove that He was the Messiah (John 10:38, 41; John 20:30-31). The seventy expelled demons to prove they were of God. The apostles cast out demons to prove that they were of God, also. Notice Jesus’ words in Mark 16:17, “And these signs shall follow them that believe,” clearly indicating that demon possession would clearly be done away with “when that which is perfect is come” (1 Cor. 13:8-13). This is a reference to revelation being completed.

Satan today uses many tools to accomplish his end. We have seen those working for many years. He uses alcohol, drugs, and immorality of all kinds to cause men to shorten their days on this earth and make man an angel of darkness.

We have only touched the hem of the garment in these matters. This writer has reams of paper to offer as proof of all that is stated herein. Again, let us be aware that Satan is surely hard at work. Paul Harvey, quoting from an unidentified sheriff in California, said that of the 50,000 children that disappear each year, many of them wind up being sacrificed to Satan or in some of the “black arts.” In Christ we have the victory over death, sin, and hell. “Thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

ENDNOTES

¹Mary Oneida Toups, *Articles Of Incorporation of “The Religious Order of Witchcraft which is domiciled at New Orleans, Louisiana, Parish of Orleans”* no page numbers.

²All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

³*The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 24, 1971.

⁴Rolla Nordic, “An Introduction to the Tarot,” *Earth Religions News*, Yule, 1973, p. 5.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Toups.

⁹Ibid.

EXAMINING ONE'S LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

The topic, “Examining One’s Life” should accomplish that desired objective. As one contemplates eternity, he must examine himself. A man must see himself as he is. He must know and use the correct (i.e., right) standard of judgment by which he is to examine himself. Then he must be willing to make himself comply with that standard. These things being true, it goes without saying, “Examining One’s Life” is a vital and important subject.

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN

Down through the ages men have attempted in various ways to examine their lives. Men have questioned: “What is the meaning of life?” or “What is the purpose of life?” or “How does one find happiness and fulfillment in life?” Apart from God and Divine revelation, otherwise intelligent men, seeking the answers to these and additional questions related to life, gave rise to the various schools of philosophy. Because so many so gravely erred in their efforts to discover what life is truly about, Paul warned, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).¹ Indeed, there are many ruinous philosophies. Philosophies, or variations of

the philosophies, which supposedly originated in antiquity are intentionally or unintentionally adhered to by contemporary man—even some who profess to be Christians.

Hedonism, the idea that pleasure (regardless of its source or nature) is the cardinal objective of a man's life, has seemingly gained the widest acceptance among men down through the ages. Almost every man-originated philosophy has adapted some form of hedonism into its concepts. The hedonist's motto might be: "If it feels good, do it!" Right and wrong are determined by whether or not a thing or an act brings sensual, emotional, or mental pleasure. This philosophy has led to the ruination of many. God made it known that "pleasure in unrighteousness" brings condemnation (2 The. 2:12). One would think Paul was describing this day and age when he declared:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God**; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

To say the least, those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" violate Matthew 22:37. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25), Moses proved that not all pleasures are good and that man has a higher purpose in life than just seeking after worldly pleasure.

A few years ago, there was an advertisement on television which contained the line: "You only go around once in life; so live it with all the gusto you can." Solomon did say, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecc. 9:10). However, Solomon was neither agreeing with nor advocating the hedonism conveyed in the epicurean philosophy expressed in the above mentioned television advertisement. Epicureanism insists that whatever happens, happens purely by chance and that this life is all there is. Perhaps the Epicurean philosophy is most often identified with the statement: "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Paul may have referred to this concept when he said, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what

advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32). In making that statement, Paul was proving the resurrection of the dead; therefore, he was exposing the error of Epicurean philosophy. Furthermore, Jesus emphasized that life is more than just what a man consumes (Luke 12:23).

Luke noted that the Epicureans and Stoics held some things in common when he penned:

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him [Paul]. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

When one thinks of a Stoic, he thinks of an intellectual who courageously faces adversity with emotionless poised constraint. Strictly speaking, Stoics believe happiness is attained only in virtue. Because Stoics deny that the virtue which brings happiness is influenced by externals (friends, possessions, events, etc.), Stoicism is individualistic. Thus, what is right or wrong to one person may be just the opposite for another. (Most, if not all, philosophers can see the connection between Stoicism and existentialism.)

Contrary to the individualism of Stoicism, but still a form of hedonism, utilitarianism (*a la* Jeremy Bentham) insists that society pronounces what is right or wrong, moral or immoral. If a thing is perceived to be favorable by a society: it is good. On the other hand, if a thing is perceived to be unfavorable by a society: it is wrong. Some have termed such thinking “the greatest happiness principle.” Others have attempted to explain the ethics of utilitarianism as “the greatest good to the greatest number.” Of course, this means it is a majority within a society which determines what is acceptable or unacceptable (right or wrong, moral or immoral).

TIMES, NOT PEOPLE, HAVE CHANGED

Surveying all the philosophies of men and the histories of men and of societies, one comes to agree with the trite adage, “The more things change, the more they remain the same.” Solomon wrote:

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth

toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, *it is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. *There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after (Ecc. 1:1-11).

Wiser and truer words than these have never been written. Still, there are those, such as the moderns who tenaciously hold to the philosophy of rationalism, who believe that man can solve all of his problems and answer all of his questions with his intellect and the developments of science and technology. Answering such thinking, someone has written:

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less common sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness. We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch television way too much, and pray way too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and lie too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes, but lower morals; more food, but less appeasement; more acquaintances, but fewer friends; more efforts, but less success. We build more computers to hold more information; we produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on glitz, but short on guts.

These are the times of fast food and slow digestion; tall men and short character; steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the

times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure and less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from to cheer, to quiet, to kill. These are the days of instant gratification, but not self-discipline. It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stock-room.

The body may be full, but the soul is empty.²

CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY SOCRATES

Socrates, the great philosopher, concluded that his contemporaries' chosen goals for living fell basically into three categories: (1) sensual self-satisfaction, (2) the acquisition of great wealth, (3) fame. In 399 B.C., Socrates contended that the people had never seriously asked themselves whether or not these aspirations were really important. At his trial in 399 B.C., with this as his platform, Socrates maintained that the unexamined life was not worth living. Unless a man's life has meaning and direction, it will be wasted, worthless, spent in vain.

If Socrates lived in the United States today, could he draw the same conclusions and would he be right to make the same contention? Is it not the case that even though man has advanced in many areas, he has not progressed much (if any) in these matters over the past 2,398 years? Is it not the case that most people today, like those in Socrates' day, have never bothered to probe their personal priorities to discover their values and/or their foundations for living? Who can deny the inestimable degree of immorality, or the immeasurable madness for money, or the insatiable escalation in the quest for worldly knowledge that so typifies the nation today? It has been correctly alleged that the modern American, in his pursuits, worships at the shrines of **sex**, **silver**, and **science**.

CHRISTIANS AND THE WORLD

Lamentably, a vast number of Christians are feasting themselves with the ungodly at the table the world has spread. These carnal cravings of some Christians for the fleshly delicacies have caused them to lose sight of the spiritual realities. They have even forgotten God. This very spirit within God's chosen once caused the Lord to say sadly: "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer.

2:32). Matilda C. Edwards poetically pictured this problem in her work: "The Church Walking With The World."

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD walked far apart
 On the changing shores of time,
 The World was singing a giddy song,
 And the Church a hymn sublime.
 "Come, give me your hand," said the merry World,
 "And walk with me this way!"
 But the good Church hid her snowy hands
 And solemnly answered "Nay,
 I will not give you my hand at all,
 And I will not walk with you;
 Your way is the way that leads to death;
 Your words are all untrue."
 "Nay, walk with me but a little space,"
 Said the World with a kindly air;
 "The road I walk is a pleasant road,
 And the sun shines always there;
 Your path is thorny and rough and rude,
 But mine is broad and plain;
 My way is paved with flowers and dews,
 And yours with tears and pain;
 The sky to me is always blue,
 No want, no toil I know;
 The sky above you is always dark,
 Your lot is a lot of woe;
 There's room enough for you and me
 To travel side by side."
 Half shyly the Church approached the World
 And gave him her hand of snow;
 And the old World grasped it and walked along,
 Saying, in accents low,
 "Your dress is too simple to please my taste;
 I will give you pearls to wear,
 Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form,
 And diamonds to deck your hair."
 The Church looked down at her plain white robes,
 And then at the dazzling World,
 And blushed as she saw his handsome lip
 With a smile contemptuous curled.
 "I will change my dress for a costlier one,"
 Said the Church, with a smile of grace;
 Then her pure white garments drifted away,
 And the World gave, in their place,
 Beautiful satins and shining silks,
 Roses and gems and costly pearls;

While over her forehead her bright hair fell
 Crisped in a thousand curls.
 "Your house is too plain," said the proud old World,
 "I'll build you one like mine;
 With walls of marble and towers of gold,
 And furniture ever so fine."
 So he built her a costly and beautiful house;
 Most splendid it was to behold;
 Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there
 Gleaming in purple and gold;
 Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held,
 And the World and his children were there.
 Laughter and music and feasts were heard
 In the place that was meant for prayer.
 There were cushioned seats for the rich and the gay,
 To sit in their pomp and pride;
 But the poor who were clad in shabby array,
 Sat meekly down outside.
 "You give too much to the poor," said the World.
 "Far more than you ought to do;
 If they are in need of shelter and food,
 Why need it trouble you?
 Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
 Buy horses and carriages fine;
 Buy pearls and jewels and dainty food,
 Buy the rarest and costliest wine;
 My children, they dote on all these things,
 And if you their love would win
 You must do as they do, and walk in the ways
 That they are walking in."
 So the poor were turned from her door in scorn,
 And she heard not the orphan's cry;
 But she drew her beautiful robes aside,
 As the widows went weeping by.
 Then the sons of the World and the Sons of the Church
 Walked closely hand and hand,
 And only the Master, who knoweth all,
 Could tell the two apart.
 Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,
 "I am rich and my goods increased;
 I have need of nothing, or ought to do,
 But to laugh, and dance, and feast."
 The sly old World heard, and he laughed in his sleeve,
 And mockingly said, aside—
 "The Church is fallen, the beautiful Church;
 And her shame is her boast and her pride."

The angel drew near to the mercy seat,
 And whispered in sighs her name;
 Then the loud anthems of rapture were hushed,
 And heads were covered with shame;
 And a voice was heard at last by the Church
 From Him who sat on the throne,
 "I know thy works, and how thou hast said,
 'I am rich, and hast not known
 That thou art naked, poor and blind,
 And wretched before my face;'
 Therefore from my presence cast I thee out,
 And blot thy name from its place."³

Yes, many congregations have been and are walking with the world. This can be seen by what is preached in their assemblies, taught in their classes, and carried out in their practices. For the most part, worldly churches are composed of worldly members. Worldly Christians need to examine their lives, but regretfully, far too many worldly brethren are like the unbelievers—they simply do not know how to examine their own lives.

HOW NOT TO EXAMINE ONE'S LIFE

How does one examine his life to determine if it is being properly spent? Before the reason of life can be established, there must be the rule, for where there is no rule, there can be no reason. Like most other philosophers, Socrates questioned man's values in life, but failed to expound an absolute standard by which man's life might be measured. Why? Because no **man (men)** can dictate the value of life for **himself (themselves)** or for the lives of all other men.

Humanistic philosophers like to quote Protagoras' statement, "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not."⁴ However, contrary to the interpretation they place on Protagoras' declaration, the humanists are wrong. One man's standards are no more authoritative than another's. There is a reason why Moses said, "Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever *is* right in his own eyes" (Deu. 12:8). That reason is that: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). Additionally, Jeremiah 10:23 trumpets: "I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his

steps.” Thus, a man must look beyond himself to find the standard by which he may examine his life.

Vast numbers are of the philosophical notion that society sets the standards for the good life. Those who hold this view range all the way from the child who says, “Everybody is doing it,” to the most learned and sophisticated of worldly philosophers. According to John Dewey’s Ethical Theory:

Absolute goods or evils do not exist; each situation is specific and calls for specific methods of inquiry. The greatest good is the elimination of the greatest evil or the fulfillment of man’s greatest need. The choice between good and evil is not made on theoretical grounds but for the purpose of reducing or alleviating as much as possible the specific evils which plague man.⁵

One cannot help but question: “By what standard does Dewey adjudicate what ‘man’s greatest need’ is?” Dewey’s humanistic surmisings would not permit him to measure man by any other standard than man. Thus, mankind (more specifically each society) determines *good* and *evil* by whatever standards it deems “specific methods of inquiry.”

No lesser light than Bertrand Russell came to advocate Ethical Naturalism, sometimes referred to as the Emotive Theory of Ethics. This is but another effort to make man (individually and collectively) the standard by which life is measured. It states:

Since moral right and wrong are not subject to scientific tests, moral judgments cannot be proved. Consequently, values lie outside the domain of knowledge; they represent merely the venting of our emotions. The point of view is that of Ethical Subjectivism. Good as an ethical phenomenon is reducible to desire, and social good refers to the collective desires common to a given group. Individuals who attribute universality to good are only attempting in this way to universalize their personal desires.⁶

The ancient Romans said it this way—*vox populi vox Dei*. Translated into English, this phrase means, “The voice of the people is the voice of God.”

Romans and humanistic philosophers (past and present) notwithstanding, Moses warned, “You shall not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exo. 23:2). In Noah’s day, “GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Everybody, except for the eight members of Noah’s family, was wicked and evil; however,

that did not make their evil and wickedness acceptable and right. Calling evil, *good*, does not make it so. In fact, God said, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isa. 5:20-21). No society can set the absolute rule or standard by which man’s life is measured. If neither individuals nor whole societies can serve as the standard by which a man measures his life, what is that standard?

HOW TO EXAMINE ONE’S LIFE

Jesus Himself affirmed that the standard for measuring every man’s life is **the Word of God**. In His “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). Thus, Paul wrote, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*” (Eph. 5:17). God’s will is revealed through His Word, the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 3:2-11). This being the case, Christ said:

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. 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 12:48-50).

In other words, God’s Word, the Bible, is the measure wherewith men must examine their lives to determine their aims, goals, purposes, values, and foundations. **It is the only and absolute standard, for by it all men will be judged!** Recognizing that it is God who sets the standards, we should also recognize that it is God who establishes the priorities for living. Man’s responsibility is to conform (measure up) to the priorities that God has ordered.

EXAMINING THE LOVE OF ONE’S LIFE

From the very moment one becomes a Christian, God must have first priority over everyone and everything else. When the Pharisee asked:

Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all

thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment (Mat. 22:36-38).

God claims top priority for the love of every man's life and demands that one love Him with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Jesus Christ demands priority for every man's love. One must love Jesus more than he loves even his father, his mother, his sister(s), his brother(s), his wife, and his children (Mat. 10:35-38; Luke 14:26). Love for Christ is personified within the Christian and is manifested by his obedience to Jesus. To His followers, Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Keeping Christ's commandments will not be burdensome. John, called the "Apostle of Love," wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). Earlier in this epistle, John stated:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:3-5).

EXAMINING ONE'S SPIRITUALITY

Expressing God's will, Jesus commanded, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mat. 6:33). God, through Paul, instructed:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).

This necessarily means that one has to separate himself from the world—he can have no fellowship with the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

EXAMINING ONE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD

First John 2:15-17 forbids that the Christian love the world:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

God not only prohibits Christians loving the world, He disallows Christians being friends of the world. James warned, "Know ye not

that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4).

No right thinking individual would ever want to become an enemy of God. In order to keep from being God’s enemy one must establish himself, meeting His priorities. We must choose the spiritual things over the worldly things to satisfy the Lord. If one truly loves God, he will hate evil. The Psalmist wrote, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil” (Psa. 97:10).

AN OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF ONE WHO EXAMINED HIS LIFE

Solomon set out to find life’s purpose and meaning. He sought to know what brings happiness and fulfillment to life. This necessitated several *experiments*. These *experiments* and their results were recorded by Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon sought to discover the purpose, meaning, and the fulfillment of life by the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. He said:

I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge (Ecc. 1:16).

What was his conclusion? The wise man said, “I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecc. 1:17-18).

Pleasure was another area where Solomon sought to find happiness and purpose in life. He tried merriment, wine, and folly. Yet, these things gave no lasting satisfaction. Accounting for this, Solomon penned:

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity. I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life (Ecc. 2:1-3).

Disappointed with the results he found after participating in these things, Solomon declared them to be vanity and vexation of the spirit.

Taking his life in a different direction, Solomon engage himself in gigantic urban and agrarian projects. He constructed great houses,

planted magnificent vineyards and all kinds of fruit trees, designed and built tremendous irrigation systems, and created beautiful gardens and parks (Ecc. 2:4-6). All these things were worthwhile and beneficial, but Solomon found them not to be the reasons for living.

Turning to the accumulation of material wealth, Solomon tried to find happiness in great riches. He owned untold numbers of slaves, possessed massive herds of livestock, and filled his coffers with silver and gold (Ecc. 2:7-8). Solomon's

ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom (2 Chr. 9:21-22).

Grand as his incomparable wealth was, Solomon came to realize that the purpose of life was not to be found in the gaining and retaining of material possessions.

He may not have sought to find the meaning of life in fame, but because of Solomon's knowledge, wisdom, accomplishments, and great riches, he became world famous.

When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart (2 Chr. 9:1).

Solomon diligently explored every avenue—sensual self-satisfaction, the acquisition of great wealth, fame, etc.—to find the meaning and purpose for living. He wanted to know what gave fulfillment to life. After examining all of these things, he proclaimed them to be *vanities* and *vexations* (Ecc. 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 16; 6:9) and said, “all *is* vanity” (Ecc. 12:8). Ultimately, Solomon declared:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil (Ecc. 12:13-14).

A NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF ONE WHO EXAMINED HIS LIFE

Paul serves as the outstanding New Testament example of a man who examined his life. Of himself, Paul wrote:

I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught accord-

ing to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God (Acts 22:3).

Further, Paul said:

If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless (Phi. 3:4-6).

Speaking about his standing before God prior to his conversion (especially relative to his persecution of the church) Paul explained he

was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

It is generally surmised that Paul came from a wealthy family and that he was being trained and groomed to become a member of the Sanhedrin. Prior to his conversion, Paul (then known as Saul) was popular as a rising star among the Jews. He was well known to Christians, too. Ananias said, “I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:13). Upon his conversion to Christ, Paul gave up his intended career, his fame, his wealth—he gave up everything in order to serve his Lord.

From being a man of wealth Paul became a man who related:

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Phi. 4:11-12).

Again, Paul said, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8). From being a popular figure among the Jews, Paul became one they wanted to kill. “The Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him” (Acts 9:23-24). What was Paul’s judgment pertaining to these matters? Hear Paul:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-

ness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phi. 3:7-14).

When Paul used God's will as the standard for examining his life, he concluded, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Jesus had said, "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat. 16:24).

Truly, Paul denied himself, took up his cross, and followed the Savior. All must do this.

PAUL PREACHED WHAT HE PRACTICED

What Paul practiced, he preached all are to do. Paul instructed, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Clearly, Paul set forth the "will of God" as the rule by which men are to measure their lives. He did this again in Titus 2:11-14,

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; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Jesus promised that if a man wills to do the will of God, he will know what the will of God is (John 7:17).

CONCLUSION

A man is to neither measure himself by himself nor measure himself by other men. Instead, he is to measure himself by the rule God has provided. Noting this, Paul explained:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves

by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (2 Cor. 10:12-18).

Christian brother, have you examined your life and the priorities you have in living it? Do they measure up to God's priorities for living? Not only must one examine his life, as Socrates contended, but he must live up to the standards God has set. In eternity will your life have been worth living or would it have been better if you had never lived at all? Remember, Jesus said:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Mat. 7:21-29).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²Unfortunately, the title and author of this quote is unknown.

³Matilda C. Edwards, "The Church Walking With the World," *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, ed. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1936), pp. 345-347.

⁴Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1972), p. 31.

⁵William S. Sahakian, *History of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Books, 1968), p. 265.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 296.

PURITY OF MIND, LIFE, AND SPEECH

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INTRODUCTION

James wrote, "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" (Jam. 1:27).¹ In order to practice pure religion one must be pure. Therefore, this chapter will study the teaching of the Bible regarding the pure conduct incumbent upon Christians and characteristic of Christian living.

Obvious it is that God places great importance on the purity of one's life. Therefore, by way of introduction to our study let us examine the word *Christian* and its significance. The person who correctly wears the name *Christian* understands the meaning of that proper name. It means "of Christ." Paul wrote that "ye are washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). This transaction takes place when one is scripturally baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). Therefore, our bodies are devoted to God as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). Thus, to be "of Christ" (a

Christian) one must keep pure, clean, and upright (Rom. 6:1-2, 12). As Paul also wrote, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). Furthermore, Peter penned: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

To be “of Christ” (a Christian) is to manifest to the best of our ability the character of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. With this in mind please consider the following character traits of Christ exhibited during His earthly ministry.

1. Holiness (Acts 4:27).
2. Justice (John 5:30).
3. Guilelessness (1 Pet. 2:22).
4. Sinlessness (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).
5. Spotlessness (1 Pet. 1:19).
6. Innocence (Mat. 27:4).
7. Resisted temptation (Mat. 4:1-10).
8. Obedience to His Heavenly Father (John 15:10).
9. Subjection to His earthy parents (Luke 2:51).
10. Zeal (Luke 2:49).
11. Meekness (Mat. 11:29).
12. Lowliness of heart (Mat. 11:29).
13. Mercy (Heb. 2:17).
14. Patience (Mat. 27:14).
15. Long-suffering (1 Tim. 1:16).
16. Compassion (Mat. 15:32).
17. Benevolence (Mat. 4:23-24).
18. Love (John 13:1).
19. Self-denial (Mat. 8:20).
20. Humbleness (Luke 22:27).
21. Resignation to do the Father’s will (Luke 22:42).
22. Dogmatic in living, teaching, and contending for the truth (John 14:6).
23. Righteous indignation (Mark 3:5).
24. Fearlessness (Mat. 21:12-13).
25. Forgiveness (Luke 23:34).
26. Purity (1 John 3:3).

Indeed we may truly say, behold the perfect and pure human—the Son of Man. He alone through the gospel can make and keep us pure. As Peter wrote, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Pet. 1:22).

GOD PURIFIES MAN THROUGH THE TRUTH

From the previously noted Scripture and other passages that teach the same thing, it is obvious that the Holy Spirit will not do this purifying for us. He considers our will inviolate. He will never coerce our free moral choice. However, the Holy Spirit does teach us what we are to do about purification. It is, therefore, our duty to

put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isa. 1:16-17).

Let it be emphasized, this is something each person **must** do for himself or herself. Paul admonished Timothy, “keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). John wrote to Christians, saying, “And every man that hath this hope [the hope of glory] in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

God will not do for us what we can do for ourselves (Acts 2:40; Phi. 2:12). However, God has always done for man what he could not do for himself. (This action on God’s part includes His love, grace, mercy, gift [Christ], the sinless life of Christ, Christ’s blood, His resurrection, the mediation of Christ, Christ as our judge, providence, the Bible, the gospel, etc.) Again, in none of these things does God hinder, alter, or infringe upon man’s responsibility to learn and do the truth in becoming a Christian and in living the Christian life.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit will not by-pass His own instrument (the Word of God) in convicting, converting, and keeping a person faithful (Eph. 6:17; Phi. 2:12; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 2:10). Hence, Solomon declared, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Though God is actually the only purifier, man’s action is so important that the Scripture declares that sinners “purify themselves, and make themselves white” (Dan. 12:10—ASV; also see Acts 2:40; Phi. 2:12).

PITFALLS TO AVOID

One can be sincere in heart and completely wrong. Saul of Tarsus is an example of one who murdered Christians with a clear conscience (Acts 23:1). In persecuting the church he thought he was doing God service (John 16:2). Saul had to be brought to saving faith in Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of his sins, and Christian living (John 14:6; Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:30; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). Having learned the truth, Saul kept his honesty and gave up his error. Hence, sincerity of heart **alone** is not all that is necessary to please God.

Moreover, one may fervently and regularly pray: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa. 51:10), but that prayer **alone** will not save him from his sins. Alone, prayer for bread will not provide bread any more than prayer alone for a pure heart will provide a pure heart. Again, one must do **what** Saul of Tarsus did in the **way** he did it and for the **reason** he did it, or such a prayer as noted in the preceding verse is useless (Acts 22:16).

To merely think that one is pure does not guarantee that he is. The writer of Proverbs wrote, "*There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness*" (Pro. 30:12). Indeed, "The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes" (Pro. 12:15; see also Jam. 1:26). Again, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). One must comply with the Will of heaven in order to be made pure.

OUTWARD AND INWARD PURITY

The psalmist wrote that the person is blessed who has "clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psa. 24:4). Thereby the psalmist represents outward and inward purity. Paul had this same outward and inward purity in mind when he wrote, "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. 7:1). An impure heart (mind) is a defiled spirit. It is the same as the "double heart" mentioned by the psalmist or the "double minded man" of James (Psa. 12:2; Jam. 1:8). Such people are hypocrites. James admonishes them to *purify* their hearts (Jam. 4:8).

FREE FROM POLLUTION

When we speak of something being pure, we mean nothing has been added to it. When tea is added to water, it ceases to be pure water. When chocolate is added to milk, it ceases to be pure milk. With these two additions to these liquids they may remain drinkable and possibly more palatable to some, but they are no longer pure water and milk.

In a like manner, add deceit to the heart (mind) of man, and it is no longer pure. The pure heart is the sincere, honest, and good heart (Jos. 24:14; Phi. 1:10; Luke 8:15). As Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). Thus, Paul speaks of the pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9). It is scripturally impossible for the impenitent double-minded person to sing or pray the words of the song, “Purer in heart, O God, help me to be.” With these introductory matters emphasizing God’s part in making us pure and our part in purifying ourselves, let us focus more closely on the topic of purity of mind.

“A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE”

The mind is not wasted because of the absence of a full education in secular matters (though certain secular learning is essential to life in the flesh). The mind is wasted if it is not correctly educated in spiritual matters—those things that pertain to a proper relationship with God. The writer of Proverbs said, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). He also wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he” (Pro. 23:7). Thus, we learn that all our acts begin in the heart. Man, therefore, must be taught the things on which he should think. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi telling them on what they should think. He wrote:

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 (Phi. 4:8).

In the light of these passages and others like them, we may conclude that to keep one’s heart or mind as God desires one must think on proper things, or the issues of his life cannot be well-pleasing to God. In the remainder of this study pertaining to the purity of one’s mind

let us follow the arrangement Paul set out in the previous quote from his letter to the Philippians.

“Whatsoever Things Are True”

Truth is that which corresponds with the facts (reality) or correctly describes the facts (reality). In other words, truth is just what a thing is, no more or no less. That which is false does not correspond with or correctly describe the facts (reality). Error, then, is more or less than what a thing actually is (reality).

Regarding spiritual truth Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). The facts of the gospel of Christ are to be found in the Word of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Hence, whatever corresponds with or correctly describes the facts of the gospel is true (reality). Anything that does not correspond with or does not correctly describe the facts (reality) of the gospel is false. Therefore, if one is to think on true things pertaining to salvation, he is to think on things corresponding with the facts (reality) of the gospel or things correctly describing the facts (reality) of the same as set out in the Word of Truth. Thus, Paul wrote, “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13; see also Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:2-3; John 17:17). Indeed, this is the reason that the Word of God must be rightly divided (2 Tim. 2:15). To mishandle the Word of God is to bring upon one’s self-destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). This is the case because it alters the facts (reality)—the truth of the gospel (John 8:31-32; Rom. 1:16).

If we do not have the facts (reality) of the matter we cannot deal with truth (just what a thing is)—biblical or otherwise. Therefore, in our daily conduct we *must* deal with one another on the basis of the facts (reality). This means that we will not be guilty of “evil surmisings” (1 Tim. 6:4). Evil surmising is nothing more or less than drawing conclusions not warranted by the evidence (assumptions). One cannot accurately draw correct conclusions about anything or anyone without adequate evidence. However, even with adequate evidence (facts) the truth of a matter cannot be deduced unless one reasons correctly with the totality of the evidence (facts). Therefore, we should more clearly understand **how** and **why** “people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6).

One, therefore, cannot think on “whatsoever things are true” without having the facts, all the facts, and nothing but the facts (realities of the matter) in their proper context, reasoning correctly with them, and drawing **only** those conclusions warranted by the evidence. This is the **only** way one can think in such a fashion as to: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). Not following the pattern heretofore set out has caused untold problems in doctrine and conduct throughout the history of mankind and the church. While there may be other reasons for such trouble to continue in this world, no doubt such will continue to be the case for at least four reasons: (1) Men think on things that are not factual (for whatever the reason); (2) They do not have all the facts before they begin the reasoning process; (3) When they have ascertained all the facts of a case, they reason incorrectly with them, thereby drawing conclusions not warranted by the evidence; (4) Being dishonest they abuse the facts and/or the reasoning process. Therefore, the truth on any given subject is obscured.

To possess a pure mind one must honestly evaluate any and all subjects. Otherwise, the mind is abused, wasted, and (regarding spiritual matters) souls are lost.

“Whatsoever Things Are Honest”

When a student takes a test over any subject, he or she is in reality taking two tests—one over the subject matter and the other over honesty. Many people had rather fail the test over honesty than fail the test over the subject matter. Thus, they cheat. As life continues, they conduct themselves accordingly with their spouse, children, employer, or whenever and with whomever being dishonest serves their own selfish desires.

In order to become a Christian one must cease being dishonest. The “good ground” that received the seed (God’s Word) of the kingdom, kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience, was and is the good and honest heart (Luke 8:11, 15). Such a person is one who will always seek the truth concerning any subject or person. He will not be content with anything but the truth. When he sees that he is out of harmony with the truth, he will make the necessary adjustments to bring his thinking and actions into harmony with the truth. Hence, Paul wrote, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).

One who knows the Bible remembers the outright dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). These two, and all such as they were, ignore the words of the writer of Proverbs. He wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life...For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he” (Pro. 4:23; 23:7). If we do not think on those things that are honest, nothing else can be in the proper perspective. One’s acts are dishonest because his thoughts are dishonest. However, if we think as we are instructed to think in the New Testament, we will hate all that is evil and love all that is good. “Honesty is the best policy.”

“Whatsoever Things Are Just”

Just derives from the Greek word *dikaios*. Fundamentally, it means the state of being right or righteous. The Greek term *endikos* is a compound word made of *en* (in) and *dike* (right). Hence, the idea is this—that which is decided righteously leads to a just sentence (see its usage in Rom. 3:8). We may, therefore, conclude that to think on things that are just is nothing more or less than evaluating all things in the light of the truth of a rightly divided Bible, drawing correct conclusions therefrom and living accordingly (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 The. 5:21; Col. 3:17; Jam. 1:25). Purity of heart demands this kind of thinking. (In view of the fact that this chapter is dealing with “whatsoever things are pure” the whole of the chapter shall be devoted to the explanation for this phrase.)

“Whatsoever Things Are Lovely”

Prospiles is the compound Greek word translated “lovely.” It is from *pros* (toward) and *phileo* (to love). *Phileo* is the love one has for his a brother. The idea is this—Christians are to love those things that are pleasing and agreeable. Of course the question arises: “Pleasing and agreeable to whom?” Keeping in mind what has been studied thus far, the only answer can be, “Pleasing and agreeable to God.” Of course this means that those things of this life that promote godly living are things that are most pleasing and agreeable to God. Purity of mind is cultivated and sustained by thinking on such things.

A DEEPER LOOK AT LOVE

The subject of love is one of the most abused, corrupted, and misunderstood of biblical topics. Hence, before leaving this portion of

our study, let us expand it by pursuing what the Bible teaches regarding love.

Many think of love as a romantic, subjective, sick, sentimental mush. In the name of *love* every vice of man is committed and all sorts of wholesome activities omitted. Therefore, before one may properly meditate on matters pertaining to love, he must have a fundamental understanding of the subject as it is revealed in the Bible (1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In the English language *love* is singular in expressing what it takes four Greek words to do. We shall now briefly note and define those four words. *Eros*, from which the English word “erotic” derives, expresses sexual desire and does not appear as such in the Bible. *Storge*, does not appear alone in the Scriptures; however, it combines with other words. It pertains to family affection. *Phileo*, the Greek lexicographer Thayer says, “denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion.” In his Greek lexicon, Lenski tells us that *phileo* is “the love of affection and personal attachment.” *Agape*, is not an emotional, affectionate, passionate response. Of *agape* Lenski says it is “love of intelligence, reason and comprehension, coupled with corresponding purpose.” *Agape* is a determination of the mind producing deliberate conviction and policy of life. It is the love of doing right simply because it is right. Therefore, Jesus could command: “Love your enemies” (Mat. 5:44). Our Lord did not command family affection (*storge*) or “personal attachment” “prompted by sense and emotion” or tender affection (*phileo*). Christ did command a mental resolve, an exercise of the will, to seek the highest good of any that would dislike Him.

Jesus loved (*agape*) the scribes and Pharisees when he said to them, “Woe unto you, scribes...hypocrites” (Mat. 23). Paul loved (*agape*) the church at Corinth when he said, “For ye are yet carnal” (1 Cor. 3:3). Peter manifested his love (*agape*) when he referred to false prophets as “natural brute beasts...spots...blemishes...wells without water...speak great swelling words of vanity...they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pet. 2:2, 12ff). In each case the truth was taught manifesting our Lord’s and His apostles’ desire for their highest good (John 8:32; Gal. 4:16). Hence, *agape* does not change when the emotions and passions surge and wane. Such is indicative of its relationship to an objective standard. It *always* leads one to obey

without question the commandments of God (1 John 4:18; 5:3). Through the gospel *agape* proves the faith of man by soliciting him to choose between God and Satan (Jos. 24:15, 22; Psa. 119:30; Pro. 1:29; Isa. 7:15; Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Agape is the highest love because it regulates with saneness and sobriety the emotional forms of love. Therefore, no form of love, no matter how emotional, rises higher nor in any way alters the kind of love (*agape*) that always leads to obedience to God's law. As Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15—ASV).

If one's family affection (love) develops properly, he must cultivate *agape*. One cannot properly nurture "the love of affection and personal attachment" (*phileo*) unless he employs *agape*. Unless the regulatory power of *agape* over the other forms of love is recognized and employed, the sobering effect of the objective truth of the Bible will be discarded for a life of emotional instability (subjectivism).

Too many relationships, including marriages, are developed on the basis of *eros*, *storge*, and *phileo* with little, if any, *agape* present. Passions and emotions are not enough to cement close friendships and intimate family ties in times of illness, poverty, and the dire calamities that are the common lot of mankind. In "sickness and in health and for better or for worse" *agape* is the prime mover behind being "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).

The Great Love of Abraham

A perfect example of the position and power of *agape* in the life of a mortal is recorded in Genesis 22:1-14. Through the eye of faith we see Abraham obey God as he takes Isaac, his son, his only son, whom he loves, and rises early in the morning to journey to the land of Moriah to offer his son of promise for a burnt offering. Finally, the place is reached, and the father of the faithful lays the wood on his beloved son. Abraham takes the fire and knife, and together they go to the appointed place of sacrifice. What fatherly emotions must have pulsed in the heart of the old man when Isaac asked where the sacrificial lamb was. *Agape* replies from Abraham's lips. "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son" (v. 8—ASV). Abraham built the altar, "laid the wood in order" (v. 9—ASV). As he bound "his son," Isaac then knew what must be. More than this is the fact

that Abraham fully realized that Isaac knew. While his arm was outstretched and the knife poised to do the bidding of Jehovah, the angel of the Lord stayed the aging father's hand.

Surely we can see that Abraham controlled the emotional aspects of *storge* and *phileo* by his willingness to do what God said. *Agape* did this for him, and it will do the same for us because *agape* "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6—ASV).

God's will and *agape* are never mutually exclusive in the Bible or in the life of a faithful child of God. Moreover, no form of love ever rises higher or sets aside our obedience to God's authoritative Word (Mat. 26:39, 40; Col. 3:17; Heb. 5:8, 9; 1 John 2:5; 5:2). Therefore, Paul wrote, "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love [*agape*]" (1 Cor. 13:13—ASV). Indeed, the pure heart understands the kinds of love of which we humans are capable, as well as the kind love (*agape*) that regulates the others.

The Nature of *Agape*

Having seen the differences and fundamental significance of the kinds of love, let us now turn our attention to the nature of *agape*. This part of our study will further show why *agape* is greater than faith, hope, and the other kinds of love. Paul sets out the component parts of *agape* in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Love Suffers Long

Paul has in mind *agape's* great quality of patient endurance. Peter wrote of the "longsuffering of God" toward the world before the flood of Noah's day (1 Pet. 3:20). Patient endurance is a necessary part of Christian love (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Hence, the pure in heart teaches, defends, and lives in accordance with the truth while it bears with those who are in need of the same. It does not allow for one to be in fellowship with those engaged in error or to compromise the truth in any way. It does allow, yes demands, a relationship that allows for reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 2:2).

Love is Kind

Paul teaches Christians to "be ye kind one to another" (Eph. 4:32). Such is a condition of being a child of God. Since no one is perfect it is easy for one to fall into the habit of fault-finding, which conduct is

condemned (Mat. 7:1-5). This attitude and way of life is not to be confused with a legitimate exposure of sin (John 7:24; 1 Cor. 5:3; 6:1). It is an attitude that has forgotten or never known 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). Kindness as a component part of *agape* is seen in the deeds that show that we care about the needs of others. Especially is this true when it comes to our love for those lost in sin and the love we have for our brethren. The great desire to be pure in heart will develop this great aspect of love.

Love Does Not Envy

Paul wrote of preachers who preached out of envy. He penned:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel (Phi. 1:15-17).

It is obvious that jealousy, malicious actions, and grudges cannot abide where love is. Jealousy, envy, and strife were in the church at Corinth. No wonder that Paul wrote the great love chapter to such characters. Hence, where envy is, there is every evil work (Jam. 3:14-16). A pure mind will not envy.

Love Does Not Vaunt Itself

To brag and to boast is to vaunt oneself. Love will not allow one to give undue accolades to oneself. In reality such reveals one’s feelings of contempt or disregard for others. The writer of Proverbs declared, “As clouds and wind without rain, *So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts falsely*” (Pro. 25:14—ASV). One of the evil characteristics of those who desired not to retain God in their knowledge is boasting (Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2). The pure in heart are busy doing good as the Bible defines the good, but they say nothing about it. This is the great and necessary godly trait of humility.

Love is Not Puffed Up

The apostle used this term several times in this letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:18; 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). It is nothing more than the evil attitude of being proud and high-minded. It is forbidden. One of the qualifications for one to be an elder is that he should not be “a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the

devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). Certainly learned and accomplished preachers should heed the words of the apostle Paul. He wrote, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Rom. 12:3). Furthermore, he wrote:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phi. 2:3-5).

Indeed, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble...Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (Jam. 4:6b, 10). The pure in heart will reject the “puffed up” disposition—an attitude that is so foreign to Christ (Mat. 20:25-28).

Love Does Not Behave Itself Unseemly

Persons who are rude, tactless, and disrespectful are not displaying love. Love is courtesy. In this our society is sadly lacking. Love will be careful to observe forms of respect. Otherwise we will be unseemly. “Thank you,” “You’re welcome,” “Please,” “May I,” “No, sir,” “No, ma’am,” and “Excuse me” are heard less and less today. Even the clothing we wear and how and when we wear it is a sign of love or the lack of it. To a degree we must be sensitive about how others feel (2 Tim. 2:24-25). The pure of heart will develop this Christian disposition.

Love Does Not Seek Her Own

A self-seeking person is a selfish person. There is no greater contributing cause to loneliness, unhappiness, and despair than selfishness. Paul wrote, “Let no man seek his own, but *each* his neighbor’s *good*” (1 Cor. 10:24—ASV).

How many marriages and homes have been destroyed (if not destroyed, certainly hindered) because of acidic words spoken in haste and anger. Each person intends to win his or her point. Husbands forget that they are to love their wives (Eph. 5:25). Wives forget that they are to love their husbands (Tit. 2:4). The attitude of selfishness in so many cases is the root cause for such unloving conduct. Some of us have never grown up. Thus, our spiritual and emotional immaturity reflects our selfishness.

The selfish person in the church is not difficult to identify. He or she is the person who constantly demands his own rights and privileges. Persons with pure hearts will manifest their love for God and the church by stressing their interest in discharging their duties, not in pursuing their rights.

Would to God that we could be as loving, pure, and selfless as Jesus. He lived His life for the benefit of others. He went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He was “wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53:5). We, therefore, are instructed: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). James taught that the Christian is to be a “doer of the work [because], this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jam. 1:25). John, the apostle of love, wrote to Christians, saying, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). The pure in heart will work hard to develop *selflessness*.

Love Is Not Easily Provoked

Paroxuno is the Greek word translated “provoke.” It means “to irritate, provoke, rouse to anger.” The person who is not easily provoked is the person who exercises self-control. He or she is serious, calm, and sober in disposition. The writer of Proverbs wrote, “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*” (Pro. 16:32). James sets out this sentiment when he wrote, “Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jam. 1:19-20—ASV). As Paul warned, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26).

However, nowhere does the Bible teach that Christians should not be upset when they see sin. In Athens, Paul’s spirit “was provoked [stirred] within him as he beheld the city full of idols” (Acts 17:16—ASV). However, though the Christian is incensed at sin, he does not become bitter and act with a resentful spirit toward the sinner. Our Lord was provoked at the sin in His churches (Rev. 2-3). Jesus’ rebuke of the Asian churches was designed to provoke (*paraoxusmos*—to stimulate in a good way, to sharpen) them unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25). The pure in heart will follow

the Lord's example and teaching in doing the same thing without becoming bitter and hateful.

Love Thinks No Evil

This component part of love means that we do not keep a list of hurts done to us by others. The pure in heart are not always looking for evil in another person's life, and in his plans he devises no evil. The Christian desires to think well of a person. He looks for the noble and not the ignoble; the beautiful, rather than the ugly; the hopeful, rather than that which is despairing; and the good, rather than the evil. Love abhors attributing an evil motive to ugly conduct. When we see sin in the life of a person, our desire is to save him, rather than destroy him (Phi. 4:5). No wonder James calls love "the royal law" (Jam. 2:8). Also, it will always be "the royal law" in the life of one with a pure in heart.

Love Does Not Rejoice in Unrighteousness

"Balaam *the son of Bosor*,...loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15). The apostle Paul spoke of those who have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 The. 2:12). Any of us can love what we want to love, and we ought to desire to love the truth. However, we should realize there always will be modern day Balaams who have pleasure in unrighteousness. However, the pure in heart recognize sin for what it is—"All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

The Bible declares, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Furthermore, "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Rom. 2:8). Paul revealed the eternal price paid by those who die in unrighteousness when he wrote, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 The. 2:12).

All who love God will make every effort to live their lives in harmony with what Paul taught when he penned, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). Hence, one who truly loves God from a pure heart does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

Love Rejoices In The Truth

God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). He has breathed out His truth in His infallible Word (2 Tim. 3:16). Hence, to know the truth and be guided by it brings freedom from sin (John 8:31-32; 17:17). It is, therefore, in the light of truth that we live our lives before God and the world (1 John 1:7). Christians love that which honors God (Mat. 5:16). Thus, Christians honor the truth of God, for the truth honors God.

As noted earlier, love rejoices when the gospel is preached even though things are not as they should be (Phi. 1:15-18). Our Lord through the Holy Spirit by the pen of the apostle of love (John) rejoiced in the truth practiced by the churches of Asia, though He rebuked them for their sins (Rev. 2-3). Thus, today, we rejoice in the truth believed, preached, defended, and practiced by Christians, even when the complete picture is not what it should be. Paul always gave compliments to the churches for what truth they practiced, even though he severely rebuked them for their error (1 Cor.; Gal.). Indeed, this is the way of the pure in heart that practice the love of God.

Love Bears All Things

One of the greatest component parts of love is demonstrated when one loves those who are not very likeable; yes, even those who hate him. All other things being equal, love always seeks the highest good of another. This should be true regarding our own disposition toward ourselves as well. Do we not continue to love ourselves even when we are not likable? Have we not ever hated our own thoughts or acts? Have we ever become angry with ourselves because we omitted a right word or action? Did we cease to love ourselves because of such thinking and acting?

Of course, this does not mean that our enemies will be as close to us as dear friends or family. However, we will do our best to do good to them. It is not easy to seek the good qualities in persons who are disagreeable. However, do we not appreciate those who seek our own good qualities, though we may often be disagreeable and sour as the proverbial pickle?

Of course, the sentiments previously expressed do not mean that love has no limits. Indeed, the Lord chastens those He loves (Heb. 12:6). This is not pleasant for the persons being chastened, but it is designed to help them "be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10-11).

Furthermore, because love does not rejoice in iniquity, it does not compromise truth for any reason or anyone. Love will discipline the sinning member of the Lord's body. Paul wrote, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault [trespass, ASV], ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). He also taught:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 The. 3:6).

In the same letter in which Paul wrote the great love chapter presently being studied, he declared to the Corinthian brethren:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:4-7).

Paul explained that such action was and is an act of love (1 Cor. 5:3-8). It is designed to save the erring child of God. To not practice corrective discipline is to demonstrate our lack of love for our brethren in need of such. And, John says, "He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death" and "is a murderer" (1 John 3:14-15). Loving enough to obey our Lord's Will pertaining to disciplining erring church members evidences a mature and deep Christian love.

Love Believes All Things

This phrase simply means that a child of God desires to believe the very best about every person and situation. Of course, facts may later come to light that will not allow one to believe the good one earlier accepted. It is the idea that one is innocent until proven guilty that should permeate the pure in heart. The writer of Proverbs declared, "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all transgressions" (Pro. 10:12—ASV). Peter put it this way: "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8—ASV). Is it our desire to form the kindest views of the actions of men? Do we seek to put the best construction on the motives and doings of others? All too often we do not. We should be slow to be persuaded that things are as bad as the tales told about

someone or some event. No, sin is not being winked at. To the contrary, one who is pure in heart is motivated by love and is the person who only wants the facts in a given case. Therefore, we will not be hasty to impugn wrong motives or actions until guilt is proven by adequate evidence (1 The. 5:21). Love demands the facts and will settle for nothing less.

Love Hopes All Things

As employed by the Holy Spirit *hope* means expectation with an earnest desire to receive the thing one has a right to expect. We see this meaning in the following passages from Paul's letters to Rome and Titus. To the Romans he wrote, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*" (Rom. 8:24-25). He told Titus, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1:2). In this constituent element of love, we realize that Paul is saying that love expects all to turn out well. Thus, the pure in heart will exercise this fervent aspect of love. Thereby, when things are at their worst, the Christian expects the best. God is in control and His children are special to Him. As Paul said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose" (Rom. 8:28). He cares for us. We should think and act accordingly.

Love Endures All Things

Love will not endure false teachers, false doctrine, or ungodly conduct (Acts 14:8-11; 15:1-2; Gal. 2:4-5, 11-14; 1 Cor. 5:2, 4-5; 2 The. 3:6; 3 John 9-10). However, there are those things in the lives of our families and in the Lord's church that we must endure. Such things as persecution and abuse by enemies and so-called friends will always be around to hurt us. We may have to bite our tongues at certain times and blink away the tears at others, but that is better than giving up our Christian integrity to lower ourselves to respond to them.

Suffering is in God's plan for His children. It is sad to hear children of God respond to a terrible ordeal in which they find themselves with, "Why did this have to happened to me?" or "This is just not fair." To the contrary, we should ask, "Who am I that I should escape

the calamities that are apart of our life on earth?” Indeed, suffering has always been used by God to test the faith of His saints in Him.

If we possess the *agape* love of which Paul writes, we will endure and bear up under all manner of adversity. We will trust in the good providence of God and always obey His will. We will endure misunderstandings—even those misunderstandings that just cannot be cleared up. Though one person may strongly desire to scripturally settle certain problems, others involved in the problem may not. In fact, they may not be concerned about what the Scriptures teach about a scriptural settlement. Therefore, they go unsolved. In such sad and sinful cases the ones’ desiring things to be done according to God’s will must endure the consequences.

Jude tells us to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21). Paul instructs us how to do it. He wrote, “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). Furthermore, he wrote:

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi. 4:6-7).

The pure in heart will cultivate this disposition of heart.

Love for the Lost

Having briefly analyzed the component parts of *agape* in this study of 1 Corinthians 13, we are better able to understand God’s love for those lost in sin as well as the love He has for His children, the church. Moreover, we are able to see why those who make up the blood-bought body of Christ should love all men, especially our brethren in the Lord. Indeed, to be pure in heart one must love mankind.

It was Christ’s love for all men that caused him to “taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). Thus, we are instructed by the apostle Paul to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). Obvious it is, then, that Jesus will not abide in any person’s heart wherein resides hate, malice, and bitterness. Therefore, a Christian must form a disposition of mind that is full of appreciation for the immeasurable worth of every human being (Phi. 2:4-8).

Love for the Church

Besides the love that Christians have for those lost in sin, there is the fervent love they have for their brothers and sisters in Christ. The apostle John wrote:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love....If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:7-8, 20-21).

There are no better people on the face of the earth than those in the blood-bought body of Christ (Acts 20:28). Hence, Peter said, "Love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. 2:17). John also wrote, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death....and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:14, 16b). Furthermore, he penned, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

"Whatever Things Are of Good Report"

Good reports may sometimes come from bad men, but routinely and consistently good reports come from good men. Hence, to keep one's mind pure, one must think on good things. This is the basic idea inherent in the Greek word *euphemos* translated "good report." The Christian does not keep a good attitude or good thoughts while he dwells on erroneous reports. This is one reason that gossip, tale-bearing, and so on, exist and thrive where men and women, boys and girls enjoy the "juicy morsels" of bad reports. Hence, the uncontaminated (pure) heart does not defile itself with bad reports.

PURITY OF LIFE

Heretofore, we have labored to dwell on the principles set out in God's Word that deal with the thoughts, purposes, intents, and motives of the inward man. We have seen that our actions are the products of our minds (hearts). However, we have also seen that even though one may have the purest of motives, without the instruction of God found only in the Bible we simply do not know what our actions should be. Thus, we need to study actions that characterize the Christian life as well as those that do not.

In reality we are continuing our study of what to love and what not to love. John wrote:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Here is a clear prohibition—“Love not the world.” It simply means do not love this world (*kosmos*) of evil. What is this sphere of evil that Christians must not love? Realizing that the thought is father to the action, let us answer the preceding question. It is: (1) “The lust of the flesh”—ideas that spring from purposed, precious, and unlawful desires to satisfy sensual appetites which manifest themselves in sinful actions. (2) “The lust of the eyes”—To view evil sights outwardly is to practice them inwardly. All kinds of wicked books, articles, plays, movies, television programs, Internet sites, and bad pictures are tools of Satan to seduce us. These items just listed are pornographic in nature. (3) “The pride of life” (“vain glory of life”—ASV)—haughty arrogance. Paul warned the Colossians of this evil attitude when he wrote, “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, **vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind**” (Col. 2:18). Some of the Corinthian brethren had become “puffed up” because of the following situations and events: (1) The thought that Paul would not come personally to correct them, (2) the factions that existed among them, (3) the fornication of the man with his father’s wife, and (4) in their own knowledge (1 Cor. 4:6, 18; 5:2; 8:1). Because of their fleshy disposition of mind Paul told them that they were carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-2; 9:11).

Hence, as John employs *world*, he means anything of this present age that would cause one to be separated from God. While we are to love the sinner, we are to hate that which leads to his rebellion to God—his pride, self-centeredness, and lust.

To love the things prohibited by God is to exclude the love of God. One cannot love both (Mat. 6:24). The things of “the world” (as John uses *world*) are evil in themselves. John declared that, “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). We should not love “the world” because it “passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17).

Moreover, when the *world* is no more, “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Hence, the selfish, arrogant, and proud who rebel against God will pass away with this *world*. On the other hand, the humble, loving, meek person who obeys the gospel is constantly under the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. He thereby remains in fellowship with God and with his brethren of like precious faith (1 John 1:7). Hence, as John wrote, such a one “abideth forever” (in heaven) (see also Rev. 2:10). As Peter wrote, “*Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved [and with it the “world” as John employed the word], what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet. 3:11).

Pornography

Paul clearly condemned those things that are “filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness” (Rom. 1:29). To these acts of impurity he added “filthiness...foolish talking...jesting” (Eph. 5:4). Moreover, he wrote, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). While the courts of our land have had great difficulty defining pornography, the inspired apostle Paul did not. **Hence, pornography is any language or action explicit or implicit which empathizes with the sins noted in the previous passages that are designed to communicate and evoke through any media a response from the person exposed thereto.** What is filthy to one is filthy to all.

Before participating in any “media event” as viewers, we should ask ourselves the following questions.

1. Would I be ashamed to finish worship with my brethren then remain in the same gathering to watch this movie, television program, listen to certain songs, or read this book?
2. Do I have any doubts about whether such is authorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17; Rom. 14:23)?

“Screen It”

“Screen it” is a service (a very good one) on the Internet that will let anyone know what to expect from movies, music, and videos. The service works by keying in www.screenit.com. The page that appears

allows one to chose from *movies*, *music*, *videos*, etc. For example when one clicks on *movies*, a second page appears with a lengthy list of new and recently released titles. If one clicks on the movie, *Mighty Joe Young*, the next page will appear with the following choices.

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG

(1998) (Charlize Theron, Bill Paxton) (PG)

Alcohol/ Drugs	Blood/ Gore	Disrespectful/ Bad Attitude	Frightening/ Tense Scenes	Guns/ Weapons
Mild	Mild	Heavy	*Moderate	Heavy
Imitative Behavior	Jump Scenes	Music (Scary/Tense)	Music (Inappropriate)	Profanity
Minor	None	Moderate	None	Mild
Sex/ Nudity	Smoking	Tense Family Scenes	Topics to Talk About	Violence
Minor	Minor	Mild	Mild	Heavy

One may scroll down the page reading all the topics or click on any of the topics in the box to read only the information under that specific heading. Please note the following excerpts from the movie “Mighty Joe Young” as an example of what the service provides.

PROFANITY

At least 3 hells, 2 damns, 1 crap, and 4 uses of “Oh my God,” 2 of “My God” and 1 use each of “God,” “Swear to God” and “Oh God” as exclamations.

SEX/NUDITY

Jill briefly shows a tiny bit of cleavage (otherwise we nearly always see her in very tightfitting tops that accentuate her bust). After seeing that Joe is playing hide-n-seek with Harry, Gregg jokes, “It’s a good thing Joe didn’t want to play doctor.”

Of course, anyone can justify himself viewing pornographic material in his own eyes. However, when he does so, he is not abiding by the Word of God and thereby sinning.

Immodest Clothing

Little concern is shown by anyone today regarding the way he or she dresses. We do not live in a time of good manners much less

modesty. Our day is a time when men, women, boys, and girls glory in their shame—a time when few blush over anything. Therefore, in the minds of many, to teach what the Bible has to say on modesty is viewed as archaic and ignorant. This is true even in churches that are considered sound on other important matters. However, such silly and vain thinking does not change the teaching of God’s Word. It will read the same way regarding baptism and modesty on the Day of Judgment as it does today.

Modesty is “observing conventional standards of proper dress and behavior; free from coarseness or indecency; chaste in thought and conduct.”² It is obvious that our society condones much that the Bible does not. Thus, the previous definition is not based on the Bible. Modesty according to the Bible is clothing and the wearing of it that does not emphasize sexual aspects of the body and thereby aid in the formation of evil thoughts in the mind of the beholder. Immodesty, as we are herein discussing, is the wearing of clothing that reveals or emphasizes parts of the body that, when seen by the opposite sex, draws attention to you and aids in the creation of evil desires on the part of others.³ Therefore, Paul wrote, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel” (1 Tim. 2:9). Moreover, Paul wrote, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” (Gal. 5:19). *Lasciviousness* means “to cause or produce lust.” Such certainly refers to clothing, the lack of it, or the manner in which it is worn that helps the mind of the beholder to lust, which is the beginning of the sin process (Jam. 1:13-16). Notice from the following Scripture the terrible consequences given by our Lord awaiting those who cause others to sin.

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones (Luke 17:1-2).

Males and females alike need to consider the following question relative to the apparel: “Is my clothing pleasing to God?” Paul wrote:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye

may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

We, therefore, need to ask: “Am I dressing to please God or to receive the accolades of a Godless society?” “Do I make my decisions on the basis of my body being a place where God dwells and, therefore, where His Will is carried out?”

Modern Dancing

If dancing of any kind involves practices not authorized or forbidden by the New Testament, the faithful child of God must abstain from them and teach against them. The dancing we have in mind would cover “ballroom dancing” and all other forms of dancing that involve bodily contact between those dancing. It also includes the various dancing done with rock music and other forms of modern dance.

In Paul’s catalog of the sins of the flesh, he uses Greek words that mean sinful activity. For example, in Galatians 5:19 he employs *aselgeia*. In the KJV and the ASV it is translated “lasciviousness.” In other versions it has been rendered “licentiousness.” According to the Greek lexicons, it related to sensuality and sexual excesses. *Aselgeia* pertains to filthy words and actions—the immoral handling of males and females.⁴

“Revellings” (KJV and ASV) is translated from *komos* (Gal. 5:19). It pertains to excessive feasting and carousing. It bears a close kinship with music and dancing.⁵

Homoios translates into “such like” (Gal. 5:19). These are sins of the same nature as those previously listed by Paul. Hence, they are like lasciviousness and reveling.

We must always avoid anything that puts our souls at risk. This means that we must not do anything or leave undone anything that would stifle our spirituality or handicap our awareness of God. Emotions meant to be aroused and satisfied only in marriage should not be exposed to things that otherwise arouse them. Our influence must be for good as the Bible defines good.

There is no way that one can involve one’s self in modern dancing as herein discussed and not be involved in sin. Paul wrote that “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Why should a child of God expose himself to such things?

Fornication and Petting

“Sex appeal” is the chief ingredient involved in everything nowadays. No matter whether one is selling pins or airplanes, “sex appeal” is used in some way to make one’s product appeal to the potential customer. Sex sells. Hence, we live in an age that may be described more and more as Sodom and Gomorrah revisited.

Fornication is glorified as recreational sex. It translates the Greek word *porneia*. *Porneia* refers to every kind of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. God will condemn whoremongers and adulterers to hell (Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:8; 22:15). God condemns homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality (Rom. 1:24, 26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Thus, the Bible plainly warns that fornicators and the like shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). We are to “flee fornication” and keep ourselves pure (1 The. 4:3-5; 1 Cor. 6:13, 18).

God created male and female with sexuality and the appetites thereof. Along with everything else, he declared such to be “very good” (Gen. 1:27, 31). Our loving God ordained marriage as the **only** institution where the sex urge may be satisfied (Gen. 2:25; Heb. 13:4). Men have perverted marriage, sex, and the home. We must do all within our power to restore marriage, sex, and the home to the honorable positions they hold when governed by the Will of God.

Petting is any kind of lovemaking, fondling of the erogenous areas, and so on. God intended such actions to be the beginning of what is to end in sexual intercourse. It is condemned by the word *lasciviousness*. As previously studied, the word means impure or immoral handling of males and females. Dating couples should always seek to deal with one another with purity and integrity that each other’s thoughts may be kept pure and holy (Phi. 4:8; Mat. 5:8). Petting does not contribute to holy expressions of genuine love.

Smoking, “Lipping,” Dipping, and Chewing of Tobacco

In order for our lives to be acceptable to God **whatever we do must** have the authority of Christ behind it (Col. 3:17). If we do not have authority from our King to act, we are acting presumptuously. Therefore, we sin (1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:17).

Let us state the preceding principle in other words. If it is the case that faith in Christ comes by hearing the Word of God (and such is the case, Rom. 10:17), and if it is the case that we are to walk by faith and

not by sight (and such is the case, 2 Cor. 5:7), then it is the case that to walk by faith is to walk as the Word of God guides and directs us. Question: **Where in the New Testament of Christ is one authorized to smoke, etc., tobacco?** If the Word of God does not authorize it, how can the use of such be walking by faith? The truth of the matter is that there is not one direct statement, example, or implication in the New Testament that authorizes the use of tobacco as we are herein discussing it. If one does not believe the previous statement, he would favor us by citing New Testament authority for it. It cannot be done.

In view of what we **know** regarding the habit forming nature of tobacco (as well as the other debilitating effects it has on the human body), can anyone imagine a Christian affirming the following proposition. **“The Scriptures teach that smoking tobacco is authorized by the New Testament.”** He must be able to prove his proposition or oppose smoking. Paul wrote, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). If he proves it, he will prove that smoking is good and that it is to be held fast. Moreover, if such is proven to be good, it is a sin for anyone to oppose smoking as the word is herein used. **Now, just who is it that desires to take on this task?**

1. T F The human body is an instrument through which one serves God (Rom. 6:13, 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:12-20).
2. T F Smoking of tobacco honors the human body (1 Cor. 6:12-20).
3. T F Smoking of tobacco is not habit forming (1 Cor. 6:12).
4. T F Smoking of tobacco helps the Christian to be a good influence for Christ.
5. T F Smoking of tobacco by a Christian hinders his good influence for Christ.
6. T F Smoking of tobacco by a Christian ruins his good influence for Christ.
7. T F A Christian exercises a good influence for Christ when his is in violation of 1 Cor. 6:12.
8. T F It is acceptable to God for a Christian who smokes to force the non-smoking Christian to suffer eye irritation, headache, coughing, sore throat, and various other discomforting conditions.

9. T F The person who subjects his fellows (his family too) to the miseries produced by smoking is practicing Paul's directive found in Philippians 2:4, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
10. T F The person who subjects his fellows (his family too) to the miseries produced by smoking is practicing the Golden Rule.
11. T F A tobacco smoking Christian gives new meaning to the phrase, "Ye are the light of the world."

The following quote serves well to end this brief study.

When one knows the effects of smoking on the body, common sense would dictate that he not smoke. This would be true for non-Christians as well as Christians. The Christian, however, has a deeper, more meaningful motivation. He recognizes that his body belongs to the Lord. It is to be presented as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Not only does his body belong to God but he belongs to God: his mind, his total personality, his time, and his money. Anything that keeps him from being and doing his best for God and for his fellow man should be left out of his life.⁶

Drinking Alcoholic Beverages

The New Testament does not authorize alcohol in any form taken as a beverage. To the contrary, it is forbidden. **To drink one drink of alcohol is to be one drink drunk.** Why is this the case? In answer to this question, we shall consider the following letter written to my co-worker Lynn Parker by Robert C. Bux, M. D., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for the Bexar County Forensic Science Center, San Antonio, Texas. At the time of his correspondence with Dr. Bux brother Parker was living in Mathis, Texas. Brother Parker asked four questions.

1. At what amount does an alcoholic beverage begin to intoxicate (number of drinks)?
2. Must one be "stumbling drunk" to be intoxicated?
3. Would beverage alcohol be considered a substance toxic to humans?
4. Are any adverse physiological effects seen after the consumption of only one beer or one "shot" of whiskey?

Consider now the answers given to brother Parker's questions by Dr. Bux.

November 16, 1992

The following are the answers to the questions as requested:

The amount of alcohol necessary to begin to “intoxicate” varies somewhat with the weight. In general, an individual who weighs 70 kilograms (154 lbs.) would require 2 to 2.5 alcohol equivalent drinks. If this was consumed [sic] over a short period of time, then the individual’s peak blood alcohol would be 0.05 and at this level, detectable changes can be seen including behavior and judgment. An alcohol equivalent drink is defined as one 12 ounce beer, four to five ounces of wine or 1 mixed bar drink.

“Stumbling drunk” implies to me an ataxic gait, where one will stagger and most usually accompanied by slurred speech. Significant gait alterations can occur at levels of 0.1 gm per deciliter and certainly any individual above 0.15 would fall under this category. At these levels, besides having a lack of judgment, and inhibition of the inhibitions, individuals will have night blindness, i.e., cannot see at night, muscular incoordination and delayed reflexes, “tunnel” vision, as well as loss of depth perception. In order to get to this level, individuals (our hypothetical 154 lb man or woman) would need to have between ten to fifteen alcohol equivalent drinks over a short period of time. Alcohol is also metabolized at a given rate of approximately three quarters to one alcohol equivalent drink per hour, irregardless of the individual’s size and assuming that the individual is in good health.

Yes, it can be toxic drink and either on an acute one time basis resulting in significant increases in accidents and injuries as well as death. On a chronic basis in large quantities, the entire body can be affected, most notably the heart with enlargement, the liver with cirrhosis, and bleeding episodes in the gastrointestinal tract.

There are subtle physiological effects after one alcohol equivalent drink, but without special laboratory testing, one would not notice this in casual conversation or observation of the individual. Certainly after two to two and a half alcohol equivalent drinks in an adult, these effects become apparent and include those above as well as a rapid heart rate and increased blood pressure. Alcohol acts as a central nervous system depressant and when taken in enough quantities can result in producing coma as well as death.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Robert C. Bux, M. D.

Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

ADDENDUM

Overall, intoxication in [sic] a matter of degree, is a process that begins with this individual’s first drink.

(signed)

Robert C. Bux, M. D.

Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

Notice how the great prophet Isaiah described the evil and debilitating effects of alcohol.

And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up

of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment (Isa. 28:7—ASV).

1. T F The Scriptures teach that one may consume that which inhibits reason.
2. T F The Scriptures teach that one may consume that which destroys moral perception.
3. T F The Scriptures teach that one may consume that which prompts one to throw off inhibitions.
4. T F The Scriptures teach that one may consume that which causes one to disregard moral and spiritual restraints.

Thus, without hesitancy we may affirm that *any* drinking of alcoholic beverages produces a form of drunkenness. The inspired apostle Paul made it very clear that no *drunkards* “shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:10).

The Use of Other Drugs And Narcotics

Drugs that fall into five categories primarily produce chemical dependency: Amphetamines, Barbiturates, Hallucinogens, Marijuana, and Narcotics. Many of these drugs have a good use when dispensed and used according to a doctor’s prescription. Some of them are much stronger and far more addictive than others. However, if one can see that the Bible does not authorize the consumption of beverage alcohol (indeed, it is forbidden), he should be able to see that those same Scriptures apply to recreational use of drugs. In other words, the reasoning and the Scriptures that cause us to conclude that beverage alcohol is sinful, are the same reasoning and the same Scriptures that prohibit any mind altering drug.

Gambling

The basic reason that gambling (wagering, betting) is sin is that it is an unauthorized way of obtaining money or anything else. Let the gambler affirm: “The Scriptures teach that gambling is an authorized means of obtaining money.” Then, let him answer the following question. Where is the direct statement, implication, or example that authorizes one to obtain money by means of gambling? Such authorization does not exist.

To the contrary, one will find the Scriptures forbidding the concept of obtaining “something for nothing.” Emphasized throughout the

entire Bible is that man should work to obtain his livelihood (Exo. 20:9; Eph. 4:28; 2 The. 3:10-12).

Furthermore, God owns all things (Psa. 24:1; 50:10-12). Man is but a steward of the things in his hands. Hence, we manage those things put into our control according to God's direction—body, time, possessions, influence, and the gospel. The Christian, therefore, shares liberally of all these things.

How does the Christian correctly harmonize “love thy neighbor” with wagering? It cannot be done. Self-interest is restricted. It ends where other persons' interests and needs are infringed upon (Phi. 2:3-4; Rom. 12:10; 13:10). Christians are to seek the interest and well being of our fellow man (neighbor). The gambler has no such interest.

No gambler ever operated on the basis of doing unto others as he would be done unto (Mat. 7:12). No gambler in throwing dice ever called “seven-come-eleven” on behalf of the one against whom he is wagering his money. No poker player ever desired for the one with whom he is gambling to have a better hand of cards than he has.

Surely, any honest person can see that covetousness is a fundamental part of a gambler's character. God places the covetous person in the same list as fornicators, drunkards, idolaters, adulterers, and homosexuals. No persons with such characters will go to heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

PURITY OF SPEECH

It is so easy to sin with the tongue. How serious a matter it is! Many and varied are the ways that men may sin with their tongues. Proper control of the tongue is fundamental to stopping all those ways. James wrote, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain” (Jam. 1:26). “Bridling the tongue” means that one's speech is under the correct control of the speaker. When one does not exercise self-control over his tongue, his devotion to God is empty and worthless. The writer of Proverbs declared, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Pro. 21:23). As in everything else a Christian does, he must have authority for what he says and how he says it as well as to and about whom he speaks. Therefore, the first step in purity of speech is that the speaker must carefully choose his words—his words must be under his control and he must be under the control of Christ. As the psalmist wrote, “I said,

I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me” (Psa. 39:1). Therefore, let us consider the various ways one may sin with his tongue.

Taking the Lord’s Name in Vain, Bywords, Slang and Filthy Language

The use of God’s name in any irreverent or disrespectful manner is sin. We are taught to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). Hence, we should employ His name with deep reverence. While some may not engage in outright cursing, they do not hesitate to employ euphemisms, slang, or bywords such as: “My Lordy,” “Golly” [God], “Good Gosh” [God], “Gosh–awful,” “My Goodness,” “Gee [Jesus] or Gee Whiz!,” “Gee Whilikins,” “Jeminy,” “Zounds,” “Jove,” “Gad,” “Gad bodkins,” “Darn” [damn], “Dickens” [devil], and “What the Deuce” [devil]. Certainly, these are not all of the euphemisms in use, but they are sufficient to represent the irreverent and disrespectful words many use regarding deity and religious matters. Furthermore, some would never say *hell* or *damn*, but they do not hesitate to say, “For God’s sake,” “For Christ’s sake,” “Heavens to Betsy,” “For heaven’s sake,” “My heavens,” “Good heavens,” or an number of other like phrases. People who use divine terms in such a flippant manner should remember the Lord’s serious and sober comment, “And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon” (Mat. 23:22). Moreover, God declared, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” (Exo. 20:7).

I do not know who wrote it, but I have before me a tract entitled, *Ten Reasons Why I Swear*. I believe that the sentiments of the tract are herein worthy of publication.

1. It pleases mother so much.
2. It is a fine mark of manliness.
3. It proves I have self control.
4. It indicates how clearly my mind operates.
5. It makes my conversation so pleasing to everybody.
6. It leaves no doubt in anyone’s mind as to my good breeding.
7. It impresses people that I have more than ordinary education.
8. It is an unmistakable sign of culture and refinement.

9. It makes me a very desirable personality among women and children and in respectable society.
10. It is my way of honoring God who said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

Of the tongue the Bible says:

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (Jam. 3:9-10).

Filthy language is all around us. It permeates the air-waves and the printed page. The Lord forbids such filthy speaking. Paul said, “But now ye also put off all these...filthy communication out of your mouth” (Col. 3:8). To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear” (Eph. 4:29—ASV). As we studied earlier, a Christian must think on things that are pure (Phi. 4:8). His speech is to be seasoned with salt (Col. 4:8).

Gossip and Talebearing

Gossiping and talebearing have been and are the scourge of the land. It is nothing less than character assassination. God’s Word states, “Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people” (Lev. 19:16). Furthermore, He said that “a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Pro. 16:28). The following guidelines will aid one in monitoring what one tells another.

1. **The information must be true.** God said, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exo. 20:16). It was David who asked, “Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” God answered in part with, “*He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa. 15:1, 3). **Anyone who is unwilling to write out and sign whatever information he is telling others, should not say it.**

2. **Is the information needful?** Would the information about another serve a good purpose? The Bible says that one who reveals secrets is a talebearer (Pro. 11:13) and, “a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Pro. 16:28). Moreover, the writer of Proverbs declared, “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue” (Pro. 17:4). Thus, the speaker and the hearer of gossip are

both wrong. We should, therefore, practice the instruction James gave when he wrote, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jam. 1:19). Indeed, as the writer of Proverbs declared, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Pro. 21:23). Words hastily spoken all too often are the source of pain rather than joy.

3. **Is the information kind?** It must be remembered that once the words leave your mouth you have no control over them. If they are false, they will be hurtful. Moreover, just because something is true does not automatically mean it is for broadcasting all over the country. “The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds” (Pro. 18:8). It is frequently the case that the things that need to be told regarding ungodly, unrighteous, and unwise behavior by certain persons are not told, or else it goes unheeded. On the other hand, things that are unfounded and false about people are readily believed and accepted.⁷

It is easy to oppose a wrong thing in a wrong way. We should not become angry to the point where we have no control over our speech and actions. Paul wrote, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). Self-control is imperative if one is to keep his tongue and his actions under God’s control. Keeping one’s self under control will also rule out railing and violent outcries that tend to accompany out of controlled anger. Such things are forbidden to the Christian in 1 Timothy 6:4-5 and Ephesians 4:31.

Lying and Deceitful Speech

Other sinful uses of the tongue are lying and deceitful speaking. A liar is a person who tells a falsehood intending to put it over on someone with the intent to deceive that person. God hates a lying tongue (Pro. 6:16-19). Satan fathered the lie, and all who tell lies are his sons and daughters (John 8:44). John tells us that all liars will have their part in hell (Rev. 21:8). Thus, the apostle Paul tells us to stop lying and to “speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).

Jeremiah said of those who speak deceitfully: “Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him” (Jer. 9:8—ASV). These are people who talk one way when they are with a person and another way when they are not. They are *double-tongued*, and they “frameth deceit” (Psa. 50:19).

Flattery is the act of complimenting or praising a person, not because he has done well, but in order to gain something from the person being flattered. In effect it is a form of lying and deception. Of such characters the Psalmist wrote, “For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue” (Psa. 5:9). Indeed, “a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Pro. 26:28). Let us so live that we can say with Paul, “For neither at any time used we flattering words” (1 The. 2:5).

Akin to flattery are the “great swelling *words*” of which Jude speaks (Jude 16; see also 2 Pet. 2:18). Jude and Peter said that such speech served as a component part of the make up of a false teacher. Such speech is high sounding and verbose. They are vain words. The writer of Proverbs warned of such when he penned: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely” (Pro. 10:19—ASV).

Intermingled with those who flatter and employ “great swelling *words*” is found the braggart. This is a person who promotes himself usually to the detriment of others. James said, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things” (Jam. 3:5). As we studied earlier, love does not vaunt (boast) itself (1 Cor. 13:4). Thus, the boaster is lacking in the love that all Christians need. James tells us that this is an evil character trait. “But now ye rejoice in your boastings [vauntings—ASV]: all such rejoicing [glorying—ASV] is evil” (Jam. 4:16).

Murmuring and Complaining

Moreover, Paul warns us that we should not be found guilty of murmuring and complaining. By these words Paul means that we should not become so dissatisfied with our lot in life that we become upset with God. This Israel did. Of them Paul points out: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10). In fact, Paul makes it clear that “these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:11-12). Are we whiners and complainers, or are we faithful servants of God having “learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content” (Phi. 4:11)?

False Teachers

Paul warned of those who were false teachers when he said certain ones were “teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Tit. 1:11). Indeed, false teachers abuse the use of the tongue as much as all the other abuses already studied. They trouble the brethren and pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7). False teachers see the brethren as merchandise to use in any way they can to better profit themselves (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

James warns the church about teachers who are unprepared to teach the gospel. He said that such “shall receive the greater condemnation” (Jam. 3:1). We are not permitted to alter God’s Word (Deu. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). Thus, we must know whereof we speak or be quiet. Our tongues dare not be used to teach that which the Bible has not authorized.

CONCLUSION

All of us need to be careful about the use of our tongues. Consider that two of the Ten Commandments deal with sins of the tongue: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” and “Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exo. 20:7, 16). Of the seven things the writer of Proverbs says that are hated by God, three of them have to do with the tongue: a lying tongue, a false witness that speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19). Moreover, our Lord warned that “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Mat. 12:36).

Thus, in living the Christian life every fiber of our being should be strenuously employed in “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor.10:5—ASV). Indeed, with Paul we say, “But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). Being that the tongue is a part of our body, it needs buffeting along with the rest of our body. This is the only means whereby we can bridle our tongues with the gospel of Christ. Thereby, we will be found in all things “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²David Sain, *How do you eye Immodest?*, (n.p., n.d.), p. 4.

³Don Humphrey, *A Modern Look at Modesty* (Great Bend, KS: Published by Don Humphrey, 1963), p. 10.

⁴W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 114. J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), pp. 17, 80.

⁵H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, abridged version (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 402.

⁶T. B. Maston, *Right or Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1955), p. 86.

⁷Joe R. Barnett, *Keep Your Tongue* (Pasadena, TX: Haun Tract Co., n. d.), pp. 7-9.

DISOBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

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INTRODUCTION

*Junior bit the meter man, Junior bit the cook
Junior's anti-social now (according to the book).
Junior smashed the clock and hacked the tree....
(Destructive trends are treated in chapters 2 and 3).
Junior throw his milk at mom, and screamed for more,
(Notes on self-assertiveness are found in chapter 4).
Junior tossed his shoes and socks out into the rain.
(Negation that, and normal, disregard the stain).
Junior set dad's shirt afire, whittled grandpa's pine,
(That's to gain attention—see page 89).
Grandpa seized a slipper, yanked Junior cross his knee,
(He's read nothing but the Bible since 1923)!
[Author Unknown]*

Certainly the assignment of those who are “Disobedient to Parents” is timely; most of us see some demonstration of such almost daily. We live in a society that must seem much like the society in which Socrates found himself. Socrates made this comment in the 5th century BC:

The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents and tyrannize their teachers.

Socrates seemed to give much thought to the family. He is also quoted, “By all means marry: if you get a good wife, twice blessed you will be; if you get a bad wife, you will become a philosopher.”

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS

Twice in the Word of God we find this exact expression, “disobedient to parents.” Please listen and note the company that such youth are keeping. God counts this as unacceptable behavior, displeasing in His sight, i.e., serious sin!

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient [fitting, ASV]; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, **disobedient to parents**, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 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. 1:28-32).¹

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, **disobedient to parents**, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

It is noteworthy that the apostle Paul lists a similar catalogue for such depravities in his Galatian epistle: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest...such like...that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21). While “disobedient to parents” is not listed as above, it is certainly included in the “such like”!

There is truth in the old adage, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Paul expressed it this way, “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV). It is important to notice the listing given by Paul, i.e., unrighteousness, fornications, wickedness, murder, deceit, backbiters, haters of God, proud, inventors of evil things, and among all of this he includes *disobedient to parents*!

The primary duty that all children owe to their parents is that of obedience. The antonym of such obedience is disobedience. “Chil-

dren, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20). Paul addressed these words to young people who were old enough to choose whether they would obey or disobey. Furthermore, this obedience applies to all youth. It will always please the Lord when children obey their parents. Of course, we understand both parent and child must seek to please the Lord. Young people cannot be obedient to God and disobedient to parents at the same time. When youth disobey their parents, then they have disobeyed God!

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro. 1:8). “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old” (Pro. 23:22). “A wise son *heareth* his father’s instruction: but a scorner *heareth* not rebuke” (Pro. 13:1). If all children would take the admonition of the Preacher to heart, then more parents could say as John did. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). John spoke of his spiritual children. It was of great joy to this writer in having the privilege of baptizing both of his daughters into Christ!

Young people who are obedient to their parents will show respect and honor to all the aged. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:32). When was the last time a young person arose when an older person entered the room? Recently I was going into the post office. I frequently hold the door open for others. However, on this day, a young lady (about 30), arrived just before me and held the door open for me! That was a pleasant surprise, however, it made me realize my age may be showing. Regardless of one’s age such a gesture of kindness is always appreciated, is it not? “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). Age has no bearing as it relates to the “golden rule.”

How often has one been in a store or some public place and heard young people, sometimes very young, talking back to their parents, refusing to do something asked by a parent, or even giving mom or dad a cussing? (Wonder where they picked up that bad habit?) That is not respectful nor honorable. Youth honor their parents in obedience, kindness, courtesy, helping out as able, and by being a good example everywhere they go. Mom used to say as we would leave for a party

or school function, “Be good and have fun—and in that order!” Dad would say, “Remember who you are and Whose you are!” (We were Christians at the time.) As has often been said, “Young people do not let your parents down; remember, they brought you up!”

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1). Sometimes we hear the argument put forth that “in the Lord” means the children must be Christians. Then another will contend that “in the Lord” means the parents must be Christians. *In the Lord* modifies the phrase just recorded, i.e., *obey your parents*. A parallel passage is: “Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20). It is the obedience that is pleasing or acceptable in God’s sight. We must ever remember the exception to the rule, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

However, it is at this point of obedience we must admit we are lacking greatly in the society of our time. Brother Dub McClish has hit the nail on the proverbial head here.

The fabric of American society is unraveling and a principal factor is the general loss of respect for duly constituted authority. The increasing rate of crime is directly related to disrespect for civil law and order. Religion is in utter chaos because the only true authority in religion is utterly disdained. Disrespect for authority is a growing cancer even in the church of the Lord, eating away at its very vital parts. It is manifested in rebellion against godly elders and the denial of their God-given authority. This is manifested in an increasing intolerance for straightforward Bible preaching. It may be clearly seen in congregations and schools where an emphasis on Biblical authority for practice and teaching are minimized, if not ignored. Public school teachers and administrators are sometimes terrorized by unruly students...these matters all relate to a common root—disrespect for authority. *If children do not learn proper respect for authority in the home atmosphere, it will be difficult for them to ever learn it!*²

“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)” (Eph. 6:2). This is rooted in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. It is inclusive of respect and reverence to parents, and it should continue into old age. Christ was obedient to His parents. At the age of twelve He went with them to Jerusalem. He became separated from His parents; they found Him in the temple (Luke 2:46ff). He explained His actions with a question even though they did not understand, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

(Luke 2:49). Then, “he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them” (Luke 2:51).

All parents should want to help their children to grow as did Christ. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). In later years when Christ knew that He would no longer be able to help in the physical care of His mother; note the arrangements made from the cross itself:

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home* (John 19:26-27).

Christ was telling Mary that John would be taking care of her from that day forth. He saw to it that the needs of His mother would be in good hands. Certainly we can take the example of Christ and apply it in our own lives today!

Let us note now the promise of Ephesians 6:3, “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Obviously this is not a hard and fast rule with no exceptions. We all know of exceptions to this promise. Generally speaking, Christian parents will have children who do not kill, drink, smoke, partake of dangerous drugs, or participate in illicit relationships; all of which can and often lead to a shortened life expectancy. Therefore, we can understand there are extra promises involved with our obedience to parents.

DISCIPLINE FROM PARENTS

Disobedience to parents is linked directly to discipline or lack of discipline by the parents. Obedience or disobedience is an across-the-board-matter. If a child respects authority in the school, on the roads, and at work, he will respect authority in the home. If there is a lack of respect for authority in the home, it will not likely be found elsewhere, including respect for authority for God’s Word.

Paul writes by inspiration, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Paul sends forth this warning to the father in the family. Too many fathers have shirked their plain duty in the spiritual training of the children. In many homes, if the children receive any such training it is because of the mother and in spite of the father. Every child that comes into this world is richly deserving of having a Christian father and mother.

We are to nurture the child, which involves the idea of training, i.e., spiritual training. Let it be understood that the vital work of nurturing any child belongs to the home. This training is not the work of the church, public schools, government, or the babysitter. This is assigned to the mother and father in the home. “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro. 6:20).

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Pro. 13:24). When proper discipline is administered then children will respond with acceptable behavior. We need to impress upon all parents that a lack of discipline is a sin against the child in their home. *Discipline* in the Greek simply means “to teach,” and never means “to beat.” Recall the warning that *anger* is only one letter short of *danger*! Discipline should always be administered with love. “For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth” (Pro. 3:12).

Many parents do not offer any discipline to their own children. They excuse themselves by saying they desire to be their friend. Fathers first and foremost, should be a real father to their children—if they shirk their duty here, whatever else may be accomplished in life, they will not be a true friend to their children! The older women were to instruct the younger women “to love their children” (Tit. 2:4).

In that list of twenty-one terrible transgressions with which we started this lesson, Paul listed in slot number twenty, “without natural affection” (Rom. 1:31). That could read “unloving.” I still remember those times when my dad found it necessary to applaud me with one hand. He often suggested that this was going to hurt him more than it would hurt me. And I thought (I knew better than to say it), “Yeah, right!” It was not until I had two daughters of my own that I fully realized what he meant. I never questioned my parents’ love for me.

When parents draw a line, they must make sure that the punishment is swift, sure, and above all, consistent! Many times in a public place some mother/father is shopping with a child and the child is misbehaving. The parent(s) give a warning and often say it will not be repeated. Yet how many times do they repeat themselves with no action taken?

“Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward” (Psa. 127:3). Our children are gifts from God.

We must ever respect our children; they have feelings too. I have seen moms/dads(?) crush the hearts of little ones at ball fields, grocery store lines, etc., with vicious verbal abuse. I have watched parents(?) yell, snatch, jerk, and slap little children with little or no provocation. It makes my blood fairly boil! I think of the ultimate child abuse in our nation, lo, in the world—**abortion!** If I get into that subject I will be like Paul and prolong my speaking until midnight. Allow me to quote from the erudite pen of brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. He is commenting on Psalm 127:3-5, “Children: An Holy Heritage and Lovely Legacy.” Hear this powerful provocative piece:

There would have never been the infamous abortion Supreme Court ruling in 1973 if all nine of our justices had accepted without quibble or question these wonderful, wise and weighty words relative to a baby’s intrinsic value and supreme worth. Universal acceptance of this valiant verse would padlock every infamous abortion clinic—homicide mills running with full steam—world wide with 50 or more million children becoming murdered victims annually. Children are not gifts to us by senseless organic evolution. They are precious packages of heavenly sunshine beautifully bequeathed by a Gracious and Giving God an Heavenly High...Psalm 127 is a beautiful builder of great families.³

When we focus on homes in the Bible, we note that many failed. The first home (Adam and Eve), failed because man was simply **not content** to stay as man, but wanted to be as God (Gen. 3:4ff). Another home that failed was that of Noah: after the flood, his home failed due to **drunkenness** (Gen. 9:20ff). Lot’s home failed because of **greed** (Gen. 13:8ff). But Eli’s home failed in the main because of a **lack of discipline** (1 Sam. 2:22ff). Many times today, homes fail due to the sin of lack of discipline.

In the subject of discipline, parents must never make unrealistic demands of their children. Children have a limit in the area of vocabulary, skills, abilities, and experience. Children cannot be expected to behave as an adult (although some adults have behaved like children). Remember that children are gifts from God.

One Saturday night, a mother asked her seven-year-old son to shine her shoes. Later he brought her the shoes with a proud look. She gave him a quarter for having done a fine job. In the morning as she put on her shoes, she discovered a lump inside one of the shoes. She removed a piece of paper which had been wrapped around a quarter.

The paper had a note that read: "I done it for love." That is the name of the game!

DIRECTION OF PARENTS

Since our children come from God, we should teach our children about God and His Word. We should do the very best we can in directing them toward obedience to God in every way and every day. We need to realize the power of our example. Children must not be neglected when it comes to the proper example in the home. We have all heard the old adage, "I cannot hear what you say, for what I see you are doing!" It reminds us of the awesome responsibility we have as parents. When I started out as an associate minister to the late brother W. S. Boyett back in nineteen-hundred and none-of-your-business, I learned some very valuable lessons. One was impressed upon me by an elder, the late brother Jess Wilhite. In the meeting to determine whether or not I would be working with that congregation, brother Wilhite stated, "Jess, if you come, it will be as associate minister, not as a youth director. We are in agreement that every child in this congegation has two youth directors already!" He was absolutely right.

"As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth" (Psa. 127:4). An arrow does not fly straight unless it is aimed straight. So it is with youth. What do youth see the homes of their parents or grandparents? If they see dancing, they may not be convinced that pre-marital relations are wrong. If they see alcoholic beverages, they will not learn that drugs are wrong. If they see tobacco, it will be hard to warn against marijuana abuse. If they hear profanity, it will be difficult to warn against the sin of using God's name in vain. If they see \$100 or more spent on a ball game Saturday night and a \$10 bill placed in the collection on Sunday morning, it will be useless to teach them about the importance of the church and Matthew 6:33. If the example of "sleeping in" is set (or other excuses are offered) in lieu of worship to God, it will be impossible to teach the child the importance of living a faithful Christian life. "Stand fast in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13) must become the watchword of every Christian mother and father. There is never a question as to whether or not the child in the home will go to school. Why should there ever be a question in that child's thinking as to whether or not the family will be in worship or Bible study?

When King Hezekiah was granted additional days of life from God, in gratitude to God he promised: “The father to the children shall make known thy truth” (Isa. 36:19). We must ever take a stand for God’s Truth in every battle. Lewis L. Faucett, former Supreme Court Justice, related that he had heard over 4,000 juvenile cases in his life, and that only three of those young people had come from a home where they had attended Bible classes and worship regularly.

Children are in our homes for a few brief years. All too soon they are gone. From the time of birth through high school graduation that young person is directly influenced by the home for 93,000 hours. The time that youth is taught in the public schools will be approximately 10,000 hours. If that child is brought to every Bible class from birth until high school graduation, he will be there approximately 2,100 hours. Therefore, the home has nine times the opportunity to train over that of the school teachers. This means the home has forty-five times the opportunity to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), as do Bible class teachers. Sometimes we hear the church is losing her youth. While many young people do forsake the church, let us take careful note that it is the home and not the church that is charged with the primary care of children. As goes the home, so goes the church!

“Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, As *is* the mother, *so is* her daughter” (Eze. 16:44). Just as daughters imitate mommy, so little boys tend to imitate daddy. There is a cartoon depicting a little boy returning from Bible class and worship. He walks in and dad is in the recliner, unshaven, newspapers strewn about chips, and pop on a tray, and the *game* is on. The little boy walks up beside his dad and the caption reads, “Guess what we studied about in Bible class today, **hypocrite?**”

Timothy was a young man who had the opportunity to behold Christianity both in word and in deed. He had beheld faith in action in two generations. “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). Actions do speak louder than words. Children will get direction in the play pen, or if parents neglect their duty, they will get direction from the state pen!

A well-dressed couple came into a toy shop with their two children. “We want some toys that will keep the children entertained,” the mother said. “My husband and I both work, and the children are alone a great deal.” The sales girl showed them a variety of games and toys, but to each there was some objection. “It seems to me,” the mother said rather impatiently, “that if you knew what we were looking for, you could find it among all of these things.” The sales girl sighed, “I’m sorry, but I believe what you are looking for—what your children need—is a mother and a father, and we don’t sell those here.” ’Nuff said.

DISCOURAGEMENT IN PARENTS

Every Christian mother and father should desire for their child the same blessing that David did for his son. “And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes” (1 Chr. 29:19).

Almost all of us have known faithful godly parents who brought up two or more children in their family. Later in life one of those children is faithful and dedicated to the Lord and His church. Another has forsaken and abandoned the precious church for which Christ died. What makes the difference? Often these wonderful parents beat themselves up, wondering what they did wrong. After all, does not Proverbs 22:6 state: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”?

Proverbs 22:6 is often misapplied, misrepresented, and misunderstood. It is important to note what the passage does teach. It is equally important to note what the verse does not teach. The Hebrew scholars tell us that *train* is taken from the same root word for *dedication*. The child of this verse can mean a youth anywhere from 16 to about 25 years of age. There is no Hebrew word that equates to our English *should*. Therefore, the translators have supplied the word here and elsewhere in the Old Testament writings. Parents must do their very best to *train* (direct) the child according to the precepts of God’s will. It is imperative that we *teach* (train) our children to understand they are accountable to God (remember ages 16 to about 25). They will stand before God (2 Cor. 5:10; John 12:48; Rom. 14:12), as we all shall. We shall give account for our own living.

Parents cannot teach their children about right living without living right themselves. Many times we have seen little ones who

manifested a genuine interest in Bible classes. We have watched as their parents have become more and more lazy in attending worship and, of course, the Bible classes. Soon they have quit the church, sometimes will depart into denominationalism, and then attend whenever it is convenient. Someone observed that in some denominations it is only necessary to enter the building three times in a lifetime: “When you are hatched, when you are matched, and then you are dispatched!”

We are all greatly indebted to the late brother Guy N. Woods for setting the record straight on the meaning of that particular phrase “in the way he should go.” Listen to his sage and scholarly statement:

This assumption is that it means “in the way of righteousness and true religion,”—a course which all, both young and old, ought to follow—but this is not what Solomon meant here. The Hebrew phrase...means “according to the tenor of his way,” that is, in harmony with his disposition, his natural talents, and his individual character. Taught here is the obligation of parents to study the nature and disposition of their children and to train them accordingly...(Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Instead of giving all the emphasis to a rigorous standard to be applied indiscriminately, each child’s temperament is to be closely considered and the teaching is to be done so as to achieve the greatest possible adaptation to the child’s need.⁴

The wise man completes this portion of God’s Word by stating, “and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6). Please note that Solomon is not teaching that when the child becomes a *man*, he will not depart; rather he states that when he is *old*, he shall not depart. If the proper training has been done, then man will know he has done wrong at the time of his infraction. Moses was *trained* by his mother for about the first five or six years of his life. In later years, he saw “an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew” (Exo. 2:11), and “he slew the Egyptian” (Exo. 2:12). Why? He recognized the Egyptian was beating “one of his brethren” (Exo. 2:11).

Let us understand Proverbs 22:6 does not teach the impossibility of apostasy. There are too many passages which teach any man can fall from grace (i.e., Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 3:12; 2 Pet. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 The. 2:3; etc.).

It is ironic that Solomon penned this passage, i.e., Proverbs 22:6. He turned away his heart after their gods (1 Kin. 11:1ff). It is noteworthy that this “came to pass, when Solomon was old” (1 Kin. 11:4). There are exceptions!

None of us are sinless parents. None of us have ever been sinless children. One older preacher of the gospel told us that does not happen until grandchildren! Let us never misapply the teaching of Proverbs 22:6 to think the entire matter of a child's eternal salvation lies wholly with the teaching, training, and instruction received from parents. Yes, this is a weighty responsibility, and we dare not minimize it. Yet, we all know of faithful Christians who have parents who have never been a part of the New Testament church. We also know of numerous ones who have left the church, while both their parents are loyal to Christ and greatly grieved to know their children are disloyal to Him who died in their stead. Parents may help or hinder their children; but those children must keep themselves faithful.

CONCLUSION

Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift up my voice and proclaim: "Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scraps every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all?" (Socrates, over 2,000 years ago).

One of the greatest provisions that a parent can give to the children is his/her time. Children in the home need to know that mother loves daddy and that daddy loves mother. The primary goal of the home as God would have it, is for each member of that family to enjoy the haven of heaven. In the ceaseless ages of eternity. Let us determine that as parents or grandparents we will never fail to provide the best possible guidance, instruction, and example in every area of life and living. We live in a society that draws parents away from the home daily. Let us realize that nobody can provide the security, care, love, compassion, and strength that comes from loving and godly parents. Never a day passes that I do not lift up the names of our daughters before the throne of God's great and matchless grace.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"
(3 John 4).

DO IT NOW

One day you will turn around to hug them...
they will be gone...do it now...

One day you will turn around to show them...
some promise of God...they will be gone...do it now...

One day you will turn around to share with them...
some treasure of your heart...they will be gone...do it now...

One day you will turn around to correct them...
for some unseemly manner...they will be gone...do it now...
One day you will turn around to apologize to them...
for some selfish mistake you made...they will be gone...do it now...
One day you will turn around to enjoy them...
they will be gone...do it now...
One day you will turn around to guide them...
they will be gone...do it now...

Author Unknown

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²Dub McClish, "Should Parents Be Concerned About Rudeness, Disobedience and Lack of Cooperation On The Part of Their Children?" *Spiritual Sword* (October 1984), p. 34.

³Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *The Book of Psalms*, (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1990), 2:349.

⁴Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers, Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), p. 192.

PRIDE

Joel Wheeler



Joel Wheeler was born March 16, 1952 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He graduated from Tuscaloosa High School and attended Freed-Hardeman College (now Freed-Hardeman University) from 1970 to 1972. He is married to the former Susan Midgett of Annapolis, Maryland, and they have one married son and two daughters. He graduated Memphis School of Preaching in January, 1987. He also attended Williams College toward a World History degree. He worked with the Antioch congregation in Blue Springs, Mississippi, and with the church in Thayer, Missouri. He is presently working with the Foley, Alabama, congregation. He has held gospel meetings in Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, and Alabama. He is involved with door knocking campaigns in Tennessee, Missouri, and Ohio. He has done missionary work in Usinsk and Murmansk, Russia. His local work includes a daily radio program.

One of the greatest dangers the church faces today is the problem of *Worldliness*. It is recorded by the inspired writer that pride is the root of all sin (Gen. 3:5). Pride is a characteristic of the devil which seeks to destroy God and His authority (1 Tim. 3:6). Pride is a characteristic of false teachers which seek after fables and things contrary to the Word of God (1 Tim. 6:3-4). The inspired writers of the Bible had an abundance to say about the grave problem that Christians face. The Word of God is clear and precise concerning the influence of the world. The apostle John warns:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).¹

The world's influence pulls in three different ways: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Although temptation of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye has brought about the down fall of millions of individuals, the pride of life has affected every individual from the beginning of time. Although one may flee from the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes, the pride of life has a greater drawing power to sin. Pride has been the down fall of many individu-

als in every generation since man's existence. The devil uses the device of pride to draw men away from God (1 Tim. 3:4).

God was displeased with David because pride motivated him to take a census of his fighting men in the army of Israel (2 Sam. 24:1-15). Because of Nebuchadnezzar's pride, God inflicted him with a mental illness that drove him out of the king's palace and into the field to live as a madman (Dan. 4:28-33). The Edomites were brought down from their lofty state of pride by the hand of the Lord (Oba. 4). King Saul lost his favor with God because of the pride that ruled his heart (1 Sam. 15:4). Pride led Goliath to his defeat and death (1 Sam. 17). We see in all generations pride influencing men to do a multitude of evil things. Pride is a very effective instrument of the devil which he never grows weary of using (1 Pet. 5:8). In this lesson, we want to discuss the Definition, the Deceit, the Defiance, the Destruction, and the Demise of Pride.

THE DEFINITION OF PRIDE

Pride in the English language is applied in two different and opposite ways. The first definition is in a good sense of the word which means "self-respect, personal dignity and self-esteem."² The proper treatment of others requires that we have these qualities in our lives. Jesus said, "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). To treat others as we want to be treated demands that we have respect and dignity for ourselves. We cannot treat others with the proper dignity and respect if we do not possess those characteristics. Oftentimes our children and grandchildren make us *proud* in the good sense because of their behavior, accomplishments, and attitudes. When we see them doing the right thing in difficult decisions, it gives a sense of personal dignity. Hundreds and even thousands of books have been written on the harmful effects that low self-esteem has on an individual. The Lord considers His children a possession of great value simply because of the price that was paid.

The apostle Peter wrote:

But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which

had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

Chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and peculiar people are words that describe how God regards His children. God does not mistreat or torture His children as some would do to their own offspring. Those that are children of God in Christ (Gal. 3:26-29) when judgment comes are chosen to receive the eternal reward that has been promised before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5). The language Peter uses to characterize God's people should convey their important position in the mind of God. The church is not a social group, nor a political cause, but a possession of God that was purchased with the expensive sacrificial blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).

The second definition of *pride* is mostly applied in a bad sense, especially when used in the Bible. Webster defines it as "an overhigh opinion of oneself; haughtiness, arrogance, conceit."³ We often think of others who are prideful as those who are arrogant and self-righteous. The Greek language has several different words that describe pride in the very evil sense. The first is *alazonia*, which is translated "pride" in the American Standard Version (1901) and "vainglory" in the King James Version. This word means "boastfulness, vaunting."⁴

Pride causes one to boast and parade his deeds as a medallion of honor, as did the Pharisees in the days of Jesus. Our Lord revealed the true nature of these hypocrites when He said, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments" (Mat. 23:5). Phylacteries were boxes strapped to the forehead with Scriptures of the Old Testament in them. The scribes and Pharisees often enlarged the boxes so that more Scriptures would be placed in them for the purpose of being seen by others.⁵ Many of these Pharisees believed they were much more pious than others because of the amount of Scriptures that they carried in the phylacteries. Their piety and service to God depended upon the size of the box fastened to the forehead.

Oftentimes we find individuals giving toward benevolent works so they would be seen of men. One man in a nearby congregation would leave his contribution check laying on the communion table before the church services for everyone who walked by to see what he had given. It was obvious that he was boasting about what he was doing for the Lord. He vaunted himself above the other members of the church for

their praises. Those that brag about their money and deeds have failed to listen to the words of our Lord. Jesus said, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat. 23:12).

Another word for “pride” in the Bible is *huperephanos* which means “showing oneself above others, denoting pre-eminent.”⁶ It is translated as both “haughty” and “proud,” and is used in the evil sense of being arrogant. Diotrephes was one of the biggest trouble makers in the early church. The apostle John warned the church that Diotrephes loved having the preeminence and would not receive the apostle (3 John 9). It was obvious that humility was not one of his best qualities. His haughty and proud spirit was not one the church needed. Often, some who claim to be Christians believe they are better than other members of the Lord’s body. The apostle Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The Lord has set the standards for those who enter the church. Neither race, social status, nor gender determines if one is a Christian. Everyone enters into the church the same way, and no individual is above another. God does not favor the outward appearance of a man but looks at the heart.

We find another definition of *pride* in Holy Writ. The wise man wrote an inspired definition: “An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin” (Pro. 21:4). The wicked are constantly plowing with pride and arrogance, in which the harvest is sin. God said through the inspired writer of Proverbs that pride is “sin.” Pride is a sin which God hates (Pro. 6:16-19). There is no plainer definition that we can find. Some individuals try to excuse, cover-up, or redefine sin. Some in the modern world would say that pride is simply “getting ahead in life” or “taking control of a situation.” No matter how man defines or describes pride, the word still means the same in the Bible and to the Lord: it is sin.

THE DECEIT OF PRIDE

Pride is the sin that causes spiritual blindness in all of mankind. It has a subtle way of deceiving its victim. The prophets Obadiah and Jeremiah spoke of the pride that deceived the hearts and mind of the Edomites (Jer. 49:16; Oba. 4). The Edomites were convinced beyond all doubt that they were invincible and could not be brought down

from their lofty fortress. The surrounding mountains and canyons of the south land had given the Edomites a false sense of security. The pride which filled their hearts deceived their minds and they were deluded into believing that they were unconquerable (Oba. 3). They were so deceived that they believed in their hearts that even God could not bring them down. A false sense of security will run rampant in the minds of those blinded with pride. Many in the world have the Titanic syndrome, that says “even God cannot bring them down.”

Many things germinate the seed of pride in the hearts of men. Even our own brethren have been overtaken with the deceit of pride. Often, high degrees of education cause an overpowering blindness to the truth of God’s Word. One apostate brother who holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy will not discuss or defend his “one church is as good as another” doctrine to others unless they also have the equivalent education. Another brother in Texas believes that he has “advance knowledge” of how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of men today. He claims that he is teaching what the brethren have been afraid to teach for years. All of a sudden, his knowledge is superior to others, and he is the only one that can enlighten the brotherhood with truth. He has come to this conclusion through his “logical syllogisms.” Sometimes a man will allow his education or un-education to blind his heart from the truth of God’s Word. It is possible to educate ourselves away from the truth of the inspired Word. Paul warned of the character of false teachers when he said:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Paul warned Christians of the blinding pride that riches bring. Wealth and good fortune can also lift a man’s heart up with pride and blinds his mind to who he really is. Pride of wealth leads men to preach enslavement for the gospel’s sake. Pride of possessions blinded the eyes of the rich man who forgot God at the harvest (Luke 12:16-21). The rich young ruler refused to remove the one obstacle that stood between him and eternal life. Only blinding pride caused him to turn away from eternal salvation (Luke 18:22-23). The absence

of God's Word in one's life allows pride to deceive even the greatest of minds.

THE DEFIANCE OF PRIDE

Pride causes one to defy everything that is right and even God Himself. The great prophet to the Edomites wrote, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (Oba. 4). The Edomites were a prideful people living in a region where the cliffs of the mountains were over five hundred feet high. They had made their homes and temples in the red sand stone in a narrow canyon of Petra.⁷ No army in the world could enter through the narrow passage of the canyon without tremendous loss of lives. Historians reveal the strategic location of the Edomites and how they were able to keep thousands of soldiers from overthrowing them. Their pride caused them to defy the armies of the world. Their statement was: "Who can bring me down?" Not only did they defy all the armies of the world, but they also were defying the God of heaven. They believed that even the God of the Israelites could not overthrow them because of the geographical location of where they lived.

During Israel's journey to Canaan, Korah influenced a mob of two hundred and fifty men against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. He opposed God's authority by accusing Moses and Aaron of lording over the whole congregation of the children of Israel (Num. 16:1-40). Korah was blinded with his own pride and desire to lead the children of Israel. He defied God's authority by establishing his own tabernacle of worship to burn incense. He along with his blinded disciples challenged what God had already established for Israel. The wise man wrote, "Only by pride cometh contention" (Pro. 13:10).

Pride causes one to speak foolishly and defy the Lord, who is the only authority for truth. The devil is a master at defying the authority of God. It is only the pride of life that causes one to question or change God's Word. Jeroboam, the first king to the ten northern tribes of Israel is a classic example of how one defied God. He changed the place, object, time, and the priesthood for worshipping Jehovah. He went against everything that God had instructed Israel to do (1 Kin. 12:25-31). Man-made doctrines are classic examples of defying the authority of God. The introduction of instrumental music to worship

or changing the day of the Lord's Supper says that God's way for worship is not good enough. Pride does not care what the Scriptures say; it says, "My way is better." Even in the church, women are defying the inspired instructions of the apostles. The use of women as elders, deacons, ministers, teachers of men's classes, leading public prayer, presiding at the Lord's table is pride at its full-blown state. Paul stated, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:12). The proponents of these damnable perversions of worship are not interested in the Word of God. Pride has defied the divine instructions from the apostles in all generations. Many have turned away from the truth of God's Word and turned to fables, of which Paul warned in the first century (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The very foundation of humanism is pride, and that is what causes weak churches to fall into the snare of the devil.

Pride will cause one to refuse to confess his sins. James wrote: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. 5:16). Many in leadership positions have defied any wrong doings. When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, he repented of the wrong and begged God's forgiveness (2 Sam. 12; Psa. 51). Yet so many times individuals will not confess their sin. Many times, elders of a local congregation will go to one who is openly bringing reproach upon the church only to have the offender reject the warnings. Surely this is defying the instructions of the Lord. The inspired writer said:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

Many elders in the Lord's church have been grieved because of the prideful rejections to the admonitions they are instructed to give. Pride that rules in the hearts of men defies the authority of the elders, the inspiration of the Bible, and even God Himself.

THE DESTRUCTION OF PRIDE

The inspired proverb writer said, "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro. 16:18). Pride leads the way to the destruction of one's own soul. Many times individuals cannot

bring themselves to say, "I was wrong." Most divorces in this nation are prompted for the reason that neither husband nor wife will admit to wrong. Destruction to the home, family, the children's welfare, and union of husband and wife comes when pride stands in the way of doing right. Paul wrote, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). In today's society, the radical feminists are preaching that a wife is not to be submissive to her husband and to do so would be degrading for the woman. It is sad that this mindset is filtering into the Lord's church. Those advocating this kind of behavior have no inclination of what God would intend for the home and its survival.

On the other hand Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). God's instruction for the husband is to love his wife as much as he loves his own body (Eph. 5:28-29). The Promise Keepers organization has gained support of most wives in the United States because of its promise to the family. Yet God demanded this from husbands nearly two thousand years before Promise Keepers began. The Promise Keepers' philosophy is in direct conflict to the Word of God concerning the salvation of one's soul. Many believe this organization should be supported because its members promise to be good husbands and fathers. If man would simply do what God instructed concerning the home and matters of salvation, the divorce rate would simply disappear. Yet, the sin of pride continues to be the motivating factor behind the downfall of the home in today's society. The solution is simple: both husband and wife must submit to God's divine instructions for any marriage to survive. At the present time in the United States, for every two marriages there is one divorce. The rate of divorce for those who have been married for the second time is sixty-four percent; yet there seems to be no alarm that the home is disintegrating before our eyes.

Even gospel preachers can be destroyed by the pride of life. A once faithful gospel preacher, who is now a lawyer for night-clubs in Memphis, Tennessee, accused the church of destroying his marriage and family. His pride got in the way of admitting his shortcomings and failures. When we blame the church for our troubles, we have simply allowed the pride of life to destroy our reasoning ability. Perhaps the most difficult commandment of the Lord for any to obey

is to say, “I was wrong, and I need the prayers of the church.” Often, preachers demand that the church repent when it is the preacher that needs to repent. Brother Paul Murphy told the story about a young preacher who was giving the elders at a small congregation some problems with his prideful attitude. The young preacher told brother Murphy that the elders took him out behind the building and whipped him with a peach limb. This corrective measure seemed to change his prideful state of mind. The inspired writer said, “Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Pro. 22:15). It is certain that the Lord knew what He was talking about.

Pride has a way of destroying any sense of wrongdoing and the need of repentance. It seems that those filled with pride would rather die in their sin than to admit to any misconduct or false teaching. Instead of repenting, many try to justify their behavior and false teachings. We read of the Jews in the days of Jesus that were filled with pride. Jesus said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). The Pharisees in the first century believed that they themselves could do no wrong. Many have the same mindset as the Pharisees, which will damn their souls. Jesus was often criticized by the religious leaders in Jerusalem for eating and associating with the lowest of people. Our Lord said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Pride and self-righteousness had destroyed the reasoning ability of the Pharisees. They could not see that they themselves needed salvation from an evil heart or that pride had filled their souls. Pride must be driven from the heart before it destroys the individual. Pride destroys one’s influence among his peers. Pride destroys one’s ability to reason with the Scriptures, and it destroys the unity of the body of Christ when men determine to have their way. Pride destroys everything good.

THE DEMISE OF PRIDE

Those who do not obey the Lord will ultimately lose their soul to the eternal fires of hell. The inspired writer said, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: *God is* not in all his thoughts” (Psa. 10:4). Pride brings death in that the end result is an eternal separation from God. The apostle Paul wrote:

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 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. 1:29-32).

Pride is named with a long list of sins that condemned the Gentiles of their wickedness and disobedience to God's instructions. The Gentiles had ignored the instructions from God, and their pride ruled in their hearts. David Lipscomb wrote: "A darker picture of human corruption would be difficult to conceive, but it is not an overdrawn picture of man without God and his word."⁸ We can easily see that man was void of the influence of a God controlled life. Pride is named among the most hideous sins of the Gentiles. The inspired apostle Paul said that those that were guilty of these sins were "worthy of death." Death is a separation and in this verse it is a separation from God for all eternity. Pride keeps one from obeying the instructions of the Lord. Paul said: "For the wages of sin *is* death" (Rom. 6:23). A man that is controlled by pride will reap the fruits of his labor. Pride brings eternal damnation to the soul and not eternal life.

CONCLUSION

Pride is a sin that God hates, and eternal damnation awaits those who allow it to control their lives. A prideful spirit is not a characteristic of our Lord, but it is true to the nature of Satan. James wrote: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jam. 4:6). One must not allow a prideful spirit to rule in his heart. The apostle Peter wrote:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

The apostle Paul admonished that we walk daily in lowliness and meekness (Eph. 4:1-3). We must work to develop and encourage humility in our everyday life and in the church, also.

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, ed. Jean L. McKechnie (New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1983), p. 1428.

³*Ibid.*

⁴W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 1194.

⁵James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1968), p. 360.

⁶Vine, p. 1194.

⁷Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 70.

⁸David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, "Romans" (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1962), 1:46.

ENVY

Flavil Nichols



Flavil Nichols was born in Walker County, Alabama. Now retired from local responsibilities, he has been preaching almost 65 years. His father, the late Gus Nichols, became one of the best-known preachers in the churches of Christ. He helped convert and encouraged four of his own brothers to preach the gospel. When Flavil was born, both his parents called him “our little preacher.” Consequently, Flavil cannot remember when he did not intend to preach the gospel. Counting all family members, including uncles, cousins and men who married cousins, there are more than 25 preachers in three generations of the Nichols’ “clan.” Flavil preached his first sermon when he was 15

years old.

Flavil graduated from Freed-Hardeman College in 1939. Later he attended Florence State Teachers College. Since then he has continued his studies at home and in Bible classes. His continuing interest in education is reflected in his having served about 25 years on the Board of Trustees of Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama. He also serves on the Board of Trustees of Childhaven, Inc., an orphan home at Cullman, Alabama. In 1997 the “Flavil & Mary Nichols Preacher Training Scholarship” was established at their alma mater, Freed-Hardeman University, and is now fully funded. Flavil received another great honor in February, 1997, when Freed-Hardeman University dedicated to him their annual “Lectureship” series.

Flavil has preached full-time in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky. His speaking appointments have taken him into more than 20 states, as well as overseas. At his father’s death (in 1977) he declined the Elders’ invitation to succeed him at Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, because he did not want to follow his father. But, after Bobby Duncan was there for seven and one-half years, Flavil accepted the invitation to move to Jasper, where he preached until retiring from local responsibilities. For five months in 1996, he served as “interim-minister” at the Forest Park Church of Christ in Atlanta, Georgia, while those elders (in his words) “searched for a GOOD Preacher!” His articles have been published in several gospel papers.

Flavil and his wife Mary (Hardin) have two children and three grandchildren.

Do the good looks, clothes, position, or accomplishments of another person vex **you** to the point of making you *resentful of what he has achieved or received*? Are **you** *chagrined* that another—not **you!**—received a promotion, courtesy, or other consideration—one that **you** wanted, and felt that **you** *deserved*? Do **you** *feel uncomfortable, and experience mental distress*, at the success or good fortune of someone else? Do you imagine that the award or honor given to

another should have come to **you**? The name of this type of *Worldliness* is: “Envy.” This is the topic assigned for our study at this time.

Is this a neglected subject? In 1910, J. W. Shepherd published *Queries And Answers* by David Lipscomb. This book consists of Lipscomb’s answers in *The Gospel Advocate* (published in Nashville, TN) to questions from its readers beginning in 1866 and continuing more than forty years. *Envy* is not in the index. Later, E. G. Sewell also answered questions in that journal, and in 1920 M. C. Kurfees selected and published *Queries Answered by Lipscomb and Sewell*. Again, *Envy* is not one of the topics they were questioned about. Leslie G. Thomas responded to inquiries from readers of the *Firm Foundation* (which was published in Austin, TX). In 1962, James R. McGill published two volumes entitled, “What The Bible Teaches” containing Thomas’ answers to questions from *Firm Foundation* readers. *Envy* again is not in the index! More recently (1976 and 1986) Guy N. Woods published two volumes of his answers to questions submitted for him to discuss in “The Open Forum” over many years at the Freed-Hardeman College Lectureship. Once more, *Envy* is not one of the topics listed in the indexes of these two volumes. All this illustrates that few questions about *Envy* have been asked. (It does not prove that no teaching against this sin has been done.) It is our task at this time to see what the Bible teaches on this subject.

What is **envy**? The noun, *envy*, means:

1. a feeling of discontent and ill will because of another’s advantages, possessions, etc.; resentful dislike of another who has something desirable.
2. desire for some advantage or possession belonging to another.
3. an object of ENVIOUS feeling; as, he (or his fortune) was the *ENVY* of all.¹

The transitive verb, **envy**, means:

1. to feel ENVY toward; to look upon with ENVY; to resent (another) for excellence or superiority in any way, and to be desirous of acquiring it; as, to *ENVY* a wealthy man.
2. to feel ENVY on account of; to look grudgingly upon, as the advantages possessed by another; to regard with a covetous spirit; as, He *ENVIES* your superior knowledge. They *ENVY* his advancement....²

One who resents, or is pained by, *an advantage another enjoys, coupled with a desire to possess that advantage over him and others, is ENVIOUS!*

“ENVY” VERSUS “JEALOUSY”

Both **Envy** and **Jealousy** share the meaning of begrudging another’s possession of something desirable. Despite this shared element of meaning:

these words are not close synonyms, and can rarely be interchanged without loss of precision or alteration of emphasis. **ENVIUS** stresses a coveting (as, riches or attainments) which belongs to another, or of something (as success, or “good luck”) which has come to another; it may imply an urgent, even malicious, desire to see him dispossessed (“Some **ENVIUS** hand has sprinkled ashes just to spoil our slide”—Eugene Field), or no more than a mild innocuous coveting (We are all **ENVIUS** of your new coat). **JEALOUS** is likely to stress intolerance of a rival for possession of what one regards as peculiarly one’s own possession or due, or it may imply intensely zealous efforts to keep what one treasures. The term “**JEALOUS**” can be used without derogation, for Jehovah declared: (Thou shalt have no other gods before me...for I the Lord thy God am a **JEALOUS** God—Exo. 20:3-5 (AV)); but more often it carries a strong implication of distrust, suspicion, **ENVIUSNESS**, or sometimes anger. (“Stabbed by a *jealous* lover”) (“A *jealous* rage”).³

If one wants what another has, he may honorably obtain it in one of four ways: (1) He may receive it as an inheritance or other gift. (2) He may purchase (buy) it at a fair market price. (3) He may exchange or *swap* for it an item of approximately equal worth. (4) He may work for it—exchanging his knowledge, skill, energy, or services, for the desired item. Ever bear in mind that God demands that we live by “the Golden Rule,” which says: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Mat. 7:12). Our Lord requires: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat. 22:39). God also teaches: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour” (Rom. 13:10). Consequently (except in the case of gifts) one must be willing to make fair recompense—in either money, goods, or services—for what he receives. Excessive or inordinate desire for what belongs to another—whether it be intangible (such as honors, qualities, or traits), or tangible things—is sinful! **Envy** is a **sin**!

It is a sin to grudge another person’s acquisition or possession of something that is desirable! **Envy** is a **sin**! James, our Lord’s brother, says this sin is “devilish.” “But if ye have bitter **envying** and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For

where **envying** and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work” (Jam. 3:14-16). The Holy Spirit calls **envy** “Devilish!” It is no part of “the fruit of righteousness,” but is associated with the Greek *psuchikos*, translated “sensual.” This Greek word means:

having the nature and characteristics of...the principle of animal life, which men have in common with the brutes.... [G]overned by...the sensuous nature with its subjection to appetite and passion (as though made up of nothing but...) flesh.⁴

Our English word *sensual* means:

relating to or consisting in the gratification of the senses, or the indulgence of appetite...fleshly...devoted to or preoccupied with the senses or appetites; deficient in moral, spiritual, or intellectual interests: worldly, esp.: irreligious. Syn. see CARNAL.⁵

One Hebrew word, *qana* (pronounced kaw-naw’), translated “envy,” means “to be (made, cause to be) *zealous* (i.e., in a bad sense); *jealous* or *envious*; (be) *envy* (-ious), be (move to, provoke to) *jealous* (-y), X *very* (be) *zeal* (-ous).”⁶

Very early in the Bible, the sin of **envy** appeared. Because Isaac “had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants:...the Philistines **envied** him” (Gen. 26:14).

Jacob worked seven years for Laban in order to marry his beautiful daughter, **Rachel**. But her father deceived Jacob, giving him Leah, his eldest. After a week’s honeymoon with Leah, her father gave Rachel also to Jacob—demanding that he work another seven years for her! After Leah had borne Jacob four sons, his **beloved** Rachel *envied* her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die” (Gen. 30:1). **Envy** caused childless Rachel to give her handmaid, Bilhah, to Jacob, to whom were born Dan and Naphtali.

Joseph’s dreams foretold his exaltation above his brothers, and they “**envied** him” (Gen. 37:11). Hundreds of years later, after the church was established in Acts 2, Stephen said, “the patriarchs, moved with **envy**, sold Joseph into Egypt” (Acts 7:9). Thus, both Testaments tell us his brothers **envied** Joseph. Their **envy** prompted numerous sins against Joseph, which ultimately resulted in Israel’s Egyptian bondage!

After they were delivered from Egypt, Joshua heard a young man report to Moses that “Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.” He urged Moses to “forbid them. And Moses said unto him, **Enviest** thou

for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:27-29).

My father, Gus Nichols, had the attitude of Moses. (Born January 12, 1892, he died November 16, 1975.) He established a congregation at Jasper, Alabama, while living nine miles away, at Cordova, in 1924. He preached at Jasper each Sunday afternoon for about eighteen months, then moved to Millport in Lamar County where he preached for seven years (1926-1932, inclusive). The first of 1933 he moved to Jasper, where he preached the next forty-three years. There each winter he conducted a "Friday Night Training Class" which some have since called "The Gus Nichols School of Preaching." For that class he prepared each week several sermon outlines, which he gave freely to all. He not only *cut* the mimeograph stencils, but he also often paid for the supplies—stencils, paper, and ink—out of his own pocket! He estimated that he prepared fifteen thousand different outlines, and went over them in that class! One of his sons-in-law remarked, "Brother Nichols isn't afraid somebody will use his outline and preach a better sermon from it than brother Nichols did—he just hopes *he will!*—And he'd love to be in the audience and hear him do it!" Brethren, let each of us be an encourager of all others who faithfully proclaim the gospel. Do not **envy** another who preaches the truth in love! "The glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:3-4) deserves a far better presentation than any of us shall ever be able to give it! But let each do his "dead level" best every time he tries to preach or teach a class!

Upon reviewing some of the sins of Israel in the wilderness after Moses led them out of Egypt, we read, "They **envied** Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD" (Psa. 106:16).

Although this word was not used in the story of young David and King Saul, the divine record says that when Saul heard his people praising David, "Saul **eyed** David from that day and forward" (1 Sam. 18:9). Evidently King Saul *envied* David.

Solomon's special wisdom is recognized worldwide. He wrote, "**Envy** [is] the rottenness of the bones" (Pro. 14:30). He also wrote:

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou envious at the wicked (Pro. 24:17-19).

Even if the one who falls is your enemy, do not even think about saying: “Goody! Goody! I am glad you fell!”

Solomon also wrote: “Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before **envy**?” (Pro. 27:4). To that wise man, **envy** was more dreadful than wrath or anger. He “considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is **envied** of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecc. 4:4).

Isaiah foretold that “The **envy** also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not **envy** Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isa. 11:13).

Sometimes the object of **envy** is a wicked man. God directed Ezekiel to tell Pharaoh: “All the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, **envied** him” (Eze. 31:9). Yet, two verses later God announced his overthrow for his sin. “I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness” (Eze. 31:11).

God’s servant cautioned, “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou **envious** against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb” (Psa. 37:1-2). Despite this warning, Asaph, in one of the Psalms, confessed, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was **envious** at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psa. 73:2-3). A few verses later he observed: “Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches” (Psa. 73:12). After he said, “Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency” (Psa. 73:13)—he then realized:

When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction (Psa. 73:16-18).

This Psalmist concluded that God was back of their downfall. He realized that the ones whom he envied were wicked—and should be destroyed!

Solomon wrote, “Be not thou **envious** against evil men, neither desire to be with them” (Pro. 24:1). In the same chapter he said, “Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou **envious** at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the

wicked shall be put out” (Pro. 24:19-20). **Envy** puts one in the category of “the evil man” and “the wicked”!

Envy is destructive! In his first discourse to Job, Eliphaz observed that “wrath killeth the foolish man, and **envy** slayeth the silly one” (Job 5:2). Solomon wrote to his “sons”: “**Envy** thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways” (Pro. 3:31). The wise man also wrote: “**Envy** [is] the rottenness of the bones” (Pro. 14:30). Another warning from that same Sage is: “Let not thine heart **envy** sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Pro. 23:17). He observed also that “wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before **envy**?” (Pro. 27:4). Of those who are dead, Solomon observed: “their love, and their hatred, and their **envy**, is now perished” (Ecc. 9:6).

In a prophecy concerning “a root of Jesse” (Isa. 11:10), Isaiah wrote, “The **envy** also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isa. 11:13). **Envy** is something of which one should be ashamed, for we read, “LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: *but* they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them” (Isa. 26:11). The sin of **envy** brings destruction!

Inhabitants of Mount Seir, southeast of the Dead Sea, objected to Israel’s passage through their territory. Through Ezekiel, God prophesied against those people, saying:

Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee (Eze. 35:11).

The sin of **envy** incurred God’s wrath against their nation.

In the New Testament, Peter wrote about what the apostles and other inspired men preached:

This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 1:25-2:2).

This implies that in a heart where there *is* **envy** and these other evils, spiritual growth cannot take place! *Envies* (1 Pet. 2:1) is the plural of

the Greek *phthonos*, which is “probably akin to...ill-will (as, detraction), i.e., jealous (spite):—*envy*.”⁷

This aggressive sin, **envy**, played a part in the crucifixion of our dear Lord! Governor Pilate’s custom was to release at the Passover a prisoner. After hearing the case against Jesus, Pilate sought to release Him. He gave the Jewish Chief Priests a choice between Barabbas (a notable seditionist and murderer), or Jesus—because “he knew that for **envy** they had delivered him” (Mat. 27:18).

Mark recorded this more fully:

And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for **envy**. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them (Mark 15:7-11).

This reveals that even religious people—*priests*—are sometimes guilty of envy!—These people were not just *ordinary* priests, but very prominent ones—“the **chief** priests!” But **envy** motivated them to crucify Jesus!

On his first missionary journey, Paul preached in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia to the Jews.

The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming (Acts 13:44-45).

The sin of envy caused the Jews to contradict the gospel preached by Paul, and to *blaspheme*, which means “to speak evil of.” **Envy** was their root sin, out of which grew their other sins!

On Paul’s second missionary journey, Jewish opposition to the gospel of Christ at Thessalonica was likewise motivated by this awful sin.

The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people (Acts 17:5).

When they did not find Paul and those with him (Acts 17:6), they brought Jason to the rulers of the city, and “they troubled the people and the rulers of the city” (Acts 17:8)—all because of sin of envy.

The sin of **envy** keeps bad company! It was characteristic of the Gentiles who did “not like to retain God in their knowledge.” The apostle Paul gave an incisive description of their reprobate state. Read the catalogue of their sins! They were:

filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; **full of envy**, murder, debate [strife—ASV], deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God [hateful to God—ASV], spiteful [haughty—ASV], proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (Rom. 1:29-31).

Their guilt was not due to ignorance, either! The next verse says they were informed, “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.” So those who are “full of...envy” and “other such things” are declared to be “worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32)!

On the word *envy* in this text brother Moses E. Lard commented as follows:

Envy: The disposition which grudges another his excellence or place. It leads its possessor to underrate its object, and thereby to be unjust to him. When it speaks, it is usually in the form of pity for the slandered. The truly noble are ever free from it.⁸

Consider also Albert Barnes’ comments:

Full of *ENVY*. “Pain, uneasiness, mortification, or discontent, excited by another’s prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed” (Webster). This passion is so common still, that it is not necessary to attempt to prove that it was common among the ancients. It seems to be natural to the human heart. It is one of the most common manifestations of wickedness...Benevolence rejoices at the happiness of others, and seeks to promote it. But envy exists almost everywhere, and in almost every human bosom:

“All human virtue, to its latest breath,
Finds *envy* never conquered but by death.”
Pope.⁹

One may be guilty of doing a good work out of the wrong motive! The apostle Paul declared: “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife...not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds” (Phi. 1:15-16).

Timothy was instructed to withdraw himself from those who posed as teachers, but they did not consent to “wholesome words,” and “to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” The apostle Paul condemned such teachers as being:

proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

The widespread nature of this sin—**envy**—may be implied when James wrote: “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (Jam. 4:5). However, in becoming a Christian, one must repent of all his past sins. And repentance includes “quit!” Our English word *repent* translates the Greek word *metanoeo*, which is defined as “a change of mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins.”¹⁰ Therefore, being a Christian means we have resolved to cease practicing our past sins.

The great apostle Paul instructed the young preacher, Titus, to teach others that Christians should:

be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and **envy**, hateful, *and* hating one another (Tit. 3:1-3).

The sin of envy certainly keeps bad company! Repentance, in becoming a Christian, necessitates coming out of the sinning business, and resolving to stay out!

To the saints at Rome the apostle Paul wrote:

And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and **envying**. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof* (Rom. 13:11-14).

Here the Holy Spirit lists *envy* with the works of darkness. He puts it in the same class with drunkenness and other lusts of the flesh!

Addressing the church at Corinth as “babes in Christ,” Paul wrote, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. 3:3). Full-grown Christians should have outgrown childish traits such as these!

To “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:1-2), Paul addressed a letter in which he listed some “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). Then he listed “the fruit of the Spirit” against which “there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). He exhorted, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Listen to him plead with those Galatians: “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:26).

After our Lord’s brother wrote about the “meekness of wisdom,” he said, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth” (Jam. 3:13-14). Two verses later he explained: “For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work” (Jam. 3:16).

To the end that our “faith and hope might be in God,” we (like those in the first century) “have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren” (1 Pet. 1:22). The apostle Peter admonished, “*see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:22-23). To those who are thus “born again,” that inspired apostle (Peter) gave these directions: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:1-2). He exhorts each Christian to eliminate from his heart *envies*, along with all those other vices here named. Let each Christian generously feed his spirit, or soul, with the “milk of the word” and grow up past the stage of needing to be “bottle-fed”!

Anticipating another journey to Corinth, Paul wrote to that church:

For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that I shall be found* unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates [strife—ASV], **envyings** [jealousy—ASV], wraths [angry tempers—ASV], strifes [disputes—ASV], backbitings [slanders—ASV], whisperings [gossip—ASV], swellings [arrogance—ASV], tumults [disturbances—ASV] (2 Cor. 12:20).

Attitudes and conduct such as these plague many congregations today! Brethren (and sisters, too!) need to work on these problems wherever they rear their ugly heads! Eliminate each of them from every heart and life!

To the Galatians Paul wrote:

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 (Gal. 5:19-21).

Envy puts one into bad company in this lifetime! And, unless this sin (like all others) is repented of, it will keep one out of heaven. He will be turned away from the beautiful gate, and will be banished to the blackness of eternal punishment forever and ever in the world to come!

SIN ORIGINATES IN ONE'S HEART

Each accountable human being is responsible before God for his own heart with its affections and desires. By inspiration Solomon wrote, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23). The same inspired man wrote, "As he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he" (Pro. 23:7). Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mat. 15:19). He asked, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Mat. 9:4). Our Lord also declared:

from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-24).

Satan put it "into the heart of Judas...to betray" Jesus (John 13:2), which resulted in that dastardly deed. Peter asked Ananias, "Why hast thou conceived this thing **in thine heart**? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). God punished Ananias with instant death!

Guarding one's heart is vital! It is the most important thing a man can do! When a lawyer inquired of Jesus, "Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mat. 22:36-37). Underscoring this truth, He explained, "This is the first and great commandment." He then adds: "And the second

is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat. 22:38-40).

This necessarily implies that each person is responsible for his/her own heart’s affections and desires. In the world-wide, age-lasting “Great Commission” Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). Through the apostle Paul the Holy Spirit wrote to Christians at Colosse saying they had been “buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him*” (Col. 2:12). Therefore, they were saved—for among the Spirit’s instructions to these Christians we read, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). Each person is responsible for his own heart, with its desires and affections.

We have been forewarned that the Devil has many *devices* to entrap God’s children (2 Cor. 2:11). One scheme he often uses is **envy**. Solomon, while warning his “son” against the allurements of a prostitute—“the evil woman,” or “a strange woman” (Pro. 6:24), wrote, “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart” (Pro. 6:25; read verses 20-35). Yes, even an inspired man’s “son” is responsible for his own heart, and for what he lets it want or long for. Keep *envy* out of your **heart**, and thereby you will also keep it out of your **life**! Jesus taught this truth, saying:

those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man (Mat. 15:18-19).

“Evil thoughts” certainly includes envy. When such thoughts originate in any heart, they make it “not right in the sight of God” (Acts 8:21). Mark 7:21-23 tells us that Jesus said:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye [this includes envy!], blasphemy [railing—ASV], pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

James wrote that envying is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” Hear him:

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but

is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work (Jam. 3:14-16).

THE REMEDY FOR ENVY

The cure for the sin of envy is **love**—for “love **envieth** not” (1 Cor. 13:4, ASV). But this love must motivate one to obey Christ, who by the grace of God died for our sins. “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Primary obedience to the gospel includes: (1) faith in Jesus as the crucified—**and risen**—(Rom. 10:8-10) Son of God. This faith is produced by the written Word (John 20:30-31). Faith is the “conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah....conjoined with obedience to Christ.”¹¹ By faith, one (2) must repent of all his past sins (Luke 13:3). He must change his mind, for the better, hating his past sins, with a resulting change of conduct. He thereby comes out of the sinning business, and resolves to stay out! (3) He must “confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,” announcing that he believes in Christ (Rom. 10:8-10). (4) Then he must “be baptized...for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38)—to “wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16)—or to “be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). After this, if one lapses back into sinful thought or action, he must repent of his sin(s) since his conversion, confess his fault(s), and pray (Acts 8:22-24; Jam. 5:19). “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

Brethren, “Let us walk honestly, as in the day...not in strife and **envying**” (Rom. 13:13).

ENDNOTES

¹Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, Deluxe Second Ed. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 609.

²Ibid.

³Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: G & C Merriam Co., 1981), p. 378.

⁴Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Associated Publishers, n.d.), pp. 677-678.

⁵Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 1048.

⁶Ibid, #7065, p.104.

⁷Strong, #5355:75.

⁸Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 64.

⁹Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes: Notes on the New Testament*, “Romans” ed. Robert Frew, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 44.

¹⁰Thayer, p. 405.

¹¹Ibid., p. 511.

IMMODEST APPAREL

David Baker



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INTRODUCTION

In Genesis 3, God confronts Adam and Eve with their grievous sin. Adam, upon realizing there was no way out of the “mess” he had gotten himself into, took the coward’s way out. He laid the blame on others—first on his wife, then upon God Himself. Eve, not to be outdone in the art of excuse making, declares that the blame should be laid squarely upon the shoulders of Satan. Neither party would accept responsibility for his or her actions. Not much has changed since then; folks are still sinning, and they are still making excuses for their sin even though James declares:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jam. 1:13-15).¹

God demands that we “own up” and “fess up” to our departures from the truth (1 John 1:8-10). We have a host of people that are legitimate prospects for the invitation because of their tolerant stance on sin, the scope of which ranges from pornography to social drinking. The church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has gone from *conservative* to *liberal* in its thinking on a wide range of issues—one of which is modesty. That which was once considered to be obscene and offensive has now found a home in our everyday lives along with our

assemblies, but the truth is: no excuse in the world will be able to keep it from the eyes of Him who sees all things (Job 26:6; Job 34:21; Psa. 66:7; Heb. 4:13).

LOCATING THE PROBLEM

Many consider the wearing of obscene clothing or lack of appropriate dress the problem. Apparel (or lack of it) is just the horse on which the problem rode out. Therefore, as usual, we end up treating the symptom instead of the disease. That, my friends, is the reason we have had so much trouble cutting the head off of the ungodly monster called immodesty.

When the Bible speaks of the heart, as it so often does, it is not referring to the physical organ that is within our bodies. The Bible heart has to do with our intellect, emotions, will, and conscience. If the Holy Writ teaches anything, it teaches that upon becoming a Christian a change of *heart* must take place, and that change must be complete, including the intellect, emotions, will, and conscience. The intellect or understanding must be sufficiently enlightened in order to be “approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15). The emotions will be harnessed to the point that an individual will love God supremely (Mat. 22:37). The will of a person will be conditioned so that godly determination and devotion will sit in the driver’s seat of life, and nothing will come between him and his service to Jehovah. Then knowing God’s Will, and bringing our feelings into line with the Scriptures, and with the knowledge that we have been obedient to God, we will have a clear conscience before Him (1 John 3:20-21). Then and only then will a person be suited for the Master’s use! If these conditions are not present in one’s life, **we** will continue to do what **we** want to do, when **we** want to do it, and how **we** want to do it. Thus, the heart plays a major role in the choosing of proper attire. If the heart is on the right track, we will (1) seek all the revealed information available on the subject of modesty, (2) learn to love these principles because they please God, (3) cleave to them with every fiber of our moral being because they are eminently right, and (4) possess an attitude that when we violate these principles, our conscience will prick us. Then the heart will be functioning as the God of heaven and earth intended, and it will lead us to the truth as it is found in the Bible.

In the gospel according to John, Christ announces, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in

truth” (John 4:24). Even though this passage is speaking of worship, it is equally true concerning our everyday service to God. Sincerity, in, of, and by itself, can still lead one into condemnation by Jehovah. If sincerity is void of truth, whether it be worship or our everyday service, we can and will be sincere about the wrong things. A perfect example is found in the epistle written to the Romans:

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

It must be admitted that these Roman brethren were sincere, but it must also be conceded that they were sincerely wrong.

Another example of sincerity minus the truth is found in the life of Saul of Tarsus. He was a believer, but he was a believer of the wrong things. He was pursuing a religion that God had taken “out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). In pursuing such, Saul persecuted the church with all his might and strength (Acts 26:2-11), and this provoked in him a good conscience, a good feeling about himself (Acts 23:1; 26:9). He thought he was as right as rain! Yet, he was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) and found salvation only when the right spirit was coupled with the truth of God’s Word. So, it is entirely possible for a man or woman, whichever the case may be, to feel extremely good about himself, have a conscience void of offense, and still dress in attire that offends God in the worst possible manner.

WHAT IS IMMODESTY?

Immodesty can be defined as: “The wearing of clothing that reveals or emphasizes parts of the body that, when seen by the opposite sex, draw attention to you and create evil desires.”² This of necessity would include short shorts, mini skirts, bathing suits, see-through blouses, low-cut blouses, or clothes so tight that someone can read the label on undergarments, which leave little to the imagination.

Paul throws his hat in the ring on such nonsense when he discusses lasciviousness as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). *Lasciviousness* means “to cause or produce lust in another person whether male or female.” We should recognize that men and women are not to dress or

act in such a fashion as to arouse lust and desires in others that cannot honorably be fulfilled.

WHAT IS MODESTY?

Modesty can be defined as: “Observing conventional standards of proper dress and behavior; free from coarseness or indecency; chaste in thought and conduct.”³ It is true that culture plays a part in the standard of what is considered to be immodest or modest. For instance, in one land if a woman was considered immodest who was in public without being veiled, under the definition of modest, she should wear a veil. If a woman in another culture was expected to wear a full length robe in order to be considered decent, then she should conform. Culture can play a *part* when it comes to deciding what is modest and what is immodest; but, the rules of society and culture definitely have their limits.

Custom “alone” **does not** establish, regulate, or define morality in and of itself. Any rational thinking person realizes that which was considered to be immodest one hundred years ago is now considered to be modest in our generation. If culture “alone” sets the standard for decency and appropriateness, then we could all be walking around stark naked in the next few years and culture would declare us to be fashionable. Customs should only be adhered to so long as they do not violate any part of God’s revelation to man. The children of the Almighty will seek to abide by generally accepted customs that compliment biblical principles and not the other way around.

THE COMMAND TO BE MODEST

When the subject of immodesty arises in the minds of most folks, women seem to be in the forefront. No doubt, this is due to the special qualities that the Creator has given to women that appeal to men, and the desires He placed within man. However, the rules of modesty apply to men and women alike. It is noteworthy that while in the garden of Eden after the first pair had sinned, they made for themselves aprons of fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). Just a few verses later inspiration records, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). The man as well as the woman was to be clothed, in apparel suitable for a growing population. Men also need to take note of the fact that during the performing of a miracle recorded in Mark 5 and Luke 8, a lesson on

modesty is also taught. Luke describes the man as being possessed by demons and he “ware no clothes” (Luke 8:27). Upon our Lord casting out the demons, we find the man “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35). Those who are disposed to applying the principles of modesty exclusively on the woman are sadly mistaken and are vexed with their own “sort” of demons.

Paul addresses the issue of modesty in no uncertain terms. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1 Tim. 2:9). Since Bible authority is established upon direct statement, example, and implication, we must ask ourselves: “Does the statement of Paul on modesty fall into one of these three categories?” Those of sound mind and judgment would have to conclude that this is a direct statement; thus it meets the requirements of being legitimate and authoritative. This of necessity rules out modesty being a matter of option—“right if I do or right if I do not” (Rom. 14). The command to dress in “modest apparel” is no different than the command to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. In order for us to reach the shores of the good side of eternity, we must meet the conditions stipulated in the Holy Writ, and one of those conditions is to dress in “modest apparel.”

There was a time when God’s people could tell the difference between what was modest and what was immodest, but for too many, those days have long since fallen by the wayside. Instead of looking to the Bible for guidance on how to dress, they now survey clothing stores, magazines, and television. The question most often heard today is: “How short is too short?” What they really want to know is: (1) how much skin can they show, (2) what amount of body parts can they leave hanging out, (3) how tight can their clothing be, and (4) how much attention can they draw to themselves and still get to heaven? Isaiah spoke of the Jews as having “gone away backward” (Isa. 1:4). Instead of moving forward unto maturity, perfection, purity, and godliness, their religion was stuck in reverse gear, like many today. We need to be thinking in terms of “prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 The. 5:21-22), rather than, “What can I get away with?”! The Christian man or woman will never see how close they can get to the chasm of sin, but will avoid it like the plague. Anyone who is asking, “What is mod-

est?” or “How short is too short?” is more than likely already moving in the wrong direction and is seeking to justify his or her sinful notions.

THE PURPOSE OF IMMODEST CLOTHING

When it comes to women’s clothing, fashion readily admits they are styled with the man in mind. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a female dressing herself in a manner as to impress a friend, boyfriend, or her husband, as long as no biblical principle is violated. Today’s fashion statements have little or no regard for what the Bible has to say about modesty, and their sole intent is to arouse in men passion and desire. Mary Quant, the mother of the miniskirt was asked, “What is the point of fashion?”

Mini clothes are symbolic of them. (Girls who don’t want to wait until dark to go to bed with a man.) So are cosmetics that seem natural and stay on right into bed and out again, because that is the point. All this decoration is put on in order to seduce a man to bed, so what is the sense of taking it off?⁴

Don Humphrey quotes Theodor Reik as saying, “The other day the owner of one of our elegant dress stores stated that a dress is successful when it awakens in the man who looks at the woman the wish to take it off, to undress her.” Humphrey adds, “The seductive impulse theory of fashion is not a new one. Many experts have said, ‘Fashion is sex.’”⁵

This is not to say that the buying and wearing of all modern clothing is wrong, but, the buying and wearing of all modern clothing for the express purposes of arousing unlawful lust, passions, and desires in others is wrong. The concept of wanting to be **chased** rather than being **chaste** is as wrong as it gets for the child of God.

While on the subject of fashion, we need to note that no article of clothing is wrong in and of itself. Apparel is not the problem! Clothing (or lack of it) becomes a difficulty when it is worn (or excluded) in such a manner that would unnecessarily produce lust in another individual. Of equal note is the part circumstance plays in determining what is modest. The wearing of undergarments only in the confines of one’s own home would not constitute immodesty, but to continue to wear them in the presence of company, or to retrieve the morning newspaper so scantily clad would be considered immodest. It is understood that time, place, and culture help determine modest dress

or behavior even before the point of 1 Timothy 2:9; but they can never help to change the rule of 1 Timothy 2:9.

The Christian's Influence

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus forever set the standard regarding the effect we are to have on those round about us:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Mat. 5:13-16).

As children of the Most High God, we are to have a good influence on the world. We are to be the preserving, seasoning, and illuminating factors in a decaying, dying, and lost society. How a Christian conducts himself in society is a direct reflection upon the Almighty (Rom. 2:24; 1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:5). If that is true, and it is, then what sort of a signal are we sending out when we dress in such a fashion as to cause others to stop, gaze, and glare at our bodies? The words of the Master Teacher would seem appropriate just here: “but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Mat. 5:13). If we cease to be an influence for good, then we become good for nothing and are of no use to God, Christ, church, or ourselves.

The influence that a woman has upon a man can be seen in the relationship between Adam and Eve. Paul wrote, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14). The text does not state that Adam did not sin—it says he was not deceived. He followed Eve into sin with eyes wide open and this vividly illustrates the power and great influence that a woman possesses over the opposite sex. This influence does not stop with associations and relationships, it carries over into every nook and cranny of life, including how she dresses. There is not an ordinary man who can look at a woman in nothing but a bathing suit for a long period of time and not have evil thoughts. If he says he can, he is either so young that his passions have not arisen, so old they have subsided, so ignorant that he does not know what is going on, abnor-

mal, or a liar.⁶ God made ladies with special features and qualities; they carry great weight in the world that we now live in, and they will be held accountable as to how they use these blessings, **they must use their influence in a godly manner!**

A WORD TO THE WISE

In the gospel record according to Luke, Jesus addressed His disciples in this manner:

It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones (Luke 17:1-2).

It doesn't take a rocket scientist or a brain trust to figure out what Jesus had in mind when He spoke these words. Due to the finiteness of mankind, and there being those who would love darkness rather than the light, offenses are bound to come, but, woe unto them through whom they come. A person would be better off to suffer physical death than to cause one of God's children to stumble and fall. If this penalty does not enlighten us on the severity of causing others to stumble, nothing will. Every man, woman, and child that has reached the age of accountability ought to remember this verse when they begin to put on their clothing. One either advertises for God or for the devil; it is one or the other, no one can have it both ways. If someone advertises for the arch enemy of the souls of all mankind (Satan), then Jesus was talking to him (or her) in Luke 17:2-3. The living of godly, pure, and blameless lives is hard enough without having temptation placed in front of us at every turn we make.

There are those who seek to justify their sinful self-imposed dress codes by saying, "Some people are going to lust regardless of what I wear." That statement is true because Peter spoke of just such a group, men "having eyes full of adultery" (2 Pet. 2:14). These men would lust after a woman if she were wearing a full length rain coat. Their eternal destination has already been decided by the Word of God (Mat. 5:28; 1 Cor. 6:9). But that neither touches top, side, nor bottom the innocent-minded person who can be led to evil thoughts by the immodesty of others. No matter how one slices or dices it, he (or she) is in sin when dressing immodestly and causing others to lust.

OTHER RELATED PRINCIPLES

The wise man Solomon wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man” (Ecc. 12:13). In the New Testament, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul penned these words:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

To the church at Corinth Paul wrote, “And ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). He wrote to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). We could draw upon a host of other Scriptures, but these will suffice. The sole aim, goal, and desired end of humanity should be to please our heavenly Father in all things which would certainly include the way we dress. If we dress to please God, the principles relating to everyday living and modesty will not pose a problem. However, if we dress to please ourselves, we will continue to search for loop-holes and use ignorant questions as a smoke screen for our sinful activities. I heard a wise old preacher say one time: “If we would dress every day as if we were going to meet the Lord in judgment, and the first question asked us would have to do with our dress, we would have no problem in determining what was modest.” He hit the nail right on the head!

THE SOLUTION

In order for us to make a return to the ways of God in all areas (including modest apparel), the problem must be met head-on. The place to start is in the home! Fathers and husbands need to get the “bull by the horns” and “put the pants back on” because the buck stops with them (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3). The Bible teaches that ultimately it is the male’s responsibility to see that the God-given principles of modesty (1 Tim. 2:9) are instilled within their offspring (Deu. 6:1-6; Eph. 6:4). Fathers have the option of training their chil-

dren while they are young, or they can fight them when they get older. The latter choice is very distasteful. This training needs to start with the earliest of years, if not sooner. A young boy or girl who has been trained properly will most often stick with the program (Pro. 22:6). Fathers should remember the dog wags the tail, the tail does not wag the dog. Just because children wish to run around half naked all the time does not mean that it has to be that way. It has been said that every child born has come here equipped with a starter button, and it is located on the lower extremity of their body (the rear end). A wise and loving father will keep in mind: “Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Pro. 22:15). **Don’t Be Afraid to Hit the Starter Button—It Is God Sanctioned.**

The church needs brave teachers, elders, and preachers who will follow Paul’s lead by keeping back “nothing that was profitable *unto you*” and not shunning to “declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27). The principles of modesty are important to the soul salvation of God’s creation; therefore, they must be taught. Any teacher, elder, or preacher who will not teach the truth on the matter of modesty should be removed and replaced with someone who will. If it is the case a person has been instructed in the ways of right and pure living before God Almighty, and they still will not submit to the authority of Jehovah, then the “leaven” must be purged out before the whole body becomes infected. Listen to what Paul said under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 The. 3:6). Christians are instructed to disturb the disturber. Sissy boy elders, and preachers have let those of a liberal mind-set make inroads in the church long enough. It is high time that men and women alike stand their ground, toe the mark, and get in line with the Word of God. If they steadfastly refuse to conform to clear, plain, Bible teaching, then like Jonah, overboard they must go. Until we make a return to these scriptural guidelines, immodesty will continue to accelerate and the souls of those caught up in sin will be in jeopardy of hell-fire and brimstone.

The lives of Christians are the only Bible many in the world will ever read (2 Cor. 3:2-3). We must make sure that the text is not

corrupted or illegible. Live so that the more you are known, the more you are esteemed. We in the kingdom have been greatly harmed on all fronts by men and women alike who have no sense of shame and refuse to adorn themselves in proper dress and behavior. A wise person once stated, **“If it ain’t for sale, why advertise it,”** and **“if we want men to see the image of God in us, we need to keep our bodies clothed.”**

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²David Sain, quoted by David Lipe, *The Spiritual Sword*, July 1971, p. 8.

³Don Humphrey, *A Modern Look at Modesty* (Great Bend, KS: Don Humphrey, 1963), p. 10, as quoted by David Lipe, *The Spiritual Sword*, July 1971, p. 9.

⁴*Newsweek*, November 13, 1967, as quoted by David Lipe, *The Spiritual Sword*, July 1971, p. 9.

⁵Humphrey, p. 26.

⁶Jimmy Allen, *What is Hell Like?* (Dallas, TX: Christian Publishing Co., 1965), p. 69.

DANCING

Roger Jackson



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INTRODUCTION

It must be noted in the beginning that such a lesson as this is generally ignored by those who are engaged in the practice of dancing. It matters not how convincing the reasoning might be; those who have made up their minds are going to dance. Our appeal is to the minds and hearts of those who love what is right and want to keep themselves pure (1 Tim. 4:12).¹ Neither is our appeal only to the youthful dancer, but all dancers and especially parents and teachers who are in a position of influence.

Most people today who dance are young and unmarried. It has been my seasoned observation that when young people grow up and marry, especially the young ladies, their dancing days quickly come to an end. Marriage seems to teach them a few things they did not know, or things they refused to acknowledge about the “facts of life” that led to an abandonment of the practice.

Most tracts, articles, and book chapters on dancing focus on the situation as it existed in the fifties and not much later. These materials are far outdated. The face of dancing has changed drastically. Now we are trying to play center field in a game in which the ball has been hit into far left field. These materials, as good as they are, deal with the waltz, fox trot, tango, country slow dancing, and square dancing. The defenders of dancing thought they had a good gray area to argue their

case. Now the case is totally different. Subsequent evolution of dancing has left its practice far, far from the gray!

When people today undertake a defense of dancing, make no mistake about it, they are not talking about a waltz or square dancing. There can be no doubt that the modern vulgar, sexually explicit, gyrations loosely called "dancing" are sinful. No one is opposed to the rhythmic movement of the feet to the beat of music, per se. The sinfulness of dancing lies in the sexual suggestions, scanty clothing, and intentions that all come with dancing, not to mention the handling of a woman in a manner no husband would permit, or most young ladies would permit, after the music stops. It does not take the astute observer long to determine the roots of modern dancing. The grandfather of it is shown on National Geographic Explorer periodically as the cameras invade darkest Africa to find the most backward heathen on our fair globe. Modern gyrations bear a strong resemblance to the frantic frenzies of naked natives who have not learned any better in an enlightened age. If it be argued that we should "get with it" because these are the nineties, we humbly ask, what has a number got to do with it?

HOW THE PRESENT SITUATION DEVELOPED

I was in San Antonio, Texas, in 1964, in a barracks at Lackland Air Force Base, putting my belongings in order, as were the rest of the soldiers, when I noticed a fellow across the room gyrating frantically. His feet were not moving, there was no music since radios were banned, his arms were moving in different directions to a certain rhythm, and on his face was the most stupid expression I think I had ever seen. Not having been exposed to the dancing scene of the sixties, I did not know that what he was doing had come to be called "dancing."

How did we ever get to this sad state of affairs? It all started with Chubby Checker, that pudgy performer whose version of "The Twist" reached number one in 1960 and again in 1961 after he recorded "Let's Twist Again." He did several other *dance* songs, such as "The Hucklebuck," "Pony Time," "The Fly," and "Limbo Rock." "The Twist" was quickly tagged immoral and sexually provocative. Have we ever come a long way! As is usually the case the artists tried to get on the bandwagon by going further and further out into left field. Even the titles betray a moronic mentality second only to the idiotic

intellect it takes to try to dance some of them. Other dance songs of that era were the bop, stroll, “Shimmy, Shimmy, Ko-Ko-Bop,” locomotion, watusi, mashed potatoes, the Freddy, wipeout (i.e., standing in one place and shaking), funky chicken, monkey, boogaloo, worm (squirring on the floor), and the ultimate “dirty dance,” the lambada. We repeat, for emphasis, that when the defenders of the modern dance speak, they are not defending the waltz or square dancing, as they may suggest, but the ones I have named and more. Young people who still have some sense of shame left ought to understand that sane people are laughing at them. And to think that this stuff is promoted in “fifth quarter” dances by **churches!**

Two of the most effective helps to engage in these modern dances, and others like those named, are alcohol and drugs. A person just has to be on something to act like that. One local radio announcer has for many years called them “Johnny jump-up” and “herky-jerky” improvisation. It takes no talent for dancing at all, just a little alcohol. Even without the sexual overtones, it is embarrassingly silly, and the only thing that keeps the dancer from knowing it is a drunken or doped state. While I was in Montgomery, Alabama, the associate preacher where I worked was a teacher at Alabama Christian and he was on the discipline committee. One night they caught two couples out dancing. When they were brought before the committee the girl was all in tears. She explained that the boy she was with had been a terrible embarrassment because he did not know how to dance. She explained that he just stood on the dance floor and jumped up and down. At least it once demanded a little gracefulness!

WHY PEOPLE DANCE

While there might be a lot of reasons for dancing of which we are not aware, there are five of which we are sure. (1) Getting drunk or drugged. (2) Looking for a sex partner (or just plain lust). (3) Some are wild and rebellious and their gyrations are counter cultural and a statement of their rebellion. (4) Others think it is fun or recreational. (5) Some people dance in various ways when they are full of joy or on fire. Not all of it is vulgar, but most of it is. The following is an example of dancing because of joy:

Today, looking back upon the Revival [Cain Ridge, 1801] there is a note of humor in the way it was conducted, but in those days, it was a serious affair. Conversion was quite literally a convulsion. Converts

went through a series of bodily agitation. There were about five general types of these physical contortions: (1) the falling exercise, this was the most common. The subject would cry out in a piercing scream, then fall flat on the ground and lay for several minutes as though dead; (2) the jerks, in this exercise various parts of the body would jerk violently to one side and then the other; (3) the dancing exercise, this would begin with the jerks and then pass on to dancing. Usually they would dance until they fell exhausted to the ground; (4) the barking exercise, this was really the jerks, but when a person's body jerked suddenly and violently, it caused a big grunt, which appeared to be barking to the observer; (5) the laughter and singing exercise was just what the terms signify.²

Although this description is 197 years old, it appears to describe the modern dance instead of a "holy roller" meeting. All it needs is to be set to music, if what is called "rock" can be properly named "music."

DANCING IN THE BIBLE

Nearly every reference to dancing in the Bible places it in a bad light. It is connected with idolatry, revelry, and lustful passions. The second recorded instance is Exodus 32:15-19. The Record states that Moses and Joshua heard a cry coming from the camp as they came down from Sinai with the tables of law. Joshua thought it was the sound of the struggle of men in war. It was the sound of confusion, which aptly describes dancing in this century. Moses characterized it as revelry and knew the participants were up to no good. Not to be unexpected, they were all naked; but quite unexpectedly, it was Aaron who had allowed them do it (Exo. 32:25—NKJV). Perhaps he thought they would more quickly perceive their shamefulness, but it did not work. Perhaps a parallel today would lie in the fact that instead of helping us combat dancing and nudity, parents are promoting it.

We all know that in 1 Kings 18 Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal. When it came to be their turn to call down fire from their god to consume their sacrifice, they leaped upon the altar and cut themselves. However crude it might have been, it was nonetheless dancing. Then again, it does resemble a lot of the modern stuff, does it not. Maybe Elijah had two left feet because he did not dance at all. At least he knew dancing and his God were incompatible. May his tribe increase (but not a tribe of dancing natives)!

One of the most infamous dances of the Bible was that of the daughter of Herodias as she danced before Herod at his birthday party

(Mat. 14:1ff). Her lascivious dance so excited the men and especially Herod that he promised her anything she requested (Mat. 14:6-7). She, according to her mother's instructions, asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter (Mat. 14:8). Nothing good came from Herodias' dance and nothing good comes from the modern dance, which would be much like her's. Both are designed to excite the lust of men and are thus works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

In Luke 15:25 the Lord said that when the elder brother received the news that his brother had returned from the far country, he left his chores and headed home. As he drew near, he heard the sound of music and dancing. Those who believe in mechanical music in the worship insist the house represented the church. Those who believe in dancing are sure the house is a dance hall. They need to get together and decide. No matter, the kind of music they were playing in that house would not be allowed in any dance hall of today, and the dancing would not be permitted in **most** congregations—and in no faithful ones. Neither was the dancing done in the house the same as the dancing done in dance halls today. The dancing was an expression of joy somewhat like fans express themselves at a football game. A dance devotee would have to strain out a midget gnat to see a likeness. Not a word is ever said in the parable to give the glimpse of the hope that dancing anywhere is approved of the Lord.

DEFENSES OFFERED FOR DANCING

There are seven basic, repeated arguments in favor of dancing, and they are quite unimaginative. These have all been answered many times over the years, but still people, even Christians, continue to dance. Until they are answered, which they have not been, we will continue to make them. They become more weighty as dancing gets worse, while the arguments attempting to justify dancing lose ground with every new dance that pops up.

1. "It is good exercise." What about slow dancing? Not much exercise benefit is there. However, the exercise folks slow dance too. Let's be brutally honest, shall we. Not one in fifty dancers engage in it for the exercise benefits, do they? The men who attend dances surely do not present themselves as exercise auditors. What about aerobics? If you must use that method of exercise choose a class of women only or men only. One mixed class I heard of asked that the men be ex-

cluded because the women were being ogled. Look that word up and learn! Instead, try a good diet.

Paul told Timothy:

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

2. "It is fun." Apparently, worst sin against youth today, and perhaps adulthood as well, is to deprive them of having fun! Some folks are not going to do one thing unless it is **fun!** Quality of life is not judged by whether or not it is fun. Life and living are more than fun, though fun has its place. However, what may be fun to one may not be fun to anyone else, and what might be fun to one person is a tragedy to everyone else. To many it is fun to: drive 100 miles per hour up a one way street; to abuse and murder children; or to commit rape and adultery. So how is fun defined? We all acknowledge sin is fun. Fun will never compensate for hell no matter how loudly the dying sinner proclaims: "Yea, but I had a lot of fun." Does character matter? Moses chose "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). Are we preachers against fun? Of course not. Every time it has come up for a vote, I have voted for it. I have a lot of fun, and I do not dance.

3. "It is socially acceptable." It would not have been fifty years ago. All that proves is that society can be conditioned to tolerate anything. Our society will now tolerate cursing in public, abortion, lying, living together without the benefit of marriage, and Bill Clinton. The tolerant crowd travels the same road (Mat. 7:13-14). What society will not tolerate today, it will tolerate by the next generation. John warned us about such love of the world (1 John 2:15-17).

4. "Dancing helps develop poise and gracefulness." Who goes to a dance hall for no other reason than to gain poise? A dancer who is so uncoordinated that he cannot chew gum and walk at the same time would not be benefitted at all if he danced the modern dances fifty years. It is not choreographed to poise. It is not choreographed at all. Paul called this type of argument, "do evil, that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). It would be better to stumble into the pearly gates than to waltz gracefully into hell anyway. Mothers who give their daughters dancing lessons do not know or care what they are doing.

5. “I can dance without having evil thoughts.” Can anyone guarantee that those who watch have the same restraint? How about ones dancing partner? Robert R. Taylor, Jr., put it this way:

One brother wrote us that he danced in high school and never felt the slightest tinge of wrong feelings toward the young girls in his arms from time to time. He also stated that girls in the briefest swimming attire do not bother him when he goes to the beach. We are not able to say whether such a man is lying, has perfect controls over all his emotions, has a faulty memory, is a biological freak or is a spiritual giant. Two of these can be eliminated with immediate haste. We have no men on earth today who have perfect control over their emotions. Spiritual giants do not frequent dance halls and mix and mingle among those at the swimming beaches where semi-nudity is the “in practice.” We will not pursue the categorical placement of the brother any further.³

Young ladies, on the other hand, offer, “It is not my fault if men lust after me,” or words to that effect. It is time some women took responsibility for their actions. Mama needs to talk to her little girl if she thinks she can walk around in a bikini or thrash around in a mini-skirt like a professional prostitute before young healthy men and not be partially responsible for their evil thoughts. Wait till they get married and see if their husbands will put up with it. Most of them learn enough to stop it when they get married anyway. One wonders if any of these little girls know why exhibitionists dance during their performances? But they just seem not to have a clue (Mat. 5:28).

6. “The Bible does not say not to.” This is the big one! If it did people would just rename it and aver, “The Bible doesn’t say not to.” It is a poor excuse for sin to say or imply that before a thing can be sinful the Bible has to call it by name and precede it with, “Thou shalt not...” We would keep God on the run to the print shop if He had to do that. Some things are wrong by common sense observation. The Bible teaches by principle also. Even the consequences of a thing may argue against it. However, for those sad souls who must stick a hand into the fire before they will believe it is hot, we offer an answer to the obvious. By principle the Bible teaches against gambling, euthanasia, abortion, and infanticide, but never says, “Thou shalt not” regarding any one of them.

Besides, how many dancers have read the Bible to see if it says, “Thou shalt not dance”? This attitude is reminiscent of the city preacher who went to a backwoods country church to fill in one Sun-

day. He forgot a Bible reference and just said, “Where the hen scratches, may the worm be there also.” His companion, the song leader, whispered, “The Bible doesn’t say that.” To which he replied, “Hush up! These red-necks don’t know that.”

The Bible condemns causing lust in Matthew 5:28 and condemns lasciviousness in Galatians 5:19-21. Dancing has the appearance of evil from which every Christian must abstain (1 The. 5:22).

7. “Some people dance and nothing happens to them.” This sounds a little repetitious. Just how does such a person know nothing happens to other dancers? Mind-reading is denied in the Bible (1 Cor. 2:11). It is amazing how many people are foolish enough to practice something that has harmed untold millions and yet insist his has done no harm until it harms them.

8. “I do not see anything wrong with it.” Unfortunately, there is no answer to this one. Remember, though, the harm of a thing is not determined of one’s perception of it. This excuse says not one thing about dancing, it is a comment about a person’s **perception**. How many people see nothing wrong with instrumental music, denominationalism, living together without the benefit of marriage, abortion, and lying?

The problem lies in the fact that few people see anything wrong with what they are already doing. The Bible says to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). The activity must **first** be determined to be good, **then** it may be practiced. It gets rather difficult to stop a person who does a questionable thing and then tries to prove it is good. The reason primarily is that the inverted proving and practicing results most of the time in a heart problem. As Simon was told: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).

WHY PEOPLE SHOULD NOT DANCE

1. Dancing is a sin, and even unbelievers know it. Unbelievers often search for a means of criticizing Christians, and it is a proven fact that if they cannot find a real one, they will make one up. Peter said, “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ” (1 Pet. 3:16). We have enough false criticism of the church without dancers opening the door for more; these breath-

ren that dancers should love the church the Lord died for enough to sacrifice a little “fun” to avoid more criticism.

2. Dancing destroys a Christian’s spirituality. Philippians 4:8 gives a list of things upon which a Christian must think, or feed his or her mind, in order to enhance a good spiritual life. These are things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. It is safe to say that not one of these things is on the mind of a dancer. Moreover, it is likely that their very opposites are. Furthermore, dancing (with its questionable motives) will tend to drive the dancer further away from the attainment of them. Paul asks if there is any virtue (spiritual value) in his list. The answer is obvious and the question rhetorical because it has been proven that there is repeatedly. On the other hand, is there any virtue in dancing? Then choose which one will feed your mind good things.

Instead of enhancing spirituality, the atmosphere on a dance floor drives it out. In 1 Peter 2:11 Christians are admonished to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Dancing loses a battle in that war. When a Christian loses enough of them, he will lose the war. Dancers either quit dancing or quit the church. They soon learn they do not go together.

3. Dancing destroys a Christian’s influence for good. Dancing does not destroy a person’s influence. They have plenty of it left because their dancing will embolden others to dance. Even those who are not Christians lose their influence for good. However, a few Christian girls and boys actually suggest that they intend to follow their dates to the dance floor to keep alive their association and use that influence to convert them! Would it not seem more reasonable that the assembly of the church is the better place to convert lost sinners? The Lord did not create a dance hall for conversions and how many young people have been converted on a dance floor? How many Christians can say honestly that they ever even discussed Christ, the church, or the gospel, in a good light, on the dance floor? If the subjects came up at all, it was probably in the form of a rebuke or criticism by the unbeliever. We are not prepared to argue that no conversions take place on the dance floor. It is a matter of who has converted whom.

When Christians choose to date unbelievers, they place themselves in a situation where choices have to be made. So does the unbeliever.

Considered from the girl's side, he goes places and does things that are wrong, not even knowing they are wrong sometimes. It is the Christian's responsibility to refuse to go to those places. If she does not, he may very well use her participation even in things that are right, but he considers inappropriate for Christians, against her and as a primary reason for not obeying the gospel. How it hurts to be told in response to efforts at conversion, "Why should I be baptized, when you live just like I do?" When she first stepped off of the dance floor, did she feel as if she was closer to converting him, or further away?

First Corinthians 6:18-20 is a stern warning against the defilements of the spirit and sins against one's own body—or abuse of it. Those who dance lend their bodies to sin and their influence to Satan's kingdom. Parents who defend the right of their children to dance would fire the preacher, if they could, in a minute if he or his wife were caught on a dance floor. Elders caught dancing would be removed immediately, and in many cases the same result would ensue if their children were caught dancing. Consistency, thou art a jewel!

4. Level-headed, sober people laugh at dancers. Dancers have no idea how utterly foolish they look when they engage in modern dancing. Some of the more "civilized" dancers do scarcely better. Comedians use the stupidity of the movements to good advantage. A fifty-year-old comedian can get a belly laugh by simply mentioning the name of some of the dances. Dancers have no idea what they look like. Our society has lost its ability to blush. *Shamefacedness* in 1 Timothy 2:9 literally means the ability to blush. Women are commanded to wear clothing that shows they have the ability to blush. All of our conduct should be geared to that missive.

5. Dancing leads to fornication and adultery. If someone claims that he has danced and not committed either of these sins, let it be noted that the last dance has not been danced yet. The facts are indisputable. Many have and many more will. Nearly all of them would have said that it would not happen to them. Remember Matthew 5:27-28 warns that **looking** precedes the act. There are few places more fertile for the sowing of lust and reaping of fornication than the dance floor (Gal. 6:7). It is impossible to sow one and not reap the other sooner or later. The "boys" know it. Girls should hear what they say. It has been a long time since I was a boy, but not that long. Take my word for it girls, they do not go dancing for exercise,

grace, or to learn the gospel. One lady on television described country line dancing as a form of group sex. What does that tell us? Dancing has one objective.

Dancing has sex appeal, which is **the** thing to have these days. By definition, sex appeal is the ability, characteristic, or kind of appearance that will create a desire in one of the opposite sex (or perhaps of the same sex for the perverted) to want to have sex with that person. That is exactly what it is! There is nothing good about sex appeal, unless it is directed toward a person's spouse. Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr., was correct when he said, "Dancing would die in a moment were it not for the sex appeal."⁴

CONCLUSION

There was a time when we could say that people were not born dancers. This was true because in days gone by dancing required some learning and talent. Although that kind of dancing is still done, and is still wrong for the same reasons we have been giving repeatedly for years, it is no longer the norm in the dance world. A first time dancer may be just as accomplished as a seasoned sensation. Exhibitionists think they have some kind of *talent* no one else has. The truth is that it just does not take any talent to take your clothes off. In just the same way modern dancers think they have talent. They are equally wrong. It does not take any talent to act like a fool. Preachers cannot stop others from dancing. Dancing, as noted earlier, is a form of rebellion, and the more we preach against it the more those who are beyond reason will dance. However, there are a few deluded souls who can be helped; so we must keep going. We preach, and even rant and rave about its dangers, and the kids still do it and laugh in our faces. But who do they come to when they are in trouble? Parents can stop dancing. They say they would rather that their young people be on a dance floor than in a parked car. But do they know where their kids go after the music stops?

A few years ago if parents had caught one of their children going dancing, they would have tanned his hide. However, it is the 90s we are informed? A number has changed. Now they take them, or they go in their Z28s their parents paid for. They are often full of alcohol they got from the refrigerator. Modern parents would assure us that they will be all right because they have given them condoms and birth control pills. What part of "No" do we not understand?

Someone will say, “You are just against dancing because you are a preacher.” Young people, and dancers of all ages, has it ever occurred to you that we might be preachers because we are against dancing? Has it ever crossed your mind that we love you and do not want to see you get hurt or go to hell? Listen to us. We have seen what dancing will do, and before we were Christians, some saw it first hand. We know whereof we speak. The next time you are asked, “Shall we dance?” just say, “No!”

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²Earl I. West, *The Search For The Ancient Order* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1964), 1:23.

³Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *How Young People Get Hurt* (Ripley, TN: Taylor Publications, 1986), pp. 11-12.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 15.

PORNOGRAPHY

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There was a time when the average person's concept of pornography was pretty well limited to Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine. Between the years 1954-1968 *Playboy* was the only mainstream publication of its kind. This is not to deny that other elements of the world of pornography did not exist during those years. The XXX rated movies have been around a long time. Child pornography has existed for many years. But, aside from Hefner's magazine, the other elements seemed to be buried deep in a seedy underground world inhabited only by the extremely depraved parts of society—at least, that is what we all assumed.

Whether or not it is actually true that there was a time when pornography was limited to the shady elements of society is not important. Today, pornography is everywhere! The world of hard-core pornography is no longer limited to some underground world of people who fit a profile largely created in the minds of good folk. The vision most good people have of a person who indulges in hard-core pornography is really a caricature; it is out of proportion with reality. The user of hard-core pornography, in the minds of most people, leers lecherously when a pretty girl walks by. He runs around in a raincoat prepared to flash the unsuspecting. He hangs out at the adult bookstore or adult video store, or, perhaps, a local strip club. His perversions are so obvious they can be spotted instantly. But pornography

was never limited to people of this profile, and it has become so accessible that today anyone is liable to be a user. The user of hardcore pornography may be walking past you in a gray business suit. He might be your next door neighbor. He might be your husband or son!

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

The Supreme Court has ruled that in our country community standards determine what constitutes pornographic material. Does the phrase *community standard* sound fairly meaningless? What is pornography in one community might be perfectly fine in another community. A *community standard* often amounts to no standard at all. It is important to remember that what a Christian considers pornographic may not be considered such by society. Just because it is not X-rated does not mean a Christian ought to be watching it, reading it, or listening to it. The Christian's standard is the Bible. It is likely that there are a lot of situation comedies on television that we would feel mighty uncomfortable watching if the Lord was sitting on the other end of the couch. We should not allow some vague community standard to determine what is right for us and our families. We should ask ourselves if a certain movie, television show, etc., meets the Philippians 4:8¹ standard. Is it true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, or praiseworthy? If not, then it fails to meet the biblical standard for good viewing. If it incites lustful thoughts, then it fails the Matthew 5:27-28 standard, where Jesus said it is adultery to look at a woman to lust after her.

It is especially important that to realize that the Bible standard and the community standard do not draw the line in the same place when it comes to pornography. Today, the distinction between pornography and popular culture has become so blurred that there is often no discernable difference. The photography of Mapletorpe does not look any different than the pictures that appear in popular pornographic magazines. The great artists of the past worked in oils, water colors, and plaster. Today, popular mediums are excrement and urine. Great musicians and song-writers of the past wrote beautiful melodies while crooning about love: "Moon River," and wanting to be "Close To You." Today, they boast that they are a "Big Man With a Gun,"² name themselves after lunatic mass murderers (e.g., Marilyn Manson), and scream about violent sex.

The major difference between art and pornography often seems to be nothing more than who is funding it. A live sex act might be considered pornographic unless it is funded by tax dollars through the National Endowment for the Arts—then it is art. What amounts to nothing more than a pitiful dirty ditty suddenly becomes art if a major record label puts it out.

The current situation calls for bluntness: The parent who is not aware of the music, television, and movies his children are watching is negligent. Children are going to school with many peers caught up in heavy metal and rap music. Rap music is no longer just for inner city blacks, and the car thumping and shaking next to you at the red light is just as liable to be a white kid as a black. This writer is not one who believes that good music ceased to be produced in the 1940s, prior to Elvis and rock and roll. His teen years were spent in the seventies, and he continues to listen to many different forms of music including rock and roll. Parents: are you listening to what your kids are listening to?

ACCESSIBILITY OF PORNOGRAPHY

One reason our nation's pornography-related problems have risen so dramatically is that it is now available in so many different forms. There was a time when pornography was pretty well limited to books, magazines, and movie houses. These venues presented a problem for many who desired access to pornographic material as the individual had to actually walk into the bookstore or theater. This, of course, meant running the risk of being seen, a risk many were unwilling to take.

Today, pornography use has risen dramatically. In 1996 an estimated \$8 billion was spent by Americans on hard-core pornography.³ This significant amount of money says that a lot of people are using pornography. Several factors have contributed to the escalated use of pornographic material, but increased accessibility is without a doubt the single most important factor. The accessibility factor is directly related to the many different venues through which pornography may be used today.

Many of the wonderful conveniences available to us are also avenues through which highly destructive things may enter our lives. The telephone is a great convenience, and in the business world it is a valuable tool. If all of the phone lines for a day were shut down, it

would shut down many businesses. Preachers find the telephone a valuable way of doing everything from ordering Bible class material to checking on the status of the sick. But because so many are “wise to do evil,” every wonderful convenience can be turned to insidious purposes as well. United States phone companies state that 500,000 calls are made **daily** to phone-sex numbers, and, mom and dad, it is estimated that 70% of those calls are made by minors. Often children are left alone for several hours after school in many families where both parents work outside the home. These parents think junior is doing his homework. However, they have been shocked into awareness about pornography upon receiving a huge phone bill full of charges to a 900 number.

Video Cassette Recorders are great. We can avoid having to pay the excessive prices of the theater if we are willing to wait a few months for a movie to come out on video. We can rent our favorite old movie, or record a three-hour program and watch it in two hours by fast-forwarding through the commercials. But the VCR is also a convenience for those who want to watch pornographic movies. Those who desire to view hard-core pornography no longer have to risk being spotted at a theater on the seedy side of town. They can watch them in their own home by simply slipping a video into the VCR. One does not even have to risk being seen renting the video; he may just order it over the phone or the Internet and have it mailed in a plain brown box.

What about the personal computer? Preachers use their computer to produce sermon outlines, articles, and letters (this manuscript is being composed on a computer). One can use a home computer to keep up with the family finances. The kids can do their homework on the computer. Now we have the Internet to go along with the computer. A person can send e-mail to his friends, and do research on just about any subject imaginable. Once again, those wise to do evil have turned home computers to their advantage (and profit) through pornographic Internet sites. In a seven-day period *Playboy's* web site had 4.7 million hits. The pornographic web sites are using the latest technology to involve their customers. We are not just talking about pictures and stories: movies and live performances can be viewed on the net. There are even interactive games that put the computer user in control of sexual situations.

The Internet also poses the greatest risk to young people, and parents need to be aware of this. Ordering a book, magazine, or video brings with it a certain amount of risk. Mom and dad could stumble on to the merchandise, but an Internet site is gone once the computer is turned off. For a child spending many hours alone after school, this is a dangerous situation. Unfortunately pornographic Internet sites are not difficult to find. One quick search can produce the addresses of hundreds of pornographic Internet sites. They are so prevalent that all one has to do is type in the wrong word and suddenly pornography pops up on the screen. Additionally, the pornography industry has laid traps by giving their web sites deceptive names. One pornographic web site address is the name of a government agency. One could be innocently trying to contact a government official and wind up with a screen full of pornography (remember, the Internet address of government agencies usually ends with *.gov*, not *.com*).

PORNOGRAPHY AND THE BIBLE

From a biblical perspective pornography violates so much Scripture it is difficult to know where to begin. The fundamental problem with pornography is that it produces lustful thoughts in the mind of the user. Jesus said:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 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. 5:27-28).

The problem with wicked thoughts is that we sometimes fool ourselves into believing we are not really responsible for what we think. We understand well enough that to purposefully dwell on lustful matters in our mind is wrong. "But," we say to ourselves, "sometimes things just pop into my mind and it is not my fault." At times this certainly does happen. Sometimes a bitter, hateful, or lustful thought just seems to appear out of nowhere. However, it is also true that what a person is thinking at any given moment is influenced by the things he has seen, heard, thought, and been exposed to in previous moments. When Jesus said it was adultery to look at a woman to lust after her, He was telling us that the battle between good and evil, God and Satan, is really a battle for the mind. Whatever we give our minds over to our bodied will follow.

The importance of understanding that the battle between Christians and the world is a battle for the mind cannot be stressed enough. Many centuries ago the Roman Catholic Church converted entire nations given over to idol worship. They converted these people by beating them in the field of military battle, then declaring the conquered nation a “Christian nation,” but these people were still pagans in thought. One nation can militarily conquer another nation, but unless the conqueror can change the thinking of those they have conquered, there will always be strife, and victory will have to be maintained with might. To win the mind of an opponent is to be truly victorious.

The battle for the mind is really the crux of the issue. Many Christians today are approaching the evils in our society with the same mentality the Roman Catholic Church had toward the heathen several centuries ago. We simply use a different weapon. Rather than gaining victory with swords and javelins, we look to win the battle with legislation. We believe if we can pass laws against pornography, we have won. If we can get our candidate elected, we have won. My friends, if the history of the nation of Judah tells us anything, it ought to tell us that legislation does not change hearts. Judah had several kings that were reformers. When they came to the throne, they outlawed the idols and forbid the worship of foreign gods. But when the reform-minded king died, the nation immediately returned to the idols and false religions. Why? Because they never left. False religion had never stopped reigning in their hearts.

Think about it this way for just a moment. Christians are supposed to hold their allegiance to the God of the Bible above all else, and many of them do. A government might outlaw the Christian religion, but those who hold it above all else will not reject their convictions simply because someone passed a law. Our assemblies might get more secretive, and our Bibles may not be held in plain view so much, but no law will convince us that Christianity is wrong. Do we think we are the only ones who feel so strongly about our beliefs? Of course not, which helps explain why the reforms of the kings of Judah failed to last beyond the reign of the reformer king. The people were never convinced in their own minds that their actions were wrong.

Legislation against pornography, abortion on demand, and other issues will never give us any lasting victory. Political legislation may

do some short-term good, but turning hearts to God is the only way to win the war over the social issues in our society. Pornography can only be defeated when people are convinced that the God they love and worship says it is sinful and must be avoided. If a community ordinance against pornography is passed, we should not breathe a sigh of relief as though the war is over, for winning a battle is not the same as winning a war.

Each Christian has the responsibility to win the battle for his thoughts. Second Corinthians 10:5 speaks of “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” This verse may seem unreasonable. Out of the many thoughts we think every day, how is it possible bring every one of them into captivity? What about those infamous thoughts that just pop into our heads?

There are at least three things we can do to control our thoughts. First, there is **selection**. Thousands of thoughts pass through our minds daily, but ultimately we make a conscious decision to select the ones we are going to dwell on. A thought popping in to our head is one thing; dwelling on it is another matter entirely. The former can be excused; the latter cannot.

There is also the matter of the **raw materials** of our thoughts. We are constantly providing raw materials for our thought processes. The books, magazines, and papers we read provide raw materials. The television shows and movies we watch provide raw materials. The music we listen to provides raw materials. The people we choose to associate with and the things they say provide raw materials for our thoughts. Out of all of these things our own thoughts are produced. As with most products, the quality of our thoughts is largely determined by the quality of the raw materials from which they are made. If we read good books (like the Bible), if we watch wholesome television and movies, if we listen to wholesome music, and associate with virtuous people, then the number of wicked thoughts that just pop into our minds will be few. It is foolish to think we can read trashy novels, watch movies and television shows that are filled with nudity, violence, sex and innuendo, or listen to music that advocates wickedness, and still have wholesome thoughts. Furthermore, it is also foolish to do these things, then say, “It’s not my fault; these thoughts just pop into my head.” This principle of carefully selecting the raw materials

from which our thoughts are formed is set forth by Paul in Philippians 4:8,

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.

Now notice that Paul has given us a positive charge rather than a negative one. He did not say that we should not think about certain things; rather he tells us the kinds of thought that ought to occupy our minds. Bringing every thought into captivity is not just a matter of trying to push evil thoughts out, but also filling the void with wholesome thoughts.

Another area in which we are in charge is the **circumstances** of our thoughts. The circumstances that we choose to place ourselves in are important factors in the events that take place in our lives. This writer overheard a conversation between two women seated in an adjacent booth in a restaurant. The one woman was complaining that she had been married several times, and all of them were losers. She could not understand why she could not seem to find and choose good men to marry. Later in the conversation she revealed that she had met all of her husbands in a bar. Imagine that, meeting a man in a bar who turned out not to be a good husband. The circumstances under which she chose to find a husband produced a pretty predictable outcome. When we choose to put ourselves in circumstances where evil speech and ideas are advocated, then we must accept responsibility for the evil thoughts produced by the circumstances.

David wrote the following concerning circumstances: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psa. 101:3). There may be times when we find ourselves in circumstances beyond our control. But how often do we invite evil circumstances? We are responsible for the things we see, and it is sinful to set wickedness before our eyes for our personal viewing.

Finally, another circumstance that seems to often lead to problems is too much idle time. It is not Scripture, but it is a true proverb: “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop” (cf., 2 The. 3:11-12). People that are busily engaged in good works are less likely to be side-tracked by evil thoughts and desires.

PORNOGRAPHY AND MARRIAGE

There are many things that could be considered under this heading, but the most important one is this: Pornography destroys marriages because it destroys young men. The feminist movement has complained that women are the ones truly hurt by pornography, and we agree with them on this point. However, young men are also hurt because the pornographic view of male-female relationships is wrong. A very important passage of Scripture for husbands is 1 Peter 3:7, “Ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” Husbands are to live with their wives “according to knowledge.” The way women are portrayed in pornographic material is false. The male-female relationship is badly skewed by pornographers. That should not be a shock since accuracy of portrayal is not their goal. What they are trying to do is cater to various sexual fantasies of some very depraved men. Women are portrayed as being treated quite cruelly and loving it. Any man who gets his understanding of women from pornography is not going to be fit to be a husband. He cannot dwell with his wife according to knowledge if his knowledge of women comes from pornography. The man who learns how women ought to be treated from the pornographer will certainly not honor her as the weaker vessel. Young men need a proper view of how to treat women—not the debauchery of the pornographer.

PROTECTING THE KIDS FROM COMPUTER PORNOGRAPHY

As mentioned earlier, the home computer is without a doubt the most dangerous avenue by which hard-core pornography may enter a home. Children who spend a lot of unsupervised time at home with a computer are especially at risk. This writer recently spoke with a woman who represents Apple Computers. She specializes in the application of technology in the classroom. She had several good suggestions that parents need to listen to.

More than any one thing it was stressed that computers should be kept in high traffic areas in the house. Computers in the bedroom are bad news. Kids are less likely to view pornography on the computer if

it is in an area where people (especially mom and dad) are constantly moving about.

Another suggestion is to avoid chat rooms of all kinds. Even though a chat room may be portrayed as having a wholesome or beneficial topic, often bad people enter these discussions. One really does not know to whom his is talking or what they are liable to say.

There are also programs like Net Nanny which recognize key words and block attempts by the computer user to go to certain web addresses. From time to time, however, these programs can be inconvenient as they may prevent one from entering a web site that one really needs to enter.

Also, most net browsers keep a history of the sites entered. Parents may wish to check this history from time to time to see where their children have been going on the Internet. It is, of course, possible to delete all or parts of the history, and the history is only kept for a few days.

CONCLUSION

Pornography is a threat to our children. The best strategy for keeping our children away from this threat is for parents to rear them in godliness, while taking an active roles in their lives.

ENDNOTES

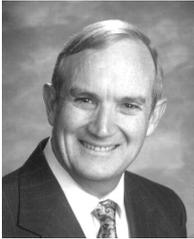
¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²In the song "Big Man With A Gun" the singer is boasting of his anatomy and sexual ability, not a weapon.

³*Fact Sheet-The Sex Industry In America*, The National Legal Foundation.

FORNICATION AND ADULTERY

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INTRODUCTION

Never in the history of our dear land has there been a greater need for setting forth God's plan relative to marriage, divorce, and remarriage and God's condemnation of "Fornication and Adultery." God **does** have a law on marriage!

We live in a day of decadence and degeneracy, in a day of promiscuity and compromise, in a day of situational ethics and the new morality, in a day of license and no objective standard, in a day of rebellion and blasphemy, in a day of selfishness and bigotry, in a day of sodomy and living together, in a day of child and adult delinquency. These attitudes and philosophies have taken their toll on the homes in America, and even within the church of our Lord. The past generation—and even in the past five years—has seen a change in our great brotherhood. Whereas we spoke in days gone by with a strong,

united voice against the evil of promiscuity and divorce, many uncertain sounds are surfacing today in the church to undermine the teachings of the Scriptures which serve as the foundation of the home—the bulwark of society and of the church. The burden of this study will be to describe the home as God would have it, to observe the severity of tampering with God’s plan for the home, to address and to meet the objections to the teachings governing marriage and the permanency of the home, and to make recommendations as to how this problem can be successfully attacked and alleviated in the church.

THE PROBLEM—ITS URGENCY

Sexual impurity on the part of those not married is a grievous sin and is severely and clearly condemned by Jehovah. Those who walk after the Spirit do not “fulfil the lust of the flesh;” one of which works of the flesh is fornication (Gal. 5:16-21).¹ In fact, Paul says those who practice sexual relations outside of the marriage bond “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9). The aged apostle commanded Timothy, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Peter urged, “Beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

Sexual sin begins in the heart; it begins with lust (Jam. 1:14-15). Our Lord stated:

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man (Mat. 15:18-20).

God’s people abstain from sex before marriage. Joseph, when “his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me,” and when she “caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me,” fled and left his outer garment in her hand (Gen. 39:7-12). Why? Joseph reacted: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” He **refused** to be immoral!

Someone may say: “Well, we live in a different age, in a different culture.” Dear reader, neither culture nor “situation ethics” is the standard of what is right and what is wrong. Sex outside of marriage is sin, it has always been sin, and it shall be sin till the Lord returns.

The Bible teaches that sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1-2), places one's soul in jeopardy, and brings eternal destruction unless abandoned and repented of. Paul said the Corinthians who obeyed the gospel had repented of their fornication and had been washed from this iniquity (1 Cor. 6:9-13). No fornicator can be saved in his unregenerate state; only the lake that burns with fire and brimstone awaits him or her (Rev. 21:8). "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" (Gal. 5:17). One cannot, in fact it is absolutely impossible for a person to live in fleshly lust and in sexual immorality and at the same time live for Christ. A choice must be made: Which master shall I serve?

Sociologists universally class the deterioration of the home, resulting from divorce and remarriage, as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, social problems of our nation. And, the problem is not an isolated one, inasmuch as more and more nations are experiencing it. Civilizations of other centuries have experienced the same crisis. The Roman Empire during Christ's day was characterized by divorce which was both easily acquired and frequent. Some counted their age by the number of wives or husbands they had. It was against this background that the New Testament was written.

Today, marriage is viewed as simply a legal contract, such as buying property, which may be formed and dissolved at will. Nearly one out of every two marriages ends in divorce. Many view marriage as being an antique relic, which is obsolete and simply cannot meet the needs and demands of today. More and more are choosing a "meaningful relationship" of adults living together, not married. One has but to remember that divorce and living together outside of marriage were viewed just a few short years ago as disgraceful and as characteristic of reprobates to see how far we have moved down the road to ruin. Who in the church could have imagined that some in our fellowship would have departed from the stance of Holy Writ?

MARRIAGE—ITS INSTITUTION BY GOD

God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden. Having been directed to name the animals and having observed them to select a possible companion, Adam did not find a "help meet for him" (Gen. 2:20). God anesthetized Adam and removed a rib from his side from which He made woman, who became "bone of my bones, and flesh of

my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). God’s purpose was clear: there was to be one man and one woman for life. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

Only God has the right to draw up the contract of marriage between a husband and a wife, and the Scriptures lay out the terms of that contract. No number of lawyers or liberal *theologians* can loose the married partners from or modify the terms of the contract. “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19:6).

The marriage vows are sacred. Consequently, one should enter into marriage advisedly and soberly, determined to “fear God, and keep his commandments” (Ecc. 12:13).

MARRIAGE—ITS PURPOSE

Paul stated that marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4). First, the marital relationship was established in God’s infinite wisdom because man needed companionship. One can appreciate the reason that three persons make up the Godhead, and he reasons that God created the angels and man in His own image. He desires and needs companionship, which the beasts of the earth cannot provide. “*It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18).

Second, the marital relationship was established to fulfill the physical needs of the man and of the woman (1 Cor. 7:1-5). That marital relationship is the **only** place where God authorizes the fulfillment of the physical relations. Third, the marital relationship was established to perpetuate the human race. Upon Eve’s creation and before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were commanded to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). The home is to provide a permanent place of safety and security where children can be reared in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4).

Fourth, the marital relationship was established to cultivate morality and industry, which are vital to society and to the church. Fifth, the marital relationship was established most importantly to assist and enable the parents and the children to live the more abundant life of righteousness and, thus, to be able to walk hand in hand to the “land of fadeless day.” Is it any wonder God decreed that “the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as

he liveth” (Rom. 7:2)? When a person comes to any appreciation of God’s design for marriage, he can more adequately appreciate the seriousness of divorce and promiscuity.

THE HOME AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT

God’s regulations regarding the home are vital, and the results of disobeying and disregarding His commands are disastrous.

Some Definitions

Several words need to be defined. **Fornication** (*porneia*), from which we get the word “pornographic,” is defined by Vine as “illicit sexual intercourse,”² by Thayer as “illicit sexual intercourse in general,”³ by Arndt and Gingrich as “prostitution, unchastity, fornication of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse,”⁴ and by Liddell and Scott as “prostitution, fornication, unchastity.”⁵ Fornication would thus include homosexuality and bestiality, as well as adultery. **Adultery** (*moichos*) is more narrow in meaning than is fornication. It is defined by Vine as “one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another,”⁶ and Thayer defines the verb form as to “have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife.”⁷ **Divorce** (*apoluo*) is defined by Vine as “to let loose from, let go free”⁸ and by Thayer as “used of divorce...to dismiss from the house, to repudiate.”⁹

God’s Attitude Toward Divorce

God hates divorce! From the beginning of time, God intended for marriage to be permanent (Mat. 19:6). The seventh of the Ten Commandments was: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo. 20:14), and the offender was to be put to death (Lev. 20:10). Malachi warned Israel:

The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away (Mal. 2:14-16).

In the New Testament, the warnings are even stronger. Christ intensified the regulation when He stated:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 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. 5:27-28).

He continued:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Mat. 5:31-32).

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 (Mat. 19:9; cf. Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).

In addition, the Apostle Paul stated:

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Rom. 7:1-3).

From these and other Scriptures, one observes that God authorizes remarriage on but two grounds: death of one's mate, and unfaithfulness to the marriage vows on the part of one's mate through bestiality, homosexuality, or adultery. The offended party can remarry (although the marriage should be salvaged if possible) if he or she is truly innocent. A violation of 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, that is, the sexual defrauding of one's mate, would not constitute innocency, but neither would it remove the guilt from the adulterer.

The Child Of God's Attitude Toward Divorce

One of the greatest examples in Holy Writ of the proper respect for the home as God would have it is found in Job, one who lived in the Patriarchal Age. He did not have the greater benefits of the Mosaic Age or the ultimate enlightenment of the Christian Age. In the book of Job, one of the most remarkable writings in all literature (described by Luther as "magnificent and sublime as no other book of Scripture" and by Tennyson as "the greatest poem of ancient and modern mind"), the historical character of Job defended his chastity and his unblemished devotion to his marriage vows.

The events in the book happened during the Patriarchal Age, as is evidenced by the following. (1) The book contains Aramaisms of the earliest form and freshness. (2) Job lived well over 200 years, comparing favorably with the lives of the patriarchs and not with those in Moses' day. (3) No mention is made of the numerous Israelite religious and political institutions. (4) Worship and the family are described in patriarchal language. (5) Job's wealth compares favorably and exceeds that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (6) The name of Job has been found in documents 2,000 years before Christ. (7) No historical events from Abraham's call onward are mentioned. (8) The form of idolatry mentioned is of the earliest form. (9) City life—elders, judges at the gates, the chieftain, yet having indictments—is early. (10) There was no formal priesthood; Job begged for an umpire. (11) The Sabceans and Chaldeans were still roaming marauders. (12) The unit of money is referred to elsewhere only in reference to Jacob (Gen. 33:19; Jos. 24:32). (13) Job's wealth is described in the same terms as that of other patriarchs. (14) Job's daughters were heirs with their brothers, a thing not permitted in Judaism (Num. 27:8). (15) Job shaved his head, which would have violated Mosaic law (Deu. 14:1). These and numerous other arguments point to the probable date for Job in the time described in Genesis 10 and 11. It was in this early age that Job lived, holding his marriage in such high esteem.

Job had been ruthlessly accused by his supposed friends of rank and grievous sin, which had precipitated God's having to destroy him. Not realizing that Job was suffering because of his righteousness, the friends reasoned:

1. All suffering is punishment for iniquity.
2. Job is suffering.
3. Therefore, Job is a sinner.

Job stubbornly and persistently defended his integrity, and in chapter 31 he asserted his innocence for a final time and placed his signature thereon. The first part of this defense is pertinent to our study.

Job's first assertion of innocence is that he had "made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid" (Job 31:1)? One should study the **cutting of the covenant**, as is seen in Genesis 15:8-18, in which animals shed their blood and the two parties passed between the carcasses—the imprecation was that the one violating the

covenant would deserve the same destruction suffered by the animals. Job had made a solemn resolution that he would not look upon a woman with lust in his heart. Solomon warned: “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids” (Pro. 6:25).

Even in “old patriarchal religion” Job has the same purity of heart which Christ solemnly and sternly demands in Matthew 5:8, 28. Job disavowed every unchaste gaze, for he revered the sacredness of virginity and he dominated sin even in its first beginning. “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned” (Pro. 6:27)? Job would not be unfaithful to his wife and to God in a sinful, lustful glance. God knew his every step and every secret thought motive. Such activity would bring not only *calamity* and *disaster* in this life but also destruction when God brings every work into judgment (Job 31:2-4).

Job’s second assertion of innocence is: “If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or *if* I have laid wait at my neighbour’s door; *Then* let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her” (Job 31:9-10). Here Job disclaims ever having been guilty of adultery. *Enticed* is from the Hebrew meaning “to open, to expand.” He had not been ingeniously deceived or entrapped by a married woman. “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Pro. 1:10). Nor had he ever secretly waited for his neighbor to leave home so he could commit adultery with his neighbor’s wife. Such was/is widely practiced by the immoral. “Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night” (Pro. 7:8-9). Such a crime would warrant humiliation on the part of his wife. Only the enormity of the crime and his full knowledge of his innocency would cause him to invoke this grave punishment upon himself—the defiling of his own wife by another. It would be worse than her death.

Job refrained from the grievous sin of adultery. “For this *is* an heinous crime; yea, it *is* an iniquity *to be punished* by the judges” (Job 31:11). Not only is the one engaged in adultery a criminal, but he is guilty of an infamous act. It brings the deepest wound, robs one of honor and virtue, destroys the home, and shames the whole family. It has been termed a form of murder. No wonder Job stated that “it *is* a fire *that* consumeth to destruction” (Job 31:12) and Solomon warned:

“Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour’s wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent” (Pro. 6:28-29).

In Job, one sees the attitude toward the sanctity of marriage which is exhibited by a man who was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). Can the child of God be any less perfect and upright?

OBJECTIONS TO GOD’S PLAN ANSWERED

Many hours, days, and years have been devoted to figuring out ways in which God’s law can be circumvented in areas of doctrine, not the least of which is in the area of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, where some attempt to make divorce less heinous. Some of these objections and the refutations thereof follow.

Divorce Is Never Right

First, some try to circumvent God’s plan by saying that Matthew 19:9 is not applicable now but was a part of the Law of Moses. Thus, no person has the right, even in the case of fornication, to put away a mate and marry another. Christ’s exception is not part of the Law of Moses; Christ makes that perfectly clear in the context and in Matthew 5:31-32. Numerous statements of Christ apply today, though none of the writers of epistles repeat the principle—“call no *man* your father” (Mat. 23:9) and “tell *it* unto the church” (Mat. 18:17) are cases in point. God does protect an innocent person against a criminal mate.

One should keep in mind that divorce is not commanded by Christ. The offended party can show grace to the penitent, as in the case of Hosea and Gomer, thereby possibly saving the marriage.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth (Hos. 2:14-15).

Moses Permitted Divorce

Some try to circumvent God’s plan by reasoning that because Moses permitted divorce and remarriage for every cause, such is allowed today; Christ rejected such reasoning (Mat. 19:3-9), by referring to the original, universal law of God. Using *suffered*, Jesus indicated that God *held his nose* and *stomached* (by the hardest of efforts) Moses’ permitting divorce for some causes because of the

grace defects in the hearts of the Hebrews. This training was preparatory until the Seed should come (Gal. 4:1-7). Moses' law did increase the difficulty of obtaining a divorce—due process was obligatory. The law did lift the moral level of the Jews. However, Malachi demonstrates that God still hated divorce (Mal. 2:16). These divorces permitted by Moses were nailed to the cross, just as other things permitted under the law of Moses (Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14).

The State Allows Divorce

Some try to circumvent God's plan by reasoning that since the government permits divorce for virtually every cause, divorce must be right. The state has no right to authorize what is forbidden by God and justify the union of two people who do not have scriptural grounds to marry each other. We must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29) and be careful not to be "conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Daniel would have been justified in drinking strong drink and in eating unclean meat and meat offered to idols, had the king's command made it right (Dan. 1:5, 8).

Everybody Is Getting A Divorce

Some try to circumvent God's plan by reasoning that it is the popular thing to do, therefore right. Paul stated, "Flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18) and, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1 Cor. 10:8). When the Pagans practiced adultery, Paul warned: "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3). "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil" (Exo. 23:2).

God's Law On Divorce Not Applicable To Non-Children Of God

Some try to circumvent God's plan by attempting to deny that non-children of God are amenable to God's law on marriage. Those in the world are free to marry, divorce, and remarry as many times as they wish; but if and when they are baptized, their present companion must continue for life. According to this reasoning, they cannot sin, for they are not under the law (Rom. 4:15). One does wonder, if this is true, how Paul could class Christians in Corinth as fornicators, drunkards, and thieves prior to their baptism (1 Cor. 6:9-11). One also wonders how at the age of accountability a person is separated from God, except by violating law. The only other possible way is for one to be born hereditarily depraved. What law did the Sodomites violate

bringing on their utter destruction? Note the sins, including homosexuality, of the aliens in Romans 1:20-32! The evidence which demonstrates that all human beings are under God's law could be multiplied (Acts 17:30-31; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 2:12-16; 1 Pet. 4:3-5; Eph. 2:12; Col. 3:5-7, et al.).

One Cannot Live In Adultery

Some try to circumvent God's plan by affirming that one cannot "live in adultery," that it is a one-time act, which takes place the moment the two people are united. The Colossians, prior to their conversions, *walked* and *lived* in fornication and in other former sins (Col. 3:5-7). *Committeth* in Matthew 19:9 is in the present tense, thereby indicating habitual, linear, continuous action. Those thus walking are in the state of adultery.

Adultery Is Made Pure By Baptism

Some try to circumvent God's plan by suggesting that baptism forgives the adulterous state. Will those holding this position affirm that baptism forgives one who persists in his idolatry, in his thievery, or in his sodomy (1 Cor. 6:9)? As noted earlier, the person in such an adulterous relationship keeps on committing adultery as long as the state exists. Thus, those who affirm this position neglect the doctrine of repentance: "**Repent**, and be baptized...for the remission of sins," Peter urged (Acts 2:38). Can one imagine John the Baptist telling Herod that baptism would make his marriage a scriptural one, after having commanded, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Mat. 3:8)? Can one imagine a person being told that baptism would remove the guilt of robbing a bank, while he kept the million dollars; or of stealing a horse, while he persisted in retaining the horse in his pasture? "The legs of the lame are not equal!"

Early Church Fathers Condoned Adultery

Some try to circumvent God's plan by appealing to the early Christian writings and to the supposed silence of those writers on the subject. Several weaknesses exist in this position. One, we have but few of those writings. Two, one can defend almost anything in religion from the *silence* of the early fathers. Three, such reasoning places those writings on a par with the inspired and inerrant Word of God and even uses them to contradict plain apostolic teachings. Would the same brethren use such reasoning to defend premillennial-

ism, infant baptism, or gnosticism? Such an appeal to those uninspired writings accuses, admittedly or not, the Scriptures of being imperfect and unable to furnish a person completely unto every good work.

Hurts Innocent People

Some try to circumvent God's plan by stating that innocent children are affected by carrying out Christ's command. It is very sad and unfortunate that the innocent suffer; however, this fact does not change the decrees of Christ. Those who argue this do not hesitate to carry out Christ's commands in the case of marriages involving Christians. Does God have two laws governing marriage, one for non-Christians and one for Christians? The way of the transgressor is hard, on both the transgressor and his family. The Jews had to give up their foreign wives, regardless of the wives and children affected (Ezra 10:1-12; Neh. 13:23-27). Yes, the innocent suffer, but God's law still stood; and, stand it must today!

To Love Means To Compromise

Some try to circumvent God's plan by accusing us of not loving people. The church should demonstrate love to those involved in unscriptural marriages by being truly concerned. God's love has never enabled Him to violate His justice by compromising sin, nor does love in Christians call for or justify going against God's plan for marriage.

The Guilty Party Can Remarry

Some try to circumvent God's plan by saying that the guilty party can remarry after the innocent party has remarried. The teaching is that the divorce and remarriage of the innocent party has severed the relationship, thereby freeing the guilty one to remarry. This theory would have Christ giving two exceptions, instead of one. Also, this theory would violate the principle of sowing and reaping, for he would benefit from his own sin (Gal. 6:7-8). His way would not be hard, as is true for the transgressor (Pro. 13:15). It would also invite people to plan ways to relieve themselves of obligations of undesirable marriages. This has God punishing lesser sins more than He punishes greater sins (Rom. 7:1-3; Mat. 19:9). And, the partners in marriage are bound, not only to each other but also to God, through His universal laws governing marriage. One may become freed from

his innocent partner because he or she remarries; however, he is not free from the law of sin and, thus, cannot re-marry.

CONCLUSION

The crisis which exists in our society and in the church regarding a lack of respect for God's plan for marriage and the family can be successfully confronted and alleviated by the following. One, in the course of studying any Bible subject, a person must not allow personal prejudices and emotions to blind his eyes to the simple truths of God's Word—truths one could see, were he not to have help by others or by his own preconceived ideas to misunderstand. Two, one must never allow himself to involve himself in hermeneutical malpractice, but he must use sound principles of interpretation in his approach to this subject, just as we beg of the sectarian world. Three, one must learn and teach God's plan for marriage to his children in his home. Four, elders, evangelists, and Bible class teachers must teach these principles in the church, and elders must back these principles by the exercise of proper discipline. Five, each partner in marriage must maintain strict purity of heart and life. Six, marriage partners must exhibit true *agape* love—love which is unconditional and is committed to meeting their mate's needs (1 Cor. 13:3-7).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 2:125.

³Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 532.

⁴William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second Edition (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 693.

⁵Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 1450.

⁶Vine, 2:32-33.

⁷Thayer, p. 417.

⁸Vine, 1:329.

⁹Thayer, p. 66.

ABORTION AND EUTHANASIA

Tim Smith



Tim Smith was born in Clay County, Arkansas. He began preaching the gospel, with the encouragement of his maternal grandparents, in 1981. Tim attended the Bellview Preacher Training School and took several classes at Alabama Christian School of Religion. His first full-time work as a preacher was with the church of Christ in McLellan, Florida.

Tim has worked with congregations in Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Missouri, and is presently working with the Enon Church of Christ in Webb, Alabama.

Tim is married to the former Freda Sue Gott, and they have two daughters, Lee Ann and Amanda Sue.

The two questions under consideration are extremely important, touching on the preservation or cessation of human life and necessarily involve consequences which are irrevocable. All questions of biblical concern are, at least to a certain extent, important, but some allow for correction and offer a second chance to one who might today be in error concerning them. These questions, however, afford the individual no such liberty. If one believes that abortion is acceptable to the Lord and has one performed or encourages another to have one performed on them, there is no way for the life taken in that procedure to be brought back. If one faces a crisis and is moved to practice *euthanasia*, there is no way for the reconsideration of facts and the restitution of life. Once the life is taken, it cannot be given back again.

One of the difficulties involved in the consideration of such issues as these are the emotional impact such questions have. Emotions are a common part of man's make-up, but they often cloud issues and move one to adopt positions of extremity they ordinarily would not adopt. If one were to go out into the public and interview people at random, there might be many questions about which people had no strong opinion, but were one to ask questions about abortion and euthanasia, opinions would probably be clear and strong. The ability to arrive at an informed decision on these matters depends on the ability to lay aside the emotions and pursue the facts. In the final analysis, the truth

of the matter does not depend on what our parents thought (or think), and it does not depend on what the politicians or educators think; these are ever changing *standards*, and are therefore no standards at all. We must seek out a standard which is truly unchanging, and that unchanging standard for all is the Word of God.

This presentation is designed to assist the Bible believing individual in understanding the issues and ascertaining the position of the God of the Bible concerning them. Other studies which might be necessary before using the Bible to convince the non-believer of the truth on these issues. Such studies would concern the authority of the Scriptures themselves, but for those who accept their authority the following points will be of great value.

Avoid the temptation to over-sensationalize the matters by appealing to emotional cases designed to ridicule or terrorize the proponents of abortion and euthanasia, as such cases seldom prove the point to the satisfaction of the non-believer and often open the door for such presentations by the advocates thereof. As Bible believers, we appeal to the authority of the Scriptures, and that authority is sufficient in itself to settle the issue. You may well be able to impress another with illustrations, but they may be equally impressed by one holding an opposing viewpoint. We must ever keep in the forefront the authority of the Bible and ask those with whom we discuss these matters to consider what the Bible says. We shall proceed with a definition and brief overview of the subjects and then an examination of the Scriptures concerning them.

ABORTION

Abortion itself comes from the root word *abort*, which means: “To miscarry in giving birth; also, to fail of development.”¹ *Abortion* is defined as: “The act of aborting; the expulsion of a fetus before it is viable; miscarriage; also, arrested development; also, an imperfectly developed birth or product.”² As applied to the case at hand, abortion involves the ending of a pregnancy prematurely, the destruction of the fetus, for any number of *reasons*. It is argued that a woman has power over her own body, and therefore has the right to decide whether or not she wishes to carry a pregnancy out to term or to end it for convenience. It is further argued that human life does not begin at the point of conception, but only after the fetus is *viable*, or able to sustain life on its own outside the womb.

It is sometimes contended that extenuating circumstances may justify abortion, such as poverty or potential illness. If, as they contend, an unwed teen “finds herself with child,” she should determine the potential of happiness, health, and success for the fetus, and if it is not likely that the fetus will meet with happiness (as she defines happiness), abortion should be considered. Emotional factors are often invoked to prejudice the issue, especially including incest and rape. The particular points of error in the arguments set forth in defense of abortion include the notion that aborting a fetus is a personal decision involving only the mother, and the notion that “human life” does not begin until there is a certain level of *viability* in the fetus.

EUTHANASIA

By definition *euthanasia* is altogether improper and conveys a totally fictitious and erroneous sense of respectability and dignity. It is derived from two Greek words: *eu* meaning “good, noble” and *thanatos* meaning “death.”³ It is designed to carry with it the idea of an easy and tranquil death, a painless passing. As fewer people are familiar with this than are familiar with the former topic, in the interest of fairly representing the basic tenets of euthanasia we turn to the words of Derek Humphry, an acknowledged leader in the euthanasia advocacy. “Derek Humphry founded the Hemlock Society in 1980 and was its executive director until 1992. Today he is president of Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organization.”⁴ Clearly Mr. Humphry is a leader among those who advocate this practice, and his words will be accepted as authoritative with respect to the general tenets of their position, though we will only look at them in general. We have no desire to put too much stress on the words choosing rather to focus on the position in general. Mr. Humphry went on to say, “The Hemlock Society is dedicated to the view that there are at least two forms of suicide. One is emotional suicide, or irrational self murder in all its complexities.”⁵ This suicide is taken in reference to a mentally disturbed individual taking their own life, for no reason other than the mental distress in which they find themselves. He continues:

Let me emphasize that the Hemlock Society view on that form of suicide is approximately the same as the American Association of Suicidology, and the rest of society, which is to prevent it where you

can. We do not encourage any form of suicide for mental health or unhappy reasons.⁶

Here a distinction is made (or at least attempted) between one who suffers mental illness and one who suffers physical illness. While maintaining the “right to death” for the ones suffering physical distress, they would deny the same *rights* to those who suffer only mental illness.

Opponents of euthanasia find a great weakness in their position at this point, at least so far as consistent reasoning is concerned. If mental illness is a legitimate condition (and most recognize it as such), how can one deny the sufferers thereof the same relief as those who suffer from physical illness? Mr. Humphry continues:

Suicide can be justified ethically by the average Hemlock Society supporter for the following reasons: *One.* Advanced terminal illness which is causing unbearable suffering to that individual. This is the most common reason for self-deliverance. *Two.* Grave physical handicap which is so restricting that the individual cannot, even after due consideration and training, tolerate such a limited existence.⁷

The Bible student will be very interested in two particular words used here by Mr. Humphry: *justify* and *reason*. These two words indicate that the two statements describing the condition of individuals *justify* mercy killing, and make it somehow *reasonable*. In this sense, *justify* is used to indicate that the practice under consideration is shown to be proper; it is vindicated. Therefore, they are contending that one suffering from a handicap or a presumably terminal illness is proper in the engaging in of actions the end of which terminates life. To say that they are *reasons* indicates that they should have the force of making evident the propriety of a conclusion drawn from them. The proponents of euthanasia, then, hold that a man is justified and acts within the confines of reason when he takes such steps as are necessary to terminate his life instead of continuing in a difficult situation.

ABORTION AND EUTHANASIA: NATURAL PARTNERS

While it is true that not everyone who accepts the idea of abortion accepts euthanasia, and vice versa. It is equally true that the two practices stand or fall by the same arguments. To advocate the ending of a life before birth is no different than advocating the ending of a life before natural death. It comes down to a **respect for human life** or the lack thereof. If it can be shown that it is proper and acceptable,

justified and reasonable, to allow the taking of life in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, it is equally proper to take the life of one who has no more to offer (of a productive nature) to society. The main difference between the two positions centers on choice, as it is argued that the adult chooses to take his own life and should be afforded the right to act on their choice, while no one argues that the baby in the womb exercises the same choice. Further, the matter of “forced euthanasia” ought to be considered in any discussion of *chosen* or *voluntary* euthanasia. Nazi Germany is the only nation on record as having passed a forced euthanasia law, but there are others who advocate the practice in one way or another. The idea is something like this: if it is determined that a person has lived out their *usefulness*, and that they can offer society no more than continuing medical bills and *unnecessary* medical attention (unnecessary in that it will never produce in them a recovery), their life ought to be ended by force, by act of law. Similarly, the argument could be made (without merit in the opinion of opponents) that a pregnancy which would lead to an *unproductive* life ought to be terminated by force, by act of law.

THE BIBLE AND ABORTION

With respect to abortion, the key point concerns the point of origin for human life. Much is made by the advocates for abortion about an imaginary distinction between the *life* that exists in the womb and the *life* that exists at the point of *viability*. It is contended that “human life” does not begin in the womb; therefore, it is acceptable to destroy the “non-human life” in order to make more comfortable the already existing human circumstances in which the mother lives. The Bible, however, makes no such distinction between *human* and *non-human* life. In Exodus 21:22-23 we read:

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.⁸

In this reference there is a distinction in punishment for the offender based on the outcome, but notice that punishment is present regardless. If, as the result of the strife, a woman has a premature birth, but there is no harm to either the woman or the child, then only a fine as imposed by the judges will follow. If, on the other hand, there is harm

to either the mother or child, then punishment is based upon the harm that has occurred.

What, then, is the passage teaching? Simply this. If two fighting men caused an intervening pregnant woman to give premature birth, yet no harm followed to either the mother or child, a fine could be levied as a penalty for such carelessness. However, if any harm followed, to mother or babe, justice was to be meted out. The mother and unborn child had equal protection under the law.⁹

Notice that Moses said “life for life,” indicating that the life of the unborn child is equal in value to the life of the one who caused its cessation. This indicates that there is no “non-human” status biblically ascribed to the life in the womb—indeed just the opposite!

The reason there is no non-human status when discussing an unborn child is also seen in Scripture. That reason is that God is the Giver of all life. In Acts 17:25 we read, “he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” The *he* of this passage is God (cf., Acts 17:24). There are many other passages which indicate this truth, among which are the following:

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:27).

Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb? (Job 31:15).

Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews (Job 10:11).

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them (Psa. 139:13-16).

As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all (Ecc. 11:5).

Note that in each of these references the life that is in the womb is the same in kind and worth as the life that is *viable*. The individuals addressed in the passages were given no distinction between the state of the unborn and the state of the mature. The Lord does not recognize a difference in the two *states*.

Other verses bear greatly on this matter in the New Testament, in which the Greek *brephos* is used. The important point is seen in the way in which the word is used. In Luke 1:41 we read, “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the **babe** leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” In Luke 2:12, 16 in speaking Jesus the beloved physician writes, “And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the **babe** wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger....And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the **babe** lying in a manger.” Then in Acts 7:19 we read, “The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their **young children**, to the end they might not live” *Brephos* is translated “babe” in Luke 1:41; 2:12, 16, and “young children” in Acts 7:19. The same word is used by the Holy Spirit to refer to both the unborn in the womb and the young *born* out of the womb. Why? The simple answer is that God makes no distinction between the two. From the moment of conception onwards the Bible does not distinguish between the value of the life, repeatedly referring to it as legitimate and protected by all the divine dictates governing murder. That the individual maintains his identity and person from the womb onwards through life is seen in Isaiah 49:1, 5,

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name...And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

Isaiah was “Isaiah” in the womb, and he continued to be the same on to the day in which he wrote the words we just read.

Sometimes it is argued that a woman has the *right* to control her own body and that an abortion falls within this *right*. The Bible tells us, however, that the baby in her womb is not her body, but another body and person. Further, anyone who takes the life of an innocent person is worthy of death (cf., Gen. 9:6). All of the arguments in favor of abortion assume that the life in the womb is somehow *non-human*, and with the fall of this assumption comes the fall of all the conclusions based on it. Life in the womb, from conception on, is human, and it is no more proper to destroy that life than any other. Even in the extreme cases to which men point, those involving rape and incest,

does the fact that these vicious and horrendous acts were perpetrated lessen the value of the life that is produced by them? If it were learned twenty or thirty years after the rape or incest occurred that the product of the rape or incest had no real prospects for success in life would it be acceptable to terminate their lives then? If it would be acceptable before birth, when the future was in doubt, why would it not be acceptable when all doubt had been removed?

THE BIBLE AND EUTHANASIA

In discussing euthanasia, it must be remembered that life is a gift from God. "The LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). We do not *will* ourselves into existence and therefore we do not *own* our existence outright. Death is the time when "the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). Since God gives to all life (cf., Acts 17:25), God is the *owner* of all life. He, as the owner of life, alone has the right to govern the taking of life. The crucial point to our discussion, then, centers on who has the right to take the life of another. More specifically, we might put it in the form of a question, "Do I have the right to end my life at my will?" Many emotional considerations are brought to bear on the discussion before this question is answered, such as the extent of suffering to which one may be subjected and the *quality* of life. These really have no bearing on the final answer to the crucial question. If it can be shown that man controls independently his life and its duration, then the issue is settled, and it would be perfectly acceptable to practice euthanasia. However, if it can be shown that we do not control our own existence independently, then euthanasia is forbidden, regardless of the "extenuating circumstances" to which men often point.

There are at least six instances of suicide on record in the Bible: the suicide of Samson (Jud. 16:29-30); the suicide of Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam. 31:4-5; 1 Chr. 10:4-5); the suicide of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23); the suicide of Zimri (1 Kin. 16:18); and the suicide of Judas (Mat. 27:5; Acts 1:18). We read also of temptation of the Philippian jailer to take his own life instead of suffering the punishment he feared for the apparent loss of the prisoners. In all of these cases, even though the presence of physical illness is not there, other distressing and difficult circumstances are present, and

suicide is looked down on with Divine disapproval. In Revelation 9:6 we read, "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." Here we find men under such distress that they desired the freedom death would afford them, but we do not see Divine approval bestowed upon the desire. The Bible merely uses the desire for death to illustrate the terrible persecution of God's people. There is not a passage of Scripture to be cited in which God gives His nod of approval to the practice of suicide.

As noted above, all life comes from God, and is therefore under His control. He determines who may terminate life and when it may be terminated. God allowed the termination of life as punishment for murder (and other crimes) in the Old Testament, but we never read of this approval in the case of personal suffering. There is, therefore, no authority for a man to take his own life. Such being the case, the one who takes his own life does so in opposition to the will of God, and dying in that condition faces eternal damnation.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It is usually admitted that euthanasia and abortion are highly charged emotional issues, and as we have noted above, such issues often become clouded with personal feelings, and positions concerning them are taken without properly considering the facts. It is admittedly difficult to see another suffering endlessly from a terminal illness, and it is equally difficult to consider that we may be in such a condition some day. Under these circumstances the temptation to take our own life may well be great. But, a faithful Christian will not allow the difficult circumstances in which he finds himself to overwhelm him and displace the teachings of the Bible as the supreme authority in his life. The Bible tells us that we do not have the right to take our own life: life belongs to God.

This leads us to another equally controversial set of circumstances. If one is suffering from a terminal illness, (by definition that is an illness from which he/she can never recover), is it appropriate to refuse life-sustaining treatment? Must the Christian be placed on machines which will keep the heart beating after the mind is gone? Must a Christian take medicine to prolong existence, no matter how painful that existence may be? From a biblical standpoint the evidence is at best sparse, if not nonexistent. In this writer's opinion,

there is a difference between taking actions to physically end life and not taking actions to artificially sustain existence. But in the final analysis, this decision must be made by those facing it, and it is a very grave one indeed. The Bible forbids ending life forcibly under these circumstances, but there is no evidence that it demands us to submit to endless medical treatment in a futile effort to sustain it.

ENDNOTES

¹*The New Century Dictionary*, Vol. 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Derek Humphry, *Euthanasia Opposing Viewpoints* (n.p., n.d.), p. 17.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁹Wayne Jackson, "Exodus 21:22-23 and the Sanctity of Fetal Life," *Christian Courier*, January 1992, p. 35.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Kent Bailey



Kent Baily was born in 1952 at Hamilton, Ohio. For the past 22 years he has served as local evangelist with congregations in Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee, having completed 15 years work with the church of Christ in Lenoir City, Tennessee. Kent writes for various brotherhood publications and speaks on numerous gospel meetings and lectureships each year throughout the states.

During the past several years Kent has participated as the regular speaker on *Searching The Scriptures* and *The Bible Speaks* radio broadcasts and presently serves as one of the regular speakers on *What Does The Bible Say* TV broadcast sponsored by the Southwest Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi.

Kent is a graduate of Louisville Bible College (B.A) and Tennessee Bible College (M.A.). He has received additional education from the Law Enforcement Satellite Academy of Tennessee, the FBI Law Enforcement Training School, and the National Institute of Justice, serving as a Sergeant with the Lenoir City Police Department Reserve Unit.

Kent is married to Judy (Whitehouse), and they have one daughter, Merideth.

Homosexuality (sexual relations between men) and lesbianism (sexual relations between women) has never been authorized according to the Scriptures. Such is perversion and is therefore destructive of the very moral fiber upon which all civilized societies exist. In spite of such truth, there exists a movement within society to literally undermine the very foundations of biblical morality, and lead individuals into a degenerate and reprobate condition of thought.

In February 1972, the **National Coalition of Gay Organizations** met at the Armitage Avenue United Methodist Church in Chicago. An invitation had been sent out to 495 homosexual organizations across the United States to come and prepare a “gay stance for the 1972 elections.”

About 200 individuals from 18 states representing 85 organizations were present for this two-day event. Conference participants adopted the 1972 **Gay Rights Platform**, which included 17 federal and state demands. Some of these demands were:

1. Federal encouragement and support for sex education courses, prepared and taught by homosexuals presenting homosexual-

ity as a valid and healthy preference and lifestyle as a viable alternative to heterosexuality.

2. Repeal of all legislative provisions that restrict the sex or number of persons entering into a marriage unit; the extension of legal benefits of all persons who cohabit regardless of sex and/or numbers.

No doubt the single most important victory which the homosexuals have attained in our society has been to shift the debate from that of behavior to that of identity. This change creates the false view that those, who upon the basis of God's truth, oppose the sin of homosexuality do so because of a hatred and personal animosity toward those involved in such a perverted lifestyle.¹

With regards to the sin of homosexuality, Fred D. House correctly observed:

When we talk about the sin of homosexuality, or the sin of Sodom, we speak of that which is shameful, we speak of that which is wicked and nowhere in the Bible does it ever come close as to being characterized as righteousness. In Romans 1, Paul spoke by the pen of inspiration, and said in verses 26 and 27, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." In Romans 1:29 it says that they were "Being filled with all unrighteousness..." Then note verse 32, "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."²

Brother House continued in observing:

Speaking of unrighteousness, and that they pleasure in it, note Paul's instruction and comments concerning the people at Thessalonica. In 2 Thessalonians 2:12, the writer says, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." In this verse we see a marked difference in righteousness and wickedness.³

Homosexuality is a grievous sin that must be opposed with all of our might. It is degrading by nature, filthy in its conduct, and condemning in its results. While indeed we must have a holy hatred for all sin in general and this sin in particular, we must always remember our hatred must be centered upon the sin rather than upon the sinner. This distinction does not suggest a tolerance for sin, but rather a genuine love for the sinner—to turn them from evil practices that they

may escape the righteous wrath of God. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we note the words of Peter: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).⁴

The inspired writer Jude noted: “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 22-23).

Liberals in the media, politics, and religion make a big fuss about those, who based upon moral principles and truth, stand in opposition to homosexuality. We are generally viewed as individuals desiring to do personal bodily harm to those guilty of such a sin. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only those motivated by the truth of the Scriptures relative to the plan of Salvation and the New Testament church are those who truly love the souls of those enmeshed in such error. We encourage such sinners to give up sinful practices and by personal obedience to the conditions of the saving gospel of Christ receive reconciliation unto God in the one spiritual body of His Son, the church (Eph. 2:11-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

My responsibility during this lesson is to formulate a valid biblical argument demonstrating the sinfulness of the homosexual lifestyle. In addition we shall note some pseudo arguments made in defense of the sin of homosexuality, give biblical evidence that those involved in the sin of homosexuality can overcome such a problem, and expose the agenda that the homosexual movement has to destroy our society.

THE BASIC ARGUMENT

In developing the case against the sin of homosexuality, we make the following argument.

1. If it is the case that homosexual activity is sinful, then there are no circumstances involving any individual in which homosexual activity is approved by God.
2. The Scriptures teach that homosexual activity is sinful.
3. Therefore, there are no circumstances involving any individual in which homosexual activity is approved by God.

It is presupposed in this lecture that God exists, that the Bible is the plenary, verbally, and inerrantly inspired Word of God, and that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. Such being the case necessitates that the basic message of the Bible regarding homosexual

activity must be accepted as truth, and that the reaction of Christ to this particular situation is the reaction of Deity to such human activity.

If the minor premise of this argument is true, the case being that the form of this argument is valid, then it necessitates that the conclusion must both logically and scripturally follow, and therefore the argument stands! Please note the evidence set forth to demonstrate the soundness of the minor premise of the argument.

THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN

In noting Genesis 19, we read of God's attitude toward the sin of homosexuality and His reaction to such. Thomas Eaves, in his debate with Paul Johnson commented:

A very simple way to determine God's attitude toward homosexuality in the Old Testament is to read how he dealt with it. In Genesis 19 the inspired record reveals to us God's dealings with the city of Sodom. This city and its inhabitants (ten righteous souls could not be found in this city, Genesis 18:32) are referred to as, "wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly" (Gen. 13:13) and, "because their sin is very grievous" (Gen. 18:20). Because of the sin of sodomy Jehovah God destroyed Sodom (Gen. 19:13; 19:24-25). The sin of this wicked city is identified in Genesis 19:4-5, "But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men that came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us that we may know them." "That they might know them...Yoda is applied, as in Judges 19:22, to the carnal sin of *paederastia*, a crime very prevalent among the Canaanites (Lev. 18:22; 20:23), and according to Romans 1:27, a curse of heathenism generally." (*Commentary On The Old Testament* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Vol. 1, p. 233).⁵

In his first affirmative article, brother Eaves alluded to Lot commenting upon the intended activities of the Sodomites as wickedness and gave additional Old Testament passages as supporting evidence (Isa. 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Eze. 16:49-50; Lam. 3:9). He also documented from the New Testament how the acts of Sodom were identified as being sinful:⁶

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling

among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) (2 Pet. 2:6-8).

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 7).

THE LAW OF MOSES

Under the covenant of Moses we note very explicit teaching condemning the sin of homosexuality.

1. “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion” (Lev. 18:22-23).

2. “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them” (Lev. 20:13).

3. “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deu. 23:17).

4. “And there were also sodomites in the land: *and* they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel” (1 Kin. 14:24).

5. “And Asa did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made” (1 Kin. 15:11-12).

6. “And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land” (1 Kin. 22:46).

7. “And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove” (2 Kin. 23:7).

As we note carefully Old Testament teaching under both Patriarchy and the covenant of Moses, homosexuality was considered sinful by the very mandate of heaven. It was evil, wicked, and carried the death penalty. During the reforms of both Asa and Josiah sodomites were not permitted to even enter the assembly of the Lord.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Among God’s provisions for humanity is the New Covenant, the gospel of Christ. God’s people today are a covenant people who

entered into this relationship by being baptized into Christ and His church upon their faith in Jesus as the Christ, repentance of personal sin, and confession of the Deity of Jesus as the Christ (John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13).

While indeed this New Covenant is distinct and different from the Old Covenant (Heb. 8:7), there are some eternal moral principles that have always been bound upon humanity regardless of the covenant that is in force. As we study the Scriptures we should clearly see that God has always had a moral code, and to deviate from such a code would result in sin.

In the New Testament, the gospel of Christ, we find that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, possesses all authority over all of humanity. Man is thus answerable and/or amenable to his rule (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). The “Pentecost-pointers” set forth in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount dealing with moral, ethical principles are thus bound on all of humanity today. Even though Christ stated these principles while the law of Moses was in force, they pointed to the coming kingdom, the New Testament church, that was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ in Acts 2.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST IN MATTHEW 5:32 AND 19:9

Regarding the concept of divorce and remarriage our Lord stated:

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Mat. 5:32).

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 (Mat. 19:9).

Humanity, having been created by God in His own image, are distinct beings. Mankind is distinct from the animal creation, but males are distinct from females as to respective functions. We find in Genesis 2:18-24 that God created woman as the marriage partner for man. The marriage concept, therefore, is for the benefit of humanity. In Matthew 19 our Lord indicates the importance of such an institution demonstrating that such is for the life of those two beings joined. Paul, in Ephesians 5, demonstrates the sacredness of such a bond.

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, placed marriage on such a high plane, other than physical death (Rom. 7:1-3), that the only reason for the breaking of this marriage bond would be the sin of fornication. Then and only then would the innocent partner have the scriptural right to divorce the guilty partner and form a second marriage.

Fornication, from the Greek *porneia* (πορνεία) is defined as “illicit sexual intercourse in general”⁷—i.e., all unauthorized and/or unlawful sexual intercourse. The case being that the only divinely authorized sexual relationship is between man and woman in the marriage bond; homosexuality would therefore implicitly come under the purview of fornication and therefore be sinful.

ROMANS 1:18-32

In noting the New Testament epistles, the subject of homosexuality is treated as sin. In noting especially Romans 1:26-28, Paul was inspired to write:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Homosexual affections are described as being “vile” and this particular type of sexual activity is described as “changing the natural use into that which is against nature.” By the term nature the text speaks of that which is natural, or in accordance with nature. Homosexuality is described in this text as being against nature or perverted. Such is based upon lust—a longing, or desire. It is an unseemly, shameful deed. Our text therefore, depicts homosexuality as that which is against nature or perverted, based upon lust, and is considered as a shameless deed. No greater divine indictment against such sinful activity can be found elsewhere!

GALATIANS 5:19-21

In the Galatian passage, Paul indicates that there are certain activities that are based upon fleshly desires. Four particular categories: (1) sins against moral purity, (2) sins of atheism and/or irreligion,

(3) sins that deal with disposition, and (4) sins of excess are addressed.⁸

Among these works of the flesh we find the sin of fornication (πορνεία). As already demonstrated in this chapter, fornication is properly defined as being inclusive of all unauthorized unlawful sexual intercourse. As already demonstrated, fornication is inclusive of homosexuality. Therefore, homosexuality is condemned under the purview of works of the flesh.

HEBREWS 13:4

In Hebrews 13:4 the inspired writer stated, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Humanity is created in such a fashion as to have a sexual appetite. The divine qualifications for marriage set forth in Matthew show that the marriage bond is to be enjoyed by scripturally qualified males and females, not males with males, nor females with females.

The text indicates that when the sexual relationship is perverted those involved in such sin are known as whoremongers and adulterers and under the condemnation of God. *Whoremonger* is translated from *pornos* (πόρνος) meaning “a man who prostitutes his body to another’s lust for hire, a male prostitute,...a man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse, a fornicator.”⁹ We must understand that the word *fornication* (πορνεία) encompasses all forms of unlawful sexual intercourse, of which homosexuality is inclusive; πόρνος would thus include homosexuals. *Adulterer* is translated from *moichos* (μοιχός), which obviously speaks with reference to one guilty of adultery. Generally speaking, *adultery* (μοιχεία) speaks with reference to one having sexual intercourse with another’s spouse. The term can also be used in the sense of debauchery as Jesus used this term in Matthew 5:28,¹⁰ and in either case such would be inclusive of homosexuality.

PSEUDO ARGUMENTS MADE IN DEFENSE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Various unsound and false arguments have been made in defense of homosexuality, however, due to the limitations of both time and space we will not attempt to deal with all of the specific material that has been introduced in defense of this sinful lifestyle. Basically two

different approaches are used by homosexuals and/or sympathizers of such sinful lifestyles.

First, there is the secular humanistic approach used by atheists, agnostics, and all of those who reject the biblical concept of God and the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible. In disproving these contentions, which has been done on numerous occasions, we establish the case for biblical morality, which thereby literally “jerks the rug” out from under the homosexual defense.

Second, those of the “religious” homosexual persuasion make pseudo arguments from misapplied passages of Scripture. It is this type of pseudo argumentation to which we now give our attention and expose.¹¹

A Denial of The Biblical Usage of Fornication And Adultery

Religious homosexuals deny that fornication and adultery would be inclusive of homosexuality. They allege that the abuse of homosexuality is what is condemned in the usage of both terms.

Such a line of reasoning is worse than ridiculous—it is sinful! To allege such, one must discount all lexical evidence and contextual usage of the terms. Such an argument proves that when we allow a false teacher to redefine the meaning of crucial terms the false teacher can “get by” with anything.

A Perversion And Misuse of Various Passages

When one takes note of the way homosexuals misapply the Scriptures, it becomes evident that they are just as perverted in their thinking with reference to the proper usage of the Scriptures as they are in their view of human sexuality.

It is falsely argued that in Genesis 19 the sexual activity condemned of God is that of “same sex rape” and “forced angelic sex.” However, the context of the chapter, in addition to other passages that have already been introduced, speaks to the contrary. It is obvious that the sin condemned in the passage is that of same sex intercourse and activity. In Romans 1:18-32 Paul refers to such activity as “vile affections” and “against nature.” Jude refers to such sexual activity as “going after strange flesh.” Anyone making such a ridiculous type of assertion would be either totally dishonest or else so ignorant of the Scriptures that they would not know whether Jesus Christ was crucified on Mount Calvary or shot on Bunker’s Hill!

It is falsely argued that in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 the words of inspiration condemn only the abuse of homosexuality, not homosexuality itself. In noting the texts under consideration, however, it is obvious to even the casual reader that specific concepts are being condemned, not just the abuse of those concepts. How can one possibly abuse that which is within and of itself sinful? The words of inspiration condemn homosexuality, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, reveling, extortion, lying, perjury, and all things contrary to sound doctrine, not one's abuse of those concepts—for they are sinful within themselves.

It is falsely argued that in Hebrews 13:4 “all marriages” are classified as being honorable and “all sexual activity in all marriages” is thereby authorized. It is further asserted that homosexual marriages would come under the purview of marriage; therefore, such is authorized upon the basis of the passage. In response to such perversion of truth we first note that the text does not state nor imply that everything referred to as a marriage is honorable. The text states that “marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.” By *marriage* we refer to what the Scriptures define as marriage: a qualified man being joined to a qualified woman by God (Mat. 19:4-6)! Any relationship other than this would not be marriage at all—such is perversion. Those making misuse of the Scriptures in such fashion demonstrate the fallacy of ignoring the total context of biblical teaching regarding a particular subject.

It is falsely argued that in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6 Paul condemned “same sex inversion” not “homosexuality.” This phrase refers to *heterosexuals* engaging in *homosexual* activity. If such reasoning were not so sinfully tragic, it would truly be funny! How in the name of common sense can one remain a *heterosexual* while engaging in *homosexual* activity? That would be just as ridiculous as affirming the existence of a round square, or a heavenly demon!

It is falsely argued that if an individual is homosexual by nature, then he is not condemned by God. It is further affirmed, by those teaching error, that there are those who are homosexual by nature; therefore, it is falsely affirmed that homosexuals by nature are not condemned by God. In noting passages such as Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6, in addition to others, God made no special exception to those claiming homosexuality due to natural desire. Romans 1 states

that such a desire is not natural, but rather perverted. Both major and minor premises of the so-called “*nature argument*” are therefore false.

In his debate with Paul Johnson, Thomas Eaves observed:

In an article in the *Journal of American Medicine*, Dr. Charles Socrates, M.D., says that homosexuality is not “innate or inborn” but an acquired or learned process. This is confirmed by the pro homosexual SIECUS (Sex Information and Educational Council of the U.S., Inc.) which says in its pamphlet on homosexuality that “Genetic, constitutional or glandular factors play little role in the causation of homosexuality.” This book is written by Isadore Rubin, Ph.D.—who approves of homosexuality—and his authority for the statement is other “authorities in the field.” (*There’s Nothing Gay About Homosexuality*, by Murray Norris).¹²

Those Guilty of The Sin of Homosexuality Can Change And Be Forgiven

Homosexuals are not born with such perverted desires, but rather are seduced, and then recruited into that particular movement. Thomas Eaves observed:

According to Cahn, the group had been operating for ten years with at least 45 members—adults and boys aged seven to 17 seduced into homosexuality...Club members supposedly got together on such outwardly innocent enterprises as fishing trips, then swapped boys, generally fatherless youngsters who had been coaxed into the ring with gifts...The group had even drafted a “Bill of Rights” for each boy. The key clause: “every boy has a right to a loving relationship with at least one responsible male adult after whom he can pattern his life” (*Time*, June 5, 1972).¹³

Homosexuality is unnatural, sinful behavior that is learned. If such sinners give up such sinful practices by turning unto God in obeying the saving gospel of Christ, they will be forgiven of such sin, becoming members of the one spiritual body of Christ which is His church. The apostle Paul was inspired of God to write:

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. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Faithful gospel preaching that strongly opposes the sin of homosexuality is not the preaching of hatred, neither is it the proclamation of violence, nor physical harm. Such is the clarion sounding forth of truth making known God's terms of divine redemption that sinners may be forgiven conditioned upon their obedience to the Lord and have the promise of eternal fellowship with God.

The Homosexual Agenda

In November of 1987, Marshall K. Kirk and Erastes Pill authored an article appearing in *Guide Magazine* entitled: "The Overhauling of Straight America." The reader should consider the major points of this particular strategy and note carefully how those of the homosexual persuasion have gained much ground in their goals. These individuals advocate the following:

1. Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible.
2. Portray homosexuals as victims, not as aggressive challengers.
3. Give protectors a just cause.
4. Make homosexuals look good.
5. Make the victimizers look bad.
6. Solicit funds.
7. Get on the air with radio and television programs.
8. Start with the fine print in newspapers and magazines.
9. Encourage favorable homosexual characters in films and television shows.
10. Ask television networks to accept homosexual sponsorship of certain ads and shows.
11. Address the lingering public fears about homosexuals as loathsome and contrary aliens.
12. Make homosexuals seem less mysterious; present a series of short spots featuring the boy or girl next door, fresh and appealing, or warm and loveable grandma and grandpa types.
13. Identify historical homosexual or bisexual personalities who are illustrious and dignified...and dead.
14. Portray homosexuals as victims of discrimination: images of brutality, tales of job loss and family separation.

15. The mainstream will identify better with the plight of the homosexuals if straights can, once in a while walk a mile in their shoes. A humorous ad or television show might help them do this.
16. Vilification of victimizers: These images should be combined with those of their homosexual victims by a method propagandists call “bracket technique.” For example, for a few seconds an unctuous beady-eyed Southern preacher is seen pounding the pulpit in rage about “those sick abominable creatures.” While this tirade continues over the sound track, the picture switches to pathetic photos of homosexuals who look decent, harmless, and likable; and then we cut back to the poisonous face of the preacher, and so forth. The contrast speaks for itself. The effect is devastating.
17. We have sketched out here a blueprint for transforming the social values of straight America. At the core of our program is a media campaign to change the way the average citizens view homosexuality.¹⁴

During the course of this chapter we have set forth an argument that is both valid and sound in demonstration of the sinfulness of homosexuality. We have demonstrated the fallacy of the pseudo arguments presented in defense of the homosexual movement and have given proof that this sin can be overcome.

Our nation stands at a great crossroads. May we as faithful members of the church of Christ unsheath the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and through faithful proclamation and defense of God’s eternal truth do battle until Jesus comes!

ENDNOTES

¹*Stop Promoting Homosexuality*, Website, <http://www.sphi.com/index.html>.

²Fred D. House, “The Sin of Sodom,” *Living Soberly, Righteously, And Godly*, ed. Thomas F. Eaves, Sr. (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 1977), p. 241.

³*Ibid.*

⁴All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁵Thomas F. Eaves, Sr., *A Debate On Homosexuality* (Algood, TN: T & P Bookshelf, 1981), pp. 14-15.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), pp. 531-532.

⁸J. Noel Merideth, *A Commentary On Galatians* (Lawrenceburg, TN: Merideth Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 201-209.

⁹Thayer, p. 532.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 417.

¹¹Paul R. Johnson, *A Debate on Homosexuality* (Algood, TN: T & P Bookshelf, 1981), pp. 18-24.

¹²Eaves, pp. 47-48.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁴Marshall K. Kirk & Erastas Pill, "Strategies of The Homosexual Movement," Stop Promoting Homosexuality, Website, <http://www.sphi.com/index.html>.

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE

Danny L. Box



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INTRODUCTION

The theme for this lectureship, *Worldliness*, is one which is very much needed. As we look all across the brotherhood, we see many of our brethren who are “eaten up” with worldliness. They want to be known as Christians, but they still want to be a part of the world. Many have forgotten the entreaty of John found in 1 John 2:15,¹ “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world.” We see many who no longer do as instructed by James: to “keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). No longer are their lives transformed by the renewing of their minds, but they are conformed to the world, and are no longer concerned with that “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). In fact, it is my belief that “worldliness” is the primary problem with the church today. Because of worldliness in the church, we no longer grow, we no longer are the example we ought to be, and we no longer preach against those things of the world, because we are afraid we will run off some of our members.

My assignment on “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use” deals with three major areas in which brethren love the things of the world more than they love God. We do not have to look far before we find “breth-

ren” who think it is acceptable to take a social drink. We also see many brethren standing in front of the building, smoking between class and worship, or church buildings with “no smoking” signs posted in the bathrooms, and we have many who think that recreational drug use is all right, as long as no laws are broken. The fact is that there are physical, as well as spiritual dangers in using alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Let us look at each individually, pointing out those dangers to our bodies as well as to our souls.

ALCOHOL

She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright (Pro. 23:29-31).

Alcohol is a drug, though many people neither realize it nor accept it. In a survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, an estimated 111 million Americans 12 years of age and older were current alcohol users, which was about 52% of the total population in that age group.² In a similar survey conducted by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research, it was reported that the most commonly abused illicit drug was alcohol, especially among teenagers and young adults.³

When we talk about the use of alcohol as an illicit drug, we must first understand what we mean by *illicit* and *drugs*. When we use *illicit*, we mean anything that is “not allowed by law; prohibited; unauthorized; improper.”⁴ In the state of Alabama, and most other states, to legally (according to man’s law) obtain and drink alcohol, a person must be at least 21 years of age. Anyone under age, who buys and drinks alcohol, does so in violation of state law, hence the use of *illicit*. When we use *drug*, we are referring to “any chemical substance that affects the central nervous system causing changes in behavior and often addiction.”⁵ When people drink alcohol, they are taking a substance into their bodies that will affect their behavior, and also cause physical problems and possible addiction that will be with them for the rest of their lives.

Whenever people are consuming alcohol, it may seem as if they are having a good time, and for them it might be a good time right at that

moment. But what is happening to their bodies while the alcohol is being consumed? The truth is, drinking causes the body to suffer. There are short term and long term effects of alcohol on the body. For that reason people must know what this *drug* can do to the body. One can stop the destruction of the body while the body is still having short term effects, but once a person enters the long term phase, there is no turning back.

In a report entitled “Alcohol and the Body,” Brooke Allen made the following statement concerning this subject:

Many of the body’s physiological functions can be affected by the use of alcohol. The first system that needs to be discussed is the cardiovascular system. There has been a discovery of recent evidence which proves a variety of diseases are brought about by a substance that coats the body’s red blood cells causing them to stick together in clumps. These clumps are called “sludge” and are created by the ingestion of alcohol. As one can imagine “sludge” can lead to heart disease and ultimately to the blockage of veins and arteries in the heart, which can lead to death at a very early age.⁶

The leading cause of death in alcoholics is due to the effects that alcohol has on the **cardiovascular system**. These effects include high blood pressure, irregular heart beat, myocardial infarction (heart attack), blocked arteries, and strokes. Alcohol slows down the electrical conduction of the heart. This results in the pumping action of the heart being altered, and when the pump is not working properly, heart failure occurs. This in turn makes the heart work harder, resulting in a higher force or pressure needed to move the blood. Oftentimes when the pressure increases, weakened vessels burst, resulting in hemorrhage, or strokes. The heart will try to compensate by beating at a rapid irregular rate, which causes other problems—all because of the effects of the drug alcohol.⁷

The **central nervous system** is another major system affected by alcohol. The main organ in this system is the brain. When ingested, **alcohol destroys brain cells**, and brain cells are the only cells in the body that do not regenerate. When brain cells die, they can **never** be replaced. Our brain cells are responsible for coordination, memory, motor function, sensory function, and all of the functions that are vital to life. When we drink and lose brain cells due to the toxic effects of alcohol, we lose coordination, the ability to think clearly, our speech becomes slurred, we forget things, lose our strength, and oftentimes

become violent and/or aggressive in behavior, or develop severe depression.⁸ We have all seen the “drunk” who is staggering down the road, who does not remember his name, has trouble talking, and gets upset and wants to fight, or breaks down and cries. This is a person with a brain that is suffering from the toxic effects of alcohol. For a demonstration of the effects of alcohol on the brain, take a piece of fat meat and place it in a small amount of alcohol; then watch the searing effects that alcohol has on the meat. That is exactly what it does to the brain.

Another major system affected by alcohol is the **hepatic system**. This system, which includes the liver and gallbladder, functions by filtering the blood, helping to form clotting factors, aiding in the digestion of our food, and helping the body utilize insulin.⁹ There are a variety of syndromes and pathological changes of the liver caused by alcohol. The most severe of these is cirrhosis. Cirrhosis is a disease process of the liver in which the liver is damaged and is no longer able to filter the waste products from the blood properly. Cirrhosis also does not allow the body to produce those factors which helps the blood to clot. The person with severe cirrhosis will usually be seen with a swollen abdomen, jaundiced (yellowish orange) in color, and hemorrhaging from all areas of the body. Once the liver has failed, there are only two solutions to the problem—a liver transplant, or death which usually occurs before a person can receive a new liver.

Alcohol is also dangerous because of the **possibility of addiction**. Addiction occurs when the body develops either a psychological dependence or physical dependence upon alcohol, and goes through withdrawal symptoms if alcohol is not consumed on a daily basis.¹⁰ When a person becomes addicted to any substance, it is a long uphill struggle to overcome it, and that struggle lasts for a lifetime.

As Solomon truly said, “Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Pro. 20:1). The person who drinks alcohol is not wise because of the physical effects it has on the body and the problems that come with it!

TOBACCO

“WARNING: THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS DETERMINED THAT SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH.”

Even though this label has been attached to all tobacco products since 1964, it has done very little to curb the use of tobacco. An

estimated 61 million people in the United States were smokers when the last figures were released in 1997.¹¹ According to a report released by the Surgeon General, 3,000 kids between the ages of twelve and seventeen start smoking every day, and nearly 1,000 of them will eventually die as the result of their smoking.¹² The Center for Disease Control made the following statements:

Tobacco is fast becoming a greater cause of death and disability than any other single disease. At present it is estimated that tobacco kills over 3 million people world wide each year, with more than 400,000 of those deaths occurring in the United States. Cigarettes and other tobacco products kill more Americans each year than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murders, suicides, illegal drugs and fires combined. Smokers who die as a result of smoking would live on average 12 to 15 years longer if they had not smoked.¹³

People who smoke give six basic reasons for smoking. The first reason is **stimulation**. They say that cigarettes give them a physical lift or “boost” that makes them feel better. **Gratification** was listed as the second reason for smoking. People said that they enjoyed the sucking on the cigarette or the handling of the cigarette. **Relaxation** was the third reason. Smokers said that smoking helped them relax and enjoy life. **Tension relief** was given as the fourth reason for smoking. Smokers said they smoked to help relieve tension built up in stressful situations. People placed **addiction** as the fifth reason for smoking. Many were hesitant though to admit that this was the reason that they smoked. The final reason given for smoking was **habit**. Many admitted that they light one cigarette after another out of habit.

Regardless of the reasons why people smoke and all the enjoyment they think they get out of it, we must address the harmful effects of tobacco on the body. In smoke given off by the burning of tobacco there are more than 4,000 chemicals that are harmful to the human body—the chief of these is nicotine. In a report from the Internet entitled “Facts You Should Know About Cigarette Smoking,” the following information was given:

LUNG DISEASE: Smoking accounts for 80% of all chronic obstructive lung diseases. Smoking is involved in approximately 85% of all lung cancer deaths. A smoker gets more nose and throat inflammations, respiratory and sinus infections and bronchitis than any other group.

HEART DISEASE: Smoking accounts for 30% of all heart disease deaths. The carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke increases the amount

of cholesterol clogging the arteries. Nicotine in cigarettes can raise your blood pressure, increase your heart rate, and increase the oxygen demands of the muscles. A coronary spasm may occur during smoking which may lead to chest pain and a heart attack. Smoking causes stiffness in the walls of the arteries and leads to an increased risk for the artery to rupture.

CANCERS: Smoking is the major cause of cancer of the lungs, lips, tongue, salivary glands, mouth, larynx, esophagus, and middle and lower pharynx. The development of stomach cancer can be directly associated with smoking. Smoking is known to cause bladder cancer, and has been linked to kidney, uterine and pancreatic cancer as well. Also a strong link has been identified between smoking and leukemia.

HORMONAL PROBLEMS: Women who smoke enter menopause an average of 5 years earlier than nonsmokers. Smoking and nicotine can alter and/or decrease the hormones involved in reproduction. Nicotine can also cause unsuccessful pregnancies, and increase infant mortality. It can also cause impotency in men.

MISCELLANEOUS: The effectiveness of many medications is greatly reduced in smokers. Smoking accelerates the aging process. In women, hoarseness is 17 times more frequent in smokers than in nonsmokers. Excess facial hair is 7 times more frequent in women who smoke compared to those who do not. Smoking causes bad breathe, discolors teeth and promotes tooth decay. It decreases the sense of smell and taste.

ADDICTION: All tobacco products contain substantial amounts of nicotine. Nicotine has been clearly recognized as a drug of addiction, and tobacco dependency has been classified as a mental and behavioral disorder. All experts consider tobacco dependency to be as strong or stronger than the dependency on such substances as heroin or cocaine.¹⁴

Even though the advertisers portray smoking as a pleasurable activity for the “healthy, wealthy, and wise,” more people are suffering the effects of tobacco than can be imagined. Not only are those with smoking related diseases suffering, but their families also suffer, and those who are around the smoker suffer the effects of second hand smoke. It has been proven that second-hand smoke is more toxic to those who inhale it than to the actual smoker. Financial problems can arise due to the expensive cost of tobacco products themselves, not to mention the cost of medical care resulting from their use. Joe Camel might have said that “It is **cool** to Smoke,” but it is foolish to do so.

DRUG USE

Drug use among American young people continues to rise. In a survey conducted in 1994 by the University of Michigan among American high school students, especially eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, it was discovered that an average of 31% of all students surveyed had used some type of illicit drug at least once in the prior twelve months.¹⁵ In a more recent survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, with results released in October of 1998, an estimated 40% of all Americans twelve years of age and older had used an illicit drug at least once during their lifetimes. It has also been reported that the drugs most often abused were alcohol, marijuana, stimulants, PCP, LSD, glue, paint, codeine, morphine, opium, Seconal, Ativan, Valium, cocaine and “crack.”

Use of any drug for purposes other than those for which it is normally intended, or in a manner or in quantities other than directed, or by someone other than for whom it was ordered is considered drug abuse. People abuse drugs for a number of reasons. Some want to experiment and have “fun.” Others are rebelling against authority. Some are trying to relax or escape reality. Still others are trying to treat a true medical problem. But the main reason given by people for their drug abuse, especially teenagers, is peer pressure. They want to fit in with the crowd. They don’t want to be laughed at, or made fun of, or called names. They want to be accepted by their peers, and if it takes using drugs with the crowd to be accepted, then many will do so. Signs and symptoms of school age children on drugs may include any of the following:

1. A change in the child’s friends, a new group.
2. Seclusive behavior.
3. Long unexplained periods away from home.
4. Lying.
5. Stealing.
6. Involvement with the law.
7. Deteriorating family relations.
8. Obvious toxic state: drunk, delirious, incoherent, unconscious.
9. Changes in behavior and normal attitude.
10. Decreased school performance.

Parents, preachers, teachers, elders, friends, and relatives should be aware of the signs and symptoms of those who might be using and/or abusing drugs and do all that they can to help them before it is too late.

All abused drugs fall into different categories. There are **narcotics**, which include drugs such as morphine, opium, heroin, and methadone. Then there are **depressants** such as alcohol, barbiturates, and sedatives. This group is commonly called “downers” because of the depressive nature of the drugs. Then there are **stimulants** such as amphetamines, methamphetamines, cocaine, and “crack.” This group is commonly called “uppers” due to the stimulating effect of the drugs. Many of the prescription diet pills are among this group and are often abused by young women. Then there are **hallucinogenic drugs** which include marijuana, MDMA (Ecstasy), PCP (Angel Dust), LSD (Acid) and peyote. Then there are the **inhalants** which include paints and paint thinners, model airplane glue, Sterno, and even in some cases gasoline and kerosene. We need to look at each one of these groups and see the effect that they have on the body.

NARCOTICS

Narcotics are most commonly used in the medical world as pain relievers. Among the most commonly used narcotics are morphine, codeine, Demerol, and some of the opium-based compounds, such as paregoric. Many people will take these prescription medications and abuse them. They will break tablets down, dissolve them in water, or take liquid paregoric, then heat this solution, and inject these medications into a vein for the effects that they give. People who abuse narcotics never give any thought to the effects of an overdose which includes convulsions, respiratory arrest, and death. Also, one of the big problems associated with narcotic abuse is the use of dirty needles and unclean conditions during use, which can lead to hepatitis, tetanus, and AIDS. The signs and symptoms of someone using narcotics include: needle marks on the skin, rapid heart rate, constricted pupils, respiratory depression in high doses with coma, and respiratory arrest in an overdose.

DEPRESSANTS

The depressants are those drugs that slow you down, and are most commonly used in the medical profession as sleeping pills, and drugs to fight anxiety. Such medications are widely abused. Many people

will get prescriptions from their doctor for these drugs, and then sell them on the street because they are one of the most sought after drugs by the habitual abuser. These drugs are often used by the habitual abuser to bring themselves down off a high, produced by some other drug. Many famous personalities have died from an overdose of depressant drugs, while trying to bring themselves down. The late Elvis Presley had a toxic level of at least three depressants in his blood stream at his death. Depressants cause mental confusion, moodiness, suicidal thoughts, and muscle incoordination in high doses. When taken in combination, or mixed with alcohol, depressants can lead to death by shutting down the respiratory system. The person abusing depressants will have slurred speech, lack of coordination, decreased attention span, impaired judgment, mood swings, dizziness, double vision, and aggressive or suicidal behavior.

STIMULANTS

Stimulants are those drugs which cause one to be overly alert. In the medical profession, stimulants are used in a lot of diet pills to increase the energy level of the obese person, which in turn speeds up the metabolism, helping to burn up more calories, resulting in weight loss. The person abusing stimulants will display euphoria, dilated pupils, rapid heart rate, anxiety, restlessness, hyperactivity, aggressive or violent behavior, fever, convulsions, hallucinations, sweating, and bad breath. Due to the effects on the heart and brain, people who abuse stimulants often die of heart attack or stroke. Cocaine and “crack” are two of the drugs that fall under this category. Since this drug is so widely abused, we will address it individually later in this study.

HALLUCINOGENIC DRUGS

This group of drugs which include marijuana, LSD, PCP, MDMA, and others have no proven medical benefit. Some advocate that marijuana relieves nausea and vomiting associated with the use of cancer-fighting drugs or lowers the pressure in persons with severe glaucoma, but recent studies have shown that the same effect can be achieved by other prescription medication. Abuse of the hallucinogenic drugs can cause anxiety, wide mood swings, vivid and frightening hallucinations, panic attacks, depression, schizophrenic behavior, and a distorted sense of reality. Many under the influence of these drugs have tried to fly off of high buildings, walk through a hail of

gunfire, and set themselves on fire thinking they will feel no pain. These drugs may also cause chromosome damage, which can affect any unborn children that the abuser may have. Many of the drugs which are used as hallucinogenic agents are used to kill animals (MDMA), or that have been used in research as mind-altering drugs designed to be used against the enemies of our country (LSD).

INHALANTS

Solvents, aerosols, refrigerants, and medical anesthetic gases are all abused as inhalants. Inhalants are those substances that can be breathed in to get “high.” But inhalants are extremely dangerous. They clog the lungs, cause seizures, brain damage, and death. Irregular, rapid heartbeat, and heart attack are common with inhalants. One of the most common abuses now is the sniffing of paint, which has caused a great number of deaths among teenagers, just in the last couple of years.

COCAINE

The use of cocaine in our country continues to rise to the point now that the selling of this drug is a multi-billion dollar business. Presently, it is the most abused drug in the age group from 18-35, and some reported cases have people as young as 12 and 13 years old smoking “crack.” To get a better understanding of this drug, let us answer a few questions about it.

First, what is cocaine? Cocaine is a drug made from the leaves of the coca bush. These leaves are cut and soaked in kerosene, paint thinner, ether, or other solvents to make a thick paste. This paste is allowed to dry and then refined into the fine white powder that is called cocaine. What is “crack”? “Crack” is the powdered form of cocaine that is mixed with some type solvent and then baked, resulting in rock-like white or tan pieces. When smoked, it produces a cocaine vapor that is in its most powerful form. “Crack” is quickly and overwhelmingly addictive, and is so frequently abused because it is cheap enough for even children to buy. “Crack” is **extremely** dangerous!

How is cocaine used? Cocaine can be snorted in powder form, it can be mixed with water and injected directly into a vein, or it can be smoked. How does cocaine affect the body? It causes the brain to release extra amounts of Dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin into

the blood stream. In normal levels, these chemicals help control and maintain certain normal functions of the body. However, when cocaine increases the production of these chemicals, the increase causes the heart to beat faster, sometimes leading to an irregular heartbeat and/or cardiac arrest. Other symptoms are an increase in blood pressure, dilated pupils, heavy sweating and shaking, anxiety, and trouble sleeping. Cocaine puts extra stress on the circulatory system which causes weak vessels to rupture due to the increased work load.

When smoked or snorted, cocaine clogs the air sacs, which reduces the ability of the lungs to move the oxygen that the body needs to survive. Infection and lung damage can result from smoking cocaine. With lung damage, a buildup of fluid in the lungs results and a person can “drown” in their own fluids. Respiratory failure is a common cause of death in the cocaine user. Snorting cocaine results in nasal sores, irritation of the sinuses, and a constant stuffy nose. Nosebleeds and deterioration of the nasal cartilage often occur.

Cocaine also affects the immune system. This is the system that keeps people from getting sick, and helps them fight infection when they do get sick. Women who are pregnant and use cocaine have a greater chance of miscarriage or having babies born with severe birth defects. Due to all the very serious health problems associated with cocaine, and its very lethal potential, people should ask themselves if is it really worth their lives to use this drug?¹⁶

SPIRITUAL DANGERS OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE

In the preceding part of our study we have looked at the physical dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Now we must turn our attention to those spiritual dangers that are entailed in the use of these. First, as we have tried to indicate, all of these cause severe health problems, or (in other words) they harm our bodies. Paul wrote, “For ye are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor. 6:16). He also tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies not our own, they are the temples of God and bought with a price. This body that we possess is the temple which houses the soul that was given to us by God. By inspiration we are told: “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1). If we do anything that spots or blemishes this body in any way and makes it an unacceptable sacrifice to God, then we will stand condemned. Consuming

alcohol, smoking tobacco, and using drugs destroys the body, thus making us unacceptable to God.

Second, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are works of the flesh and as such will separate the soul from God. Paul in writing to the churches at Galatia, made the following statement by inspiration: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*." After giving a list of various transgressions, Paul concluded this way: "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" (Gal. 5:19-21). Because the works of the flesh are sin, and "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), when we do those things that are sin, we separate ourselves from God. James tells us that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jam. 1:15), and the Romans writer tells us that the "wages of sin *is* death" (Rom. 6:23). So, if we are guilty of drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and using drugs, we are guilty of doing that which will separate our souls from God, and if we die in that condition, we will be lost eternally.

Third, if we use alcohol and drugs, we lose our ability to think and reason. When God made man, He made him in His image. One of the abilities that God gave man, that no other living thing has, is the ability to think, reason, and to make choices. In Joshua 24:15 we read, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." How can we choose to serve God if we are under the influence of some mind-altering drug or alcohol which robs us of the ability to think and reason correctly? In Philippians 4:8 we are told to think on things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. How can anyone think on things of this nature when under the influence of some substance that will "mess him up" so bad that he cannot even remember his own name? Our Lord told us, "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mat. 5:8). How can a person keep his heart pure when he is using some substance that removes inhibitions, and conscience, and causes him to violate God's laws of morality? In the long ago, Isaiah said that the priest and prophet had erred in vision and judgment (Isa. 29:9). Now why had they erred and why had they stumbled? Because they were "under the influence" and were not able to think and reason as God wanted them to. If a Christian uses anything that will cause him to not be able to think and reason clearly at all times, then he has violated the commands of God and will stand condemned.

Fourth, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs destroys one's influence. When writing to the young man Timothy, Paul told him, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [manner of life], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). He went on to tell him: "Take heed unto [pay attention to] thyself." Why was he so concerned with this young man's influence? "For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Our Lord gave us this command: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Is it not our influence, or the effect that we have on the people around us, affected by the way we act? Paul told us that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." In other words, every one of us has an effect on all those around us. It can be either a positive or negative effect, depending on the things we do. If we are seen drinking, smoking, or using harmful drugs by those around us, then we have destroyed our influence on them, and God is not glorified. Once we have destroyed our influence with someone, then it is impossible to be able to teach them the truth of God's Word, because they will look at what we have done instead of what we are trying to say. Often we have a greater chance of converting our friends and family by our actions instead of our words. When friends or family looks at a Christian, do they see someone who is willing to "practice what he preaches"?

We could go on giving Scripture after Scripture that condemns the use of wine and strong drink. Most of these are provided by the wise man Solomon in the book of Proverbs. Or we could turn to the New Testament and see that we are to follow the Perfect Example and walk in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Perhaps the reader has not seen following words taken from an article by brother Robin Haley:

Let us remember just who we are: "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:8-10 ASV). Again, "For ye are all sons of light, and sons of day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night: and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 The. 5:5-8 ASV). Remember... "Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts,

which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11)...“abstain from every form of evil” (1 The. 5:22 ASV).¹⁷

Brethren must take heed to: “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world” but keep themselves “unspotted from the world” and remain faithful until death. If we do this, there will be a crown of righteousness reserved for us, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at the last day!

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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COVETOUSNESS

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INTRODUCTION

Covetousness is a sin that is common. However, few confess this sin. Not many preachers or elders have had one to confess that he has been guilty of covetousness. Why? Because if one confesses that he has been covetous, then he also admits indirectly that he has been guilty of a self-centered, selfish, take-care-of-number-one attitude. The attitude of having enough, to many of us, is to have just a little bit more than what we have. We need to give heed to the following Bible principles: “*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*” (Heb. 13:5).¹ Paul put it this way: “*And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*” (1 Tim. 6:8).

Jesus said, “*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Luke 12:15). We live in a world carried away with things. We are under a God-given obligation to teach our children that **things** will not satisfy. We encourage our young men to become doctors and lawyers or anything that will bring in the material wealth of our day.

How many times do we encourage our young men to become elders, deacons, or preachers.

DEFINITION OF COVETOUSNESS

Covetousness is a wrongful and sinful desire for that which is not ours. Strong says that it is greediness or love for money. Covetousness usually expresses itself in one of four ways: (1) the way we go about trying to gain things, (2) the way we go about trying to keep things, (3) a failure on our part in wanting to share things, and (4) a sinful and wrong desire for things even if such cannot be gained.

Covetousness is not just an unlawful desire for money. It can include wrongful desires for things like power, prestige, the neighbor's wife, or a position in life. Jethro gave Moses this advice:

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (Exo. 18:21).

Men who love truth ought to hate covetousness. Which should make all of us wonder, do we really need all that we have? One does not have to be rich to covet!

We must understand that covetousness is idolatry. Paul states it this way: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). Covetousness causes us to make **things** our god. God must be first in our lives, or He is not there at all.

Covetousness is that which comes from the heart.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, *but* they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness (Eze. 33:31).

We must set our hearts on the commandments of God rather than covetousness. "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119:35-36).

IS COVETOUSNESS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL?

There are those who believe that covetousness is the root of all evil. They reason this way: (1) if it is the case that the love of money is the root of all evil, (2) and if it is the case that the love of money is caused by covetousness, then (3) it is the case that covetousness is the root of all evil.

The Scriptures state: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Notice that Paul says that the love of money is the root of all evil and that some coveted after it. Therefore, some conclude that covetousness is the root of all evil. They ask the question, “Why do we have prostitution, drug abuse, homes broken into, cars high-jacked, banks robbed, muggings, fraud, etc.?” So, they surmise, covetousness is the root of all evil.

However, we do not believe that covetousness is the root of all evil. We are convinced that a failure to seek God and keep one’s heart pure is the root of all evil. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). “For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee” (Pro. 23:7).

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

The problems that often face society are caused by covetousness. One of the Ten Commandments says: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Exo. 20:17). One was not to covet his neighbor’s wife. We live in a day and time where this admonition is not heeded. Our Lord warned us about a wrong desire toward one who was not our mate.

“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). It is possible to have someone else’s wife just like it is possible to have someone else’s car.

But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto

Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife (Mark 6:16-18).

Herod was said to have Philip's wife. Possession in God's eyes does not mean lawfulness.

The President of the United States is in trouble because he has coveted those other than his mate. This sin has caused him to lie trying to cover it. He has embarrassed his family and the nation because he would not control his wicked desires. We can do the same thing.

David got into trouble when he had an unlawful desire for a woman who was not his wife.

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house (2 Sam. 11:2-4).

Nathan exposed this situation by telling the parable of the ewe lamb.

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, there were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As* the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity (2 Sam. 12:1-6).

The rich man was so covetous that he would not share one of his lambs with his friend, but took the poor man's instead and killed it. No one appreciates a covetous person, and neither did David. He stated in anger that the man who did that must surely repay fourfold and that he should surely die. He did not realize that he was the

covetous person under consideration. A covetous person fails at times to see himself as others see him.

Covetousness can get us into an adulterous situation. “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” (Mat. 19:9).

EXAMPLE OF THOSE WHO GOT INVOLVED IN COVETOUSNESS

Covetousness started with the **angels**. Some of them had to have desires for things (probably unlawful power) that caused them to sin and fall from the favor and grace of the Most High God. “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6).

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

Adam and Eve fell victim to covetousness.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:4-6).

Eve saw that the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Her unguarded desires got her into trouble.

Achan did not realize that covetousness could be so fatal. He stated:

When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are* hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it (Jos. 7:21).

Achan saw, coveted, and took. He realized that what he had done was wrong; so he hid what he had taken. However, there was an all-seeing-eye which had him marked for what he was.

And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day (Jos. 7:24-26).

What a tremendous price to pay for so little. There is a proverb that would have helped Achan. “The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days” (Pro. 28:16).

Covetousness got **Ahab** into trouble over Naboth’s vineyard.

And it came to pass after these things, *that* Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which *was* in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it *is* near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; *or*, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, *and* eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kin. 21:1-7).

And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died (1 Kin. 21:13).

Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt

Speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine (1 Kin. 21:18-19).

Ahab and Jezebel thought they had pulled off the perfect crime, but they were wrong. Covetousness was going to cause their blood to be licked up by dogs.

Gehazi was a great man, but he failed to guard his heart from covetousness. Most people know the story of Naaman found in 2 Kings 5, but how many people know the rest of the story which involves Gehazi? He coveted what Naaman had brought to give to Elisha. He thought that he had come up with a clever plan. The Bible states:

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, *as* the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw *him* running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, *Is* all well? And he said, All *is* well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid *them* upon two of his servants; and they bare *them* before him. And when he came to the tower, he took *them* from their hand, and bestowed *them* in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence *comest thou*, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *Is it* a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white* as snow (2 Kin. 5:20-27).

Gehazi plagued himself and his seed with leprosy because of the sin of covetousness.

The rich farmer of Luke chapter twelve was covetous. The Lord had a reason for telling the parable. “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). The rich man could think only of himself.

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? (Luke 12:18-20).

Covetousness cost this man his soul. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26). The rich farmer left all that he had worked for behind. He had no treasures laid up in heaven. A person must be rich toward God to go to heaven.

Ananias and Sapphira lied about what they had given to God because they were covetous.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him* (Acts 5:1-6).

The covetous hearts of Ananias and Sapphira cost them both their lives and their souls. Surely, we can see from these few examples that we have used that covetousness will destroy a person. Even though such is true, think of the church members who miss services and the opportunity to serve God because they are too busy trying to amass material goods. We have those in the Lord’s church who are workaholics when it comes to making money, but will do little or nothing for God or their fellow man.

CURES FOR COVETOUSNESS

1. We must realize that all things belong to God and that He is just letting us use them for a little while. “The earth *is* the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1).

2. We must realize this earth is not our home. “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

3. We must understand that we are not going to take any material things with us when we die. “And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). “For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim. 6:7).

4. We must realize that a pursuit of the wrong things will cost us our souls. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26).

5. We must seek true and lasting treasures.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mat. 6:19-21).

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

6. We also must believe that God has promised to His children the necessities of life if they will trust Him. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33).

7. We must realize that God wants us to share what we do have with others. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

CONCLUSION

We shake our heads at Judas Iscariot and think for thirty pieces of silver he sold out our Lord and his own soul. The question is what is your price? What is mine? We must be strong enough to resist Satan’s offer.

Our Lord was tempted with covetousness. He had a desire for food but not to such an extent that he turned the stones into bread. He had a desire for all the kingdoms of the world but not to such an extent

that he fell down and worshipped Satan. He could have had such pride that he fell down and jumped from the pinnacle of temple to prove to the devil that God would take care of Him, but He did not. He controlled His desires, and we must control ours.

True religion is learning to take our will and submit it to the will of God. The more we love God, the less things will mean to us. May God help all of us to remember the words of our Lord: “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). May we also remember the words of the great apostle Paul:

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or **covetousness**, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, **nor covetous man**, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:3-5).

A covetous person will not enter into the kingdom of God!!!

ENDNOTE

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

MATERIALISM

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



Ira Y. Rice, Jr., was born August 3, 1917 at Franklin, Texas. He is the son of Ira Y. Rice Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. Baptized at the age of twelve by A. R. Holton, at Norman, Oklahoma, Ira began preaching while yet a boy, in 1932. After ministries at Noble and Paul's Valley, Oklahoma; Edcouch and Mercedes, Texas; Paso Robles, San Rafael, Richmond and San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington, he went, in 1955, to plant the churches of Christ in Singapore, Malaysia, and Southeast Asia where he spent several years in mission work.

Having now preached for over sixty years, Ira is the Editor of two monthly periodicals, *Contending For The Faith* and *The Far East/ World Evangelism Newsletter*. He is also the author of several books. He is a co-founder and President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions in Singapore and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968. He has been a missionary to the Far East under the oversight of the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida, since 1978. Ira has preached the Gospel in over sixty countries around the world and recently helped to establish the church of Christ in Latvia.

When conversing with the woman at the well of Sychar, among other things Jesus told her:

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth (John 4:22-24).¹

Regardless of what Jesus told that woman, one of the most prevalent forms of worldliness in the church is the devotion of many to material (contrasted with spiritual) things. Commonly known as materialism, the worship of finite things of this world rather than the infinite things of the Spirit of God is one of the greatest curses the church faces today.

MATERIALISM—A FORM OF IDOLATRY

Although those who worship material things would be the last to admit it, such practice, instead of being true worship is a form of

idolatry. One can be guilty of idol-worship without actually bowing down to a physical graven image.

Someone truly said that anything standing between us and God is an idol. Take, for instance, money. Did not Paul tell Timothy that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10)? Jesus Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

When the great black evangelist R. N. Hogan preached this truth many years ago, one of his brethren responded, “Shucks, receiving is good enough for me!”

Covetousness Is Idolatry

Those who covet material things are just as guilty of idolatry as those who bow down to idols. Remember what Paul wrote to the Colossians:

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 (Col. 3:5-6).

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF MATERIALISM

Abraham And Lot

One of the earliest examples of materialism comes from the story of Abraham and Lot. When God told Abram (as he was then called) to leave his country and kindred “unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1), Lot, his nephew, went with him, “and into the land of Canaan they came” (Gen. 12:5).

Because of famine, Abraham and Lot went down into Egypt until the dearth was over. When they returned to Canaan, they both had so many cattle and possessions that

the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren. *Is* not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all

the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:6-12).

It was straight-out, unvarnished materialism which caused Lot to choose the better part of the land for his herds, leaving only the less-watered land of Canaan to Abraham. We all know the rest of the story, how God blessed Abraham for his unselfish spirit and cursed Lot for his materialism.

Israel In The Wilderness

Wherein materialism is concerned, probably the classic example of all time, was the attitude of the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. Even though God, through Moses, had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, once in the wilderness they forgot all about their former slavery, remembering only the leeks and the garlic they had left behind in Egypt.

We read all about it in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Numbers:

And the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes (Num. 11:4-6).

They could not appreciate the blessings of freedom with manna for remembering what they had to eat under slavery. They would gladly have gone back into their former servitude if only they could enjoy those material meals once more.

Ahab's Coveting Naboth's Vineyard

In 1 Kings 21:1-16, we read the story of Ahab's coveting the vineyard belonging to Naboth. When he offered to trade with Naboth or else to pay money for his vineyard, Naboth refused, saying, "The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

This so displeased Ahab that he went home, laid down on his bed and refused to eat. Coveting Naboth's vineyard as he did, it upset his whole equilibrium that he could not have it.

When Jezebel, his wife, saw the effect this was having on Ahab, she devised a plan to have Naboth killed, arranging for two men of

Belial to witness falsely against him that he had blasphemed God and the king. As a result of this false accusation, the nobles of the city “carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.”

When Ahab heard that Naboth was now dead, he went down to the vineyard of Naboth and took possession of it. Thus we see the ultimate wickedness to which Ahab’s materialism eventually led.

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF MATERIALISM

Ananias and Sapphira

Even though we often concentrate on other aspects of their story, materialism was the principal problem of Ananias and Sapphira, as recorded in Acts 5. Even after they had sold their property, they coveted part of the price, pretending to give it all to the Lord.

Luke records:

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things (Acts 5:1-11).

From Luke’s account, it is clear that it was materialism that cost Ananias and Sapphira their very lives! What would happen to some of us today if apostles were still with us and exerted such power?

Simon The Sorcerer

Consider also Simon, the former sorcerer of Samaria, who believed and was baptized, but who, seeing the apostles' power to transmit the Holy Ghost, reverted back to materialism.

Acts 8:18-24 tells the story.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Even though Simon, just like his other fellow Samaritans, had obeyed the gospel, yet, his former propensity to materialism caused him to succumb once more, and he had to repent and pray (and be prayed for) to renew his right standing before the Lord.

The Church At Laodicea

From the first three chapters of Revelation, we learn many lessons from what Jesus said to the seven churches of Asia—not the least of which involves the church of the Laodiceans. Talk about a whole church given over to materialism! In Revelation 3:14-18, John was instructed to write:

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

We often hear sermons against being lukewarm. But what was the cause of such with the Laodiceans? The reason was that they put their trust in worldly riches and possessions rather than in heavenly riches

and spirituality. So blinded were they by materialism that they could not even see the nakedness of their own spiritual condition.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT CONCERNING MATERIALISM **The Rich Fool**

Some of the most pointed teaching in the entire Bible has to do with material wealth. Take, for instance, Jesus' account of the rich fool who had so many goods that his barns could not hold it all. This parable is recorded in Luke 12:16-21, as follows:

The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Basing his further remarks upon this parable, Jesus went on to instruct His disciples:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you (Luke 12:22-31).

The Rich Man And Lazarus

There was Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus. At the bottom line, what was the rich man's problem? He was so full of his own

materialism that he was not even conscious of his fellow man, much less of his needs. Jesus said,

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table (Luke 16:19-21).

They both died. Lazarus was comforted, but the rich man was tormented. When he appealed to Abraham to send Lazarus to his relief, Abraham said:

Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence (Luke 16:25-26).

In other words, through his materialism, the rich man had forfeited his own soul.

The Rich Young Ruler

Again, in Luke 18, we read of Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler. It is clear from Luke's account that this young ruler, as the saying goes, "thought he had it made." Beginning from verse 18, we read:

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none *is* good, save one, *that is*, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Luke 18:18-25).

GOD'S COUNSEL TO THOSE WHO TRUST IN WEALTH

If anyone knew the emptiness of uncertain riches, certainly it would have to be David, in the Old Testament. In Psalm 49:6-7, he wrote, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the

multitude of their riches; None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” David’s son Solomon, probably the wealthiest man of his day, in Proverbs 23:4-5, put it this way: “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” Although the book of Ecclesiastes does not mention him as the author by name, most scribes attribute the book to Solomon. For those who are always striving for “just a little more,” in Ecclesiastes 4:6, 8, the writer counsels: “Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit...yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches.” In the very next chapter, the writer warns that hoarded riches actually may be hurtful to the owner. Ecclesiastes 5:13-14 warns: “There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand.”

Coming to the New Testament, the apostle Paul summed it all up to Timothy, saying:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, and *it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6:6-11).

Rather than letting our hearts dwell on and yearn after material things, Paul also wrote to the Philippians:

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. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phi. 4:8-9).

ENDNOTE

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

STEALING

Guss Eoff



Guss Eoff, Jr., was born March 7, 1923, in Fort Worth, Texas. In February of 1942, he married Lla Laine Norris. They have one son, Larry, also a gospel preacher. Guss began preaching in 1942.

Guss attended Pepperdine College in Los Angeles and Southwest State Teachers College in San Marcos, Texas. He has preached for local congregations in California, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Missouri. He also has preached in over twenty-five countries and twenty-six states. He served as a missionary in Hong Kong for two years.

In 1974, he went on a preaching Safari in Tanzania, East Africa, that covered 20,000 miles before he returned home. In 1995, he held his tenth campaign in Malaysia and Singapore and conducted a Soul Winning Work Shop.

He conducted the first television program for churches of Christ in Northern California and has conducted weekly programs in California and Texas. He also conducted daily radio programs as well as weekly programs in California, Oregon, Texas, and Louisiana.

In 1997, Guss and his wife, Laine, moved to Llano, Texas. He speaks on about six lectureships each year.

INTRODUCTION

My subject in this lectureship is **stealing**. There are many synonyms for stealing: *pilfer, filch, purloin, embezzle, and rob*.

Webster says of *stealing*:

To take, carry away feloniously and, usually, unobserved; to take or appropriate without right or leave, and with the intent to keep or make use of wrongfully; as, to steal money or another's goods...To take away without scruple or by unjust or unfair means...To get without earning or deserving, by or as if by unfair means.¹

Webster says of *rob*: "To take something away from by force; to strip or deprive by stealing; to plunder; to steal from."²

The Dictionary of New Testament Theology gives us the following help:

Rob, Steal. Robbing implies the idea of violence, but the distinction from stealing, with its overtone of secrecy, is not always preserved.

The use of *Klepto* (Lat. Clepere) emphasizes the secrecy, craft, and cheating involved in the act of stealing or embezzlement (cf., Eng. Stealth). By contrast *lestes*, which derives from the same root as *leia*,

booty and *apolauo*, to take advantage of, includes the element of violence, though not necessarily of dishonesty: a soldier exercising his right to seize plunder could be termed *lestes*. But the word usually meant robber, bandit, pirate.³

There are many words related to *steal* or *stealing*. A few of those words were mentioned above. A number of other words could be added to that list, such as, *stealth*, *theft*, *defraud*, *exploit*, *kidnaping*, *deprive*, and etc.

STEALING AND ROBBERY

Let us focus our attention on stealing (or the taking of that which belongs to someone else). A thief intends to keep it or use it without permission of the owner. In most cases the victim does not know the perpetrator.

My parents taught me well! They emphasized that I should not steal. Though my parents never took me to church or Bible school, they taught me that God said, “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo. 20:15).⁴ I knew what was right or wrong.

When I was in the seventh grade, I had a beautiful stamp collection. I worked hard and spent a great amount of time in arranging it. There was a nearby drug store that sold used stamps. I saved my money and had bought several stamps from the drug store.

There was a large beautiful green stamp from Jamaica in a rack on the counter in the store. I wanted it the first time I saw it. I went back to look at it every day. I knew I did not have enough money to buy the stamp, but I wanted it in my collection.

One Sunday afternoon I went to see the stamp again. I looked at it and other stamps on display. I took the Jamaican stamp out of the rack and put it back several times. I looked around to see if anyone was watching me. I took the stamp from the rack and leaned over the counter. When I thought no one was looking I slipped the stamp into my shirt pocket. I continued to look at other stamps. Suddenly a big hand was on my shoulder. I was scared to death; I knew I was caught. A deep voice said, “Come with me.” I was taken to the back of the drug store. When we reached back office, the deep voice said, “Give me that stamp!” I said, “What stamp?” The answer came back, “The stamp you put in your pocket.” I reached into my pocket and handed the store detective the stamp. “What are you going to do to me? Are you going to take me to jail?” “I want to go see your parents,” said the

detective. I led the detective to our house. It was Sunday afternoon; my parents were sleeping. I had to wake them and tell them that someone wanted to talk to them. I was never so scared! I was afraid my father would whip me; but he did not. Instead, my mother made me get my stamp collection. We went to the back yard to the trash burning barrel. She made me tear out one page of my collection at a time and burn it in the barrel. It broke my heart! But I have never wanted to steal again.

There was a great deal of difference in my theft of the stamp than in someone robbing by force. The result is the same, one unlawfully steals that which belongs to another.

STEALING OR THEFT

Stealing or theft is a sin against God. One of the ten commandments forbids stealing. “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo. 20:15; Deu. 5:19). The book of Leviticus deals with sundry laws for the children of Israel. Of course, it includes the same prohibition with reference to stealing. “Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another” (Lev. 19:11).

THINGS THAT ARE STOLEN

When we read the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, we read of many things that can be stolen. We are only going to notice a few at this time.

Money And Valued Things Can Be Stolen By A Thief

“If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man’s house; if the thief be found, he shall pay double” (Exo. 22:7).

Animals Can Be Stolen

Jacob told Laban that if he found any of his flock of sheep or goats that were not speckled, spotted, or black, he would assume that Jacob had stolen them.

So shall my righteousness answer for me hereafter, when thou shalt come concerning my hire that is before thee: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that *if found* with me, shall be counted stolen (Gen. 30:33).

Animals can be and are stolen. Wild and exotic animals as well as dogs and cats can be stolen.

People Can Be Stolen

Joseph told the butler the meaning of his dream; then he told him that he had been stolen away from the land of the Hebrews. “For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon” (Gen. 40:15). Joseph was kidnaped by his brothers. We can thus see that kidnaping is stealing. Men and women can be stolen as well as children. We must notice what God said concerning stealing men. “If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and he deal with him as a slave, or sell him; then that thief shall die: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee” (Deu. 24:7).

Devoted Things Can Be Stolen

Achan coveted spoil captured during the victory at Jericho.

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it (Jos. 7:20-21).

People may think they can get away with stealing, but God knew what Achan had done when no one else did. Jehovah said to Joshua:

Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: yea, they have even taken of the devoted thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also; and they have even put it among their own stuff (Jos. 7:11).

False Household “Gods” May Be Stolen

“Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father’s” (Gen. 31:19). Rachel stole her father, Laban’s, teraphim. Images were used in worship in the homes. No doubt they were prominent in the home. Laban noticed they were gone and accused Jacob of stealing these images. Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

Another Man’s Wife May Be Stolen

David stole Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba.

And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the

Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child (2 Sam. 11:2-5).

It must be noticed that the Bible says, “and took her.” David stole the wife of Uriah. He took that which belonged to another. He tried to cover his sin, which eventually caused Uriah to be killed in the heat of battle. David took Bathsheba to be his wife. He took her and killed her husband so he could keep her.

Nathan, God’s messenger, told David of a rich man who had many flocks and herds. There was a poor man who had only one ewe lamb. When a traveler came to visit the rich man, he did not kill one of his own flock to feed him, instead he took the poor man’s only lamb. He killed and prepared the lamb to feed his guest. David was very angry when he heard about the action of the rich man. He told Nathan that the rich man deserved to die for this deed. Nathan told David that he was the man. Notice the words of Nathan:

Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon (2 Sam. 12:9).

It must be noticed that Nathan said, “And hast taken his wife to be thy wife.” David took (stole) another man’s wife.

Men’s Hearts May Be Stolen

Absalom, the son of king David, stole the hearts of the people from his father. “And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Sam. 15:6). By smooth and clever speech, this wicked son won the hearts of the people. No doubt the people listened to what they wanted to hear, whether true or not. Thus Absalom dexterously stole the hearts of the people from his own father. When one reads the account in 2 Samuel 15, he can see the skillful contrivance of Absalom. Men can steal the hearts of men today by planning and maneuvering. Regardless of their accomplishments, they are still thieves.

Children Can Steal From Parents

As previously mentioned, Absalom stole the hearts of the people from his father. Consider the ungodliness of children that steal from

their own parents. Solomon said, “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression, The same is the companion of a destroyer” (Pro. 28:24).

One who steals from his parents is a thief; he is no better than one who destroys. He may say that everything that belongs to his parents will be his one day; why not take it now? As long as possessions are controlled by parents, parents are the owners. Children have no more right to take them than anyone else. Some ungodly children will even go to court to get what belongs to their parents. They are thieves; they steal! Such children are no better than the thieves that beat and robbed the man going from Jerusalem down to Jericho. The thieves stripped him of everything, beat him and left him to die (Luke 10:25-37).

Man Can Steal From God

It seems strange that children would steal from their parents. Parents provide for their children, and yet many children steal and take advantage of their parents. Yet, this is the very thing that children of God do to their Heavenly Father.

God supplies us with all things. The apostle Paul told the people of Athens that God did not live in temples and that He was not served by men’s hands. He made known that “he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). Then Paul said that in God “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

God told Israel that everything belonged to Him.

For every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains; And the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof (Psa. 50:10-12).

Notice again the words of Palm 24:1, “The earth is Jehovah’s, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein.” Again in Exodus 19:5, Jehovah tells us “for all the earth is mine.” If God owns all things and allows us to use them, how can we think of stealing them from Him.

Strange as it may seem, God’s own people steal from Him. You may ask, “What can people steal from God?” There are many things that God gives us, and, in turn, demands that we return some of it to Him.

God gives us our living! We have to work for it, but God rewards our efforts. He gives us physical health so we can use our bodies in

working and providing a living for our families. Our Heavenly Father gives us the years of our lives. Of those years, He demands that we return some of that time. We are to spend some of our time in working, some in entertainment, and some in relaxing. Our Father demands that some of our allotted time be used to worship Him.

Jesus was tempted of Satan. The Devil asked Jesus to worship him. Our Savior quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13, “And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8).

Jehovah was displeased with the Gentiles because they worshipped false gods.

Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:24-25).

God seeks men to worship Him. Jesus told the Samaritan woman:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

When man fails to worship God, he steals that which belongs to His Heavenly Father.

A person steals, or robs God, when he fails to give of his earnings.

From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough *to receive it* (Mal. 3:7-10).

New Testament Christians were given instruction as to how they were to give.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The amount given was determined by how one was prospered. Christians were taught to sacrifice; they were to give **liberally**. “*Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:7). When Christians fail to give as they should, they rob God. Children of God should purpose to give liberally. If they fail to give as they are prospered, they steal that which belongs to God. When God’s people fail to purpose, in determining what they are going to give back to God, they steal from God. When they fail to give generously, they steal from the very One that provides all that they have.

FALSE PROPHETS STEAL

“Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor” (Jer. 23:30). The people of God received God’s message from God’s true prophets. Their neighbors, who were false prophets, would steal God’s message and proclaim it as though it was their own.

Jehovah was against such false teachers.

Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah (Jer. 23:31-32).

False teachers today take some truth and build a false doctrine, then they claim that such false teaching is from God. Thus, they steal from God.

Men can steal from the writings of others and publish them as their own. This form of stealing is called plagiarizing.

God had strict punishment for thieves under the Old Law. If a man would steal another man and sell him as a slave, the penalty was death.

If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and he deal with him as a slave, or sell him; then that thief shall die: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee (Deu. 24:7).

Stealing of animals is dealt with under the Old Law in Exodus 22:1-4. Sometimes people may think they are justified for stealing if they are poor or in poverty. Notice what the wise man said concerning those who steal to satisfy their hunger: “Men do not despise a thief, if

he steal to satisfy himself when he is hungry: But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; He shall give all the substance of his house” (Prov. 6:30-31).

WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT STEALING?

When one came to Jesus and asked what must he do to have eternal life, Jesus said, “Keep the commandments.” Among the commandments, He quoted, “Thou shalt not steal” (Mat.19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20).

The inspired apostle Paul teaches Christians about stealing.

Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Rom. 13:8-9).

The apostle Paul writes that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. He then lists the unrighteous among whom are thieves. Thieves, those who steal, cannot go to Heaven. Paul instructs those who steal, saying, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need” (Eph. 4:28).

The apostle Peter tells Christians that they must not be thieves. “For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters” (1 Pet. 4:15).

WHAT DO WE THINK OF THIEVES?

My father told me many times, “There is something you had better remember. There are two kinds of people that no one ever trusts, thieves and liars.”

Personally, I have no respect for anyone who steals. To the contrary, I have utter disdain for those who steal. I despise a thief. While Lily, Larry, and I were in Klang, Malaysia, preaching in a campaign, I received a phone call from a friend, who was taking care of our house at the time. She informed me that someone had broken into our house and stolen everything they could sell. They stole my guns, television, Lily’s computer, and everything they could get their hands on. I was furious! There is no doubt it was a well-planned robbery. We had someone staying in the house at different times. No doubt the thieves had been watching and knew when to break in. Not only did

they steal things which had sentimental value, but also they invaded our privacy. We were half way around the world and could do nothing about it. We had been doing the Lord's work overseas for six weeks. There was no sense in leaving for home right away; the damage had already been done.

Thieves are cowards! Jesus said, "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Mat. 24:43). The thief waits till there is no one to protect the house before he steals.

God hates stealing so much that He will not allow thieves to enter the Kingdom of God.

Or 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 men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

God help us not to be named among such as ungodly thieves that steal that which belongs to another. Those of us who are Christians must be diligent that we do not steal from our Heavenly Father—or anyone else.

ENDNOTES

¹*Webster's New International Dictionary*, 4:2465.

²*Ibid.*, p. 2156.

³"Rob And Steal," *The Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co.), 3:377.

⁴All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

GAMBLING

Garland Elkins



Garland Elkins, a native of Tennessee, was educated at Freed-Hardeman University, Middle Tennessee University, and the University of Tennessee. He has done local work in Tennessee and Virginia. He has conducted gospel meetings in several states and appears on numerous lectureships throughout the brotherhood each year. He is a member of the faculty of the Memphis School of Preaching. He serves as co-editor of the journal *Yokefellow* and is in charge of public relations for the school. He has written several tracts and many articles for leading publications. He was Associate Editor of the *Spiritual Sword* for fifteen years. He was selected Outstanding Alumnus of Freed-Hardeman University in 1981. He appeared on the Phil Donahue show in 1984 defending what the Bible teaches on church discipline. He lives in Memphis and is associated with the Forest Hill Church of Christ. He is married to the former Corinne Smith, and they have three daughters and two grandchildren.

Gambling is a sin that is committed on a wide-scale basis; it is a sin that is growing not only in the secular world but also has gained wide-spread acceptance in the religious world. The acceptance and defense of gambling by the Roman Catholic denomination is public knowledge. However, in earlier days most of the Protestant denominations adamantly and publicly opposed gambling. Alas, many Protestants as well as Catholics now endeavor to defend gambling, and unfortunately many members of those denominations not only defend the sin of gambling but also actually engage in the practice of gambling themselves. Unfortunately some members of the Lord's Church now seek to defend gambling, and several actually gamble themselves. How sad and sinful!

In 1989 brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr., and this author wrote a tract entitled *Gambling: National Pastime To Prosperity or Sure Bet To Poverty and Perdition?* This tract is still in print and may be ordered from me at my address: Garland Elkins, 1190 Estate Drive, Memphis, TN 38119. I do not know of more accurate material in print anywhere; therefore, I shall quote freely from this tract.

GAMBLING DEFINED

Webster defines gambling by saying, "To play a game for money or other stakes; To hazard, wager; To stake or wager in gaming; A transaction involving a risk or uncertainty." Athens Clay Pullias, former President of David Lipscomb College (now University), once wrote a fine tract on the evils of gambling. He defined gambling as "gaining or playing for money; the betting on the result of a game; the playing of a game of chance or skill for stakes."

Brethren Frank Pack and Paul Southern once combined their respective definitions on gambling by stating:

Connected with gambling is the strong element of uncertainty, the large chance of losing. It has been popularly defined as "getting something for nothing without rendering service or exchange of goods and is essentially stealing and a form of robbery." It involves taking a risk in order to obtain something for nothing, and often means losing what one has and obtaining nothing. "Psychiatrists classify gambling in the compulsion category similar to multiple sex, cheating, drinking, or drug addiction. Habitual gambling is a mark of a disturbed personality, and undesirable character trait."¹

Thomas Eaves, able preacher and long time professor at Tennessee Bible College in Cookeville, Tennessee, has well written:

A simple definition of gambling would be desiring the possession or possessions of another (prize). The gambler creates a risk (that of losing his own possession) in an attempt through chance to gain the possession or possessions of another with nothing given in exchange. Gambling takes many forms: card games, dice, numbers, betting on elections, buying sweepstakes tickets, betting on horse races, slot machines, betting on sporting events, various types of sports pool, punch boards, bingo (for money or prizes), buying tickets in raffles, betting on recreational activities, matching for cokes, and even pitching pennies.²

Jackie Stearsman wrote a very fine tract in 1988, *What About Gambling?* He says that a very common misconception relative to gambling is that gambling is anything involving a chance and that all of life is a chance and hence there would be nothing wrong in a game of chance or in gambling. Brother Stearsman labels this as too general of a definition. In the language of definiteness he says, "Most individuals can see the difference between the toss of a coin to determine 'who will receive' the football to start the game, and the toss of dice on a table for stakes of \$100."³

He quotes Stafford North to the effect that “‘Gambling is the act of risking what is yours in order to get what belongs to another with nothing given in return.’”⁴ He also quotes Herbert Spencer who said: “‘Gambling is a kind of action by which pleasure is obtained at the cost or pain of another. It affords no equivalent to the general good; the happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser.’”⁵

Brother Stearsman further states:

Another identifies gambling as technically a swindle: the pay-offs on bets must be less than fair. The overwhelming majority of the “investors” must eventually lose their money, if the rambling enterprise is to survive and prosper. The case for legalized gambling is an argument in favor of the government raising revenues by swindling its citizens rather than taxing them.⁶

Without question or quibble, gambling is robbery by consent. It is an exceedingly strange characteristic of this whole racket that one consents to be robbed by one more skillful or lucky with dice or cards than is he. And this he does willingly! Where else except in gambling would such absurdity be tolerated? In other realms such a concept would be deemed insane.

Furthermore:

Gambling is a matter of KIND, not DEGREE. Whether one is wagering fifty cents, or fifty dollars, he is still violating the same divine principles. In a booklet entitled *Gamblers Anonymous* (and published for members of the group of the same name) the author states: “any betting or wagering, whether for money or not no matter HOW SLIGHT OR INSIGNIFICANT where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or ‘skill,’ constitutes gambling.”⁷

Every gambler is a parasite living off what he can take from others. He gives **no fair** exchange of goods or services in return. He is counter-productive to the society around him. His winnings always, and without exception, leave all others as clear losers. Such are the low breeding and despicable character of him who gambles. Abraham Lincoln is on public record as saying that regular gamblers are “a set of men certainly not following for a livelihood a very useful or honest occupation.”⁸

Fully agreeing and, if anything, making the matter even more acute is a statement from Ovid Demaris in *Parade* magazine, wherein he wrote pointedly and powerfully:

Gambling is a parasitic enterprise that thrives on the weaknesses of people. It leaves in its wake corruption, debasement, despair and the

subversion of moral authority. This is the real bottom line that states should assess before plunging into the maelstrom created by the gambling craze.⁹

Many people seem to have trouble in determining what constitutes gambling and what does not. The foregoing should be sufficient in helping all of us to see what gambling really is.¹⁰

Now, consider the following answer to the question of gambling as addressed by brother Guy N. Woods.

“Why is it wrong to gamble?”

Gambling is wrong because it is immoral, destructive of character, and eventually fatal to those who persist in it. It is immoral, because it violates God’s basic plan designed for man and that is that he is to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. This, of course, does not mean that only those who engage in physical activity to the point of perspiring do God’s will; the familiar statement of Genesis 3:19 is metaphorical in nature and designates labor whether physical, mental or intellectual. Gambling is wrong because it is destructive of both body and soul; it’s feverish victims become so obsessed they easily succumb to other temptations in order to indulge their desire. And, gambling is fatal because most of those who fall prey to its incitements lose their moral stamina, their strength of character and any desire to earn their living by honest work, as God intended.

Gambling is really a form of theft, because it takes from many and gives without effort to a few. Most often, those from whom money is taken are least able to lose, and usually the loss falls on helpless women and children who must suffer deprivation because of the gambler’s obsession. States sometimes legalize some forms of gambling; but this does not make it right in God’s sight, or any less serious in its consequences.

One of the most common arguments to justify gambling (there are those so brain-washed they really think the action is a proper one), allege that there is an element of chance in all that we do and that in a very real sense all of us are gamblers. The argument is often advanced that farming, if operating a business or investing money involves risk and is therefore a form of gambling. This is fallacious and false reasoning. True, businessmen and farmers assume risks in their planning but this is an exchange of effort, mental or physical, in order to produce tangible and useful benefits for others as the fruit of their labors. Gambling differs from this in the very real sense that artificial risks are created and the results simply take from the many in order to benefit the few. No goods, labor or services, as in legitimate efforts, result. In the nature of the case, gambling is wrong because it is a form of greed which takes from others without offering anything of value in return. Remarkably, some, even including reli-

gious organizations, allege that gambling is proper when the proceeds are given to useful and worthy purposes. This is the age-long fallacy of doing evil that good may come. The law may legalize it; some churches and civic organizations may practice it; nonetheless, gambling is subversive of the human spirit, harmful to the best interests of all who engage in it, and sinful in God's sight.¹¹

GAMBLING IS BIG BUSINESS

Gambling's big business nature is the reason organized crime is linked with or behind so much of the gambling world. To them it represents mega-bucks. For this reason the government has invaded the realm of gambling—to make up what older forms of taxation seem never to accomplish—money enough to keep the spendthrift wheels of government running. Therefore, millions of Americans gamble in hopes of turning a little into a lot by means of an overnight success. This attitude is the reason so much of the entertainment world has latched onto gambling. It brings paying customers into their establishments who not only spend money in gambling but in dining, drinking, etc. Newspapers give all sorts of coverage to the famed horse races at Kentucky Derby, The Preakness, the Belmont Stakes, and other lesser known racetracks around the country. In West Memphis, Arkansas, is Southland Track, one of Arkansas' main gambling tracks, which features dog racing. It is almost always a daily part of the television news scene at 10:00 P.M. to have a report on the daily double winning numbers from racing greyhounds.

Gambling is a multi-billion dollar vice in our land. *The Commercial Appeal* carried a rather revealing article entitled, "Lottery Scratch Feeds Nation's Gambling Itch." James Barron of the New York Times News Service authored the well-written and deeply informative article. He tells us just how big gambling is in the United States, relative to the mega-bucks flowing into gambling's covetous coffers. He wrote:

The increasing acceptance of legal and illegal gambling is reflected in the size of the national pot: Americans wagered \$241 billion legally and illegally last year, estimates New York gambling expert Eugene Christensen. Put another way, almost \$1,000 was bet for every man, woman and child in the country.¹²

Minus any question or quibble to the contrary gambling is big business in our land. It is bad, *bad*, **bad** business all-right but it is still big, *big*, **big** business from the word go. The gambling proponents

have done a total snow job in conning thousands and thousands of former non-gamblers to get hooked by office pools on sports outcomes, raffle ticket project buying, or selling of chances for a worthy community endeavor. Now the new kingpin of the growing world of gambling is the lottery—with prizes in the tens of millions and a recent one in Pennsylvania that skyrocketed to a whopping \$115 million for a one-time drawing.

All of the foregoing are at constant work in making the United States the kingpin of the whole gambling world. Ernest Havemann labeled the United States as being “the gamblingest nation that ever existed.”¹³ Thirty-nine years have not changed that charge at all. If anything, we have become more and more enamored with gambling—its glitter, its promise of instant riches, and its cure-all for failing governmental coffers. The once applied stigma of it as wrong or sinful has been largely replaced with general acceptance. It is now a national pastime with growing and glowing promise of prosperity just around the next bend in the road. But is it?¹⁴

Since we wrote our tract, the state of Mississippi has voted to permit “legalized gambling.” They may call it *legal*, but the sin of gambling is still unscriptural. Suppose the state of Mississippi or any other state could use its part of the money thus collected for educational purposes, that would not make murder right and scriptural. Likewise, whatever money that is received by the state from the gambling industry is really “sin money” no matter what they say about it.

Tunica, Mississippi, located near Memphis, Tennessee, is a curse to many people. There are numerous lotteries in that town, and though the gaming industry has and is “making money hand over fist,” there is another side of that coin. There are some very sad situations that have resulted from people going to Tunica to gamble; I shall mention only one. A member of the Lord’s church called and talked to me via the phone, and though he did not give me his name, he did identify himself as a member by telling of what congregation he was a member. He also named some of his relatives who are Christians. He knew that I had long been personal friends of some of his relatives, and other of his relatives I knew by name and reputation. This brother explained to me that through gambling at Tunica, Mississippi, he had lost between \$250,000 and \$300,000. This has affected his business in

an adverse way, and he and his wife have obtained a divorce. Such stories could be multiplied.

GAMBLING: AN ANCIENT SIN OF INTENSE INFAMY

Gambling is almost as old as the race. Far more than one historian has said this of the gambling menace. Ancient Babylon engaged in this vice. The ancient Egyptians engaged in gambling at least six centuries before Abraham was born. It will be recalled that some of the earliest civilizations about which we know anything were the Babylonians in central Asia and the Egyptians in northeast Africa. Cretans were gambling in the 17th century B.C. There were gambling Greeks during the time of Homer, and he lived about 850 B.C. or earlier. He would have been a contemporary of Elijah and Ahab in the Northern Kingdom. Homer in his famed work *The Iliad*, referred to the usage of knuckle bones in the gambling practices of his ancient age. Herodotus, father of history, said gambling was going on during his era. He lived about the same time as did Ezra and Nehemiah of biblical fame. Aristotle lifted his powerful pen and valiant voice against gambling in Greece. During the 4th century B.C. Roman children played "heads and tails" with their coins. Such reads like modern American children in the beginning stages of their blooming gambling proclivities. Roman soldiers gambled in pitching coins to see whether heads or tails would win the available prize. Some of the Roman emperors were addicted to gambling. Caligula, emperor during the early years of the Lord's church, was a compulsive gambler. He committed rather atrocious crimes to gain enough money for his wagering weaknesses. Monte Carlo or Las Vegas would have been made to order for the likes of Caligula.

Gambling was a vice of the Near and Far East in times of antiquity. Both Hindu and Islamic leaders sought to curb its vicious spread among their subjects. From time to time it afflicted God's people both before Calvary and afterwards as well. Some have thought that Isaiah 65:11 alludes to gambling among God's people, but this passage is not conclusive. From the Jewish writings in the *Talmud* and *Mishnah* we have warning after warning of the evils of the gaming vice. Some of the church leaders in the early centuries of Christianity such as Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom denounced gambling and the gains anticipated therefrom.

Many European nations have faced gambling problems for centuries. Laws have been liberalized throughout much of Europe, but at one time were much more strict. Monte Carlo is to European gambling devotees what Las Vegas, Nevada, is to Americans—a synonym of gambling and the accompanying evils of strong drink, immorality, and in general a live-it-up-with-gusto type of lifestyle.

Gambling has a long checkered history among the nations of Africa and the American nations. American Indians were frequently afflicted with gambling fever.

Gambling in America has been around for a long, long time but has had its heyday during the twentieth century. Just as with strong drink, laws throughout the states have been liberalized to popularize it into the big and bad business it currently experiences. This century has seen the development of legalized parimutuel betting with Kentucky leading the way in 1908 for its race-track betting followed by Maryland in 1920 and Illinois in 1927. Harness racing and greyhound racing were not far behind and form major parts of the gambling world in our day. During the hot and heavy parimutuel battle of 1987 a strong sermon was preached in a West Tennessee pulpit against gambling. A woman was present whose living is connected with horse racing. Though this sermon was delivered in her home congregation, she has not attended a single service since. Casinos and now the lottery have greatly aided the infamous world of gambling.

Its correct alias throughout the last 4,600 years of its known history has been infamy. Wholesome it has never been, is not now, and never will be! Laws have at times sought to eliminate it, then to regulate it, and now to capitalize on the mega-bucks flowing freely and furiously into and from gambling coffers. Yet, it is a vice that appeals to the baser part of man; it feeds constantly on his greedy, materialistic, and avaricious spirit and it is damaging to man's personality.¹⁵

GAMBLING IS CRIME-RIDDEN

Documentary evidence for this is abundant. We are presenting only a tiny bit of the magnitude of available evidence at our disposal and which we have gathered for many years and for just such an expose as this. We are quoting from people in the know and who work constantly to exterminate criminal activities in our nation.

Gambling activity is the most serious form of organized crime. This activity supplies the financial grease that lubricates the machinery of other operations, such as, importation of narcotics, penetration of legitimate business, corruption of officials, and so on.¹⁶

There is no major bookmaking operation in the United States which operates without organized crime.¹⁷

Organized crime connections are needed to handle betting *layoffs* and to insure collection of losses incurred by bettors. A former official of the Organized Crime section of the Justice Department “testified that three times as much illegal gambling occurs in states with legalized gambling than in states without it.”¹⁸

Austin McGuigan, chief state’s attorney for Connecticut, said:

In many places in the Northeast, organized crime has quit accepting bets on pari-mutuel racing. So much race fixing was going on that organized crime became leary of handling racing action. Organized crime instead is involved in fixing the races, ownership of tracks and peripheral industries, horse ownership and other parts of the industry.¹⁹

The theory we developed at the U. S. Commission on Gambling is that from the standpoint of economics, legal gaming not only feeds on itself and is its own economic stimulus, but it also stimulates illegal gaming.²⁰

Another significant observation reads:

In 1982 a nationwide survey of police and sheriffs’ departments which have pari-mutuel gambling in their jurisdictions revealed: 53% of the law enforcement officials who responded believed gambling had increased their area’s crime rate...54% said that horse racing in their jurisdictions had caused at least a slight increase in the number of “undesirables” they had to handle.²¹

William H. Webster is in a position to know how crime-ridden gambling really is in our land. He has served our nation in such responsible positions as FBI Director and more recently as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. During the 1980s, and just four years ago, he gave a magazine interview on crime in America and legalized gambling’s link with such. The question asked him was: “How do you feel about legalized gambling? Is that a factor in encouraging crime?”

Forthrightly he answered:

Well, in my position, I hesitate to take moral positions on legislative issues. But I pointed out at the time that Atlantic City was going into casinos that we know of no situation in which legalized gambling was in place where we did not eventually have organized crime. Crime

doesn't always show up in the same way. In Atlantic City organized crime influence is coming through the control of goods and services. It's different from the "skimming" we've seen in Las Vegas. We're also seeing evidence of corruption as organized crime tries to reach the gaming commission through other state officials.

So I really don't see how one can expect to run legalized gambling anywhere without serious problems—fraudulent tickets, counterfeit lottery processes. Any time organized crime sees an opportunity to put a fix on something, to get an edge on something it'll be there. And gambling is still the largest source of revenue for organized crime.²²

Webster is **no** fly-by-night authority on this momentous matter. He spoke from a great wealth of experience. Gambling and crime are synonyms for a surety. There should be neither debate nor quibble at this primary point. Those who gamble are a part of the problem—not a part of the answer to the gambling fever that scourges the world. Yet, professors of Christianity are at times proponents of gambling and even hearty participants therein. Such is shameful and inexcusable! As the inspired scribe James says relative to another matter, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jam. 3:10).²³

Las Vegas: A Case In Point

Since William H. Webster mentioned Las Vegas, Nevada, in his wise, weighty warning relative to gambling, a few observations are in order. Las Vegas and Nevada are widely acclaimed synonyms for gambling. Mention of the city and/or state immediately reminds one of where gambling enjoys a heyday minus parallel in the United States. Gamblers and their mega-bucks keep the highways and air lanes busy with their coming and going. Gambling is the big draw—the primary motivation. But Las Vegas has some other things that accompany its gambling paradise and these do not receive the publicity that gambling and the big entertainers do in the media. It has the dubious position of having the nation's highest rate per capita of serious crimes (36,000 annually). It has 100 murders annually or 1 for every 3.65 days. It has the highest rate of alcoholism in the United States. Gambling and drinking have an ardent affinity for each other. The suicide rate is more than double the national average. The losers at the casino wheels and dice-throwing tables do not fare so well after losing their all in these gambling dives. There are 10,000 active prostitutes in Las Vegas—equal to one out of every nine women in

the area between ages 15-39. Gamblers who hearken to Las Vegas love to gamble and have their immoral mates for a night after the gambling fever eases up a bit. Immorality is a close affiliate of the gambling world. Reacting to the foregoing Harry Reid, former Chairman of Nevada Gaming Control Commission and later U.S. Senator from Nevada, said, gambling has been good for the state, “but any state trying to follow Nevada’s lead will find that social costs far outweigh any economic benefits.”²⁴

A Las Vegas casino manager says if he lived in a place where there was no legal gambling, he would do all in his power to keep it out. Relative to people who bring in their money, he says that he takes “their money but I wouldn’t take them home for dinner.”²⁵

If gambling is so innocent, so wholesome, and such an economic booster, why would this casino manager not want such philanthropic people in his home and at his table? Would it not be good for his children to form such friendships and to be around such people for an evening meal? This casino manager said a lot in a few words! But gambling America is not listening to such counsel from people who are in the know as touching what this vice is all about and what it does to people.

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Another Case In Point

A very frank and revealing article about gambling in this north-eastern city appeared in *Parade Magazine*. Its fearless and forthright penman was Ovid Demaris, who is considered an expert on what gambling can do for a city. He does his homework before he picks up the pen to write. An earlier work of his, *The Green Felt Jungle*, depicted graphically what casino gambling had done for Vegas. A later book published by Bantam, *The Boardwalk Jungle*, does an equal expose on gambling in Atlantic City—now called “the nation’s newest gambling mecca.”²⁶

Upon his arrival in Atlantic City to do research for *The Boardwalk Jungle*, Demaris asked a cab driver what casino gambling had done for him personally. The cab driver answered angrily by saying, “I’ll tell you what it’s done for me. It turned my daughter into a hooker and my son into a hustler.” *The Boardwalk Jungle* volume had already begun to take definite shape in Demaris’ sharp, analytical mind. The deeper his research led him the uglier the overall picture grew. Gam-

bling has taken an exceedingly heavy toll of this New Jersey metropolis, located just 130 miles from New York City or the Big Apple.

New Jersey passed the Casino Control Act in 1977. In the short nine years between passage of the act and the Demaris expose, the FBI reported that crime in Atlantic City doubled, then tripled, and finally quadrupled. Legalized gambling has brought unsavory characters of the deepest dye to this New Jersey city. Demaris affirms that the only thing doing well in Atlantic City is the gambling industry. Leave the Boardwalk and one wanders about in a virtual wasteland according to the Demaris assessment. The city has become a jungle—hence, the name of the Demaris book.

Two highly meaningful quotes from Demaris read, “There is nothing new about the business of separating a sucker from his money—that is what gambling is all about...Gambling is a game of fantasy vs. the harsh reality of the house’s favorable odds.”²⁷ The world is never at a loss for an abundance of suckers, for as Barnum of great circus fame used to say, “There is one born every minute.”

Memphians who have fought hard to get parimutuel betting brought to the Bluff City have said that such legalized horse racing will bring great numbers of tourists to Tennessee’s largest city. Such misguided Memphians should have taken a long, lingering look at what type of tourists legalized gambling has brought to Atlantic City, New Jersey, the last dozen years. When the gambling proponents tell us that legalized gambling will be good for a city, they use that word good in a rather restricted manner—it will be good for the gambling industry—about like a super salesman of inferior products who is always telling prospects that he has an extra good deal for them. The good part turns out to be good only for him and not the customer when the inferior product has been purchased. And this is what Tennesseans are asked to purchase in this parimutuel mess—an insanely inferior product. That is the way it has turned out for Atlantic City citizens who were sold a glittering bill of goods in 1977.

Larry Braidfoot has written an excellent book exposing gambling in its true, infamous light. It is entitled, *Gambling: A Deadly Game*. He writes these piercing words:

Over half of the students surveyed at Atlantic City High School reported gambling in casinos and about 10 percent indicated that they gamble there weekly. Atlantic City High School has a special coun-

selor to work with students addicted to alcohol, drugs, and gambling.²⁸

Braidfoot reports that within 300 miles of Atlantic City live some 50 million people.²⁹ He also states that organized crime is “highly involved in running the junkets which transport large numbers of customers to Atlantic City casinos.”³⁰

Though some of the facts and figures cited above are several years old, in principle they are still up to date. No doubt the figures today would be as bad and likely even worse.

THE LOTTERY: THE NEW DARLING OF GAMBLING

The lottery itself has been around for a long, long time but its new glitter is very recent in origin. The big jackpots have propelled it into great prominence. Illinois had one of nearly \$70 million; this eclipsed the former high of \$60 million in Florida; the more recent one in Pennsylvania skyrocketed to a whopping \$115 million just a few days before these lines are penned. By the time this chapter is published, another state lottery may even eclipse that of the recent one in Pennsylvania since this highly publicized form of gambling is mushrooming. The media goes all out in such huge jackpots with almost unparalleled prominence till the final winner is declared.

Sylvia Porter recently wrote about lotteries, “The Worst Investment: A State Lottery.” She presents the “rest of the story,” or a picture of the ones who come up as losers. Sometime back the governor of Illinois said there were no lottery losers in Illinois. Porter begs to differ with this surface, from the top-of-the-head recklessness. She speaks of those losers as having long faces. They had vainly hoped for a brief moment that they would suddenly be propelled into the lap of luxury with the mega-bucks of a gigantic lottery jackpot win. She writes:

Those who wager money on state lotteries often are those who can least afford it. A national survey not long ago found that people at the poverty level spend an average 2.1% of their income buying lottery tickets. The lottery is, to some, their chief “investment” vehicle.

Viewed as a tax to raise state revenues, it is the most regressive of all taxes, because the poor actually pay more than the rich, both as a percentage of their income and in actual dollars. Nor have lotteries proved to be the big moneymakers states had hoped they would become.

Lotteries in 26 states last year generated \$13 billion. Only \$5 billion of the \$13 billion total made its way into state coffers.³¹

This averages out to less than \$250 million per state coffers, and one is made to wonder how much of this has to be fed back to those in poverty who help feed the lottery mills annually with their very scarce dollars. Lottery advertising also runs into millions of dollars per year, and this expense comes from state coffers. It becomes a vicious circle. Those promised mega-bucks for roads, schools, medical care, etc., are frequently left holding an empty bag or a bag with holes in it much like in Haggai's day (Hag. 1:6).

Porter quotes a New York Lottery vendor who says:

It's really very sad. I have people come in here and spend \$25 or \$50 buying lottery tickets and playing the numbers. The people who do this aren't well-to-do. They're poor. Some are on public assistance. You'll get an occasional guy in a business suit, but he buys one ticket. The ones who buy dozens are the ones who are really desperate.³²

Porter continues by saying in this hard-hitting expose of the so-called glittering world of lottery jackpots:

During the recent Pennsylvania lottery frenzy, there were excited interviews with people who had spent \$1000 to \$5000 buying chances.

"I'd better win, because this is mortgage money," gushed one. Lionizing such behavior makes little sense. Fiscal irresponsibility is not heroic.³³

Porter offers sound counsel to all lottery devotees caught up in this fevered frenzy by asking and answering:

Should you play the lottery? There is certainly no sensible financial reason to do so. State lotteries do what those same states consider illegal when done by anyone else. The justification is that in the end—money for the state—justifies the means. **And** besides, it is reasoned, people would gamble anyway....A lottery ticket is in no way an investment.³⁴

In saying that it is all right if the state does it, we are edging closer and closer to the Communistic philosophy that the state is all important and what she does, whether right or wrong, cannot be condemned by any of its citizens. Taxation by Caesar (human government) is an accepted, defended biblical principle as per Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; and 1 Peter 2:13-14, 17, but a resort to plain old gambling (and this is what the lottery surely is) becomes reprehensible regard-

less of the twenty-six to twenty-eight states now having it and others like Tennessee who are considering it for the future. As Sylvia Porter says all the way through her excellent article, a state lottery is “the worst investment.” With her assessment we both fully concur.

Neal R. Peirce promptly labels the lottery as gambling. He writes:

With the national media feeding the frenzy, people flew in from all over America **to gamble** on Pennsylvania’s \$115 million record setting jackpot, the biggest since Illinois set its \$69 million record 12 days earlier [Emphasis ours].³⁵

Peirce is quick to say that when the lottery craze can generate up to 500-ticket-per-second sales, that such does not augur good for our national condition. He writes, “Lotteries, once the peculiar blight of impoverished Third World countries, are mushrooming across 28 states—even as the U. S. savings rate sinks to the lowest in the industrialized world.”³⁶

He inquires as to what is feeding the lottery craze. Is it “Sheer materialism, fed by media hype? Lack of individual or national purpose? Erosion of the work ethic? There’s no one answer.”³⁷ It is our seasoned judgment that all the above feed this fever and contribute to this craze. Now just who will dare deny it and with what incontrovertible facts to offset such a conclusion. Peirce continues his pungent and pointed comments by noting:

States used to treat gambling as a faintly tainted activity, at best. No longer. Now it’s the states Silver Bullet, a substitute for politically dangerous taxes. States are hooked, like their gambling citizens.... Last year Americans bought more than \$15 billion worth of lottery tickets. Net revenues soared to \$5.8 billion. New Jersey and California may soon net \$1 billion each.

So the money’s getting deadly serious. And the lottery rash keeps spreading. A last bastion, the South, is now crumbling. Florida and Virginia recently succumbed; Louisiana and Georgia are teetering.

Lotteries have become a massive, regressive, debilitating tax—especially on lower-income people. Statewide sales of more than \$100 per adult are commonplace, meaning that hundreds of thousands of people are spending more than \$1000 on the tickets.

If lotteries were a harmless form of entertainment, who could oppose them? But they can become an addiction. “We’re building a nation of gamblers,” says Arnold Wexler, executive director of New Jersey’s Council on Compulsive Gambling.³⁸

Peirce seeks the solution. He asks:

What do we do other than turn the wheel of history back to 1964 when New Hampshire unleashed the first state lottery of the 20th century?

A huge scandal, like the corruption that killed Louisiana's lottery in 1894, might dampen, even kill off today's craze. Short of that, some stopgaps steps come to mind:

Curb the outrageous \$400 million-a-year lottery ad campaigns that states finance and countenance...All lottery ads should be banned. The media hypes the games enough.

The states ought to print warnings about compulsive gambling directly on the tickets (as we now insist for cigarette packaging).

State lotteries should funnel a lot more cash into treatment programs for the addicts their own public gambling helps create.

Cap the size of jackpots. They have a spiraling effect, drawing more and more people, siphoning off more and more cash needed for family budgets and education and savings.

Limit the spread of lottery outlets.

Stop pretending that education, old folks' programs or state economic development programs really benefit from lottery sales. Lottery funding just supplants other necessary state appropriations.

If you hear anyone propose a national lottery, tell him the facts.³⁹

We think Peirce is on target, dead center at that! More states are going the lottery route and Uncle Sam will not be far in the rear with a national lottery. Some gambling experts think this is whistling in the dark relative to the National Lottery, but Uncle Sam's eyes are not blind when he sees the mega-bucks now generated within state lottery circles. Will large county and metropolitan city governments be far behind? Soon we could have lottery in city, county, state, and Federal branches of government.

James Barron has some very interesting observations. His three opening paragraphs get to the very heart of the problem as he pun-
gently pens:

Driven by the growth of state-sponsored lotteries, gambling is becoming a national pastime. Get-rich-quick advertisements and too-good-to-be-true jackpots have established legal lotteries as a middle-class sport.

Some experts fear that America is turning into a nation of lottery addicts, on the way to a nation of gambling addicts. These experts worry that the legitimacy of once-illegal forms of gambling is undermining traditional attitudes toward work and play, saving and investing, even right and wrong.⁴⁰

Two other provocative paragraphs state:

Experts say state lotteries have played the largest role in changing attitudes toward gambling.

State-run games are leading the way for forms of gambling that have long been confined to the shadowy milieu of illicit bookmakers, loan sharks and dingy storefront betting parlors.⁴¹

Barron says women and teenagers are entering the gambling world in ever increasing numbers. He says these two groups are much “more likely to play lotteries than go to a casino or the racetrack.” His three closing paragraphs are very disturbing and alarming. He writes:

The Times-CBS News Poll found that gambling is most widespread in the Northeast, much less so in the South; 76 percent of those questioned in the Northeast have gambled at least once in the past year as against 43 percent in the South.

But there are indications that longtime fundamentalist religious opposition is softening in the South.

South Carolina and Georgia may have lottery questions on the 1990 ballot, partly because legislators worry about the cash they are losing to neighboring states that have beaten them to legalization.⁴²

Those of us who worked during 1987 to keep parimutuel betting from coming to such cities as Nashville and Memphis can really relate to the Barron assessment that longtime fundamentalist religious opposition toward gambling is definitely crumbling among many southern religionists.

Larry Braidfoot devotes all of chapter three of his gambling expose volume to State-Operated Lotteries. There are 32 pages in this hard-hitting chapter. It is heavily documented. We quote from two of his closing observations:

It is clear that no other form of legalized gambling will bring the activity more visibly into the community. Those who choose to utilize the services of a casino or a racetrack have to travel to that facility to engage in gambling. This is not so with the lottery. Because of its wider availability, it has far more potential for doing exactly what the Presidential Commission warned against: encouraging people to gamble rather than merely allowing those who might choose to do so. With its outlets the lottery goes into the community. It goes on television and advertises under the banner of the state's name. One has to look long and hard for information about how pitiful one's chances of winning are.

Should a state establish a lottery which will increase the number of compulsive and problem gamblers in our society?...No!

When the facts are clearly viewed, the kind of assessment upon which public policy should be based weighs heavily against the state-operated lotteries, and that reliance upon them constitutes an abdication of the legitimate role of the state in promoting the general welfare.⁴³

The very day these lines are written *USA Today*, June 8, 1989, there is an article on the front page relative to a move underway linked with the lottery and which will affect sports quite drastically. It bears the eye-catching title of “States Bet Football Pools Are In The Cards.” The writer is Wayne Beissert. It reads:

The NFL season kicks off Sept. 10 and with it, another try at legalized football betting cards. Jim Davey, Oregon’s lottery director, will give details to the state’s lottery commission for final approval on June 26.

Players could pick from a full slate of weekend NFL games. Each game would carry a point spread.

“Every other (state lottery) is just waiting for somebody else to try it,” says Michigan lottery chief Michael Carr.

Michigan may test-market the tickets in small areas.

Weekly payoff range:

\$8 for the minimum pick of four games. About \$8,000 for correctly picking all 14 games. But the game could face a challenge from the NFL.

The league went to court in 1976 in a futile attempt to stop Delaware’s Scoreboard game, similar to Oregon’s. Delaware had hoped to make more than \$6 million, but dropped it at season’s end after taking in only \$727,000.

The NFL is still opposed to the idea, says public relations director Jim Heffernan.

“Ninety percent of the fans would be holding cards on a game” and wouldn’t care who wins or loses—only by how many points. “They’d be rooting for the wrong things.”

He stopped short of saying the NFL will oppose Oregon’s plan because it hasn’t happened yet.

Illegal sports betting is common. Former FBI expert William Holmes says up to 7 percent of the population buys into pools in New York, Kentucky, New Jersey, Georgia, Florida.⁴⁴

This is just one of many ways the gambling lottery can go in this fevered frenzy to promote gambling for the mega-bucks regardless of how many get hurt. The love of the mighty dollar is the bottom line both for the state governments and for individuals therein relative to the lotteries.

Let us present a brighter side of the coin gambling in state lotter-ies.

It touches only one man and his family, but what a powerful example he set some years ago. This writer knows, and counts as a dear and warm friend a fine, dedicated Christian, Russell B. Cozort, who quit his post as manager of an A and P Supermarket in Allegan, Michigan, in 1972, because that store began to sell lottery tickets. He had been manager at the Allegan store for twelve years and had been an invaluable employee with A and P for twenty-two years, beginning with them as a stock boy in his teen-age years and working up with faithful service rendered. He had a wife and five children to support at the time he made this decision to resign. He was unwilling to compromise what he had been taught from childhood onward that gambling is unnecessary and wrong. He went to selling World Books from door to door as temporary employment. Later he went with another grocery chain, and the Lord has richly blessed him. In newspaper reviews that received wide coverage, and this author still has the clippings in his possession, he said, "I have to live with myself, and I didn't feel I could be involved in something that is morally wrong." One of his fellow-workers was not surprised at the Cozort resignation. He said in response, "You have to understand the Cozort family...these are people who believe in the Bible. You might say they lead a Bible-centered life." They still do, I might add! His wife and children were supportive of his decision. God richly blessed this couple. They found good jobs later, gave their children excellent educations and their children today are a credit to their conscientious, dedicated parents who placed principle over compromise and right over wrong. One of their children, brother Kevin Cozort is a faithful and highly respected member of the Southaven Church of Christ, and his brother Keith preaches for the church in Olive Branch, Mississippi. We are made to wonder just how many of Cozort's fellow-Christians in Michigan in 1972 bought lottery tickets and became part of the problem that the Cozorts refused to become part of the same. The Cozorts were, and still are, a sure part of the answer to the gambling craze that floods our nation.

Harry S. Truman, our president from April 1945 till January 1953, once said:

If you want to be like Nevada, that's your business. Nevada is the only black spot on the United States continent....Legalized gambling is the worse thing in the world. I don't believe in it. Too many people have jumped out of windows because of Nevada. It is a fever.

Were Truman alive today and surveying the current gambling scene, he would have to say that gambling has just about covered the whole nation with its black spots. Nevada no longer has a monopoly in this malicious mess known as gambling!

Twenty-five years ago James C. Coleman in his college textbook *Abnormal Psychology in Life*, referred to the six million compulsive gamblers of that era who were set to lose 20 billion dollars each year. Following is a summary of some of his observations:

Psychoanalysts and others have described the gambler as being immature, hostile, passive, dependent, rebellious, obsessive, masochistic, magical in his thinking, and prone to act out his impulses. This means that those who permit, condone, or in any way encourage, individuals to gamble, however minor, are contributing to the development of immature, hostile, dependent, rebellious, obsessive, masochistic, magical-thinking individuals.⁴⁵

Why are not more of our political, educational, and religious leaders speaking out against this mounting malady in our day? It is no longer popular to do so, and they walk the popularity path. Only men of conviction and courage will speak out on the popular evils of the day.⁴⁶

BIBLICAL CONDEMNATION OF GAMBLING

Religious proponents defensive of and favorable to gambling are always coming up with queries such as: "Where does the Bible condemn gambling?" or where does the Bible say, "Thou shalt not gamble?" They will say, "You cannot find the word gamble in the Bible." Neither can we find the explicit words of rape, cocaine, heroin, etc., but participation therein is biblically condemned for a surety. Here are twenty grounds of biblical condemnation of this grave, grievous evil.

1. Gambling is wrong because it takes and does not give. The gambling operator is not a giver; he is a taker. He knows there is little likelihood that he will have to do much giving to his gambling clientele. He does not throw the dice. Why should he? The mathematical chances of his losing in the process are nearly nil. Dr. E. E. Blanche authored a book entitled *The Mathematics of Gambling*. In it he said:

In the long run, nobody can win but the men who own the game (meaning the gambling houses or the operators of the gambling operations). The mathematical laws of chance guarantee the operator from 1.5 per cent to 90 per cent of all money wagered.

One can rest assured that their take is far closer to the 90 per cent than to the 1.5 per cent.

2. Gambling is wrong because it violates the Golden Rule which says, “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). Gamblers are **not** Golden Rule practitioners by **any** stretch of the imagination.

3. Gambling is wrong because it is based on the Iron Rule and not the Golden Rule philosophy just depicted. The Iron Rule says that might makes right. Get all that you can from others by hook, crook, or by whatever means are available.

4. Gambling is wrong because it goes squarely against the first of all commandments—loving God supremely (Mat. 22:37). Gambling and God are incompatible; they do not mingle and mix. There is no way a person can be a devotee of gambling and a devotee to Deity at the same time. Both are masters of men, and man cannot serve two masters at the same time (Mat. 6:24).

5. Gambling is wrong because it violates the second of the greatest commands—love neighbor as self (Mat. 22:39). One is not loving neighbor as self when he is feverishly engaged in trying to win his neighbor’s whole paycheck, his house, his car, or all he has in savings. His love is centered in self in total fashion.

6. Gambling is wrong because it violates the new commandment of the Christ which inculcates that we love one another as He loved us (John 13:34-35). No gambler can do this; no gambler ever does this!

7. Gambling is wrong because of the three motivations that keep it going: (1) a covetous, greedy desire for gain at another’s expense; (2) its evil excitement; and (3) its combativeness to be a willing winner with all others as reluctant losers. Such a greedy, covetous, selfish disposition is the very opposite of the Pauline directive to Roman Christians wherein he wrote, “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another*” (Rom. 12:10).

8. Gambling is wrong because it goes squarely against the work ethic that we earn our bread by the sweat of our face (Gen. 3:19). No longer are we to steal (which is what gambling is—robbery by consent or permission) but work with our hands that which is good (Eph. 4:28). No work—**no eat** is the Pauline directive in 2 Thesalonians 3:10. Within the quietness of our own work we are to eat our own bread (1 The. 3:12). Gambling quenches the desire for honorable toil.

9. Gambling is wrong because it enslaves; it gets into a man's blood, and (like the alcoholic where no day is a day minus liquor) the compulsive, addictive gambler lives a tortured life where no day is a day without either gambling (or wishing he were so engaged).

10. Gambling is wrong because it violates the biblical concept of stewardship, and a steward is required to be faithful and honest (1 Cor. 4:1-2; Luke 16:1ff). Whatever we have has been bequeathed to us for a short span of time by a Gracious God on holy high. We are not to waste or squander it. The gambler bats out on both scores—he is wasteful; he squanders what he does have. Many a man has lost his all due to a deck of cards, a pair of dice, or the way his horses always came in as losers.

11. Gambling is wrong because it sets an evil example before others. We are to be examples of that which is good as per 1 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 2:7-8.

12. Gambling is wrong because it breeds dishonesty, deceit, and immorality. It leads to lying. It leads to petty theft or armed robbery to pay for rising or even staggering gambling debts to the gambling lords who know no mercy when pay-up time arrives. It leads to immorality as women pay off their debts by granting sexual favors to their gambling creditors.

13. Gambling is wrong because it is a world our Lord never entered. God, a gambler while here in the flesh; a Savior who shot craps; a teacher who practiced gambling himself and taught others its strategies? Perish such thoughts!

14. Gambling is wrong because it destroys marriage and the home. Many a gambler has lost wife, family, job, money, etc., because of his compulsive habits of gambling.

15. Gambling is wrong because it destroys mental serenity. The compulsive, addictive gambler is never really at peace with God, others, or self.

16. Gambling is wrong because it is covetousness and selfishness gone to seed. Jesus warns us to take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things he has (Luke 12:15). Covetousness, the very foundation of gambling, is styled idolatry by Paul in Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5. The gambler is basically an idolater at heart.

17. Gambling is wrong because it tries to make the end justify the means, which is as perilous in rationalization as it can be.

18. Gambling is wrong because it looks to luck and fortune—not to the Lord and the faith. Gambling is a rejection of God's providence in our lives.

19. Gambling violates Matthew 5:16 which says that we are to allow our lights to shine before men in order that God might be glorified by our good works. Gambling is a work of darkness—never a work of true light.

20. Gambling is wrong because it violates the Christian charge that we are to do good to all men and especially to those of faith's household (Gal. 6:10).⁴⁷

FOUR WAYS OF OBTAINING MONEY: THREE HONORABLE—ONE DISHONORABLE

What, then is the clear line of distinction between gambling, which is a vicious and corrupting sin, and the taking of risks which are essential to productive living? Gambling is sinful because it involves the desire to obtain something for nothing—something which belongs to another person and/or persons. It is stealing by permission. It is an agreed-upon form of stealing.

There are three right possible ways of obtaining money: (1) Money can be earned (Gen. 3:19; Mat. 20:8; 2 The. 3:10); (2) Money can be given to one as a gift (Pro. 17:8); (3) There are occasions when money has been found, and there was no known way to determine where it came from (Mat. 13:44). These are honorable ways of obtaining money. There is a fourth way to obtain money, and that is through stealing. Obtaining money through stealing is sinful (Rom. 13:9; Eph. 4:28).

What one receives from gambling is not earned, it is not a gift, and it was not found; therefore, the only category into which the money obtained by gambling can be placed is stealing—stealing by consent. Someone will say, “It is not stealing because the parties agree to it.”

Question: Suppose various ones agreed to commit immorality or to murder. Would it be right to engage in these sins just because people agreed to them? God forbid!

Now, let us specify some areas that are not gambling. (1) Putting money into the bank and drawing interest from it is not gambling. Such is right, and our Lord said that it was. “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest” (Mat. 25:27—ASV). Our Lord endorsed the principle of getting one’s money back “with interest.” (2) The bonafide investor in stocks and bonds falls into this same category since these represent partial ownership of productive facilities such as factories, industrial plants, transportation facilities, mines, etc. (3) Insurance is not gambling. One pays for protection for the inevitable possibilities of illness, injury, death, etc.⁴⁸

During an election giving legal endorsement to parimutuel betting a few years ago, I was invited as a guest on one of the popular call-in talk shows in Memphis. We received some very interesting telephone calls, and the talk show host and I engaged in some interesting exchanges. Though he is Roman Catholic and strongly in favor of gambling, nevertheless he treated me with courtesy. In essence I presented the above to him while on his show.

SOME PERVERT THE SCRIPTURES IN AN EFFORT TO JUSTIFY GAMBLING

There are those who contend that the Bible approved gambling. They refer to the assignment of tribal lands (Num. 26:55), office rotation (1 Chr. 24:5), and the selection Matthias by lot (Acts 1:26) in the New Testament. However, in each one of these cases it was not a matter of the people’s gambling, and by chance arriving at whatever result obtained as in the case of gambling. This was God’s way of making His choice known to the people. “The lot is cast into the lap; **but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD**” (Pro. 16:33).

In *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* newspaper of February 25, 1999, there was a newspaper article from Washington which was written by Marianne Means, a columnist for Hearst Newspapers. She

takes aim against the “religious right.” Though I do not and cannot endorse everything that is taught and advocated by the “religious right” when they oppose “divorce, dirty language, adultery, blasphemy, euthanasia, abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and cohabitation,” I agree with them one hundred percent! I oppose those sins as much as they do. However, I also oppose gambling (and I am certain that many of them also oppose gambling).

Following are some quotes from her article which is entitled “Selective About Sins” with a subtitle, “What happened to moral outrage toward gambling?”

Washington—Social conservatives deplore what they claim is a national decline in moral standards, symbolized by President Clinton’s survival and Congress’s failure to embrace an agenda dictating a right-wing concept of virtuous behavior.

But the alleged threat to the Republic from our supposed ethical collapse would be far more persuasive if our self-appointed moral arbiters were less selective about the sins they see as the problem.

For instance, a cultural monster is rapidly smashing old notions of personal and community vice all across America. Yet most leaders of the religious right have not taken up arms against it. The beast does not appear regularly among their top priorities.

The problem is legalized gambling, which used to be widely considered a dangerous sign of moral decline and a flagrant disavowal of the honest virtues of hard work and responsibility. But in the last decade gambling has become so pervasive it has steadily invaded even the most conservative states of the southern Bible Belt.

The religious right remains conspicuously reticent about the traditional fears generated by legalized gambling. Somehow games of chance that were once considered the gateway to corruption, bankruptcy and crime no longer upset our moral militia even though the poor and innocent are often the major victims.

Whatever happened to family values? Where is the religious right’s moral outrage?

In addition to these signs of intellectual exhaustion on the right there is a rational explanation for a reluctance to address the social changes that pervasive gambling may bring: money.

In addition, the industry has taken a sophisticated approach and has benefitted from tolerant state laws that have provided a fresh sense of social legitimacy....Gaming creates local jobs, and taxes on its revenues go for education or other desired programs. It has attracted a middle class in search of amusement.

Legalized gambling now has a foothold in every state but three, in the form of casinos, parimutuel betting, dog racing, horse racing, video poker, keno or lotteries. In 44 states churches and charities get in on the act, mostly with bingo.

Both Republican and Democratic candidates have received huge campaign contributions from the industry, which is pursuing favorable operating and tax deals. According to Common Cause, each party received nearly \$9 million from 1988 through 1998.

Last November, conservative South Carolina kicked out GOP incumbent Gov. David Beasley largely because he promised to shut down the state's video poker industry and opposed a state lottery. Nearly half of the \$6 million in campaign contributions that went to Beasley's victorious progambling Democratic opponent, Jim Hodges, came from the state's 30 video poker operators.

At the Republican National Committee meeting in January, South Carolina GOP national committeeman Buddy Witherspoon tried to take revenge on the industry for defeating his party's governor. He proposed that the GOP formally reject all campaign contributions from Gambling interests and prohibit RNC financial support to GOP candidates who support gambling.

It died with barely a whimper.

Gambling may yet emerge as a big political controversy, if the federal commission can document an increase in individual addiction and corporate corruption. But thus far the industry has little to fear.

Means quotes Patrick Buchanan, a 1992 and 1996 Republican presidential candidate. He listed in a recent newspaper column his favorite symptoms of cultural decline: "Divorce, dirty language, adultery, blasphemy, euthanasia, abortion, pornography, homosexuality and cohabitation." Then she wrote, "Six of the nine are associated with sex. Is that why gambling, a sexless activity, didn't make the cut." Like Buchanan, I am opposed to all of the nine sins that he listed. However, I am also opposed to gambling. Why not make that the tenth item on his list. I would guess that he is opposed to gambling. If he and others indeed are opposed to gambling with the same degree of opposition as we do the other nine that he listed, then we are agreed in all ten items.

On the very day that this writer has completed the manuscript for this book there appeared on the front page of *The Commercial Appeal* newspaper, Memphis, Tennessee, Tuesday, March 2, 1999, the lead article was entitled: "Tunica's sheriff resigns, admits extortion scheme." Then follows a long article depicting some of the corruption

which characterizes Tunica, Mississippi, the gambling center of the area. Under the picture of Pickett who is shown in handcuffs is the caption “Tunica County Sheriff John Pickett arrives in handcuffs Monday at the federal courthouse in Oxford.”

Brethren, let us do everything within our power to oppose and defeat the sin of gambling. If we are faithful to the Lord, He will bless us.

ENDNOTES

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ANGER, HATRED, AND MALICE

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INTRODUCTION

Worldliness has long been a plague to those both within and without the body of Christ. No one is more familiar with the terrible consequences of worldliness than Satan. The devil is man's formidable foe and his mission is to constantly seek "whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8)¹. Satan is a master at using the glitter and appeal of worldliness to tempt people to entangle their lives in the bondage of sin.

Perhaps there has never been in the recent history of the Lord's church a time in which worldliness has so captivated the minds of many who profess to be children of God. A Christian is to be a follower of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21), and one cannot be walking in the steps of the Saviour while holding hands with the world. The church in far too many places today is filled with those who have refused to give up their worldly dress, habits, language, friends, and recreation. This problem has been a chief cause of many elders and preachers winking at sin, compromising both their convictions and the teaching of the Bible, and refusing to demand repentance while encouraging those living in sin to do the best they can. Of course, all is done in the name of love, but Christ teaches: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

There is no way one can cling to Christ and cling to the things of the world. The apostle John's pleading is too clear to be misunderstood when he says:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

A person's allegiance cannot be divided between heavenly and earthly matters. Jesus taught this truth by saying, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Mat. 12:30). Again, the Master teacher said, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24). The apostle Paul speaking by inspiration said, "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

The brethren at Colossae were challenged with these words:

If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

It is imperative that members of the church of Christ possess the mind-set that Paul describes in the above verses of Scripture. A Christian must never forget that the only citizenship that really matters is in heaven—not in this world (Phi. 3:20). May we all keep firmly fixed in our minds the words of Paul to Titus: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12).

Let us now give our attention to a study of anger, hatred, and malice.

MALICE

We will begin with the sin of malice because it is in a class of its own. God never harbors malice in His heart, and by its definition this word can never be used in a good sense. In this writer's estimation,

this is what separates malice from anger and hatred. It is **always** wrong to allow malice to rear its ugly head and take root in the heart. It is **never** wrong, however, to be angry at what makes God angry and to hate what God hates.

Malice is defined in the dictionary as “a desire to harm others or to see others suffer; extreme ill will or spite.”² It is the opposite of excellence.³ Thayer defines the Greek word for malice as meaning “malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness, depravity; wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws, evil, trouble.”⁴ The word can be used in a general sense for **wickedness** and is translated as such in the Scriptures. In teaching on practical Christianity James says, “Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of **wickedness**, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). Peter reminds brethren to put “away therefore all **wickedness**, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,” (1 Pet. 2:1). The *Englishman’s Greek Concordance* reveals that the Greek word *kakia* is used in eleven Scriptures in the New Testament and is translated as “evil, wickedness, maliciousness, and malice.”

The Bible shows that there are at least subtle distinctions in the words *malice* and *hatred* by using them in the same verse of Scripture. Paul reminds Titus that “we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in **malice** and envy, **hateful, hating** one another” (Tit. 3:3). It is **never** right to be the cause of hurt or injury to another person. Malice would surely be in contrast to *agape* love that always seeks a person’s best spiritual interest. The child of God cannot entertain malice in his heart and be pleasing unto God. As Paul said, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

The attitude and principle that will strike a deathblow to malice is easily understood. It is, however, most difficult to be unselfish and practice Christian principles. Paul reminds the Philippians of an essential characteristic that is frowned upon by all who allow themselves to be clothed with worldly traits. Paul writes:

Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of

you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others (Phi. 2:3-4).

A child of God will seek to please folks whenever lawful and possible; they will strive to avoid those things that incur another's wrath. Paul put into practice that which he preached. The Holy Spirit records Paul as saying, "Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 10:33).

People understand what it means to practice the "golden rule." The concept is rooted and grounded in Scripture and is easily seen in the life of Christ. In fact, it was our Lord who said, "Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved" (Mat. 7:12). The sin of malice will die when people possess the attitude found in the mind of a follower of Christ. Malice cannot survive where love of Scripture abounds! The Psalmist declared, "Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved" (Psa. 119:11). When you are tempted to wish ill-will and injury toward others please remember these words:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, 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 (Phi. 4:8).

If you are genuine in doing such, the sin of malice will not take root in your heart.

ANGER

The dictionary defines *anger* as "a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility."⁵ The word most often translated "anger" in the New Testament is from the Greek word *orge*. Thayer defines *orge* as meaning:

anger, the natural disposition, temper, character, movement or agitation of the soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but especially anger; wrath, indignation, anger exhibited in punishment...used of punishment inflicted by magistrates.⁶

The word *parorgizo* is used twice in the New Testament and is translated anger in Romans 10:19 and wrath in Ephesians 6:4. Thayer says it means "to rouse to wrath, to provoke, to exasperate, to anger."⁷

According to the Englishman's Greek Lexicon, *orge* is used as a noun 36 times in the New Testament and is translated in the King

James Version 31 times as “wrath,” three times as “anger,” and one time each as “vengeance” and “indignation.”⁸ The word *orgidzo* is used eleven times as a verb and is translated as “angry” or “wroth.”⁹

The Bible does not teach that anger is inherently sinful, but it is a sin to be angry without a righteous reason. In the King James Version Jesus says:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment (Mat. 5:21-22).

The American Standard Version rendering of this verse does not include the words *without a cause* as based upon a variant Greek text. Other Scriptures, however, support the idea of an acceptable **cause** for righteous anger or indignation. The Pharisees, wanting to ensnare Jesus in a trap, waited to see if the Savior would heal a man on the Sabbath day. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, asked the man with the withered hand to stand and then addressed the Pharisees by saying:

Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them **with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart**, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored (Mark 3:4-5).

In commenting on the above incident one writer says:

Anger, when applied to God and to Jesus, is not passion, but a deep, moral resentment against wrong. It is perfectly consistent with love for the sinner; indeed it is a fruit of love. It would be base and sinful not to be kindled to indignation by baseness, treachery, cruelty, and hypocrisy. This indignation is one of the motive powers of all reformatory movements.¹⁰

There is also the incident of Jesus driving the money-changers from the temple, overthrowing their tables, and saying, “Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise” (John 2:16). Although the personal element of malice is absent, Jesus had **cause** to be angry at the abuse of sacred matters.

One may observe in view of the examples given that it is appropriate for Deity to express anger but not man. However, Paul reminds the Ephesians: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). This verse clearly shows that human beings can be angry and not sin. It also reveals that anger can lead to hatred

and sin. Even a just and holy God is slow to anger (Nah. 1:3). In regard to Ephesians 4:26 one must remember:

This is not an exhortation to be angry, neither is it a prohibition to be angry. Anger is not necessarily sinful. God is angry with the wicked every day.... Oftentimes the Christian is brought face to face with sin, corruption, and crime so iniquitous that it would be a sin not to manifest deep indignation—a holy indignation. But when he becomes so aroused there is great danger of sinning, of rashly doing a wrong that cannot be corrected, he must be doubly guarded lest he sin.... But a feeling of angry indignation that in its first arousing is harmless, or even praiseworthy, by being harbored and kept alive, soon degenerates into malice and hatred which is always exceedingly sinful.... Wrath cherished soon develops into malice.¹¹

Personal and passionate anger not directed toward evil that causes one to lose his temper never works the righteousness of God. James emphasizes this truth in teaching on practical Christian living when he says, “Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jam. 1:19-20). This type of wrath or anger is worldly and is **always** condemned in the Holy Scriptures. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31) is Paul’s command to the Ephesians. Paul’s message to the Colossians was the same: “But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth” (Col. 3:8).

There are valuable lessons to be learned in regard to anger. We must always be cautious in giving way to anger because our emotions and feelings can lead to that which is sinful. Anger must never be harbored until it festers and contributes to our giving “place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). We must guard against being angry without righteous cause. We must remember that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mat. 22:39). Thus, we should not become angry with others for something that would not make us angry with ourselves. Such would show respect of persons and be hypocritical and inconsistent (cf., Jam. 2:1ff). One must not be angry because of accidents, mistakes, human frailty, or failure of memory. God does not become so angry with man’s actions that He ceases to want what is best for him.

On the other hand, righteous anger directed against evil is not worldly or wrong. It is amazing to observe those who are quickly

consumed with personal anger steadfastly refuse to become angry at the spiritual rape of the Lord's kingdom. The church is often maligned, attacked, mocked, and criticized while those who profess to be Christians raise not an eyebrow but stand calmly by practicing patience and forbearance. Brethren should be ashamed that they lack such zeal for sacred matters! The truth is always to be proclaimed in love (Eph. 4:15), but it is not unloving to express righteous anger at worldliness invading the precious bride of Christ! Are we not to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered" (Jude 3)?

The things "written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). Many examples are given of people possessing a just and holy anger not concerned with their own personal rights. David was terribly angry with the rich man who took the poor man's only ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-6). The prophet Nehemiah was "very angry" when he learned of the abuses practiced by God's people (Neh. 5:1ff). Moses was angry because his people did not trust God (Exo. 16:20), and his "anger waxed hot" at their apostasy on Mount Sinai (Exo. 32:19).

Selfish anger, however, is clearly condemned in the Old Testament. A few cases in point would be Cain against Abel (Gen. 4:5), Esau against Jacob (Gen. 27:44-45), Saul against Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30), and Ahab against Naboth (1 Kin. 21:1ff). The warnings of the wise man must not be forgotten. First, Solomon warns that "a wrathful man stirreth up contention; But he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (Pro. 15:18). Next he cautions: "Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger; And with a wrathful man thou shalt not go" (Pro. 22:24). Finally appear these words of wisdom: "A fool uttereth all his anger; But a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it" (Pro. 29:11).

All would do well to remember the great wisdom given by the Holy Spirit through James: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jam. 1:19-20).

HATRED

There is no doubt as to the sinfulness of hatred. It is listed as a work of the flesh and those who practice such works will not enter into heaven. Paul says:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, **enmities [hatred—KJV]**, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Vine says *echthra* that is rendered “hatred” in the King James in Galatians 5:20 “is the opposite of *agape* love.”¹² The hatred we now describe is a hatred of men and not of evil, filthiness, and wickedness. Thayer defines *miseo* that is translated “hatred” as: “to hate, to pursue with hatred, to detest.”¹³ The dictionary defines *hatred* as being “intense animosity or hostility.”¹⁴ One only has to understand the animosity the Jews had for Christ to see the end result of hatred. John 15:18-25 clearly shows that the sin of hatred crucified the Lord. It is also revealed that they hated Christ “without a cause” (John 15:25).

God has never authorized the hatred of man. The apostle John affirms this truth by teaching: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). A person guilty of such hate exhibits the attitude or disposition of mind of a murderer. Not only may one not hate his brother, but neither may he hate his enemy. Jesus taught: “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you” (Mat. 5:43-44).

Resentment and anger can eat away at a person like a cancer. The context of 1 John 3:12-13 shows that Cain hated Abel. Because he burned with anger (Gen. 4:5) and hatred, Cain murdered his brother. It was hatred that caused Joseph’s brothers to desire to murder him (Gen. 37:5, 20). Hatred of people **always** produces works of the flesh which war against the soul. All people, but especially the Christian, should abstain from such fleshly and worldly vices (cf., 1 Pet. 2:11).

Hatred is incompatible with the love of God. Jesus emphasized the necessity of proper love for one’s fellowman to His apostles. The Master taught:

And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your

reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil (Luke 6:32-35).

Christ also stressed **how** we are to love. He said to His disciples:

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

Since we are to be imitators of Christ, we are to love as He loved (cf., Eph. 5:1-2).

There are numerous Scriptures that teach that people are not to possess the spirit of hatred. Paul admonished the brethren at Rome: “In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). Again, he taught:

Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

To the church at Galatia Paul said, “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:14-15). Paul prayed that the Thessalonian saints would “increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also *do* toward you” (1 The. 3:12). James, in reminding everyone of Christian principles, says:

Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors (Jam. 2:8-9).

John reminds us that if God so loved us we should love each other (1 John 4:11). The apostle then gives an excellent summary on the subject of love in saying:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21).

There are, however, those things God hates, which we likewise must hate. The Psalmist teaches that we are to hate everything that is

false (Psa. 119:104). The wise man declares, “A righteous man hateth lying” (Pro. 13:5). Solomon also says we should hate *bribes* (Pro. 15:27) and *covetousness* (Pro. 28:16). The truth of the matter is that God hates all evil and wickedness. Loyal soldiers of the cross must do the same!

How can followers of Christ have **any** fellowship with those who allow, condone, or participate in works of darkness (cf., Eph. 5:11)? One thing which God hates is “hands that shed innocent blood” (Pro. 6:17). How can a Christian not hate the act of abortion and refuse to fellowship those who support it? According to God, homosexuality is an “abomination” (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). How can folks thus not hate such an unnatural sin? If we hate the sin, we will not in the name of love extend fellowship to the sinner. God hates divorce or “putting away” because of broken vows, broken homes, broken laws, heartache, and hurt (Mal. 2:16). Adultery is the **only** reason God will allow for divorce and remarriage and **only** the innocent party can claim this exception (Mat. 19:6, 9). Evil works are to be hated—not encouraged (Rev. 2:6). All that is sinful and worldly should be hated as it is opposed to that which is righteous (Heb. 1:9). It is **always** proper to hate what God hates!

CONCLUSION

The Lord’s church is not to have *spot* or *wrinkle*; instead it should be *holy* and *without blemish* (Eph. 5:27). No member of the body should be ashamed at exhibiting righteous indignation toward that which stains the precious church of Christ. Fellowship with God, Christ, and those of like-precious faith is essential and to be treasured, and we must hate those things which would sever such fellowship. Malice never seeks that which is best for a person and should never be allowed to linger in one’s heart.

As we live in this world, may we steadfastly refuse to be **of** the world! Let us rejoice that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phi. 3:20), and may we keep our “mind on the things that are above” (Col. 3:2).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

²*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992). Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation.

³W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 388.

⁴Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 320.

⁵*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.*

⁶Thayer, p. 452.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 490.

⁸Wigram-Green, *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), p. 616.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰C. E. W. Dorris, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970), p. 71.

¹¹David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1969), 4:89.

¹²Vine, Unger, White, p. 210.

¹³Thayer, p. 415.

¹⁴*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.*

BACKBITERS AND GOSSIPS

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Two of the main problems facing the church today are backbiting and gossip. Probably all of us have known good and honest people, whose lives were hurt by these sins. Probably, that we can recall entire congregations being divided asunder because of the effects of slanderous speech.

If some members of the Lord's church would spend one half of their energy on saving souls as they do on gossip and backbiting, many more souls would be won for Christ. Sadly, though, many brethren are more influenced by television and Hollywood than by God's Word.

Christians should avoid the misuse and abuse of the tongue. It is God's will that man bridle his tongue; otherwise, his religion is in vain. James declares, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain" (Jam. 1:26).¹ There are many ways in which a person can sin with the tongue, but gossip and backbiting are perhaps the most destructive.

Complicating matters, though, is the fact that faithful gospel preachers are sometimes accused falsely of gossip and slander. Whenever false doctrine is exposed and false teachers taken to task publicly, some will say that it is merely "preacher gossip." Never mind that the statements are on record, on tape, and in print!

Add to the mix those engaging in false doctrine. Invariably they will cry they were “misunderstood,” or “taken out of context.” They will also accuse the faithful preacher of slander. Now, it is the case that some preachers do engage in gossip and slander—we are not immune. However, when a preacher lives up to his charge of preaching the truth, he does not engage in gossip. Simply to expose false doctrine from public statements does not equate with slander.

To understand the problem, we must know what the Bible says about gossip and backbiting. We need to see the effects of these sins in people’s lives. And, most importantly, we must resolve to not engage in them.

Gossip is a sin of which many are guilty. Talebearing has always been an awful menace to society. Consider the impact of the news media. How many times will a reporter go public with a scandalous story attributed to “anonymous sources”? Entertainment gossip columns and television shows have also contributed to the problem. Little wonder, then, that the Lord’s church has a problem with it!

Moses writes, “Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people” (Lev. 19:16). It is not wise to tell secrets. A faithful person keeps a secret, but a talebearer reveals it. Solomon said in Proverbs 11:13, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” With this passage as a measuring rod, which are you? A talebearer? Or, a faithful person?

How many times has someone been told a secret from a trusted friend, only to turn right around and tell it to as many people as possible? Gossip destroys friendships. This we know both from observation and the Bible. Again, hear Solomon: “A whisperer separateth chief friends” (Pro. 16:28). Gossip can start a run on a bank, divide a congregation, break up a family, ruin a reputation, and shatter the happiness of the innocent.

But, having said that, gossip also involves intent. Say, for instance, that someone is told about a sin involving a member of the congregation which is not of public knowledge. That person then tells the elders about it, since it affects the flock of which they are shepherds. He also tells a couple of trusted brethren so they may be aware of the problem and be able to help. Is this gossip? Obviously, the intent was to help the person and not to harm. However, if it is told in a conspira-

torial manner indiscriminately with a view to harm, then it becomes gossip. Clearly, intent is involved.

In 1 Timothy 5:13, Paul indicates what is involved in gossip. In the midst of describing the sins of younger widows, he says, “And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” Notice the zeal involved. They go from “house to house.” They are busy, all right, but not about the Lord’s business!

The gossipier suffers. Peter says, “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” (1 Pet. 4:15). He suffers a loss of reputation, friendships, and character. He usually has low self-esteem and is a very sad and bitter person.

The devilish work of the gossipier should not be tolerated. God said in the long ago that the righteous are not to associate with such. Hear Solomon in Proverbs 20:19. “He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” The person who lends his ear to gossip is just as guilty as the person who wags the tongue!

An eagerness to hear evil and slander reveals a wicked heart, as we see from Proverbs 17:4. “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.” Remember, if there were no gossipy ears, there would soon be no gossipy tongues.

Paul writes, “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies” (2 The. 3:11). According to the apostle, a busybody deserves to be withdrawn from. Verse fourteen says to *note* that man, and “have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.” Paul knew the work of the church would suffer if gossip were left unchecked! But, he adds in verse fifteen, “Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” We must try to restore such a person back to the truth in order to save the soul.

Bless their hearts, though, some members get mad at the elders and their decisions. Others get upset at the preacher and what he is preaching. These members will talk about them and their wives in anger, and tell people “what they think.” Usually, if they are upset at the elders and preacher, the reason is that they did not cater to the whims of the “offended” parties. Watch out when that happens!

Someone says, "I don't gossip; I tell the truth." Really? You had better take inventory of that statement! The bottom line, brethren, is that gossip is a sin! It is rooted in selfishness! If I do not get what I want, I will stamp my feet, throw a tantrum, hold my breath, and basically act like a spoiled brat. Gossip falls right in line with that behavior. It demonstrates a lack of spiritual maturity.

Related closely to gossip is backbiting, or slander. In the "rogue's gallery" of sins in Romans 1, Paul lists backbiting in verse 30. Indeed, slanderous speech is wicked! Solomon well said, "The north wind driveth away rain: so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue" (Pro. 25:23). Anger and slander go hand in hand. If someone is "wronged," then he should "get even," according to current "wisdom." It matters not who is harmed or what is said, as long as I have the last laugh.

This way of thinking is foreign to the Word of God. Indeed, consider what David says in Psalms 15. He asks in verse one, "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" He immediately gives us the answer. "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue" (Psa. 15:2-3).

Is it not significant that Paul lists backbiting as one of the sins he feared to find among the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 12:20? Slanderous speech devastates relationships. When someone "has it in" for another, often he cares not what he will say about that person or his family. The apostle likens this behavior to that of the animals. He writes, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). Brethren can be so swept up in slander that it scuttles the Lord's work wonder, then, that Satan often uses it to pit brethren against each other. It can consume a congregation!

In 3 John 10, evil Diotrephes is described in graphic detail by John. This verse gives us the profile of the backbiter.

Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

The backbiter talks nonsense! He brings unjustified charges against someone and accuses falsely with words of spite, ill-will, and vengeance.

Malice is a sin which we are to put away. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31). Of course, backbiting is included in evil speaking. Peter declares, “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:1-2). The antidote to backbiting and gossip is the Word of God. The child of God will immerse himself in the Word, be fervent in prayer, and love the brethren.

How can a Christian say he is practicing the Golden Rule, when he is backbiting against his fellow brother in Christ? Such is impossible to fathom. It matters not what happened in the past; nothing justifies backbiting. It simply cannot be named among brethren. One reason why the Lord’s church is non-existent in some areas is because the brethren argued so much!

Having seen what gossip and backbiting is, we must see what it is not. Gossip is not, as we said earlier, exposing false doctrine. The two are not equivalent. The faithful gospel preacher is to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). New Testament writers, on occasion, called the names of false teachers and named their doctrines. This was done to protect the church. But, let some lukewarm brother or sister get worked up over what a gospel preacher says in the pulpit about their favorite apostate, and watch out! The offended brother or sister will say all manner of slanderous things against the preacher and even gossip about him. However, the whole time he or she will accuse the faithful preacher of those very things!

When Max Lucado was exposed a couple of years back of teaching Baptist doctrine, some brethren defended him and said the charges were untrue and slanderous. But, the audio tape was produced which showed beyond doubt the accusation to be true. Some brethren refused to believe Rubel Shelly was teaching false doctrine. Even when they were shown manuscripts and books he had written, they stubbornly refused to believe. Over the years, though, the mass accumulation of evidence has been too much to ignore.

Such is the case with any false teacher. The evidence exists, usually, to prove the charge; it is also easy to find. When clear-headed brethren see the evidence, they will have their eyes opened. Only the most bull-headed among us will refuse to see.

This does presents a challenge for us. To be true to our charge and also faithful to God, we must be doubly sure we have all the facts at our disposal. Not only that, we also must make sure our motives are pure. Is our main concern the good of the church and the defense of truth? Or, is it a personal vendetta and a long-held grudge?

This should make us examine closely our motives. It should also cause us to be more fervent in doing our duty to warn the flock of God concerning false teachers. In doing so, we also must be meticulous in our research.

When we hear an accusation against a preacher, we need to do some digging on our own. If a tape exists, listen to it. If a book or manuscript exists, read it. Base judgments on the evidence, not hearsay. Further, use God's Word as the standard of judgment!

If we decide to write publicly about these matters, we need to document all statements and make sure they are accurate. The radical left does not need to be helped in their agenda by our sloppy research. Brethren who can still be influenced for good must have all the facts at their disposal.

When this writer was preaching at Spring Valley near Florence, Alabama, Joe VanDyke led in a split which formed Magnolia Church of Christ. Within months, they were meeting with the denominations in open fellowship. The local newspaper publicly documented this practice and praised it. However, some brethren refused to believe the worst, even when presented with the evidence! Nine times out of ten, personalities were involved. Usually, family members were the cause, but in some cases brethren just did not want to hear it.

The vast majority of brethren, though, saw immediately where Magnolia was headed. The cries of "gossip" and "slander" were seen to be false. Through the dedication of faithful men, the truth was told. The Shoals area is strong and will not succumb to the siren song of the left.

Such is not the case in some places, though. In spite of what faithful brethren have tried to do, false teaching has gained the upper

hand. The cries of “gossip” and “slander” have won the day. No matter what the evidence, some will never be convinced.

Brethren must not despair, though. We must continue to carry out the Great Commission and remain faithful ourselves. The Lord’s church has always faced threats to its existence, both from without and from within. Jesus told Peter, “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). No matter how hard Satan may try, he will not succeed in destroying the church.

At any rate, gossip and backbiting are sins that do threaten the purity of the church and its unity. Although Satan will not succeed in destroying the church, that does not mean he will give up. On the contrary, he will continue to use all means at his disposal to do so.

It was previously mentioned that these sins are to be put away from us. But, the question remains, how do we do it? It seems easy to say that the child of God is to put away malice, gossip, and slanderous speech. However, it takes effort on our part, and God’s help through His Word.

“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Pro. 21:23). Solomon well spoke to the problem. Proverbs gives practical advice on how to control the tongue. Yet, it is difficult for us to apply because it is so easy to slip in what we say.

Solomon said, “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (Pro. 13:3). The child of God must control his speech. Otherwise, ruin will result—not only in this life, but the life to come.

Notice what the wise man said in Proverbs 10:17-21,

He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth. He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise. The tongue of the just *is* as choice silver: the heart of the wicked *is* little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

Christians cannot go about life being careless in what they say. Solomon emphasizes the seriousness of this matter in Proverbs 18:21, “Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” Solomon well realized this power. As king, his word carried authority. Likewise, what we say has tremendous impact.

In Proverbs 6:16-19, Solomon lists seven things that are abomination in God's sight.

These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Does this not accurately describe the one who habitually engages in gossip and backbiting? Indeed, three of the sins listed directly deal with the tongue. Little wonder, then, that Solomon mentions the sowing of discord last. It is the ultimate fruit of this way of thinking.

James writes:

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh (Jam. 3:2-12).

So, is the situation impossible? Not at all! Listen further to James, "Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (Jam. 3:13). The busy Christian will not have time to slander and gossip.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (Jam. 3:17-18).

The tongue is capable of the greatest good when used properly. Solomon wrote, "Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Pro. 16:24). Additionally, "A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Pro. 25:11). How may we use the tongue for good?

We must begin with the mind. Jesus said, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mat. 12:34). He further said in Matthew 15:17-20 that man is not defiled by what goes into him but rather by what comes out of his heart. An old computer adage says, "Garbage in, garbage out." So also the output of our mouths depends on the input of our minds.

When we begin to take Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:8 seriously, the battle of tongue control becomes much easier. We must store our minds with pure and holy thoughts. Sadly, too many of us are filling our minds with impure and unholy thoughts, and this is reflected in our speech. Garbage in, garbage out!

Paul also wrote, "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). The Christian's speech must be gracious. Luke wrote concerning Jesus, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22). Such words appear on our lips when God's grace fills our hearts

When considering the control of the tongue, our emotions play a part. Anger and wrath are emotions that cause too many to gossip and backbite. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jam. 1:19-20). Such is the opposite of current thinking in the United States.

One only needs to look at television to see this is the case. Jerry Springer is the ringmaster of the current cultural swamp. Reason and calm do not hold sway; on the contrary, unbridled anger is the dominant emotion. In addition, so-called "mainstream" programs feed off of anger and malicious rumors.

Fear is a natural emotion that may cause us to say what would otherwise not have been said. Fear led Peter to deny the Lord. It also caused some to confess Caesar and spare their lives, instead of con-

fessing Christ and losing their lives. Fear may also lead some today to gossip and slander someone, to avoid losing prestige and friendships.

Listening carefully to others and sorting through emotions before speaking will help prevent gossip and backbiting. Paul's words to the Philippian brethren are most appropriate.

If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phi. 2:1-4).

Having the right mind-set towards our fellow man will assist us in putting away gossip and backbiting.

It is the child of God's responsibility to comfort his fellow man. This means always being ready to soothe the troubled soul. Just as Paul said, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 The. 4:18), even so we must comfort brethren with soothing words and not slash and burn with hatred and malice.

"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*" (Pro. 15:23). Encouraging, uplifting speech is another antidote to gossip and slander. Barnabas is a prime example of this. Luke reveals that his nickname meant "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36). Barnabas was an encourager, a peacemaker.

Some folks have the ability to find those who need to be built up. They are able to say the right thing at the right time. This is an ability we all need to develop. Do we seek out those who are discouraged? Do we engage in encouraging speech and help those who need a pat on the back?

We preachers need to prayerfully consider our own lives. When we hear a rumor about a fellow preacher, do we immediately repeat it without investigating the facts? When we hear something about another congregation, do we immediately believe it to be true? Remember, gossip can affect preachers as well as anyone else. If we are to be faithful in what we preach, we need to be faithful in what we say.

Prayer is vital in controlling the tongue. Fervent prayer for wisdom to use our tongues properly is crucial. When our minds are focused on God and His will, then we will not be focused on our selfish wants. It

has been well said, “Prayer moves the hands that move the world.” Asking for God’s help along these lines is necessary for the Christian.

Meditating upon Scripture has to be a part of the Christian’s life, especially as it has to do with the tongue. When one dwells in the Word, he will not be inclined to slander his brother or sister in Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me (Psa. 119:169-175).

Gossip and backbiting must be obliterated from our lives. We need to be reminded of Peter’s words, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10). This is divine advice! And we need it!

ENDNOTE

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

LYING AND CORRUPT COMMUNICATION

Bobby Liddell



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INTRODUCTION

God hates lying! He always has, and always shall. His Word plainly states His abhorrence of this sinful abomination.

These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19).¹

God is the “God of truth” (Deu. 32:4), and cannot lie (John 14:6; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Psa. 89:35); thus, His Word is Truth (John 17:17). As evidence of His stand against prevarication, God has decreed that “all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Knowing the absolute opposition of God to lying, and the dreadful, sure punishment He will mete out for this wickedness; surely, we can understand the need to repent of all lying in the past, cease from all lying in the present, and abstain from the sin of lying in the future (Col. 3:9). To do this, we need instruction and encourage-

ment from the Word of God, and a consistent practice in avoiding falsehood, and in telling the truth.

The problem of corrupt communication is a second facet of our study, and goes hand-in-hand with the study of lying. Both are (at least, primarily) sins of the tongue. Hear God's Word on the matter: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). Corrupt means that which is rotten. Sadly, too much *communication* today is rotten! However, God's people have put away such speech and seek to speak only that which is good.

In our study, we shall consider the sin of lying and corrupt communication, the solution to this sin, and the blessings of putting away such unbecoming and ungodly behavior.

THE SIN OF LYING AND CORRUPT COMMUNICATION

The Sin Of Lying

Lying dates back to the serpent's sinful subterfuge in the Garden of Eden, the first sin upon earth, when Satan lied—and accused God of being the liar (Gen. 3:4-5; cf., John 8:44)! Throughout the history of man, "Lying has ever been one of the common, if not one of the commonest, vices of the race."² However, truth goes farther back than that—all the way to eternity, for God, who is truth, and the source of truth, is eternal (Deu. 33:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 9:14).

Those who lie are of the devil, and behave as his children, instead of as God's children. "When is a man more like Satan, than when he is lying?"³ Of the devil, Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Lying is completely out of harmony with Christianity, for it is against Christ and His church. Oliver Wendell Holmes fittingly portrayed sin's dependence upon lying deception: "Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all."⁴ The Hebrews writer penned: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Indeed, sin is deceptive, promising everything, but delivering only pain, sorrow, separation, and doom. Sin's attraction is a lie.

As did Pilate, many ask, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). According to one survey, 67% of Americans do not believe in absolute truth.⁵

Citing the book, *The Day America Told The Truth*, 91% of us lie regularly, most cannot go a week without lying, and 20% cannot get through a day without lying.⁶

Men often prefer lies to truth. “Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness” (Psa. 52:3). Many, like the Jews Jesus addressed, will believe a lie when they will not believe the truth: “And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not” (John 8:45). Such men will “trust in lying words, that cannot profit” (Jer. 7:8), and, “be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 The. 2:12). Micah correctly set forth the preference of the people for lying prophets: “If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people” (Mic. 2:11). Often, in Old Testament times, true prophets of God sounded God’s warning concerning lying prophets who, God said, “prophesy a lie in my name” (Jer. 27:15, 10, 14, 16; 28:15; 29:21, 31; Eze. 21:29; 22:28; Zec. 10:2). Just as often, the people listened to the lying prophets, for, as Jeremiah recorded, “my people love *to have it so*” (Jer. 5:31).

Idolatry Is A Lie

God’s Word describes the idol maker, “That he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand” (Isa. 44:20). “Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them” (Jer. 10:14). Paul wrote: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 1:25).

As is all sin, so all lies are against God (Acts 5:3-4). The “father of lies” entered Paradise on earth, but God will not forbear liars to be in His eternal Paradise. Those who lie will not be in Heaven. “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). “For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. 22:15).

In spite of all this, some propose the propriety of the “little white lie,” while others equally unashamedly assert the validity of the *whopper*. “We cannot conform truth to ourselves, but we can conform ourselves to truth.”⁷ For a sad example of “situation ethics,” and

“relative truth,” consider the following. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states: “So that a false statement knowingly made to one who has not a right to the truth will not be a lie,”⁸ and, “However we are also under an obligation to keep secrets faithfully, and sometimes the easiest way of fulfilling that duty is to say what is false, or to tell a lie.”⁹ Again, “A Catholic who on being asked denies that he is one, does not necessarily deny the faith. Such an answer might merely be a fitting reply to an impertinent question.”¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, wrote in *Summa Theologica*, “Now it is evident that the greater the good intended, the more is the sin of lying diminished in gravity.”¹¹ How different was the perception of Theodore Roosevelt, who said:

“Liar” is just as ugly a word as “thief,” because it implies the presence of just as ugly a sin in one case as in the other....We need fearless criticism of dishonest men, and of honest men on any point where they go wrong; but even more do we need criticism which shall be truthful both in what it says and in what it leaves unsaid—truthful in words and truthful in the impression it designs to leave upon the readers’ or hearers’ minds.¹²

“No lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21). Whether conveyed by a direct statement, false witness, breaking a vow, leaving a false impression, talebearing/gossip, slander, telling a “partial truth,” exaggeration, hypocrisy, flattery, or by silence (Gen. 20:2; Psa. 101:5; 12:2; Pro. 10:18; Eph. 4:25; 2 Pet. 2:18; et al.). Truthfulness is a foundational element of a free society. As Representative Henry J. Hyde, in his opening statement at the Judiciary Committee hearing on December 2, 1998, so succinctly stated, “Lying poisons justice. If we are to defend justice and the rule of law, lying must have consequences.”¹³ If we place no premium upon truth, and no penalty upon lying, we remove the underpinning upon which our homes, businesses, governments, and churches rely. In every aspect of civilized society, there must be grounds for trust, or it all falls down. In such a situation, the wicked rule, and the righteous weep. God, through Ezekiel, denounced the liars of his day:

Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life (Eze. 13:22).

In view of the above, why do men lie? First, it is a heart problem. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man” (Mat. 15:19-20). Some lie for fun. “Now, you wait right here, and make the ‘snipe call,’ and we will run the snipes by you.” Some lie to hurt another. Potiphar’s wife falsely charged the pure and godly Joseph because he had spurned her advances.

That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice (Gen. 39:14).

“A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Pro. 26:28). Some lie to save their pride or position. Aaron said, when confronted with the sin of making the idol, the golden calf: “So they gave *it* [gold] me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf” (Exo. 32:24). Some lie for advantage, to deceive for gain. Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, lied to Naaman to receive two talents of silver and two changes of garments, and received leprosy as well (2 Kin. 5:15-27). “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death” (Pro. 21:6). Some lies are set forth in an effort to avoid detection and punishment, or upon being caught, to shift blame. After sinning, Adam tried to blame Eve (and God!): “And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:12). Eve, unable to hide, pointed the finger of blame at the serpent, and said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13). Some lie to protect themselves. When Peter was identified as one who had been with Jesus: “He began to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not this man of whom ye speak” (Mark 14:71). Some lies are made in an effort to please another, or to avoid offending someone. “Yes, that really is a pretty dress.” Some are lies of boasting. “I caught a fish this big!”

It should come as no shock to anyone who has heard of the antics of so many of the *televangelists* to learn that men will lie to promote their positions in religion. The Jewish rulers, fearful of losing their power and popularity to Jesus, sought false witnesses to accuse Him (Mat. 26:59ff). Because some will “not endure sound doctrine...after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). As long as there are those who will listen to the fables of men, there will be men who will supply them. “And they

shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:4).

The Sin Of Corrupt Communication

Note these warnings from God’s Word.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit (Mat. 12:33; cf., Luke 6:43).

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth (Col. 3:8).

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks (Eph. 5:3-4).

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exo. 20:7).

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation (Jam. 5:12).

How ironic that with the tongue we may praise God, proclaim the gospel, and promote good; and with the tongue we may also swear, curse, and take God’s name in vain. We can sweeten our lip with pure, sweet words, or we can spiel forth with filth and rottenness. “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (Jam. 3:10). Our tongues can be used for good or evil, and we make the choice. We can choose to control our tongues, but we can never allow our tongues to run loose. As James wrote: “But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (Jam. 3:8).

What is corrupt communication? It is described by and includes profanity, irreverence in speech, immoral, lewd, lascivious, improper words, suggestive innuendo, and indecent, obscene, offensive, abusive, shameful, ungodly, or unbecoming talk. It is speech that denigrates, debases, defiles, and destroys.

A generation ago, those men who were obscene and profane in speech, were still conscientious in not using such speech in the pres-

ence of women and children or in certain public places. Many will remember the uproar over Rhett Butler's use of a certain four-letter word in the movie *Gone With The Wind*. Now, from radios, televisions, and movie screens, there spew forth words of evil without shame. In books, magazines, and newspapers, obscenity is no longer taboo. In public, swearing, taking God's name in vain, and using filthy, suggestive, salacious language is no longer the unacceptable exception. There is no shame attached to corrupt communication. Sometimes, even church members see no harm in telling off-color jokes, using euphemisms, and even *mild* curse words.

Why Is There Such a Problem?

There is a lack of control of the mind. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he" (Pro. 23:7). Corrupt words come from corrupt minds (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8). We will never control our lips until we control our minds. As one said, "We need to put our brains into gear, before we put our lips into motion."

There is a lack of sufficient vocabulary. Some have grown to use "bad words" as an excuse for not training themselves to communicate effectively. Much like the ubiquitous "you know"; the swear word is used as a universal expressive. Some have tremendous difficulty in expressing themselves with normal, decent, socially acceptable language. This is simply ignorance, and is easily remedied by study (a good dictionary would help), and by observation of those who are able to express themselves well with polite and pure words.

There is a lack of ability to place emphasis. The interjectory curse word is considered by some to be the ultimate underline, and the extreme exclamation point. We would do well to remember the power is in the lightning, not the thunder.

There is a lack of inner strength. Some use filthy language in an attempt to appear *tough*. This writer worked (in construction) with a man, who claimed to be a member of the Lord's church, but who did not speak three words without using God's name in vain. He had a desire to be known as a rough and rugged construction worker—he failed. What he did do was repulse even the wicked with his non-stop obscenities and bring reproach upon the Lord, whom he claimed to serve, and His people, among whom he claimed to be.

There is a lack of self-esteem. Some want so badly to be accepted, they will do whatever it takes. If the crowd one considers to be *cool*, uses profanity, so will he. What a sad reason to sell one's soul!

There is a problem of habitual use. Those who have broken the habit of using filthy, corrupt words state that it was not easy. It becomes a way of life to curse and swear, to tell dirty jokes, and to make suggestive comments. It is like a cancer which intertwines itself around the brain, whose removal is difficult at least. It is ever-present and often goes unnoticed by the speaker.

There is the problem of using euphemisms, which is just another way, considered less offensive by most, of using corrupt communication. Guy N. Woods accurately presented the nature of this problem.

Jehovah has ever regarded, with the greatest displeasure, any disposition on the part of man to use his name in flippant, frivolous and profane fashion....One is *profane* who uses sacred things in an irreverent and a blasphemous manner. The word *vain*, in the third commandment of the decalogue, is translated from a word which means in a light, flippant, and contemptuous fashion. It is of serious consequence that many members of the church have allowed to creep into their phraseology words and phrases the use of which amounts to profanity. Others, who would not dare use the holy names of God, Christ, Jesus, Jerusalem, Heaven, Hell, hades, as interjections ("An ejaculatory word or form of speech, usually thrown in without grammatical connection" Webster), and for emphasis, will nevertheless use *euphemisms* (the substitution of a word or a phrase less offensive or objectionable), the derivation of which goes back to one of the foregoing forms. Were those who thus do aware of the origin of many of these common by-words they would be shocked! It is therefore important that we obtain a clear conception of the significance of such words and phrases and avoid all which even directly border on the profane.¹⁴

Brother Woods then lists several euphemisms including Gee Whiz, Gosh, Gad, Egad, Golly, Good Gracious, Good Grief, Goodness, Heavens, Good Heavens, For Heaven's Sake, etc.¹⁵ To this list may be added other such words as Darn, Heck, and Shoot. Once, while standing in a lunch line at a lectureship, a member of the church used a euphemism, and it was so out of place as to be especially shocking. As I pondered how best to approach this brother, a little girl, the daughter of a preacher friend, did far more than I ever could. She immediately spoke up and said, "You ought not to use bad words in

front of the preacher's girl." What a great sermon—and one that, I am sure, he has never forgotten!

Lying and corrupt communication are repulsive and disgusting to all who renounce “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and who would “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:12).

THE SOLUTION TO THIS SIN **Repent Of Evil Communication**

Lying and corrupt communication are sins; thus, bring condemnation, and demand repentance (Rom. 6:23; Acts 17:30-31). One, far too easily, can fall into the habit of impure speech. As with any other habit, the best way to break it is to drop it! We have all heard of one who would climb a tree to tell a lie when he could stand on the ground and tell the truth. Some are so in the habit of lying they lie when there is, seemingly, no reason to lie. They lie just to lie. God, through the inspired writer, commands us: “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). Repentance requires restitution to the point possible (cf., Luke 19:8). Repentance also requires renouncing the former sins.

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. 4:2).

In addition, we must get away from evil influences which “corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33—ASV).

The key to avoiding corrupt communication is to cleanse the mind, and keep it pure. Think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praise worthy (Phi. 4:8; Pro. 23:7; Mat. 12:34). Then, practice kind, considerate, truthful, uplifting speech. Use sound (healthy), wholesome communication that does good and not evil. Young people should make a promise to themselves and to God not to begin using bad language. As Christian parents, we always told our children: “Do not use words that you do not hear Mom and Dad use.” Even if one lives with a parent who uses foul language, do not pick up the bad habit from a parent or from anyone else.

Receive The Truth

Knowing it is wrong to receive a lie or impure words, do not receive (do not listen to) improper speech. If one does not listen to it, he will not be able to repeat it. Listening to the deceitful or sordid tales of the ungodly who are wrapped up in worldliness is wrong and condemns the listener as wicked! “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue” (Pro. 17:4). Jesus warned: “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Mat. 24:4; cf., 5, 11, 24). Sadly, some, even in the name of religion seek to deceive—and that for their unjust gain (Rom. 16:18; Eph. 4:14; 5:6; 2 The. 2:3; 1 John 3:7). However, “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight” (Psa. 101:7). We are to love truth. “Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Pro. 23:23). Likewise, we are to hate lying. “A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame” (Pro. 13:5).

Repeat The Truth

Knowing it is wrong to tell what is false or unbecoming a Christian’s speech, we must tell what is true and pure. “These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zec. 8:16). We must use: “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:8). “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mat. 5:37). Jesus spoke true and pure words (Mark 12:14), and we are follow His perfect example (1 Pet. 2:21).

Seeking to avoid blame by saying, “I am just repeating what someone told me,” does not absolve one of guilt. One said, “I never repeat gossip, so you had better listen closely the first time.”

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conaleth the matter (Pro. 11:13).

Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife (Pro. 26:20-21; cf., Rom. 1:28-32).

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends (Pro. 17:9).

Respect The truth

How? By receiving truth, and refusing evil. By respecting oneself, one's neighbor, and God. By exhibiting Christian love and godly courage. How long will the man of corrupt, lying lips continue when his listeners condemn his wickedness, call upon him to repent, and turn away in disgust if he continues?

Rejoice In Truth And Purity Of Speech

Love rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13:6).

THE BLESSINGS OF PUTTING AWAY SUCH UNBECOMING AND UNGODLY BEHAVIOR

Improper speech, as discussed above, is a sin against oneself, against society, and against God. As such, it robs man of that which is most valuable. One can lose his hope of salvation, his peace of mind, his reputation, his self-respect, his happiness, opportunities to teach others, and Heaven as well. A man known for lying will not be believed even when he is telling the truth. Thus, putting away the sins of the tongue (with all other sins) prevents the tragedies listed above, and promotes one in every right way, fitting him for fellowship with God now and eternally. One who is pure and right in speech does not fear a scrutiny of his words. "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21).

It is easier to tell the truth than to try to be consistent in lying. Sin will find one out. Nebuchadnezzar found out his "wise men" had been deceiving him when they could not make known to him the dream and the interpretation.

But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof (Dan. 2:9).

The truth is that one must tell a second lie to cover the first, and a third to cover the second, etc. (cf., Mark 14:66-72).

Do you want to live where men are truthful? Be truthful. Do you want to live where speech is pure? Use pure speech.

CONCLUSION

"Hold your tongue!" was the mother's rebuke to her young son. He tried, literally, to do what Mom said, but soon cried out, "It is too

slippery.” We must hold our slippery tongues. We must think before we speak, for, truly, our souls are at stake. The Psalmist said, “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me” (Psa. 39:1). It is a sad day indeed when men try to make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under falsehood (Isa. 28:15), and “will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity” (Jer. 9:5).

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Mat. 12:35-37).

Those who hear, believe, and obey the lies of Satan will be lost (cf., Gen. 3; John 8:44), but all who hear, believe, and obey the Truth from God will be saved (1 Pet. 1:22; John 8:31-32).

“Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Pro. 18:21).

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²B. C. Goodpasture, “Putting Away Falsehood,” *Gospel Advocate*, March 14, 1940, p. 244.

³Ibid.

⁴Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table,” Chapter 6, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1858, available from <http://eldred.ne.mediaone.net/owh/abt06.html>; Internet.

⁵Greg Laurie, “The Ten Commandments Part VI,” *Foundations for Living* (Harvest Ministries); available from <http://www.harvest.org/tools/ffl/comand6.html>; Internet.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Goodpasture, p. 244.

⁸*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX:471, quoted in O. C. Lambert, *Roman Catholicism Against Itself* (Winfield, AL: O. C. Lambert, 1956), p. 72.

⁹*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, X:195 quoted in Lambert, p.73.

¹⁰*Manual of Mormon Theology*, 1:171-172, quoted in Lambert, p. 73.

¹¹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 110, Article 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New Advent Inc., 1996); available from <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/311002.htm>; Internet.

¹²Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life VII—The Eighth and Ninth Commandments in Politics," *Outlook*, May 12, 1990, quoted in Gary W. Summers, *Spiritual Perspectives*, February 28, 1999, p. 3.

¹³*The Reagan Information Interchange* (HotTopics Online Processor, 1999); available from <http://www.reagan.com/HotTopics.main/HotMike/document-12.2.1998.6.html>; Internet.

¹⁴Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers Open Forum* (Nashville, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), pp. 180-181.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 181-183.

DENOMINATIONALISM

Dub McClish



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INTRODUCTION

The honest and perceptive student of Scripture realizes that Christianity in the days of the apostles was vastly different from the maze of today's conflicting, confused, and convoluted denominational structure. An unknown (but appreciated) author has given us the following incisive description of denominationalism:

A denomination is a religious body with extra-Biblical peculiarities distinguishing it from the church revealed in the Bible. It is utterly impossible for any denomination to exist without men believing something, doing something, being something, saying something, or having something that is not in the Word of God. All denominations teach more or less of what is in the Bible. However, the things they teach that are in the Bible do not make them denominations, but the things they teach that are not in the Bible.

The general public's concept of the church for the past several centuries has been denominational. According to this concept, "the

church” is composed of all of the various denominational bodies of *believers*. This identity is granted without regard to the wide spectrum of doctrines, practices, and names of the various denominations. Actually, the fact that the doctrines, practices, and names of these churches directly contradict clear New Testament teaching in numerous areas is generally ignored.

Additionally, diversity and division are innate to denominationalism. *Denominationalism* and *division* are practically interchangeable words in matters religious; they are never found in isolation from each other. The fact that the doctrines, practices, and name of denomination “A” often directly contradict those of denominations “B” through “Z” is considered insignificant by most and is actually lauded by many. Most profess to believe that the denominational structure is at least tolerated, if not actually approved by God.

The existence of undenominational Christianity (the only true Christianity) has not even occurred to the masses. If it has, it has been considered either unnecessary or undesirable. (“We don’t need a first-century church; we need a twentieth century [or a twenty-first century] church.”) Others may deem the goal of restoring pure, undenominational Christianity worthy, but impossible to achieve. Some (e.g., the Disciples of Christ) ridicule even the suggestion.

Because of the pervasiveness of the denominational environment, especially in the Western hemisphere, it is most difficult to interest men in the ideal of the biblical, undenominational church. Much *unteaching* must be done before actual teaching can begin, and few seem to have sufficient spiritual or mental ambition to thus exercise their investigative, discerning, and reasoning abilities. Without intending to minimize the gargantuan task the apostles and their contemporaries faced in confronting their world with the gospel, in some respects it may be more difficult to convince men of spiritual Truth today than it was then. The devil has so filled the world with counterfeit churches and doctrines that men are content with and protective of them and are generally unwilling to consider what the Bible really teaches about the church. Denominationalism has influenced so many people for so many generations, the people of our time find it most difficult to conceive of any alternative.

Not only is denominationalism accepted by the masses. One is considered intolerant and mean-spirited to suggest that it is flawed

and anti-scriptural. In this writer's youth his contemporaries considered one's denominational affiliation to be a "sacred cow" to be stoutly defended. However, the current younger generation does not appear to be so loyal to the specific denominational affiliation of one's rearing. Many of them (along with some who are older) have chosen to leave the major Protestant denominations whose roots are in the sixteenth century Reformation and affiliate with one of the inter-denominational *community*-type churches that have proliferated in recent years. Even some who are of Roman Catholic and Orthodox heritages have done likewise. However, these new churches are no less denominational than the old ones. Though often claiming to be *non-denominational*, they are actually multi-denominational, if not omni-denominational, embracing folk from almost any denominational background in their ecumenical spirit. These churches merely add to the overall morass of the denominational landscape. The members of these new churches are still firmly wedded to the general denominational concept of "the church"; they have just joined a new denomination.

Sad to say, more and more members of the church of Christ have in the last quarter of this century become extremely liberal in doctrine. In their writing and preaching they are demonstrating an alarming degree of influence by and affinity with the old threadbare concept of denominationalism. That solid truth concerning the church which they once preached, they have now abandoned and oppose. Included are those who variously serve as university administrators and faculty, preachers in prestigious and large congregations, editors of journals, Bible *translators* and distributors, radio and television producers/speakers, lectureship/workshop planners, book publishers and distributors, and elders.

A few of these have been honorable enough to admit their changed convictions and have made a clean break with the church, either founding their own denominations or joining an existing one. Most, however, have chosen to remain within the walls of Zion as religious Trojan horses, with the stated intent of moving as many in the church as they can into full-blown denominational status. Let the reader beware: such brethren are as fully denominational in their concepts of the church and in their thinking in general as any third-generation devout Methodist or Presbyterian ever could be! Thus, the issues

discussed in this chapter will apply as much to them and their ungodly work as it will to those who have for many years been in the actual thralls of denominational churches.

Having introduced the subject, our study hereafter will consist of a discussion of the causes, contradictions, consequences, and cures pertaining to denominationalism. We issue a kind warning to members of denominational churches who may read these lines: We have at times written very plainly in the remainder of this chapter. However, our motive has not been to offend or hurt, but to so clearly set forth the teaching of Scripture on this subject that it cannot be misunderstood. It is our earnest prayer and hope that the reader will be thereby caused to pause abruptly and examine his or her spiritual status and to come out of denominationalism by obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. This very obedience will cause him to be added by the Lord to His glorious church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

SOME CAUSES OF DENOMINATIONALISM

Some of the principal causes of denominationalism are the following:

Exalting Men Above Christ

While denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament pattern for and description of the church, the seeds of it are observable in various circumstances described in Scripture. The Corinthian Church serves as a case in point. Instead of all following Christ alone, some of the saints had variously decided to follow Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, respectively (1 Cor. 1:12). This seems to have been an acute outbreak of the deadly spiritual malady of *preacheritis*, not altogether eradicated even in our own distant time. Contentions and divisions were occurring in the church due to these misplaced loyalties (1 Cor. 1:11-13). They had not yet broken up into distinct religious groups at the time Paul wrote them, but had they continued on their course they likely would have. That which Paul describes constituted incipient, embryonic denominationalism; the seeds of it were clearly present.

Paul's action was immediate and his words strong and plain in correcting their destructive conduct. After a few words of greeting and introduction (1 Cor. 1:1-9), he launched a vigorous plea concerning their behavior:

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).¹

Among the numerous serious problems extant in the Corinthian congregation (as the remainder of the epistle reveals), Paul addressed this budding sectarian spirit first. Perhaps this indicates that it was seminal and fundamental to all of the others. At least, it appears that if they were not brought into a state of harmony and unity based on Christ and His Truth, it would do little good to address their other problems. Paul knew that they must be made to stand as one, following Christ alone, rather than any man (even though he and Cephas were apostles). He further knew that if they would follow Christ alone **they would be one**, because Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13).

Through the centuries men have continued to follow other mere men, rather than the Christ, in religion. The Roman Catholic Church is founded upon the human dogmas and dictates of men, the authority of which resides not in Christ, but in one man—the Roman pope. Other religious bodies claiming identity with Christ are obviously devoted to human leadership, even in their names. The followers of Martin Luther, the sixteenth century reformer, have adopted his name for their Lutheran denomination (in spite of Luther's plea to the contrary). The theological system known as Calvinism, which to a greater or lesser degree has influenced the doctrine of practically all of the Protestant denominations, is named after its originator, John Calvin, a younger contemporary of Luther. Wesleyan theology, generally adhered to by the Methodist and Nazarene Churches, and to some degree all of the Holiness Sects, is named after its originator, John Wesley (with some help from his brother, Charles). Only a small percentage of the hundreds of denominations actually bear the name of some individual, although all of them owe their existence to following the teachings of one or more men.

When men follow men more than Christ, denominationalism is inevitable.

Exalting The Doctrines Of Men Above The Doctrine Of Christ

This cause stems from the previous one. The primary way in which men follow other men in religion is by following their doctrines. This grave error and one of its consequences are evident in the first century

Jewish Pharisee denomination. Jesus rebuked their error by saying, “But in vain do they worship me, Teaching *as their* doctrines the precepts of men” (Mat. 15:9). Paul warned the brethren in Rome that following false, human doctrines would produce unwarranted division, which, as earlier noted, is a primary characteristic of denominationalism: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). While there were no denominations yet in Rome, Paul knew that the seeds of such were in the doctrines of false teachers. The following principle therefore deserves strong emphasis: **Every denomination owes its existence to one or more doctrines of men that have been given preference over the doctrine of Christ.** No denomination would ever have existed nor could be maintained were men content with only the doctrine of Christ! The fact that the New Testament contains scores of warnings, exhortations, and prohibitions, all aimed at producing strict adherence to the doctrine of Christ, forcefully underscores the principle stated above.

Exalting Selfish Preferences Above Authorized Practices

This “desires over doctrine” approach to religion is responsible for the actual beginning and maintenance of some denominations (especially those of the Pentecostal and Holiness varieties), and for many of the unauthorized practices found among all of them. Herein is seen the triumph of subjectivism in religion. That which is subjective originates in the opinions, thoughts, desires, emotions, and feelings of men, all of which are fallible, inconstant, fickle, and as varied as men themselves. Contrariwise, the Word of God is an objective standard, which is constant, stable, unvarying, and unaffected by human thought or feelings or by time or circumstance. The subjective approach in religion is basically a selfish approach: “I like it [whether it be a “faith-only” plan of salvation, so-called tongues speaking, instrumental music, hand clapping, or a hundred other things], so I’ll have it.” One need not be a genius to perceive that insistence on one’s personal preferences in religious doctrine or practice leads directly to denominationalism.

Consider the grievous and totally unnecessary division that was foisted upon the church of the Lord in the past century, the motivation for which was the subjective desires of the instigators. About mid-

century, when it appeared that the noble plea for restoration of the primitive, undenominational church was posited to practically sweep the nation, a small number of brethren began to clamor for some of the things they desired from the denominational bodies out of which they had come, but about which the New Testament is totally silent. In particular, they wanted to employ a missionary society in evangelism and mechanical instruments of music in worship. Their desire was so strong that they were willing to renounce their once-held respect for the silence as well as the statement of Scripture and to divide the people of God in order to have them. Having settled on these desired items, they then sought to justify them from Scripture **after the fact**. The primary justification they decided to employ was that since the Scriptures do not explicitly forbid these things (i.e., the Scriptures are silent about them), they had the freedom to introduce and employ them. Their behavior constituted the always-disastrous practice of allowing their desires to father their doctrine, rather than conforming their desires to the demands of New Testament teaching. They failed to realize (or perhaps did not care) that by this utterly flawed rule, any and every thing that might please men in religion could be added to the work and worship of the church, **as long as it was not explicitly forbidden**.

The division had so run its course by 1906 that it was recognized by the federal census. The “give-us-what-we-want-in-religion-at-whatever-cost” brethren were found to have captured about eighty-five percent of the church membership and to have seized possession of most of the church buildings and practically all of the educational institutions. Faithful brethren had to begin their efforts all over again almost from *scratch*. Two new denominations the Independent Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ Christian Church were directly spawned by these digressive brethren, solely because they desired certain things in religion and demanded the fulfillment of their desires.

These folk have predictably continued to add unauthorized elements to their brand of religion throughout this century till even the less liberal segment of them (the Independent Christian Church) has taken on all of the trappings of full-blown denominationalism and has rendered hollow its claim to be concerned with restoring the primitive church. Clearly, they demanded these additions to the work and

worship of God's church, not because the Scriptures ordained or authorized them, but because they liked them and wanted them! Furthermore, when we discuss their unauthorized practices with them (particularly mechanical instruments in worship), they still adamantly declare: "We are not about to give them up!"

The preference of feelings and desires over the Word of God and what it authorizes is a major cause of denominationalism.

Exalting Sincerity Of Heart Above Respect For Scripture

The Bible clearly emphasizes the necessity of sincerity in one's worship and service of God (John 4:23-24; Acts 2:41; Rom. 6:17-18; et al.). Those who merely "go through the motions" of the outward expressions of worship or service, without involving the heart, are labeled *hypocrite* and are rejected by the Lord (Mat. 6:1-8, 16-18; 15:7-9; 23:5-7, 25-28).

However, sincerity is never depicted in the Bible as the exclusive measure of faithful service. In spite of this fact, one of the long-standing guideposts of denominational apologists is the enthronement of sincerity. These folk through the years (in spite of the New Testament's frequent demands for absolute purity in doctrine and practice) have justified the existence of their religious bodies with the cliché: "It makes no difference what one believes as long as he is sincere." This has proved to be a short-sighted (not to mention nonsensical and anti-scriptural) philosophy. By implication it severs all dependence upon and appeals to the Bible authority for one's doctrine and practice. It is represented in the oft-repeated profession of one whose false doctrine or practice is exposed by Scripture: "I wouldn't trade the feeling I have in my heart for a stack of Bibles!" As with the exaltation of selfish preferences cited above, an over-emphasis on sincerity likewise replaces the objective truth of the Bible with man's own subjective feelings. Sincerity, rather than the Scripture, becomes the overriding arbiter of doctrine and practice.

Logically, if it makes no difference **what** one believes, why should it make any difference **whether or not** one believes at all? The *mainline* denominations (e.g., Lutherans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, et al.) thus sowed the seeds of their own demise (which they have been increasingly experiencing in recent years) by repeating the sincerity mantra. (After all, if sincerity validates Methodist doctrine, it just as surely validates the

doctrine of a zealous female Pentecostal preacher or of a Mormon *elder* who has a “burning in his breast” to confirm his faith in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Why, then, remain a Methodist, except for the sake of tradition or convenience?) One convinced of the primacy of sincerity could thereby as easily justify himself (as some have likely done) in wandering off into agnosticism, atheism, or some Pagan religion. (Admittedly, other factors may have contributed to the membership exodus these religious bodies have experienced, but we are convinced that their undue emphasis on sincerity has been a major factor.)

Also, logically, if it makes no difference what one **believes**, then why should it make any difference what one **practices** or how one **behaves**? This question reflects the “sincerity alone” doctrine as applied to behavior. It implies situation ethics. Could this fact at least partly explain why the mainline denominations give inordinate attention to *social* problems (e.g., the treatment and cure of AIDS, sex education, the plight of the “homeless,” etc.) and typical liberal solutions to them? Does this cliché, help explain why they often champion not only liberal social causes, but also liberal political causes as well? Little wonder then that their voices were long ago muted when it came to such things as alcohol consumption, adultery, fornication, divorce for every cause, homosexuality, and abortion. In some cases they are found to be strong defenders, if not promoters, of some of the most abominable behavior patterns. If their generations-old credo be true (i.e., that sincerity is all that matters), then all of the above and many other similar actions are thereby validated, or at least excused.

Some national commentators have wondered aloud about the permissive attitude and/or silence of most of the denominational leaders in response to the immorality, lying, perjury, abuse of power, and obstruction of justice committed by the current President of the United States (whose guilt must be shared by his partisan sycophant defenders). At least part of the answer to their question may be seen in the doctrinal relativism the denominations have been spouting for generations (along with the philosophies of evolution, agnosticism, humanism, pragmatism, mysticism, and postmodernism with which our nation has been strongly propagandized in recent years). Their

doctrinal relativism has now come to dominate their attitude toward ethics as well.

As important as sincerity is to true religion, the exaltation of it remains a prime cause of and justification for denominationalism.

Exalting Misplaced Tolerance Above Unyielding Truth

Another significant cause of denominationalism is pervasive tolerance for and non-judgmentalism toward practically any and every sort of doctrine or practice in religion. In fact, about the only thing most denominationalists absolutely cannot tolerate is intolerance! (Actually, the attitudes of tolerance, acceptance, and pluralism toward the most outrageous, disgusting, and even abominable forms of behavior have become the epitome of political correctness among those who despise the Bible and Christianity.)

Sectarians have vocalized this facet of their philosophy with another widely-used cliché: “One church is as good as another.” We fully agree that when the denominations compare themselves to their rival denominations, their statement is correct. One may as well be a Presbyterian as a Methodist, and there is no spiritual gain or loss whether one is a Lutheran, a Baptist, or a Disciple. Such religious bodies have forfeited their right to sit in judgment of sister denominations because they all alike stand before the New Testament as unauthorized, anti-scriptural, human institutions. Though they are at variance with inspired Truth on different issues and to different degrees, **they are all nonetheless at variance with inspired Truth!** As long as one leaves the blood-bought church of Christ set forth in the New Testament out of the comparison, then he is accurate in saying that “one church is as good as another.” But including it, such words are sheer folly and blasphemy! When issues of mere option and expediency in religious practice are under consideration, then tolerance is ever a virtue. However, when matters of obligatory doctrine and practice are at stake, tolerance is a deadly vice.

When tolerance of anti-scriptural doctrines and practices prevails over the demands of Scripture, denominationalism will certainly be the result.

SOME CONTRADICTIONS OF DENOMINATIONALISM

Literally, volumes could be written describing the multitude of contradictory doctrines and other features in the denominations when compared among themselves. However, the contradictions we will discuss are some of the many contrasts between the denominationalism and the church as it is revealed in the New Testament. The church of Christ is constitutionally non-denominational and anti-denominational as seen in the following:

Contradiction In Founders

Every denomination was established by one or more men. However, the church of Christ was established by Christ, the Son of God. He promised to build His church (Mat. 16:18), and He did so through the agency of the Holy Spirit and His apostles (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:1-47).

Contradiction In Time And Place Of Beginning

The Protestant denominations all have their own respective (and conflicting) times and places of origin. None of them is old enough to be the New Testament church because none of them predates the sixteenth century Reformation. The seeds of the Catholic and Orthodox denominations can be seen in some of the departures that began as early as the second and third centuries, but these organizations are not generally recognized as actually beginning until the beginning of the seventh century with the enthronement of the first pope in Rome. These dates (even at their earliest) are obviously too late to be the apostolic church, which began on the first Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of the Son of God (Acts 2:1-4, 38-41, 47).

Further, all of the denominations, whether Catholic or Protestant, must trace their respective beginnings to various places other than Jerusalem (e.g., Rome, Constantinople, Wurtenburg, Zurich, London, et al.). The one and only Divinely-sanctioned apostolic church was founded in Jerusalem, as Isaiah and Micah prophesied (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-2) and as Jesus promised it would be (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4, 14-21, 38-41, 47).

Of course, the fact that a religious body began in Jerusalem on the Pentecost following Jesus' ascension would not thereby make it the Divinely-authorized church of Christ, due to additional important factors involved. However, a religious body could not possibly be the

church Jesus built and bought if founded at some other place and time. Each denomination, whether Protestant or Catholic, differs not only from every other denomination as to place and time of origin, but also as to the place and time of origin of the New Testament church.

Miscellaneous Contradictions

Denominationalism lauds and encourages the existence of innumerable churches, but Christ built only one church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 4:4).

Denominationalism is a freeway wide enough to accommodate all men who claim to believe in Christ, regardless of their religious stripes, in its broad view of “the church” (Mat. 7:13). The church of Christ is a straitened way with a narrow gate through which few travelers pass (Mat. 7:14). The former ends in destruction; the latter leads to life.

Denominationalism caters to the whims, desires, and opinions of men. The church of Christ is rooted in the authoritative will of the Son of God (Col. 3:17; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:11).

Denominationalism conceives of “church membership” as unrelated to salvation. The church of Christ is that one spiritual body which Christ will save (Eph. 5:23).

Denominationalism justifies the existence of hundreds of religious bodies. The New Testament authorizes only the Lord’s one spiritual body—the church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23).

The denominations were purchased with the efforts, money, and reputations of fallible men. The New Testament church was purchased with the blood of the sinless Christ (Acts 20:28).

Denominationalism exists due to the sacrifices made by many men and women. The church of the Bible exists because Christ gave Himself up for it (Eph. 5:25).

Men rule and control denominationalism. Christ is the head of His church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23).

Denominationalism, along with every other false religious system, is a *plant* which is destined to be pulled up by the roots (Mat. 15:13). The church of Christ is His unshakable kingdom which He will at last deliver up to the Father (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:23, 28; 1 Cor. 15:24).

The contrasts and contradictions between denominationalism and the biblical concept of the church, only a few of which have been

listed, are many and stark. They bespeak the most grave implications and eternal consequences, as we shall demonstrate below.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DENOMINATIONALISM

The Depiction Of A Divided Christ And A Confused Gospel

The only introduction to *Christianity* that millions of people ever had before they passed into eternity was what they saw in the religious babel of Denominationalism. This same picture is the only one that many now living will see. The implicit message to them has been that Christ must have been a person of hundreds of separate antagonistic personalities. The impression left with them is that His *gospel* is a strangely confused and contradictory message. How could the heathen possibly be attracted to such a person and such a message?

The Tragedy Of Unbelief

The Lord recognized that the soul-damning consequence of unbelief would result from division and discord among those who believe in Him.

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me (John 17:20-21).

In the phrase, “them also that believe on me through their word,” the Lord referred to all who would truly become His disciples by obedience to the gospel. He was praying that members of His blood-bought church be united, which, sad to say, we are not. He is not praying specifically here that the denominations be one; they are not within the purview of His petition. He is acknowledging that division among His true people will be a stumbling block to the world, including those in the denominations, causing them to turn away in revulsion and derision.

However, by extended principle, that for which the Lord prayed concerning unity and unbelief applies to the obviously divided state extant in denominationalism. To the heathen and pagan, denominationalism and Christianity are the same. Doubtless many millions in the heathen world have observed the confusions and contradictions in denominationalism, the only representation of *Christianity* to which they have been exposed, and have concluded that it is little, if any, improvement over their own religious systems.

In fact, many who were reared in denominationalism, young and old alike, have lost their faith in the existence of God, the Deity of Christ, and the inspiration of the Bible because of the absurdities, hypocrisies, and contradictions of the denominational philosophy. There are perhaps few more powerful causes of religious infidelity than the blight of denominationalism.

Wasted Time, Money, Energy, And Talent

Consider for a moment the duplication of effort that is made among all of the denominations in training preachers, building buildings, and preaching their respective messages. Also, consider the immense sums of money that are spent in carrying on these efforts. One can scarcely imagine what great advancements could be made for and by the Truth if all of the time, energy, talent, and money presently spent by the several denominations to propagate their several flawed messages were poured into one united effort to preach the simple Truth of the Gospel!

Disrupted And Divided Homes

Anything that tears scripturally-authorized homes apart is a blight on society and a stench in the nostrils of God. Yet, this is one of the awful curses of denominationalism. Millions of homes are divided by denominational loyalties and interests. When the husband is a devout Baptist and the wife is a dedicated Presbyterian, they (and then their children) must go in different directions, not only on Sundays, but on many other occasions as well. Many couples are miserable, while many marriages have failed completely, due to fierce denominational loyalties.

But, of course, it is not the Lord's plan for all of the members of a family to merely be in one denomination, any more than for each family member to be in different ones. **He does not want anyone** to be in **any** man-made religious body. The problem of division in the home also occurs when one who is a Christian is married to a member of a denomination who resists any overtures and encouragements to study the Bible. In such a case the Christian assumes a heavy burden indeed. Not having experienced such, we can only imagine the grief and frustration that are often suffered by such saints from the comments they have made and the advice they have sought of this writer over the years.

It cannot be successfully gainsaid that religious division directly affects marriage and the home adversely, robbing its principals of the happiness that can and should exist in the family circle.

Eternal Damnation

These are harsh and biting words in these tolerant and non-judgmental times, but we have chosen them to accentuate the worst of all tragic consequences of denominationalism. Those who are in denominational churches are in a lost condition, and if they do not escape them before death or the Lord's return, they will be lost forever. *Denominationalism* is another word for division, factionalism, and sectarianism, concerning which Paul wrote: "They who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:20-21). The embryonic denominationalism extant in Corinth when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians was labeled *carnal* behavior (1 Cor. 3:1).

The denominational message will lead men to the damnation of hell rather than to the salvation of heaven, because it is a defective *gospel*. Its various messages require either more or less of men than the Lord requires for salvation. The denominations were neither sown nor planted by God; consequently, He will uproot all of them (Mat. 15:13). Denominational leaders fit the mold of those described by the Lord as "blind guides." Further, those millions of precious souls who follow them are likewise blind, believing themselves to be saved when they are lost. The fate of both classes is certain: "If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Mat. 15:14).

At the judgment, the Lord will hear the pitiful pleas of those in the denominations who have done various works, believing they were serving Him, only to hear Him say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:22-23). He prefaced this description of the Judgment Day with the categorical pronouncement: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat 7:21). The multiplied millions of people who populate the hundreds of denominations are generally relying upon the very thing for their salvation which the Lord declares to be insufficient: their intellectual acceptance of the fact that Christ is God's Son, short of their obedience to His plan of salvation. How our hearts and voices should go out to these poor lost souls in false sense of spiritual security!

The consequences of involvement in denominationalism are therefore neither few nor minor.

THE CURES FOR DENOMINATIONALISM

Earlier we discussed five causes of denominationalism. We now state the obvious: The cures for this spiritually-fatal malady are to prevent or reverse the causes, which we now need to briefly discuss in turn.

We Must Exalt Christ Above Any And All Men

When Paul rebuked the division of the Corinthians due to their following men rather than the Christ exclusively, he asked them some pointed rhetorical questions: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? ” (1 Cor. 1:13). These questions were deadly thrusts against their denominational spirit. They all aimed at one central truth: If they exalted Christ above any man, including the inspired apostles, they would be one. Christ alone died for them, they were baptized into Him alone, and they should exalt Him above all others. Division and denominationalism cannot exist when Christ alone is exalted and followed, because **Christ is not divided!**

When did Peter, apparently several years after Pentecost, cause a division among brethren in Antioch? He did so when he exalted certain brethren from Jerusalem above the Christ (Gal. 2:11-14). What caused the Galatians to teeter on the brink of abandoning the gospel for the law of Moses? They began exalting Judaizing teachers above Christ (Gal. 1:6-10; 4:17; 5:12; 6:13). The same phenomenon is observable in other New Testament congregations where problems arose, as the epistles clearly attest.

Exalting Christ above others must be done without exception, even of those nearest and dearest to us in this world: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat. 10:37). The fact of the matter is that denominationalism and every other level of division (though short of actual denominationalism) will cease when, and only when, men are content to exalt Christ consistently above any and all men.

We Must Exalt The Doctrine Of Christ Above The Doctrines Of Men

This denominational prevention and/or cure is closely related to the previous one, but deserves some notice of its own. One of the indisputable implications of the rhetorical question, “Is Christ divided?” is that His doctrine is not divided in the sense of its being self-contradictory. Rather, it is a harmonious, unified, singular whole. This truth is well-illustrated by the long-observed fact that the plural term, *doctrines*, is never used in reference to the doctrine of Christ, but only when humanly-originated dogma is being described.

The most common means by which men exalt other men over the Christ is by heeding human doctrines rather than the Lord’s doctrine. The followers of Luther are identified by their allegiance to his doctrines. The disciples of John Calvin are such due to their stubborn adherence to his theological system. While few denominations actually bear the name of some man or men, it is nonetheless true that every denomination owes its existence to the fact that the doctrines of one or more men have been given precedence over the doctrine of Christ.

The significance of exalting the doctrine of Christ above that of any mere man or religious conclave, however august the person or body might claim to be, is accentuated by the following:

1. The Bible issues frequent and strong warnings against (1) doctrine that is contrary to Bible teaching, (2) against those who teach such, and (3) against departing from Bible doctrine. While these warnings are found in the Old Testament, they are even more prolific in the New. Jesus warned of false prophets (Mat. 7:15-16). Paul’s epistles are rife with such warnings (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:14; 5:6, 11; Phi. 3:2, 18-19; Col. 2:8, 16-19; 1 The. 2:14-16; 2 The. 2:2-12; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3:1-8, 13; 4:3-4; Tit. 1:9-14; 3:9-11; Heb. 13:9; et al.). Most of the other epistles and the Revelation contain such warnings also (Jam. 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 3:3-5, 17; 1 John 2:18-19, 22; 4:1-3; 2 John 7-11; Jude 4, 17-18; Rev. 2:2, 6, 14-16, 20; et al.).

2. The Bible issues constant and powerful exhortations to adhere strictly to the inspired Word. Again, there are many such exhortations in the Old Testament, but the New Testament is especially full of them. The only way one can be a true disciple and know

the freedom Truth brings is by abiding in the Word of Christ (John 8:31-32). If we reject His Word, we thereby reject Him (John 12:48). To the Christ we must “hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak” (Acts 3:22). We are commanded to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Cor. 16:13). This emphasis is seen in passage after passage (e.g., Gal. 1:6-12; Eph. 6:17; Phi. 1:27; 2:12; 4:9; Col. 2:6-7; 3:17; 1 The. 2:13; 2 The. 2:15; 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:6-7, 16; 6:3-5, 13-14, 20-21; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2:2, 14-15; 3:14-17; 4:1-2; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 7-8; Jam. 1:21, 25; 5:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 2:1-2; 4:11; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:1-2; 3:18; 1 John 1:6-7; 2:3-5, 24; 3:24; 5:3; 2 John 6, 9-11; 3 John 4; Jude 3, 17; Rev. 1:3; 3:9-11; 22:7; 18-19; et al.)

Seed produces fruit only after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12; Gal. 6:7). Spiritually, as physically, a corrupt tree will produce corrupt fruit (Mat. 7:17b). The Book of Mormon *seed* produces Mormons when it germinates. The Koran produces Muslims, the Methodist Discipline Methodists, the Catechism Roman Catholics, and so on. None of the above, nor any other humanly-produced religious *seeds*, will ever produce Christians or the church of Christ, because such seeds are flawed and corrupt and can only reproduce flawed and corrupt fruit in religion.

However, “every good tree bringeth forth good fruit” (Mat. 7:17a). The good and pure spiritual *seed* is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). When the unadulterated seed of the gospel is sown into good soil (receptive hearts) it will bring forth only the fruit of pure, unadulterated, *unhyphenated* Christians, members of the pure, unadulterated church of the Lord. Just as no corrupt message can ever produce the church of Christ, so no pagan or denominational religious organization will ever be produced by the pure seed of the Word of God! The simple seed and fruit principle, which is universally acknowledged as operating without exception in the physical realm, is just as absolutely operative without exception in the spiritual realm. It is amazing that the masses can so readily accept it in the former, but so glibly deny it in the latter!

Whenever any religious body decides to follow only the doctrine of Christ and then executes that decision, **it will inevitably cease to be a denomination**. In fact, it will thereby become a church of Christ! Denominationalism cannot exist where only the doctrine of Christ is preached and obeyed.

We Must Exalt The Authority Of Christ Above Selfish Preferences

All authority belongs to Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mat. 28:18; John 17:2). The authority of Christ is expressed and exercised through His own words, spoken while upon the earth (Mat. 17:5; John 6:63, 68-69; 8:31-32; 12:48; 14:6, 15, 21, 24; 15:10; 17:14; Heb. 1:1-2). However, His authority is **no less** expressed and exercised through the words of His inspired men (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-20; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 5:3-5; 14:37; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; et al.) The authoritative words of both Christ and His inspired men constitute the New Testament portion of the Bible.

In order to be acceptable to God, men must submit themselves completely to the authority of the Christ, which includes all of the words we speak and the actions we perform (Col. 3:17). However, our submission also involves even “bringing **every thought** into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5b). This requires the discipline of “casting down imaginations [reasonings, ASV fn.], and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5a). Men who press their doctrinal or practical preferences in religion in the face of those things which are authorized by Christ through the New Testament are basically sectarians, factionalists, heretics. If they proceed in pressing their personal preferences their own imaginations and reasoning at all costs, denominationalism will finally result.

Conversely, the only way to prevent and/or destroy denominationalism is for all men to sacrifice their personal, subjective desires in religion and recognize the one, infallible, objective standard of the New Testament. **Where the authority of Christ is genuinely respected, denominationalism cannot and will not exist!**

We Must Exalt Respect For Scripture Above Sincerity Of Heart

While acknowledging that sincerity is essential for one to acceptably serve God, it is axiomatic that one can be sincerely wrong. Due to ignorance, misinformation, presumption, or other factors, one may be mistaken, yet be sincerely convinced that he is correct in his conviction or behavior. Sincerity does not convert carbolic acid into water, regardless of one's sincere belief that the acid is water. Drinking the liquid in all sincerity will be nonetheless fatal. So also is the

case in the realm of thought and principle. Sincerity of belief does not change error into Truth or wrong into right in the realm of religion.

So far as we know, Cain was sincere in believing his sacrifice was just as acceptable as Abel's, but it was rejected by God (Gen. 4:2-5). It appears that Nadab and Abihu sincerely believed they were serving God when they brought forth the "strange fire" for which God destroyed them (Lev. 10:1-2). Saul of Tarsus sincerely believed he was serving God when he persecuted Christians (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11).

To use sincerity as the arbiter of truth or correctness in religion is to reject a real standard of belief and practice. How can sincere person "A" question the belief or behavior of sincere person "B" though they hold directly opposite beliefs? Sincerity is but another form of human subjectivism that exalts the feelings, desires, and choices of men over the objective authority of the Scriptures. Denominations flourish in part because respect for the inspired Word has been cast aside in favor of sincerity. The Scriptures set forth the balance of determining what they authorize and then sincerely obeying them.

We Must Exalt Unyielding Truth Above Misplaced Tolerance

Forbearance, long-suffering, and tolerance toward others are urged upon all who would please God. We are to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1-2). The denominational application of this beautiful trait represents an abuse of it, making use of it to justify tolerating practically any and every belief and innovation in religion that men can invent. They thus employ a misplaced tolerance for their own departures from the Truth, as well as for those of others.

However, God is not infinite in His superior forbearance, as exemplified on numerous occasions (e.g., the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, et al.). When it comes to the matter of hearing and obeying the Truth of God's Word, at some point tolerance for error becomes a vice rather than a virtue. We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Were it not for tolerance of the wrong things and intolerance of the right things, denominationalism would soon fade away. Denominationalism cannot long continue when men refuse to tolerate those things which God cannot tolerate, as revealed in His unyielding Word.

CONCLUSION

In stark contrast to the chaos of denominationalism stands the beautiful, undenominational church of the Lord.

The church is one body (Eph. 4:5); denominationalism is hundreds of bodies.

The church was built by Christ (Mat. 16:18); the denominations were built by men.

The church has one head Christ (Eph. 1:22); the denominations have many heads, all of them mere humans.

The church contains those who are saved (Acts 2:47); the denominations separate salvation from church membership.

The church will be delivered up to the Father by Christ (1 Cor. 15:24); the denominations will not be thus delivered by Christ.

The church will be saved by Christ (Eph. 5:23); the denominations will not be saved by Christ.

The church is Christ's everlasting, unshakable kingdom (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28); the denominations are destined to be uprooted (Mat. 15:13).

The church upholds the inspired Word of God (1 Tim. 3:15); the denominations uphold and follow the creeds and doctrines of fallible, uninspired men.

The church worships in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24); the denominations engage in vain worship because they follow the doctrines of men (Mat. 15:9).

The church was purchased with the perfect, precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28); the denominations were *purchased* with mere human resources.

The church preaches one Gospel (Gal. 1:7-9); the denominations preach many *gospels*.

The church is a part of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10-11); the denominations exist due to the purposes and plans of men.

The church is a spiritual kingdom which originated in Heaven (John 18:36); the denominations are carnal *kingdoms* that originated on earth.

We plead with any and all who may read these words and who are in a religious denomination, to leave it immediately, obey the gospel plan of salvation, so the Lord can add you to His church!

ENDNOTE

¹All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

WASTEFULNESS

Eddie Whitten



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INTRODUCTION

Worldliness is likely the greatest tool Satan has to challenge the church of our Lord. The reason is that there are so many facets to worldliness. Many have been, and will be, addressed in this lecture-ship. The list of worldly subjects is endless. Not too many people would think of *wastefulness* as being associated with worldliness, but it is certainly a major topic in this regard.

As it would naturally occur, the story of what men call the Prodigal Son immediately comes to mind. In his impatience, the son asked his father for his portion of his inheritance to which his father complied. Luke records the tragic saga of the son: how he “wasted his substance with riotous living” (Luke 15:13).¹ The lesson being taught by Jesus in that passage was the joy that is experienced over one sinner that repents, but the illustration graphically shows the influence of worldliness by the wastefulness of the son.

Some may look upon the account of the wasteful son in Luke 15 as an isolated event or just an illustration used by the Lord to teach the lesson of repentance, but the tragedy of wastefulness is vividly emphasized. There are many areas of life in which we may not be aware of the great tragedy of wastefulness nor the influence of worldliness that results in wastefulness.

Let us, in this study, explore some areas in which wastefulness can become blights in the life of a Christian. When we are made aware of

some ways, we can improve our service in the kingdom of God; we should take note of that and utilize every effort we can to do our best to be better servants.

THE WAYS OF WASTEFULNESS

Time

Time is a precious commodity. The passage of time is relentless; it is without interruption. Life seems to pass rather slowly in many respects. It seems to take a long time for a year to pass. So much can be done in a year, and with the technology we enjoy today, it is astounding what can be accomplished in a year. We refer to those of advanced age as having lived a long, long time. It registers in the human mind as a long life. Those who live a hundred years know it is beyond the expectation of a normal lifetime.

When one's lifetime is compared to the time the earth has been in existence, it is viewed in a different light. Now, life is rather short in comparison. Most of us will die before we reach the age of one hundred. It is the rare exception for one to live that long. The Psalmist said, "The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psa. 90:10). The Preacher warned: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecc. 12:1). As time passes, the pleasure of our youthful days begins to wane, and the burden of years takes its toll in our activities. As Solomon pointed out in the succeeding verses of Ecclesiastes 12, the aging process takes place ending finally in death (Ecc. 12:7).

Most of us can remember the days of our youth regardless of our present age. It seems like it was just yesterday that we were skipping and playing childhood games. It was only a few days ago that adolescent dreams danced in our heads and great plans were made for our future. Some realized their childhood fantasies; others still only wish theirs had come true. Time passes so rapidly as we remember. Time passes so slowly as we ponder the days ahead.

It comes quite naturally for men to refer to the future in positive terms. We are prone to make comments about plans for tomorrow, or next week, or next year without much thought. James reminds us of our need to be aware of time. He said, "Whereas ye know not what

shall be on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam. 4:14). Keeping that sober thought in mind should help us to be more aware to use time in a more responsible manner. William Blake, an English poet, wisely stated, “The hours of folly are measured by the clock, but of wisdom no clock can measure.”² Each day we live, we are granted time for the Master’s use. “Each day is a little life: every waking and rising a little birth, every fresh morning a little youth, every going to rest and sleep a little death.”³ The apostle Paul admonished, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

An unknown poet once wrote:

I have only just a minute, only sixty seconds in it.
 Didn’t choose it, can’t refuse it, but it is up to me to use it.
 I must suffer if I lose it, give account if I abuse it.
 I have only just a minute, but eternity is in it.

What wisdom is reflected in those few words!

Worldliness inflicts its mortal wounds in the lives of so many through the wasting of time. Using time wisely results in accomplishment. Wastefulness accomplishes nothing. Once time has passed, it cannot be recalled. Shakespeare penned a plaintive, but futile plea, “O, call back yesterday, bid time return.”⁴ As much as man would like to recall wasted moments, it is impossible.

Wastefulness costs thousands of hours of lost productivity in industry every day. It costs taxpayers untold amounts of money. It costs the loss of jobs for the slothful. It affects every household both monetarily and socially. Every day many souls are cast into eternity forever lost because of the misuse of time.

Jesus gave the most important use of time. He said, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35). The major effect of worldliness is reflected in the misuse of time. Anything Satan can place before us to divert our attention and efforts away from our responsibility of taking the gospel to the lost accomplishes his purpose. Time wasted is Satan’s victory.

Talent

Just as devastating to the cause of Christ as the wasting of time is the misdirection of talent. In commerce and industry, every effort is made to determine the best use of talent. Psychological and sociological tests have been designed to discover the strong points of a person's abilities. By determining what an employee's best talents are, his abilities are used in the most efficient way to achieve productivity. This is a wise and judicious use of talent.

The apostle Paul taught the principle of proper use of talent when he wrote to the saints in Corinth:

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? But now *are they* many members, yet but one body (1 Cor. 12:14-20).

The emphasis in this passage clearly shows that everyone has talents different from others and that it takes all working together to make the body function as it should. He made a similar observation to the church at Ephesus.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

It is clear from these passages that each member of the church has different talents that should be used for the health and work of the corporate body.

The sad reality in the church is the recognition that many are not using the talent they have for the benefit of the cause of Christ. The reasons for this tragedy are many. We may offer a few thoughts for this shortcoming, all of which are associated with worldliness.

Lack of love and conviction

Members of the church are not made (compelled) to do anything. Service in the kingdom of God emanates from love and conviction. So

many do just what is necessary, or expected of them, to “get by.” “I want to be a part of the church, just as long as nothing is required of me,” is the unfortunate thought of a large segment of people. Some may wish to challenge that thought, but performance always outweighs profession. The proof of one’s conviction is reflected in his attendance. One does what one loves to do. It would be ridiculous to claim one loves to sing, for instance, and never takes part in singing. The same is true in the secular world. On any given day during football season, the stands are full of fans. The weather may be extremely cold, or rainy, or hot and steamy, yet the fans are there. The reason is that they love football; so they attend the games regardless of discomfort.

To attend all the services of the church is not as important in the lives of many in the church as it is to attend some secular events of a worldly nature. The talents of those who allow worldliness to cause them to absent themselves from worship are wasted. Jesus warned concerning this attitude. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). He also condemned the scribes and Pharisees because they boasted of their knowledge of the law of Moses but did not do what it required of them. “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Mat. 23:3).

Embarrassment

Many people are embarrassed to use their talent because they do not know the Bible as well as they should. Study is necessary for knowledge. Time is required for Bible study, and they are not willing to devote the time necessary for that study. Without preparation, it is impossible to present their best before the congregation in whatever area of service might be involved. They are embarrassed. Again, no one is made to study the Bible. No test is going to be given; no incentive is there to encourage or admonish one to study; so study is postponed or neglected. The one book that will do us the best good gathers dust because of worldliness. Paul stated, “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” (Rom. 1:16). Our faith is dependent upon our knowledge of God (Rom. 10:17), yet

we are robbed of that knowledge because of the attractions of the world.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is another cause of the waste of talent. Young people reach the age when career choices begin to be made. “What am I going to do with my life?” “What career shall I choose?” “How can I make the most money?” “What can I do to be popular? Or prominent?” All of these thoughts and considerations are important, and choices must be made. For some, the thought of preaching may be suppressed because of what others are going to do—or from fear of ridicule or criticism. Satan again uses every tool in his arsenal to weaken the proclamation of truth.

For preachers, this is a vital consideration. Anyone who aspires to preach the gospel must be a student of the Bible. Preaching is the greatest of all aspirations. To sound the precious truth of the gospel requires the greatest preparation. Without the desire to preach surpassing all other priorities in life, one should never attempt to be a preacher. Someone has correctly observed that if one can do anything else in life, he should not be a preacher. Superior talents in the field of preaching have tragically been wasted because of influences of the world. Family pressure is an unbelievably powerful cause of young men not using the talent they have to preach. Parents have seen the abuse preachers have experienced and do not want that for their son; so they try to dissuade him from preaching. Another argument, from the worldly view, is that preachers cannot make as much money as they could in some other pursuit. Thus, the talent that could be used in the Master’s service is wasted.

Popularity

A powerful tool of Satan is the vanity of man. Every person should have a desire to be successful. Success is defined by some as being popular with people. If one can only be popular in his life, he can receive the accolades of all the people. To some, the greatest achievement one can obtain is the “Oscar” for the best actor or the best actress in the motion picture business. To others, winning the Super Bowl or being elected President of the United States is their greatest goal. Achieving some highly prestigious award for heroism in whatever endeavor is tremendously popular. This is the ultimate goal of

the majority of the people of the world. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong, or evil, in achieving notoriety, or popularity as long as it is wholesome and proper. But danger lurks in the motivations for such popularity. Every person should count the cost of achievement and determine if the accomplishment is worthy of the cost. Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:26). Popularity with the world can be the worst thing possible if such popularity causes one to lose his soul. James places before us a most serious consideration: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4).

To be a Christian is not always popular. It takes much courage under certain circumstances to stand up for Jesus. Society in general rejects the morals and principles of Christian conduct. It has always been this way and will likely continue until time ends. Matthew recorded the attitude of the multitudes:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:17-19).

Jesus was crucified because His teachings were not popular with the world. Some of those who professed Christianity in the first century were horribly persecuted. Paul tells us that, today, those who "live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). The quest for popularity with the world often causes talents, which could be used for the cause of Christ to be wasted.

Vanity

Vanity includes all the attitudes which focus upon self. These are the criteria for what is important to self. Not much thought is given to anything that might encroach upon what the individual desires. He becomes the center of attention for himself. His interests are centered in selfish fulfillment. The needs and distress of others must not dis-

turb his interest. John graphically describes this conduct in 1 John 2:15-17,

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The world has a firm grip upon this person's mind. He cannot be bothered with such things as "God" who cannot be proven empirically. Whatever cannot be seen, felt, smelled, heard, or tasted does not exist in the world-centered mind. Great talent has been, and is, wasted due to the worldliness of vanity. It is such a shame that so much good that could be done for the cause of Christ remains the victim of wasted talents.

Opportunities

Enjoyment of life consists largely in opportunities seized. Life would be a time of endless boredom and unhappiness without the availability of opportunities. Every opportunity poses a problem. "What are the advantages for me in this opportunity?" "What can this opportunity provide for me?" "What am I going to have to do to benefit from this opportunity?" So many considerations enter into the decision of whether to seize this opportunity.

There is a wide spectrum of opportunities, many of which are difficult to recognize. Some opportunities must be cultivated before they can be experienced. The marketplace is sustained by creating opportunities. Sales are not made accidentally but are generated by the providing of some kind of opportunity that appeals to the customer. Scientific advancement has been the result of cultivated opportunities. Research and development in many fields have opened doors of opportunity. We fall short if we do not pursue opportunities that are open to us.

It is not difficult to recognize the importance of opportunities in secular life. Every parent seeks the opportunity for his child to do better, or be better, than he. It is always a great disappointment to learn of the failure of someone to profit from opportunities he has been offered. The world recognizes the benefit and the loss of opportunities.

When opportunities are passed by, someone suffers. Especially, as we consider the availability of opportunities afforded to the Christian. There are many areas in which the Christian suffers if he fails to use opportunities he is given. For instance, most homes in America, at least, and in many other parts of the world, have access to the Bible. Yet, not very many, in comparison, take advantage of reading and studying God's word to learn how to be a better person, a better Christian. Paul wrote to Timothy admonishing him 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). The cares and lures of the world cause many, many Christians to neglect the study of the Bible. Therefore, the opportunity to better one's knowledge of the Bible is wasted. All Christians should aspire to be the best servants in the church that they can. Paul also assured Timothy that this is an attainable goal. He wrote:

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Those wishing to be equipped for excellent service in God's kingdom have that opportunity. They must devote the time to learn as much as they can about the nature and principles of Christianity. This can be done through study of the Bible.

People suffer when opportunities are wasted by the failure to teach others about Jesus. What men call the "great commission" enjoins upon the Christian to do whatever he can to persuade someone else to obey the gospel. The salvation of souls depends directly upon whether Christians are willing to spend the time and effort to teach someone else. The gospel of Christ must be taught to others. Paul also wrote to Timothy in this regard. He said, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Jesus gave the marching orders to the church before He ascended back into heaven. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The Christian is to bear fruit in the kingdom. He cannot be a passive follower of Jesus; he must be active in the work of the Master. Paul indicated to the church in Philippi that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Phi. 3:20). We

are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), and in doing so influence the minds of others to obey the gospel. One of the greatest illustrations of the necessity of teaching others about the Christ is found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. There Paul says:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Paul indicated in this passage the impossibility of being saved without the preaching of the gospel of Christ. We have the same opportunities to teach others as Paul had, or that anyone else has. Religious groups, not recognized by Jesus (Mat. 7:20-21), go to great extremes to teach their false doctrines. Many opportunities for Christians to teach the truth to neighbors, friends, workmates, classmates, etc., go by because we let worldly fears and pressures influence us to remain silent.

Obstacles present themselves to everyone, and opportunities are wasted. Eric Hoffer, philosopher, said, "It still holds true that man is most uniquely human when he turns obstacles into opportunities."⁵ Obstacles are merely challenges that we face every day that must be overcome to achieve our goals. We must not let obstacles cause us to neglect the obligations we have to teach others the way of the Cross. Jesus bore the cross that we might have the blessed opportunity to be saved ourselves, and to help others to be saved, as well. Let us not waste our opportunities because of worldliness.

SOME REMEDIES FOR WASTEFULNESS

Since most "Ways of Wastefulness" are the products of human origin and practice, it may seem an impossible task to suggest remedies for wastefulness. People get "set in their ways" sometimes, and getting them to change their habits is very difficult. Perhaps it is impossible in many instances. If one does not want to change his ways, it is extremely hard to convince him to do so. However, there are some ways to help people better themselves.

Conversion

As strange as it may seem, there are multitudes of people who call themselves “Christian” who really are not. They have been baptized by immersion, but they have not repented of past sins and habits that are detrimental to the cause of Christ. There is a lack of understanding of what constitutes Christianity. Wherever the blame might lie, the sad fact is the commitment that comes from understanding is not there. Worldliness still has control of the person’s interest. The church is not his first priority.

First, a person being taught what to do to be saved should be taught clearly that without his obedience to the gospel he would be lost in eternal torment. Without the understanding of the difference between salvation and condemnation, what incentive can a person have to make a change in his life.

Second, a person being taught what to do to be saved should understand clearly the distinction between the church and denominationalism. If the Lord’s church is not **the** church Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), what would it hurt to stay in the same denomination, or other religious body, to which he already belongs, if any. Today much confusion is being caused by some in the church that are teaching that the church of Christ is just another denomination.

Third, a person being taught what to do to be saved should understand the purpose of baptism. Baptism is for the purpose of washing away past sins, which is preceded by repentance. Repentance should clearly be understood as the changing of one’s mind about what the direction of his life must be and be willing to change from his former direction of self-fulfillment to submission to God’s Will.

Education

No new Christian is expected to know all about the church and what is required in his relationship with God immediately upon his baptism. There is the matter of education; learning what the Christian life is all about. The blessings that come from being the right kind of person as well as the consequences of sin are learned over a long period of time. Peter admonished Christians to “grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord” (2 Pet. 3:18). Time must be allowed for this ongoing process to occur—in fact, it is a lifetime project. No one

ever reaches the level of spiritual knowledge and maturity that he cannot be taught something of deeper meaning than he knew before. Those who take the position that they have ultimate knowledge have not learned the very basic nature of the Bible.

Life's lessons are deeply ingrained in a person's psyche. For instance, the view the world has concerning the contribution varies, but the general consensus is that 2% or 3% of one's income should be sufficient to give. It takes time and teaching for one to realize that giving to the Lord is a blessing that brings joy to the one that generously gives. Paul called it a *grace* in 2 Corinthians 8:7. Other aspects of the Christian life need to be learned from study and experience. New Christians need to be taught the deeper things of the gospel. The writer of the Hebrews letter confirms this progressive process. He said:

For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:13-14).

These verses immediately follow the admonition that those Hebrew Christians had been in the church long enough to be teachers, indicating they should have already been taught enough to be able to take the "strong meat" of the gospel.

Constant, faithful, true teaching of the word of God will eventually remedy the ways of wastefulness if the student continues to study and equip himself in the way of righteousness. No leader in the church, no faithful member of the church, no preacher, no elder, no Bible class teacher ever began his or her Christian life fully equipped to handle every choice life requires. It takes time, study, and continual development to be able to discern right from wrong and be able to make the proper choices.

CONCLUSION

Wastefulness is a highly draining condition that weakens and hurts the church of our Lord. Its causes are many, and its consequences are severe. It is a malady that only time and faithful leadership and preaching can cure. The time will probably never come that there will be no wastefulness at all in the church. Everyone is a victim of wastefulness in some part of his life. We are not suggesting that the church

can ever be free of this weakness, but we can realize it is a reality and prepare to contend with it in a better way.

Would it not be a wonderful thing if we could all realize what wastefulness does to both the individual Christian and to the church collectively and be willing to work to avoid it to the best of our ability? Let us pray for God's help in doing so.

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²William Blake (1757-1827), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 7, "Proverbs of Hell" (1790).

³Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German philosopher, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, "Counsels and Maxims" (1851).

⁴William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Salisbury, in *Richard II*, Act 3, sc. 2.

⁵Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), U. S. philosopher, *Reflections on the Human Condition*, aph. 27 (1973).

CONSEQUENCES OF WORLDLINESS

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As we investigate “Consequences of Worldliness,” it seems imperative to understand the individual terms of this subject. Webster defines *consequences* as “that which follows from any act, cause, principle, or series of actions; an event or effect produced by some preceding act or cause; a result.”

Therefore, when one is speaking of consequences, he is speaking of the results which have or will occur because of his actions. Parents, for example, set rules for their children, and when those rules are broken, the children are punished. These children would be suffering the consequences of their actions.

There are many biblical examples of the consequences of individual’s actions. Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree that was in the midst of the garden (Gen 3:1). Satan deceives the woman and she eats. She then gives to the man and he eats. The consequence of their action was for them to be driven out of the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24). Nadab and Abihu were given instructions on what fire to use in the offering of incense. They chose to offer “strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1).¹ The consequence of their disobedience was: “There went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Lev. 10:2). Saul was commanded to “utterly destroy” Amalek

(1 Sam. 15:3). Even as simple as those instructions were, Saul and the people chose to spare Agag and the best of the flocks (1 Sam. 15:9). Saul learns about the consequences of his action, when Samuel says, “Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king” (1 Sam. 15:23). Ananias and Sapphira concocted a scheme “to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land” (Acts 5:3). Because of their action, they are struck dead (Acts 5:5, 10). As one can see, some consequences can be quick, decisive, and even deadly. Therefore, one should consider carefully his actions, taking into consideration the consequences.

Worldliness is defined as “anything that takes one’s mind away from God and the things he has commanded his children to do.”² Woods states in connection with 1 John 2:15 that “the ‘world’ of this passage is a sphere or cosmos (*kosmos*) of evil, an order which is opposed to God, and to whose pursuit those who abandon the Lord have dedicated themselves.”³

What is so frightening about worldliness is that many things which are worldly, are not “wrong within themselves.”⁴ Yet, when one places the item before God, then it becomes wrong (Mat. 6:33). Many would have worldliness to refer to things which are inherently wrong, such as the items listed in Galatians 5:19-21,

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.

This does not seem to be the most dangerous part of worldliness. Most can honestly say, “I have never been a part of something like this. I am not an adulterer or murderer or drunkard.” But the major problem with worldliness is when one unconsciously dethrones God. James warns, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). No one likes to think of themselves as the enemy of God, but when he puts something in front of God, he becomes the enemy of God. He could put many things in front of God: family, friends, and even possessions. When this happens, he is allowing worldliness to control his life. Christ warned, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole

world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:26). Now, there is nothing wrong with an individual prospering, but if one has to give up his soul to do so, then the consequence is too great!

Anyone who has preached for any length of time has heard individuals give the excuse, "I have to work all the time; that is why it is impossible for me to be at Church." If this is our attitude, **we need another job!** We should not blame family, work, friends, and wants for our spiritual weaknesses; especially, when the truth is we are simply working for our selfish goals. Is this what we are going to give up our souls for? Are we willing to spend an eternity in a devil's Hell for a \$40,000 a year job, rather than a \$30,000 a year job? Christ also warned "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). Those whose are blinded by the consequences of worldliness are those who will be caught unawares. H. Leo Boles states:

"Surfeiting" is a word common in the vocabulary of medical writers for the nausea that follows a debauch. "Drunkenness" in the original is from the word "methu," which means wine, and is used in the New Testament only here and Rom. 13:13 and Gal. 5:2 1. "Cares of this life" means the anxieties of life, while "as a snare" means to make fast as a net or trap; Paul uses this word several times in speaking of the devil's snares. (1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26) God's judgment comes unlooked for, "suddenly," as a trap or "snare" upon the careless.⁵

We must not be caught in Satan's snare. It could cost us our souls. Christ warns that we need to "take heed." He says it is a matter of the heart. Which is going to rule our lives: these worldly things, or the fact that Christ is coming back (Luke 21:36)? Lamar states that Luke 21

appropriately closes with an earnest caution against the dangers from within. Guard against your own lusts, lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness - lest the mere animal part of your nature become master over you, leading you to relax your vigilance, and so that day come upon you unawares.⁶

Worldliness can control and condemn our lives, if we choose to let it.

Paul tells the Christians at Colosse: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). Is this where our affections are? Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Are our hearts set

on spiritual matters? Is the most important thing in our lives to go to heaven and carry as many as we can with us? Just where are our affections?

Usually one can tell what a person loves by where he spends his time, money, and abilities. Many want to spend little or no time in service to God, but they want to talk about how much they love God. It is so true that “talk is cheap.” Where do we spend your time and money? Is it at work or maybe little league or at Parent Teacher Organization to help the school? The point is there are many good things to occupy our time, money, and energy, but when they displace God, they become worldly and detrimental to the Christian.

Paul tells Titus that we should deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Tit. 2:12). Paul, speaking to the church at Corinth said, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). To the church at Philippi, Paul said:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phi. 2:3-5).

The choice is ours! Which attitude will control our lives? Time and time again we are warned of worldliness. There are great dangers, and the consequences will be eternal. We must be careful of what we deem to be important. We have seen that the consequences of a Christian’s actions can be harmful. Let us look at some of the consequences of worldliness.

In the parable of the soils in Matthew 13:1-23, the thorns represent the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which “choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Mat. 13:22). Too often, Christians allow circumstances of this world to determine how they are going to handle certain passages. Let someone’s child get in a bad marriage, and all of a sudden, they do not see Matthew 19:9 on divorce and remarriage, as they have always seen it. If someone “walketh disorderly” (2 The. 3:6) and it is “kin,” then they really should not be withdrawn from. This type of reasoning goes on and on and on! What is happening is that they are choking the Word of God, squeezing it right out of the situation!

Many times when worldliness is involved, God's Word is thrown out. Like the lawyer who came tempting Christ (Luke 11:25), many are going to try to justify (Luke 10:29) what they are doing at the Bible's expense.

Notice how worldliness chokes the Word of God and causes the Christian to become unfruitful. In Mark 16:15-16, Christians are told to *go*. **Most** Christians will say, "I cannot go because I have this job, or I got a new house, or I have these children to think about, or I have too many obligations here." God tells us to *go*, but we think we cannot because we consider the sacrifice too high. God tells us to give (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Some Christians are going to say, "Just as soon as I get the new house and new car and my retirement plan and the children's education paid for, then I will start giving as I should." Why can we not see that worldliness will make us unfruitful? Some are going to get involved with the Lord's work, just as soon as there is time. The sad thing is Satan will make sure that they never have time. There is always going to be a job, a ball game, or a family member coming by to keep them away from their service to God. Our life can be full of important things to do, but it should be full of **the most important** thing, which is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27). How many have become ineffective to God because of the cares of the world? Christians cannot allow the cares of this world to cost them their souls.

Another consequence of worldliness can be a false sense of confidence (Luke 12:15-21). Because of his riches, the rich fool is going to have confidence that he is going to live for a long time. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry" (Luke 12:19). Whereas, he should have known of the uncertainty of tomorrow.

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (Jam. 4:13-17).

"Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2). Riches will not prolong life,

but they can cost a person his soul. The brevity of life is often taught in the Scriptures. “For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is none abiding*” (1 Chr. 29:15). “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope” (Job 7:6). “Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good” (Job 9:25). Riches cannot guarantee tomorrow. No one should put his confidence in them.

Because of his riches, the rich fool also lost sight of the needs of his soul. Worldliness will not be able to save our souls. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26). But we are told that God’s Word is able to save our souls. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). A man is a *fool* when he loses sight of the only thing that can direct his eternal destiny. Paul advised the Ephesian elders on the importance of God’s Word when he said, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). It is God’s Word that has the power to “give an inheritance.” Is it not strange that man puts so much emphasis on worldly things?

According to Paul, worldliness can cause one to be dead in trespasses and sins:

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

Coffman says that it is “evident in this verse that the deadness of unregenerated men is a derivative, not of their birth, but of their sins.”⁷ According to what Paul said, they had “walked according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2:2). Coffman goes on to discuss the course, where he states:

the course of this world is laid out in harmony with self and selfish desires. The person walking after this manner regards not the will of

God but only the passions, appetites and ambitions of egocentric self.⁸

These who were dead because of the course of this world are those who are “wholly separated from God.”⁹ There is a vast difference in being “dead in sin” and “dead to sin.” These which are described in Ephesians 2:1-3 are those who are “dead in sin.” They are separated from God, without hope, and headed for an eternal damnation because of their worldliness.

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 (Gal. 5:19-21).

Those who are “dead to sin” have hope and are alive by Jesus Christ. “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:2). “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). When we become dead to sins, we then have a responsibility to live unto righteousness. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). Are you “dead in sin” or “dead to sin”? It truly depends upon your attitude toward worldliness.

Apostasy is a consequence of worldliness. “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia” (2 Tim. 4:10). It is sad when Christians leave their first love. Demas “having loved the present age stands in contrast with those who love the appearing of **the Son of God.**”¹⁰ Barnes suggests that “having loved this present world” does not necessarily mean that Demas was “an avaricious man,” but that “he was not willing to stay with Paul and subject himself to the probabilities of martyrdom.”¹¹ Yes, even loving life itself can become worldly. Too often, we hear of Christians who have become entangled with worldliness and are no longer faithful to God.

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought

in bondage. 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 (2 Pet. 2:19-20).

What does Satan have to offer in this world that is worth one's soul? What would it take for a person to sell his soul to Satan? The problem is that many are not concerned about their souls. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28). Their only concern is the here and now, not the hereafter. For a "one night stand," men and women are selling their souls. For a high paying job, individuals are selling their souls. For pleasure, for entertainment, for family, for friends, for cars, for boats, and for just about anything, people are selling their souls.

The consequence of apostasy is going to be eternal damnation. Is that a wise choice?

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Worldliness is not of God and will cause souls to spend an eternity in a Devil's hell. Is such a price not a little too high for some pleasure? As Paul said to the church at Rome: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). No one needs to receive the wages of worldliness, but you will, unless the choice is made to be obedient to the Saviour.

ENDNOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²Leslie G. Thomas, *What The Bible Teaches—The Answers To your Questions* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1962) 2:205.

³Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1973), p. 238.

⁴Thomas, p. 205.

⁵H. Leo Boles, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1940), p. 403.

⁶J. S. Lamar, *The New Testament Commentary—Luke* (Des Moines: The Franklin Type Foundry, 1877), p. 253.

⁷James Burton Coffman, *Commentary of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977), p. 152.

⁸Ibid.

⁹David Lipscomb and J. W. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles - Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974), p. 38.

¹⁰Coffman, p. 300.

¹¹Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes: Notes on the New Testament*, "Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon" ed. Robert Frew, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 248-249.