

# ORDERLY MANNER

Owen Olbricht

Some practices that arise do so because of efforts to make worship more meaningful. As long as these efforts remain within the parameters of New Testament teaching, these efforts can be valuable in enhancing worship.

What is to be used in worship is revealed in Scripture, but nothing is revealed in the New Testament concerning when each of these are to be observed during a worship period. There are, however, some governing principles given.

Paul wrote, "But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40, NASB). The context of this verse is that more than one activity going on at the same time would interfere with another activity. Paul stated, "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret" (1 Corinthians 14:27, NKJV). "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Corinthians 14:29-31, NKJV).

The word "orderly" (1 Corinthians 14:40) comes from the Greek *taxis*, which is used of a "fixed succession or order,...strict (chronological) order,...in an orderly manner." [Frederick W. Danker and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd edition, from Walter Bauer's Fifth Edition, 1958 (Chicago, IL.: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 803.]

Paul is admonishing the Corinthians that their services are not to have activities that overlap and distract other activities. All is to be done in an orderly fashion.

This principle would exclude two men preaching at the same time. One man preaching while another was leading a prayer or while the congregation was observing the Lord's Supper. The same would apply to singing a song while the Lord's Supper is being observed. The purpose of the Supper is to give members time to meditate on Jesus' sacrifice for them and their relationship with Him.

Perhaps the singing of a song during the Lord's Supper arose because our present society feels every moment must be filled with activity and all quiet moments must be filled. Another reason may be that those who arrange for worship may not realize the personal involvement of each person during the Supper. Every person in the congregation

has his own spiritual needs to consider in the eating of the Supper in order to receive the spiritual strength provided by the Supper. No one song can provide for all the personal association with Jesus that should take place during the Supper.

For this reason singing a song creates a problem for the worshipper. If he concentrates on the words of the song, he cannot engage in his own private meditation on the body and blood of Jesus and his relationship with Jesus. If he concentrates on the Lord's body and blood, he cannot follow the words of the song. Having the congregation sing during the Lord's Supper is disruptive of the meditations of worshippers seeking to "judge," Greek *diakrino*, "discern" the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

The Lord's Supper is a sharing or communion, Greek *koinonia*, of the Lord's blood and body (1 Corinthians 10:16). Planned activities going on at the same time that distract from this sharing are a violation of an "orderly manner." In order to carry out the services in an orderly fashion the singing and communion cannot go on at the same time but should be done each one at a separate time.

Nothing is wrong in seeking to make the gatherings of the church meaningful worship assemblies. In so doing, however, all must be done in an orderly manner. Overlapping activities that distract from other activities are to be avoided. Singing songs during the Lord's Supper may seem to fill in moments of silence but in so doing such songs interrupt the worshippers efforts to concentrate on their relationship with Jesus as they commune with the body and blood of Jesus.—  
305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120-2804

## THINK ABOUT IT

Opportunity may knock only once,  
but temptation leans on the door bell.

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If you need some kind of excuse, see your  
preacher; he has heard more than anybody else.

# WHAT DOES IT COST TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Alan Caudle

*"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:28)*

Many times, children of God find it difficult to understand why those outside of Christ do not or will not submit themselves to the gospel, even when the urgency of accepting God's soul-saving plan is presented to them in the clearest of terms. Aside from the problem of those who feel they have already been "saved" through the misguidance of denominational dogma, it is indeed a wonder why most morally good people do not gladly accept the Bible's teaching concerning God's great and only way of salvation.

But the devil understands why. And within his arsenal of evil endeavors is the proliferation of the belief that it costs too much to become a Christian—too many denials of self, too many pleasures lost, too much fun to be missed. Young people especially are vulnerable to such thoughts and many find themselves asking, "Is it true? Is there a price? How much is it? If I become a Christian, will I be happy?" The God-given answers and their subsequent lessons are vitally important to the souls of young and old alike.

**There Is A Cost To Discipleship.** It would be deceitful to say that there is no cost, no price to pay in becoming a Christian and living the Christian life. Jesus himself said that one should "count the cost." It would also be false to say that sin has no pleasures. Hebrews 11:25 speaks of those who choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There is pleasure in sin, but it is not of long duration...it is only for a short time.

In view of the fact that a cost is involved, someone might ask: *How much must I love the Lord and what must I be willing to sacrifice* in order to pay the cost of being a Christian? The answers can be found in two passages of the Bible. The first, in Matthew 22:37, "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." The second, in Romans 12:1-2, "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."

The law of service demands that one follow Christ, as can be seen in Matthew 16:24: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." These truths are essential for those who would pay the price to take on the name of Christ...to serve and follow Him all the days of their lives.

**The First Cost Is To Inform Oneself.** The builder of the tower, in Luke 14:28, is told to sit down and count the cost. Certainly, it would be foolish to do otherwise. A builder must have that information in order to determine whether or not he can complete his endeavor. He must be well informed in order to begin and finish the work he has planned to do.

In much the same way, we must inform ourselves concerning the Christian life. The Apostle Paul was concerned with this in 2 Timothy 2:15, when he urged, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Informing ourselves is a life-long process that leads to the richest of rewards.

**The Second Cost Is To Transform Oneself.** The aforementioned passage of Romans 12:2 teaches this very thing. When a person becomes a Christian, when he is purified and redeemed by the blood of Christ, a great transformation occurs in his life. If this change does not happen, a conversion has not taken place. The soul is purified when the heart's desires are changed and altered, from that of evil to that of righteousness, transformed through obedience to God's word: "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 Peter 1:22). His word must dwell in our minds and control our actions: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:16-17). We must inform ourselves as to what the Lord wants us to be in order for a transformation to take place.

**The Third Cost Is To Deny Oneself.** There is no sin more prevalent than selfishness. Yet Jesus taught, in Matthew 16:24; that a person should "deny himself, and take up his

cross and follow me." Those guilty of selfishness cannot worship God as they ought, nor will they be interested in helping others as expected. It is no wonder that so many fail to worship and serve Jehovah as sincere, consecrated Christians, when they desire everything for themselves (including money, pleasures, talents, love, desires and glory) and little or nothing for their Heavenly Father. The story of the rich young ruler should be a well-remembered lesson, along with the fearful fact that one who refuses to renounce the world will also be renounced by Christ.

**The Final Cost Is To Lose Oneself.** Jesus taught a vital truth in John 12:25, when He exclaimed, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." The meaning is simple — one who loves his life too much will live for things of short duration (the pleasures of this earth), with little or no thought of eternity. But the person who is willing to give up the "good things" in this life...who "loses his life" for Christ and His cause...shall find a home eternal in heaven.

Are you engrossed in His work, in talking to others about their souls' condition, in trying to influence others by your conduct and righteous living? If so, you can say that you are losing your life. If you are willing to suffer rebuke and ridicule while you stand for the right, you are losing your life for Christ...and one day you will find it in eternity. The more we do for others (and for Jesus), the more we lose ourselves in self-forgetful service.

It is essential that we count the cost of serving Christ, for it does cost something. We must be informed, we must be transformed, we must learn and determine to deny ourselves as Jesus teaches, and we must lose ourselves in service to the Saviour. Only then can we ever enjoy and understand the Christian life and the pleasures to be found therein.—400 Valenica Drive #1223, Maumelle, AR 72113



## EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Thomas B. Warren (1920-2000)

There are those today who claim that the Bible teaches that there are Christians who are not members of the Church of Christ. But I have no hesitation in affirming that the Bible teaches the every person who is a Christian is a member of the church of Christ. This means, obviously, that I am affirming that the Bible teaches that there are no Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). The saved are those who have been reconciled unto God, and those who have been reconciled unto God are members of the body (church) of Christ (Ephesians 2:13-18). The matter is really just that simple, but in the light of the importance of the matter, let us say a bit more about it.

The Bible teaches that salvation is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10). To be in Christ is to be in His church (Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 20:28; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:7; et. al.). The Bible teaches that it is impossible for one to "cross the line" into salvation without "crossing the line" into Christ. The Bible also teaches that it is impossible for one to "cross the line" into the church.

The crucial relation of the church to salvation is seen in the statement. "And the Lord added (Greek imperfect "was adding," T.B.W.) to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47, KJV). *The English Revised Version*, in an excellent treatment, translates Acts 2:47 in this way: "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved" (Greek present participle).

In short, the Bible teaches that there are no Christians outside of the church for which Jesus died. When one obeys the gospel, being baptized (as a penitent believer) in the name of Christ (that is, by His authority), the Lord adds him to the church. He never fails to do this (cf., Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). *The Spiritual Sword*, April 1985, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 6

# WHEN “CONSERVATIVE” ISN’T SOUND

Mike Vestal

Being religiously “conservative” is not necessarily the same as being sound in the faith (Titus 1:13; 2:2). The two are not synonymous terms. Without any doubt, there are many areas in which Christians are to be, and must be, conservative. But this is not always so. Rather, we must always endeavor to be sound. Of the twenty-three passages where the Greek word for “sound” does occur, twelve are in the gospel accounts and nine are in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. The Greek word always has reference to health, wholeness and well being, whether in a physical or spiritual sense.

The idea of spiritual soundness is especially to be seen in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. We are to be sound “in the faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2). We must cling to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). And we must speak, hold and yield to the sound words of Christ (1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:8). The emphasis in these passages is on God’s word as a received body of fixed teaching that is to be used to give us the spiritual health we all should desperately desire, as well as to counteract any teaching, concept or practice that would threaten our soul’s health and well-being.

The fact is, there are real dangers in thinking that conservative always equals sound and vice versa. And this is not just an exercise in semantics or straining at some technical, but unimportant, subtlety. This becomes particularly true at a time in which an increasing number of brethren seem to be showing less respect for the authority and all sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is possible to become so carried away with the disregard for God’s word that we are seeing on the part of some brethren that we fall from our own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:16-18). And just as some in their quest for something more have been guilty of compromising Scripture and of damaging their relationship with God, so some in their efforts to be conservative may unwittingly have exhibited something considerably less than what the Lord desires. Christianity involves all the love a man has—his heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). Sometimes “conservative” is merely a buzz word for being sound asleep, or for excusing oneself from at least some aspect of the will of God. And that’s when “conservative” isn’t sound! To be more specific, consider the following

occasions when being “conservative” isn’t sound.

Soundness always has reference to good health, wholeness and well being, whether in the spiritual sense (cf., 2 Timothy 1:13) or physical (cf., Luke 15:27). But this is not always true of conservatism. There is a “carnal conservatism” that is every bit as real and wrong as the increasingly blatant disregard a number of brethren are displaying toward the authority and all-sufficiency of Scripture. To be more specific, consider the following occasions when being “conservative” isn’t sound.

**When One is Not Motivated by Love.** Revelation 2:1-7 speaks of the church at Ephesus. This church was an active congregation as well as one interested in doctrinal purity. In many ways it would have seemed to be a wonderful congregation. But the Lord said they had “left” their “first love.” And that’s serious! 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 speaks of the possibility of eloquence in communication, depth in knowledge and sacrificial giving (all good things) being worthless unless one is motivated by love.

**When One Fails to Act Wisely and Expediently.** This has to do with the need to humbly respect God’s will and to do what He has authorized in a manner that reflects sound judgment and action (1 Corinthians 6:12). It is possible to believe what is right, but to lack a sense of discernment and diligence in properly carrying things out (Philippians 1:9-11; Hebrews 5:11-14).

**When One Talks but Doesn’t Do.** What is so sound about any individual or church that talks but does not practice it? (See James 4:17). And while none of us is perfect, those who truly love the Lord will ever strive to do His will more completely (Ephesians 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 3:8-10). As John penned, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

Are both our actions and attitudes sound?

**When Sinful Pride Replaces Humility.** Is it not possible to become so proud of our stand on various biblical matters, as well as the acclaim, associations, and opportunities that may come along with that stand, that pride rears its ugly head in us? (cf., 1 Corinthians 10:12; Proverbs 16:18). One may take a stand for truth without knowing God deeply and richly, but God desires both! (Colossians 1:9-10; Philippians 3:10). Humility drives

away sinful ego when we truly seek to know Him. As John the Baptizer said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

**When the "Whole Counsel of God" Gets Lost in the Issues and Controversies of the Day.** Truth is often controversial, and error must be dealt with, but the "whole counsel of God" must be proclaimed too (Acts 20:27). It is not enough to just rebuke and reprove error; one must exhort, comfort and strengthen (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 20:20). God's people must not be known only for what we are against. We must also be known for what we are for! (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). There is seemingly no end to the number of errors which may be seen about us, but that is no reason to give congregations a steady and constant diet of every issue and controversy among us. Evangelism and vital forms of edification can easily get lost in the shuffle when this is done. May God give us all greater wisdom in exercising biblical balance in this regard.

One of the greatest dangers of "carnal conservatism" is that it is so insidious. It is easier seen in others than in ourselves. And while I trust, "carnal conservatism" isn't so in any of us, it is still wise and proper to ask, "Master, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10). For to be guilty of such is to be unhealthy and unsound.—Granbury Street Church of Christ bulletin (May 11, 18, 25, 1997).

## PRAISING GOD

Don Deffenbaugh

As God's children we have the wonderful opportunity to praise Him. We are instructed in His Word to worship Him on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Not only is the day of worship set forth in the Word, but the avenues whereby we are to express our adoration to Him are set forth. We are to sing (Ephesians 5:19), pray (Acts 2:42), observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42), and give of our means (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The manner of our worship is also clearly set forth by our Lord in John 4:24. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth. This means that our worship is to match the

one who is worshiped. He is Spirit and hence only spiritual worship will do. For example, when we sing we are to *psallo* (vibrate by touching, twanging) the heart (Ephesians 5:19). We are to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22). Then there is David's description of his worship. He said, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart" (Psalm 9:1). There was no half-hearted praise of thanks with David—he used his whole heart. When praising and thanking God we should become altogether involved in what we are doing. A divided heart will not adequately praise God.

John 4:24 also teaches that our worship is to be in truth. It is to be as truth and according to truth. This very fact will negate much of what is done in the present religious world as worship. The Word of God, which is truth, must regulate what we do in worship. A great disservice is done by those who teach that worship is not regulated by God. According to this view man becomes god to determine what pleases him in worship and God is left out altogether. Our worship is to be done "in truth."—P.O. Box 307, Neosho, MO 64850

## WHAT TIME IS IT?

Someone has prepared a mathematical parallel between the 70-year life span and the 24 hour day. You might want to check where you are right now:

- \* If you are 15, it is 8:51 a.m.
- \* If you are 20, it is 11:00 a.m.
- \* If you are 30, it is 1:25 p.m.
- \* If you are 40, it is 4:16 p.m.
- \* If you are 50, it is 6:50 p.m.
- \* If you are 60, it is about bedtime—10:11 p.m.
- \* If you are 70, it is approaching midnight!

# HOW TO BE PERFECTLY MISERABLE

Carl Garner

There are some decisions in life that are made below our conscious level. We cannot sit down, ponder the options and then chart a particular course, but gradually and slowly these choices are made. We have all known people with manifold problems, and good reasons to be irritable and depressed, yet they were pleasant, positive, and determined to make the best of whatever comes. They had made one of these choices—perhaps not consciously, but just as certainly—they were going to be happy! On the other hand, we may know others with fewer problems, less reason to complain, yet for them nothing is ever quite good enough. They love to talk about their troubles, and they constantly fret or grumble about something or someone. They, too, have made a decision—they are going to be miserable! And nothing anyone can do is going to deprive them of their enjoyment of that misery. As a service to those who have made the latter decision, the decision to be miserable, we offer the following ten guidelines for being miserable and enjoying it:

1. **Think and talk about yourself as much as possible.** In every conversation, use “I,” “me,” and “my” as often as possible. Center all your thoughts on your own interests, and whatever you do, do not become interested in or concerned about others. Talk about your troubles to everyone you see. It will not be long before no one will talk (or listen) to you, and then you can really be miserable (Romans 15:1-2).

2. **Measure your happiness by the amount of money or possessions you own.** If the first suggestion does not sound good to you, then this one will work. Compare what you have (or do not have) with everyone you know. Determine to have more or better than your neighbors, and resolve not to be satisfied until you are successful. Of course, by then your neighbors will have something new, and you can start over (Hebrews 13:5; Luke 12:15).

3. **Be suspicious and jealous of everyone.** Do not trust anyone, especially anyone who might be in competition with you. When another person receives an honor, explain to everyone that you could have done better if you had just tried. To be really miserable, you must envy everyone else their success and their happiness. That makes sense, does it not (Romans 12:10-16)?

4. **Be sensitive, easily offended, and impossible to be comforted.** Make everyone walk on eggshells around you for fear of offending you. Make it clear to all you know that you will not take anything off anybody. Look for insults in the comments of others, even when none are intended. And then return the insults, humiliating everyone who speaks to you (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

5. **Never forget a criticism or another person's mistakes.** If you want to be miserable, you must have a good memory. When someone has criticized you—or even if you think they have—do not ever forget it or let them forget it. And any time anyone makes a mistake, mark it down and periodically remind them of their blunder. As they say, misery loves company (Philippians 2:2-4; Colossians 3:12-14).

6. **Think the worst about everyone.** If a rumor begins about someone else, tell those you see that you suspected it all along. Expect the worst from others and you will usually get it. If possible reach the worst possible conclusion from seeing the deeds of others. If an action could have been motivated by greed or envy, assume that it is—then tell everybody (Mark 2:14-28).

7. **Demand agreement with your opinions.** Make sure everyone knows of your opinions, and then show hurt and disappointment when others disagree. Of course, you must make sure everyone knows that your superior wisdom and insight demands acceptance of your conclusions (2 John 9-11).

8. **Never forget a good deed you have done.** Be proud of your occasional charitable acts, and if people do not know about them—tell them. Sulk and pout if others do not go on and on about your goodness and righteousness, while showing the appropriate gratitude (Matthew 6:1-4).

9. **Shirk your duties whenever you can.** Let others know that you are too occupied in important things to be responsible for mundane matters such as helping the needy, visiting the sick, or cleaning the church building. If you cannot avoid these duties, then put them off till next week or next month.

10. **Refuse to forgive or show mercy to anyone.** Accept no reasons for failure in others. Make everyone aware of someone else's mistakes, and refuse to accept

anything put perfection from your friends (if you have any left) and associates (Ephesians 4:32).

You might be able to be perfectly miserable without following these guidelines, but if you fall short, that is just one more way of achieving depression, despair and distress. You have got to make your choice and then work at it. Have a miserable day!

## WHEN DOES OPPOSITION TO ERROR GO "TOO FAR"?

Walter Pigg

There is a sense in which we can never go "too far" in opposing error. Truth must always be upheld and error must be opposed. But in opposing error it should be acknowledged that wrong can be committed. The wrong would not lie in the act of opposing error, but rather in the actions of the opposer. But even if the opposer of error acts in a wrongful manner, which does happen some times, this does not remove or even lessen the error he is opposing. This we need to remember. Error is error, and the mistakes of those opposing it do not change this fact. The following are clearly examples when one goes "too far:"

**When the motive is wrong.** Truth, even when it sharply rebukes and condemns error, should be "in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

**When that being opposed, or when the opposition to a thing, is opinion.** Error involves a violation of, a going beyond Truth, not opinion.

**Seeking vengeance against the teacher of error is going too far.** The Lord says, "vengeance is mine" (Romans 12:9).

**Being uncivil, uncouth, or mean in opposing error is going too far.** We are to be "gentle toward all" (2 Timothy 2:24). Satire, irony, even sarcasm (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:7-14) have their place when there is a point to it. However, this should not be confused with being a smart aleck. Some of the biting rhetoric employed by some is out of place, and may even result in rendering the opposition to error less effective than it might otherwise have been. Observing demeanor and behavior are such visceral matters, that often the very people trying to be reached have already tuned out due to what they perceive as someone

being an ill-tempered, smart-mouthed boor. No: That does not absolve them of guilt or responsibility; it's just a separate question.

**Manifesting a Holier/than/thou attitude in the opposition to error is going too far.** Opposing error is a Divine mandate, yet it must not be done with the spirit and attitude of the Pharisee who went up with the publican into the temple to pray (Luke 18:10-14). A haughty man thinking of himself more highly "than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3) stands condemned even if what he is doing is right. (Taken from a longer article, entitled "Have We Gone 'Too Far' In Opposing Error?", *Banner of Truth*, November 1996. A free publication of the Hickory Grove Church of Christ, 1131 Hickory Grove Road, Almo, KY 42020-9332

## PREACHERITIS

Bobby Key

Every faithful preacher of the gospel should be loved and respected by those who seek to follow righteousness. While this is generally true, some exalt a preacher to a position God never intended. Some who are spiritually weak, honor a preacher above the Lord.

Preacheritis leads people to follow men rather than Christ. The church at Corinth had a problem with this very issue. 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? For while one saith, I am of Paul: and another, I am of Apollos: are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man" (1 Corinthians 3:3-5).

How often have you heard of elders deciding to discontinue the services of a preacher only to be met by rebellion with the preacher leading the fight, and carrying away a faction to begin a loyal congregation—that is, a congregation not willing to submit to the elders!

Brethren, one cannot go to heaven idolizing and worshipping preachers. We must be followers of Christ, not men. Any church built around the personality of the preacher, regardless of his ability, will crumble under its own weight. When any man is placed above Christ, destruction is not far away. A church with preacheritis is bound to self-destruct.—324 17th SW, Miami, OK 74354



### **GG IN A CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY**

Parkview Drive Church of Christ is in the process of opening a Christian Library which will benefit both the church family and the community. Our Church family, as well as the community, will greatly benefit from the information provided by your publication, *Gospel Gleaner*. Therefore we would like to be placed on your mailing list to receive your publication. We thank you in advance for sharing your knowledge with us as we continue the uplifting of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Larry S. Burrell, Minister, Parkview Church of Christ, Monroe, LA.

### **ENCOURAGED BY GG**

I received my first issue of *Gospel Gleaner* this week and feel very strongly the need to let you know how much I appreciate this sound publication. I was especially touched by the article "We Have Made A Mistake" by brother Max R. Miller. I would like permission to use this article in our church bulletin. I recently moved to West Helena, AR from Los Angeles, CA. I served for almost twenty years as a public school administrator while there. I was very saddened by the direction many of the congregations in California were going—and am even more disheartened when I returned to the southeast and learned that many of the congregations have departed from the "old paths." I am currently serving as the minister of the Twin City congregation in West Helena. Again, thanks for your stand for the truth. I am encouraged as I read the articles that other faithful brethren contribute to your publication. William Coates, West Helena, AR.

### **A CONTRIBUTION TO THE LORD'S CAUSE**

You are doing a great job with the *Gospel Gleaner*. Thank you for the contributions you are making to the Lord's cause. Look forward to seeing you again when our paths cross. Wayne Jackson, Stockton, CA.

### **ONE OF THE BEST**

The GG is one of the best papers and the most attractive in the brotherhood. Keep up the good work. I remember seeing you at the Bellview Lectures. I received the Vol. 18, #1 today. Can't wait to read it. We have four congregations in the Montgomery area that have left the old paths. May God bless you. James W. Berry, Montgomery, AL.

### **ENJOYS IT MORE EACH ISSUE**

I have read a couple of copies of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Each time I enjoy it more. Please add my name to your mailing list. Enclosed is a contribution and thank you so much. Bessie Baughker, Ocean Springs, MS.

### **LEARNED OF GG ON THE WEB**

Please add me to your mailing list for your publication. I am always looking for sound publications and I understand yours is one. I got your address from Garland Robinson's website and I know that Brother Garland would not promote it if it were not sound. Craig Melton, Wendover, KY.

### **VERY INFORMATIVE**

We recently saw a copy of your GG Vol. 17, No. 4 and we saw that it is very informative and just great. Therefore we are kindly appealing to you if you may put us on your mailing list. We are servants of God working with Dzivarasekwa Church of Christ in Harare, Zimbabwe. May God bless you for this great work. Howard & Snodia Suwari. Harare, Zimbabwe.

### **FAITHFUL AND SOUND**

I would be greatly edified in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ if I could receive your faithful and sound publication of *Gospel Gleaner*. Thank you for glorifying God. Scott Gann, Red Boiling Springs, TN.

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## AGENTS IN SCRIPTURAL CONVERSION

W. Douglas Harris

Conversion is a “change from one state to another, a spiritual or moral change which accompanies the turning of a sinner from his sins to God” (*Webster*). This is a very controversial subject. One theory says conversion is wholly an act of God (Calvinism); another says it is entirely the work of man. As is generally the case the truth lies in between these two extremes.

As our topic suggests, there are five agents in every scriptural conversion, which we will discuss later, but first we will note some other scriptural facts about conversion.

**NECESSITY OF CONVERSION.** Jesus said in reply to a question asked by His disciples, “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). How could it be made clearer? No one should deceive himself into thinking that God will take him home to glory without his being converted. Other passages verify the same truth (Cf. Acts 3:19; James 5:19-20). Man’s departure from God by his own transgressions (Isaiah 59:1-2) makes it necessary. If man had not gone away from God, there would be no need of talking about man’s being converted back to God.

**OBJECT OF CONVERSION: SPIRITUAL TRUTH.** Numerous passages affirm that to which we must be converted is the Truth of God’s word. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). For further proof of this see John 14:6; James 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:15; and John 17:17. (Note: We are assuming the reader has enough interest to check all these pas-

sages to determine if we have made the right application).

The truth of God’s word is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in conversion (Ephesians 6:17). Everything that is said to be done by the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of alien sinners and the sanctification of Christians is also said to be done by the word. What is the harmony? Answer: Ephesians 6:17. God’s revealed word is the instrument or tool that the Holy Spirit uses in conversion and He does not operate independent of it.

**AGENTS IN SCRIPTURAL CONVERSION.** 1. The Holy Spirit, who revealed the truth to inspired men (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13), which the sinner can read and understand (Ephesians 3:1-7). The Holy Spirit does not bypass His word to bring about conversion in some mysterious way.

2. The apostles of Christ confirmed the word by miraculous signs that had been revealed by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:1-4; Mark 16:17-20; 2 Corinthians 12:12). This word has already been confirmed by those miraculous signs of the apostles and needs no further confirmation. Thus, there is no further need for miracles.

3. The Preacher proclaims the truth (word) revealed by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the apostles (Romans 10:14-17). Human agency in the proclamation of saving truth cannot be bypassed in scriptural conversion. In every example of conversion recorded in the book of Acts (the book of conversions), human agency was involved in

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In my Bible study and sermon preparation I sometimes discover certain topics that seem scarcely addressed by writers and preachers, both in and out of the Lord's church. This conclusion is based upon the sources that I have at my disposal. In trying to study the topic of God's mercy recently, I could find very little written on the subject. If I had wanted to study about God's judgement, justice and wrath, I would have a wealth of material to read. That's fine. We need teaching on these matters.

Sometimes people say to me, "You need to preach more hell-fire and brimstone sermons." They remember those preachers of yesteryear who scared them royally, and feel that the current generation needs a good dose of godly fear. I agree. All things considered, I always preach the Bible, and that certainly includes the fiery elements, but is not limited to such. No one has ever said to me, however, "You need to preach more love, mercy and grace." And why not? Does the Bible not teach it? Indeed, Paul preached God's love, mercy and grace: "God...is rich in **mercy**, for his great **love** wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, [by **grace** ye are saved]" (Ephesians 2:4-5, emphasis mine). Can we possibly be saved without it? We all stand somewhat in the position of the publican, who "...standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). We ought to be shouting it from the rooftops!

Mercy is mentioned in the Old Testament often as the "lovingkindness" of the Creator (Psalm 25:6; 51:1). Akin to this is the expression "tender mercies." One of the Hebrew words employed is a verb that denotes parental affection, and the noun emphasizes maternal feeling. It is always rendered tender mercies, because there is no feeling in human nature that is stronger than a mother's love for her children.

## Some Characteristics of Divine Mercy

Divine mercy is universal. All men are the objects of God's mercy. This is why Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20). They took the merciful message of salvation to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23). Paul said that it even came to him, chief among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Divine mercy is indestructible. A parent never ceases to love a child. Even if that child should become ever so rebellious, but returns home, he is received with rejoicing, as was the prodigal son. So it is with God's mercy. It is everlasting. Divine mercy is perfectly consistent with God's holiness, and therefore with his hatred of sin, with his justice, and therefore his determination to punish the ungodly eternally (Romans 3:25-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12).—10820 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103





One of the politically correct words that has made its way throughout our culture today is the word “tolerance” and various forms of that word. Today it is politically correct to be tolerant regarding a variety of moral issues, but when one is not they are considered intolerant. Ironically, those who espouse tolerance demonstrate no tolerance for Christians who

believe in the objective biblical moral standard by which one must live. The politically correct suddenly become very intolerant when the Christian suggests that abortion or immoral lifestyles are wrong, or that the human life is more important than a tree or a bird. Christians who recognize the authority of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), as that which governs one’s life, are viewed as intolerant. Tolerant or intolerant, Christians must often stand alone on the Word of God. While the world often views Christians as intolerant there is a sense in which some Christians are very tolerant.

Some Christians tolerate the truth being preached week in and week out and never truly come to believe it. These Christians hear the truth of God’s Word proclaimed weekly, yet they never truly believe it. It would seem that there could not be a more tolerant person than one who hears the Word of God on a weekly basis, but does not truly believe. For example, they tolerate the truth to be taught from the Bible that there is one church, as the Bible says (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4), or about the spiritual nature of the church (Matthew 28:19-20), and yet, constantly refer to the church as if it is one in the same as a denomination. They tolerate the teaching of the Bible plan of salvation, that one must believe the gospel, repent of their sins, confess Jesus as the Son of God, and be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38), yet feel that all one has to do is believe, or that any immersion for any reason is biblical. They tolerate the preaching of truth regarding true worship, that it must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), consisting of prayer, preaching, singing, the Lord’s Supper, and giving every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), but they don’t really

believe it. They tolerate Bible truth to be taught against immorality, drunkenness, forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, and many other things (Galatians 5:19; Hebrews 10:24-25), but then do it anyway. Sometimes congregations tolerate error, such as the church at Corinth in the beginning, but there are some congregations that actually tolerate truth.

Sometimes Christians and congregations can be very tolerant in spite of what the world says, as they tolerate the teaching of truth, but fail to believe and obey it. This is easy to see regarding one who attends the worship assembly, hears the truth, but does not become a Christian. They tolerate the teaching, but do not accept it. The same thing can be applied to those already Christians, too. Let’s do more than tolerate, let’s believe and obey. 1363 Hwy 270 E., Sheridan, AR 72150-6711

## WHAT I COULD DO IF I REALLY WANTED TO

*If I wanted to*, I could make this church the most wide awake and working church in all the world.

*If I wanted to*, I could visit members who are sick or shut-in and find other ways of helping them.

*If I wanted to*, I could attend Bible classes regularly and encourage others to do the same.

*If I wanted to*, I could show more devotion in worship and receive much more good from the services myself.

*If I wanted to*, I could profit more from the sermon by not resenting the truth when it reveals some of my weaknesses.

*If I wanted to*, I could tell others about Christ and His church and lead them to Him.

Of course, all this depends on what I want to do. I could be an honored servant of the greatest of all kings. I have the ability—if I really want to.—*Mountain Home Messenger* (November 4, 1998).

## "KEEP THYSELF PURE"

Guy F. Hester



Our title, "Keep Thyself Pure," are the words of the inspired Paul to his son in the Gospel, Timothy (1 Timothy 5:22). How badly this admonition is needed in this sinful and adulterous age. Where there is impurity there is weakness. Some foreign substance gets mixed in during the process of making metal and the product is weakened. Some dirt gets in with the sand in the making of concrete, and the concrete will not hold up; it is weakened. Members of the church do not keep themselves pure, and we have a weakened church.

David said, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psalm 24:3-4). Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The pure in heart can and do enjoy God. If it were possible for the impure to go to heaven, it would not be happiness for them. They have not been schooled and prepared for such an environment. Heaven is prepared for those who prepare. God is pure in all of his attributes and characteristics. His words are pure. We read in Psalm 12:6, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." The commandments of God are pure, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8). Men may and do give impure commands, but not so with God. God's wisdom is pure. James said, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Thus you can associate purity with God and all of his attributes.

We are going into God's presence at the judgment. We want to be with Him and the Lord Jesus Christ throughout eternity. For this to be so we must be pure. John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth

not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Peter wrote, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," (2 Peter 3:1). Paul wrote these words to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "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."

Let us ask, how can we and how must we be pure?

**FIRST, WE MUST THINK PURE THOUGHTS.** Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Again in Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee." We are what we think about. Paul said, "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" (Philippians 4:8). When we think along these lines, we are thinking pure thoughts.

**WE MUST USE PURE WORDS.** Our speech must be pure. Paul said, "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" (Ephesians 4:29). Our speech has so much to do with either saving or damning our souls. Christians are pure in speech.

**WE MUST BE PURE IN OUR ACTIONS TOWARD OTHERS.** Paul admonished, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). This will regulate our conduct toward others.

**WE MUST LIVE PURE LIVES.** Again Paul admonished, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou

an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

**CHRISTIANS MUST ADORN THEMSELVES IN PURE DRESS.** No verses are put in the Bible as fillers. Listen to the instructions of Paul to "women professing godliness" in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "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; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." Ladies and girls, do you profess godliness? If you do, and do not dress and act the way these verses instruct, your profession of godliness is vain. Peter said, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4). May God help Christian women to adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit. These are the ornaments you can take with you to the judgment. The others will have to be left here or in the grave.

**FINALLY, WE MUST BE PURE IN RELIGION.** There is so much impurity in the religious world. Even many members of the true church do not have pure religion. James said, "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" (James 1:27). Not only are many guilty of neglecting the orphans and widows, but entirely too many members of the church are spotted by the world. There are many things that worldly people do that Christians can't do. There are many places that worldly people go that Christians cannot and must not go. There are many organizations to which worldly people belong that Christians must not. God intends that we keep out of these worldly things. We are in the world, but we must not allow the world to get in us. While the ship is in the water, all is well; but when the water gets in the ship, disaster is ahead. So it is with us all. May the Lord help us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.—E-mail: g.hester@juno.com

# SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Bill Dillon

September 11, 2001 is long to be remembered by this and future generations. It will be recalled for its infamy and destruction of innocent human life. A dark and sinister force has for a long time declared America "the big Satan" of the earth.

It is past time that children of God fall back on that which binds us together and that force which shall see us through the remembrances of that evil day. That force is our faith in God. Keep your faith always; cling to it in the dark and dismal seasons of this earthly life. This faith will eventually prove to be mightier than the mightiest bombs and more enduring than all the nations of the earth. Let us remember the suffering, sacrifice and courage made by literally thousands on that fateful and dreaded day, but let us also acknowledge, even a year later, that with God, all will come out right.

We are not going to ever give in to our fears (2 Timothy 1:7) and we are not going to give out our hope. Our hope is in Him who made us, the worlds, and all that is. We have it within our power to be known as "the generation of faith." So strong that neither tears nor fears can defeat us. Mark 11:22 says simply but powerfully "Have faith in God!"

As our federal government utilizes its full resources toward continued recovery and retribution, let us commit the entirety of our spiritual resources toward continuing to lead our fellow citizens towards repentance and the renewal of the commitment to God in their lives.—  
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# WHAT'S HE DOING UP THERE?

Allen Webster



all tell me!"

Five million sermons will be preached in America this year. The pulpit has an unparalleled opportunity to reach the minds of men. Yet, the world would be better off if many of the sermons were never preached. This is not said to discredit preaching for "it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21); it is to emphasize the danger of false teaching (Galatians 1:9), and the seriousness of having the right approach to this weighty task (James 3:1).

A preacher who does not understand the purpose of preaching will be wholly unsuccessful at accomplishing what God intends. Many are confused about why they preach. This is evident by how they preach. A preacher's purpose is not to:

- Simply amuse audiences;
- Discuss political issues;
- Manipulate people to steal their money;
- "Preach the preacher" (instead of Christ).

Oswald Sanders said, "We used to think that the chief end of man was to glorify God. Now we're tempted to say the chief end of God is to gratify man." Paul faced the problem at Corinth with men preaching themselves instead of the Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:2). He wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

What are the purposes of preaching?

**CONVERT THE LOST (ACTS 3:19).** During the height of the Roman Empire, there were two great orators. It is said that when Cicero spoke, the people said, "What a magnificent oration." But when Demosthenes spoke, the people said, "Let's go fight." There is an element of persuasion in preaching. Preaching "pounds on closed

hearts until they open to change." Peter was more like Demosthenes than Cicero. On Pentecost, "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Conversion is the great purpose of preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21). Sinners plunging headlong toward hell need to know of God's love (John 3:16), Christ's sacrifice (Matthew 20:28), and the Bible's plan of salvation (John 8:24; Acts 2:28). They do not need to be simply amused. Cicero, sit down and listen; Demosthenes, take the pulpit!

**CONVICT THE ERRING (2 TIMOTHY 4:2).** Preachers are dying men preaching to dying men. [Of course, there is the story of a preacher who was addressing the people one Sunday, trying to impress upon them the importance of religion. "All you people of this congregation," he cried from the pulpit, "One day you're going to die. Do you hear me? All you people of this congregation, one day you're going to die." One little man sitting in the front pew started to laugh, so the preacher asked him, "What's so funny?" The man answered, "I don't belong to this congregation." James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988) p. 212]. It is serious business to stand before God in judgment (Hebrews 10:29). Those who were once enlightened and have left the Lord need to be brought back before they leave this world unprepared (Matthew 25:46). The latter end is worse than the first (2 Peter 2:20-22). If they fail to repent, many stripes await them (Luke 12:47). A good sermon has brought many a prodigal son home from the pig pen (Luke 15:20)! An English preacher was unhappy to learn, after preaching a powerful sermon against betting, that one of his own members was a heavy gambler. Immediately, he hurried over to explain that he had not meant for the sermon to come across as a personal attack on him. The man said, "Don't worry about it. It's a pretty poor sermon that doesn't hit me somewhere." With so much sin in our society, it is still "a pretty poor sermon" that doesn't hit sinners "somewhere."

**COMFORT THE FAITHFUL (1 THESSALONIANS 5:11).** Constant "hard preaching" can damage the spiritual health of God's little lambs. Yes, preaching should "afflict the comfortable," but it should also "comfort the afflicted." Back in the days when butchers made house calls, a

mother was waiting for the butcher, who was late. She told her son, "I'm going upstairs, if the butcher comes, let me know. I want to talk to him." Johnny forgot who his mother wanted to see, so when the minister called, he shouted upstairs, "Ma, that man's here now." The mother answered, "I can't come now, give him the money out of my purse, and tell him we didn't like his tongue last week, and we're going to change!" [James S. Hewett, p. 108]. Some congregations would be healthier if the "preacher's tongue" was soft some Sundays. It is not easy to walk the strait and narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14); Christians need morale boosters. The Bible calls this "exhortation" (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul wrote, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). Too many faithful Christians lack confidence in the hope of their salvation. Preaching can help them. John wrote, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...and this is the confidence that we have in him..." (1 John 5:13-14).

**CREATE FAITH IN THE YOUNG.** Young people growing up among us need to learn the Bible (2 Timothy 3:14-15). They need strong teaching so they can have strong faith. They need it now, before they have to face the hard issues of life on their own. May our young people all be able to say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up" (Matthew 19:20)! It is a delinquent parent who insists that a child do well in public school, but fails to demand (even encourage) them to do well in Bible school. Which is more important (Matthew 6:33)?

**CONTEND WITH ERROR.** Error will not go away on its own. It started in Eden and will remain as long as the world stands. It is necessary to teach the truth (John 8:32), and one cannot teach the truth without exposing error (Jude 3). Preachers are known as much by what they condemn as what they condone (cf. Matthew 12:30).

Let's end with a smile. Spurgeon was teaching preaching students about the importance of making facial expressions harmonize with sermons. "When you speak of heaven," he said, "let your face light up, let it be irradiated with a heavenly gleam, let your eyes shine with reflected glory. But when you speak of hell—well, then your ordinary face will do!"—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

## MENDING PANTS

The wives of two preachers,  
Had a friendship that was unending.  
Were sitting together as they worked -  
Their husband's clothes they were mending.

One said to the other, "My poor John  
Is so discouraged with preaching.  
He's about ready to give it up -  
There are no souls that he's reaching."

"He said nothing is going right -  
No new faces does he ever see.  
I expect that soon he'll really resign -  
But this is between you and me."

After waiting a moment the other said,  
"It's different with my Bill.  
He seems so enthusiastic,  
Just to watch him gives me a thrill.

He's praying about the building program -  
He wants some more pews put in.  
He'll have to move a wall to do it,  
And make a class room where a junk room had been.

He's looking for Bible Class teachers  
To teach the classes that are growing.  
Offerings are up, souls are being saved -  
The members' faces are glowing.

A hushed silence fell as they continued  
Their work, making each stitch so neat.  
One was patching trouser knees,  
The other her husband's pants seat.

(Author Unknown)

—From The Preacher's PC, Tom Moore, preacher  
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## WHAT ABOUT PROFANITY?

John T. Polk II



*What does the Bible say about "profanity?" I wonder if it's all right because I seem to hear it everywhere.*

When "profanity" has become profane, surely people should notice. Profanity is not just a word or two, but an ungodly and irreverent attitude toward God and His word. Profane words and other sins come from the

heart, and all persons will be judged by what they have said and done. Jesus said, "those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man" then named sins including "evil thoughts...false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:17-20). Since it is "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:43-45), then all who use profanity are profane within their hearts! If not, why not? Tree fruit shows tree root.

Some may reply, "I don't really mean it." Then Jesus said, "every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).

Some may retort, "I'm not a Christian, so it doesn't count," but the Bible showed under Moses' law, an example of a boy brought up in a religiously mixed home who "blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed" during a fight, but was to be put to death (Leviticus 24:10-16). It mattered not whether one was a visitor or a native-born Israelite, "One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you" (Numbers 15:16; Exodus 12:49). The New Testament does not demand the death of blasphemers, but the words of Jesus will judge all people, whether they believer or not (John 3:18-21; 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

### BIBLE CONCEPT OF PROFANITY

Profanity is that which "brings down, makes common or easily trodden that which is sacred or holy." The Hebrew Old Testament expression translated by

"profane" meant to "bore out, render hollow," and its Greek New Testament counterpart meant to "treat as common, like a doorsill." Any attitude, word or practice is thusly condemned that reduces or strips holy meaning from God and His word, or that elevates the common to the level of sacred. The language in which it is spoken, or the exact words used, may vary from country to country; therefore it is the profane attitude, and not quibbling over which word(s) are profane, that is the concern of Scripture.

Since "hell" is God's appointed place for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), and "damnation" is God's appointed condition for sinners (Mark 16:16), then it profanes these to use them freely and with no purpose in conversation! Christian will heed Ephesians 5:3-6: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness [anything base, defiled, embarrassing], nor foolish talking [stupid, senseless, not intended to edify, idle], nor coarse jesting [double entendre, dirty jokes, turning good words into bad (i.e., "Jesus Christ" into Jesus Christ!, "gay" into homosexual, "churches of Christ" into denominations/sects, etc.)], which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Hilarity from Hell cannot be good.

Profaning God's Word is the prelude to all sin. The Devil's first effort was aimed at getting Eve to view God's condemnation as meaning less than "you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6). When that law was reduced [profaned, jtpII] in her heart, she sinned. Esau "despised his birthright" by bargaining it away for a bowl of soup in youthful folly and learned later it was irretrievable (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:32-38). Centuries afterward, he still was regarded by God as representing the "profane person" (Hebrews 12:16-17). Lightly regarding a holy matter, or desecrating the "holy," is profanity, and it is done, not only in word and works, but in worship, as well.

Profanity is difficult to overcome. Peter had closely followed Jesus for three years, but when he denied knowing Jesus to save his own skin, he reverted to fisherman's language, and "began to curse [call down the direst of evils] and swear [affirm, promise, threaten]" (Matthew 26:74; Mark 14:71). When Peter had no truth to his statements nor Word of God on his side, he did what so many others do – he used worldly words to numb his own conscience from its pangs (Hebrews 4:12-13). Profanity is the "drug" of men whose consciences are being seared (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

## BONFIRE OF THE PROFANITIES

**God's name in vain.** Many think God's first name is "O my" or His last name is "damn" but in either form, its frequent use as exclamation without respect, is profanity. God had said to "not take the name of the Lord in vain" [without proper respect, jtpII] (Exodus 20:7). Moses wrote, "If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth" (Numbers 30:2). God commanded Israel that if oaths invoked His name, they should be solemnly made with full intent to fulfill (Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 12:16). It is not wrong, therefore, to say "God is my witness" if indeed He is (Romans 1:9; Philippians 1:8)! "Men swear by the greater" to settle disputes (Hebrews 6:16), but God swore by Himself because there is no one greater (Hebrews 6:13-14). Many people swear upon a Bible they refuse to obey, and in the name of God Whom they refuse to revere. These oaths are profanity. The "carnally minded" person refuses to be "subject to the law of God" (Romans 8:6-8), so why think the disobedient and ungodly will bide by their oath(s). (Cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-11)? "A stack of Bibles a mile high" or continual swearing mean nothing to the profane person – or to God (Matthew 15:7-9)!

Some think swearing by all else but God is acceptable, but Jesus said, "I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head,

because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatsoever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:34-37). It is as wrong to falsely swear by what God owns as to swear by Him.

Reverence for God corrects profanity. God (Hebrew, *Elohim*) created heavens and earth from nothing (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3), and should be always respected as "the Power" who "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). Israelites were told "the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome" (Deuteronomy 10:17), but they profaned His Ways time and again. Evil Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar was forced to confess this (Daniel 2:47), the apostle Paul repeated it (1 Timothy 6:15-16), and Jesus wears the title (Revelation 19:11-16). Every idol profanes God by making His creation equal or above Him in the eyes of its worshippers (Romans 1:18-25). Evolution is an idol, and so is "covetousness" (Colossians 3:5), and other idols of the heart (Ezekiel 14:3).

**God's worship in vain.** "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15). God has never wavered from that principle throughout the Bible. God specified the incense in Jewish worship was "most holy" and not to be compounded for use by anyone for any reason other than in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:34-38). Nothing else was to be offered on the incense altar (Exodus 30:8-9). Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1-2). Possibly because of drunkenness, they had failed to "distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Leviticus 10:9-10). This is a lost lesson to those "drunk" with worldly ways who make no distinction in: God and mythological deities or idols; Jesus Christ and any other "prophet" (e.g., Buddha, Mohammed, Einstein, Joseph Smith, Edgar Cayce, et.al.); Jesus Christ and any other "church head" (Roman pope, Greek metropolitan, etc.); Bible and any other "scripture" (e.g., Koran, Rig-Vedas, Calvinism, Wesley-ism, Analects, Book of Mormon,

(Continued on page 23)

# WE MUST START SOONER!

Brad Harrub



For less than \$30 you can now purchase a "Do-It-Yourself Divorce Kit" that claims to be legal in all fifty states. Our society has so effectively streamlined the divorce process that "drive-thru" divorces are advertised in states such as Nevada. By simply driving up to a window, individuals can get the papers filed and pay the

necessary fees that begin the divorce process. In just a few weeks an official decree will be mailed to the couple—effectively ending that marriage in the sight of the government. For those who cannot wait those few weeks, one internet site is now offering their services, making it possible to fly down to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic where they have the "fastest divorces in the Western Hemisphere." This legal service invites unhappy individuals to "fly down to Santo Domingo one day, fly home divorced the next!"

The 2002 Census Report documented that the median duration of marriages ending in divorce is just under 8 years (Kreider and Fields, 2002, p. 19). In their projections of marital events, they stated that nearly everyone marries, and nearly half of these first marriages will end in divorce. They then added that most of these will then remarry after divorcing from a first marriage. Marriage has become a disposable product in our society—something that, once the user tires of, he or she simply tosses it aside in hopes of then obtaining a new one. Almost one-half of adults in America are unmarried and, for the first time, single-person households outnumber married families with children. Conventional marriages are now viewed as obsolete and are quickly becoming endangered.

In an effort to keep marriage numbers up, Wendy McElroy recently suggested that we privatize marriage. She stated, "Let people make their own marriage contracts according to their conscience, religion and common sense. Those contracts could be registered with the state, recognized as legal and arbitrated by the courts, but the terms would be determined by those involved" (2002). McElroy goes on to comment that "imposing a 'one-size-fits all' model of marriage is a folly." She then points out the confusion that same sex marriages bring into the picture as proof that we need more options. As such, she

summed it up this way: "A legal marriage is whatever contract for a committed relationship is agreed to by those involved."

We have reached the point where humans not only want to redefine marriage, but they also want to tailor-make it to fit their own wishes and circumstances. We have forgotten that marriage is a covenant that was first formed by Almighty God, and as such, we have no right to change the terms. On the sixth day of creation, after Adam was finished naming the animals, God put him to sleep and performed history's first human surgery. He fashioned the female of the species from a portion of the male's body. God then presented the woman to the man—no doubt in what we would refer to as the first marriage ceremony! Observe Adam's response: "And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man'" (Genesis 2:23). It would be roughly 4,000 years later that Jesus would have to remind the Pharisees that God intended this union between man and woman to be for life.

In addressing the Pharisees' question regarding divorce in Matthew 19, Jesus pointed out that they had altered God's original plan. From the beginning God intended there be "no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). Christ then goes on to outline the only exception for divorce and remarriage—fornication. The Pharisees did not bother him further with hypothetical "what if" situations, or plague him with their opinions regarding the waiting game and the innocent party. These men understood (as does a twelve year old child today who reads that passage) that God intended marriage to be for life—period. The only exception that broke this covenant in the eyes of God was when adultery was committed in that marriage—period. However, these are hard sayings, and so now we have preachers and elderships all across the country trying to water down or make exceptions to this clear passage in God's word. Compromises are being made as individuals look diligently for acceptance, all the while disregarding the "God-breathed" Word of God. The popularity of divorce should be a wake up call for all Christians. And rather than trying to figure out ways to twist God's word into accepting "what if's" or "certain circumstances," we need to focus on the words of Christ.

We need to recall what God intended marriage to be from the beginning and start teaching on it. Preachers need to mount the pulpit and proclaim God's original plan for husband and wife. Elders need to ensure that their flock not only realizes what God's Word teaches on this, but they also need to let individuals know they will not openly accept Christians who are in marriages that God does not recognize. Additionally, we must realize that the same T. V. stars and Hollywood actors that our children often try to emulate and dress like are also teaching them very worldly practices regarding marriage.

If we are going to stem divorce in the church, we must start teaching our young people sooner! It makes absolutely no sense for the church to be filled with four and five year-olds living in broken homes or to have friends with step-parents, and yet we do not start teaching about marriage and divorce until high school. We can act like it does not exist, in an effort to protect those in elementary school—but this does not make the reality go away. Most congregations of the Lord's church believe that the topic of marriage and divorce should be addressed just prior to our children leaving home (as well it should), however, that is not good enough. This is one of the most important decisions our young people will ever make, and yet we do not even start emphasizing the importance of a life-long commitment until they are almost already married. Many teens are already actively dating by the time Bible classes begin to cover this topic. As such, hormones and youthful lusts often cloud the eternal importance of this issue. Many of our young people are rushing headlong into marriage simply so they can fulfill physical pleasures, only to wake up several years later realizing the problem. How many of our Christian young people run off and get married, and then four or five years later they find themselves single, desperately wanting a Christian mate, but not scripturally able to remarry. Consider how many tears could be prevented if we were to properly educate our young people on this lifelong decision.

We can either start teaching the Truth regarding God's original plan for marriage, or we can watch as our children line up in divorce drive-thru's. As parents and teachers, we can start spending time and money showing our children the benefits of healthy Christian marriages, or

we can set aside the \$30 and allow them to "Do-It-Themselves" when they find themselves negotiating a divorce. The answer is not to bend the Scriptures to fit a certain situation, or find a congregation that will welcome anyone with open arms—the answer is to educate our young people about the authority of God's word. If we are ever going to turn the tide, we are going to have to start sooner!—*Apologetics Press, Inc.*, 230 Landmark Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

## HORSE SENSE

A horse can't pull while kicking,  
This fact I merely mention.  
And he can't kick while pulling,  
Which is my contention.

Let's imitate the good old horse,  
And lead a life that's fittin'.  
Just pull an honest load and then,  
There will be no time for kickin'.

**MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
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Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist



## SINGING DURING THE LORD'S SUPPER

Gus Nichols (1892-1975)



*"The congregation where I worship has recently begun singing during the Lord's Supper. To me this is distracting, and I feel after such an observance of the supper that I have not worshipped therein in a worthy manner as I should. Surely no preacher would want the audience to sing during his sermon and certainly we would not want to sing during a prayer. What do you think of this innovation in our worship?"*

It is important that we observe the Lord's Supper in the right spirit (John 4:23-24). When Jesus instituted the supper," He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto the, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). Paul says that Jesus also said with reference to the cup, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). It follows therefore that nothing should be done in connection with the observance of the Lord's Supper which is likely to detract from remembering the Lord in this act of worship. The mind should take us back to the cross and there see the Son of God writhing and bleeding, suffering and dying for our sins. Paul says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29). If we do not mentally visualize and discern the Lord's body dying on the cross for us, we are partaking "unworthily," or in an unworthy manner. They had singing in the worship when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, but the record says, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:26-30). To say the least of it, our Lord did not see fit to have the hymn sung during the supper. It is obvious that any inappropriate word in a song would

attract our attention from the suffering of our Lord to something else. Wholesome as many other things may be, they should not be forced upon our minds when we are concentrating upon the cross and trying to discern the Lord's body.

It would be much more fitting for us to sing appropriate songs just before observing the supper than to sing them during this solemn item of worship. Furthermore, it would be distracting and difficult for the audience to try to sing and handle the hymnbook while breaking the bread, etc. This very fact might become a strong temptation to have a quartet to sing for the rest of the congregation while they worship.

May we further suggest that it is very effective and instructive as well to collect the various passages concerning the bread of the supper and read them before partaking of it, and then likewise read the various scriptures about the cup just before drinking of it. At least this could be done occasionally. Or, there might be one of the various records of the account of the supper read on different occasions of observing the supper until all of them have been read. The following is a fairly good list of such scriptures: Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:13-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 11:23-34. There is another passage that may be added provided that it is read with the understanding that it only *includes* the Lord's Supper as well as all else the Lord taught—that in doing all things required by Him we are living upon His word, eating His flesh, and drinking His blood (John 6:32-58).

Since the contribution is not a memorial service like the Lord's Supper. I know of no reason why we might not sing in connection with our giving, unless it be the inconvenience of depositing it into the collection plate while singing. In some places, an appropriate hymn on the subject of "giving" is sung during the collection. As best I could observe, and judging from my own reactions to it, it made that part of the service more devotional rather than to detract from it.

Of course, it would be out of order to sing hymns during the sermon on any occasion as this would be very confusing. In that case, there would be two conflicting messages demanding attention at the same time. It seems that they had such confusion in their worship in the church at Corinth, and Paul condemned it. He said, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:26). He closes the matter by saying, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).—*Gospel Advocate*, December 1, 1960. (Photo from *Gospel Advocate* "Centennial Volume," Gospel Advocate Company, 1956. Used by permission)

NOTE: In this relatively recent "Restoration Reachbacks" selection, the late brother Nichols offered some valuable teaching on a growing practice among churches of Christ.—Editor.

## ATTITUDES ABOUT ISSUES

Bill Burk

"I am sick of hearing about the issues." This declaration of weariness seems to be more common place than ever among brethren. False doctrine is alive and well in the church in regard to such matters as marriage, divorce and remarriage, the concept of proper worship, fellowship, the work of the church and a host of other matters. At times matters of opinion become issues of controversy and cause turmoil among God's people. Whether we like it or not, issues are ongoing. When it comes to the issues, some practice:

**ISSUE AVOIDANCE.** These folk believe that issues are best ignored. They say things like, "Let's just preach the gospel and leave the issues alone." However part of preaching the gospel consists of reproving and rebuking (2 Timothy 4:2), exposing (Ephesians 5:11) and testing the spirits (1 John 4:1-2). The early church faced many departures from the truth (Acts 20:28-32). Judaizing teachers were a problem (Acts 15:1-5; Galatians 1:6-9; Philippians 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:1-5, etc.). Gnostic teaching that denied the character of Jesus had to be fought and

overturned (2 John 7). Practically, the entire epistle of First Corinthians addresses the many issues that faced the church there (division, fornication, sinful litigation, misuse of liberties, worship abuses, etc.). Inspired men never avoided the issues but were set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17; 1 Peter 3:15). We must be as well.

**ISSUE OBSESSION.** These folk seem to believe that the all of Christianity surrounds controversy. Every sermon preached has something to do with the latest false doctrine or the preacher most recently gone astray. As set forth above, faithful Christians must stand for the truth (Jude 3). Evil men must be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17). Yet, in order to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), one must vary his subject matter in preaching and teaching. A constant diet of brotherhood issues confuses the new convert as to what the whole of Christianity is (Luke 9:23) and discourages the mature member who is sick and starving spiritually due to an unbalanced diet (Matthew 4:4). We must not be issue obsessed.

**ISSUE ANALYSIS.** These brethren look at each controversy carefully (1 Thessalonians 5:21). They seek to find out what the Bible has to say on every issue (2 Peter 1:3). And, as problems arise, they scripturally make a stand, while at the same time keeping focus on what is truly at the heart of New Testament Christianity (Philippians 1:21). In preaching and teaching, they reprove and rebuke, yet at the same time they encourage with all longsuffering and teaching. We must face each issue with open hearts and open Bibles, then when God's truth is seen, act willingly and lovingly (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Some would say that issues are unimportant. Yet, if false teaching is left alone, countless souls will be lost. Some are obsessed with issues seeing nothing else as far as the religion of Christ is concerned. Such an obsession is spiritually detrimental as well. Some face the issues head on, see what the Bible says, make a stand, and then keep on keeping on as it relates to growing in God's grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). What's your attitude toward the issues?—*Grandbury Street Church of Christ Bulletin*, (September 29, 2002), 1211 N. Granbury Street, Cleburne, TX 76033-4321



# WISE CHILDREN MAKE HAPPY PARENTS

(Proverbs 23:12-25)

M. W. Kiser



Selfish children are never concerned about the mental state they leave their parents in! If you are selfish, then you are a baby. It is proof you cannot handle responsibility yet. Solomon majored in wisdom. We need to listen. How can you be a wise young person?

## I. BE TRUE TO YOUR PARENTS AND HOME (verses 12-16).

- A. God gave us parents to instruct us right.
  - 1. Responsibility (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6).
  - 2. Stewardship (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7).
  - 3. Example (1 Kings 9:4; 2 Chronicles 22:3).
- B. God gave us parents to correct us.
  - 1. Concern for well being (Hebrews 12:5-7).
  - 2. Mistreat if neglect (Hebrews 12:8-11).
  - 3. Two sides to child abuse!
- C. God gave us parents to encourage us.
  - 1. Look at the opposite (Proverbs 17:21; 19:13).
  - 2. Children's sins strike at their parent's hearts. They are affected.
  - 3. Parents should be more concerned with the soul's needs than the body's!

## II. ALWAYS CONSIDER THE TRUE END RESULT (verses 17-19).

- A. Why do wicked people always prosper?
  - 1. We see the outside only (1 Samuel 16:7).
  - 2. Lifestyles of the rich and famous!?
  - 3. Look again! (Proverbs 24:1-2; Romans

12:19).

- B. What is the fear of the Lord? (Proverbs 1:7).
  - 1. Love for God as our Father.
  - 2. Duty to God as our Creator.
  - 3. Responsibility to God as our Judge.
- C. Keep in mind "the end" is not yet!
  - 1. The paths never meet! (Matthew 7:13-14).
  - 2. The further you go the farther they become apart; harder to change ways.
  - 3. The judgement day is sure (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:14).

## III. KEEP AWAY FROM BAD COMPANY (verses 20-21).

- A. "Be not among..." (1 Corinthians 15:33).
  - 1. Drinkers in general; not just drunks!
  - 2. All sensual type people (Galatians 5:21).
  - 3. It means you cannot be one yourself!
- B. Drinking = Non-productivity = poverty.
  - 1. They loose their houses and homes.
  - 2. They loose their jobs and health.
  - 3. They loose their lives and souls.
- C. Many arguments "for" and "against" it.
  - 1. Pleasure; social acceptability; deadens the pain of troubled conscience.
  - 2. But, known to destroy everything God has given to protect and guide us.
  - 3. Strong language (Proverbs 23:26-35).

## IV. HAVE GOOD PRINCIPLES ABOUT YOU (verses 22-23).

- A. Obedience to parents (Ephesians 6:1).
  - 1. They have seen life and desire only the best for you (Matthew 7:9-10).
  - 2. Disobedience is one of the first steps to ruin (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

- B. Sincere desire to do right. "Buy...Not."
1. Moral truth is going to cost us in labor, sacrifice, and perseverance.
  2. Men sell truth cheaply: for pleasure, idleness, appetite, riches, and for what is called worldly success.
  3. The standard of truth – God's Word (John 17:17; Romans 2:2; 3:4; Hebrews 6:18).
- C. Desire culture and training
1. Wisdom: don't be superficial; see the true essence of things.
  2. Instruction: moral culture and self-discipline. (Not his "redneckism!")
  3. Understanding: discern, prove, distinguish (Hebrews 5:14). [Not animalism!]

These are the things that mark young people as wise, and clearly make their parents joyous. No one can live without "do's" and "don't's." Now, more words from the wise man (Ecclesiastes 12:1-2).—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

**MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS**  
**P. O. BOX 880**  
**MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880**

#### **SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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#### **CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER**

Virginia D. Clark Millington, TN...	25.00
Dollie Paschall Puryear, TN.....	25.00
Matthew & Staci Bynum Vienna, IL.....	10.00
Walter & Eathel Buckley Maynard, AR.....	25.00
Eva Johnson LaFayette, GA.....	25.00
Ronald & Beth Cox Sylva, NC.....	75.00
Albert F. Russell Rock Spring, GA.....	20.00
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Wards Chapel Church of Christ Manchester, TN.....	25.00
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Mountain Home Church of Christ Mountain Home, AR.....	1,450.00

# ABORTION

T. Pierce Brown



scriptural.

We have recently seen a few articles on abortion. Probably the reason we have not seen more is that most of us who write assume that most who will read our articles already know that abortion is wrong and need very little admonition about it. However, that kind of reasoning would prevent us from writing much about anything received in response to a letter I had written to an editor in a newspaper. The letter raised a question about Jesus. It started off with "If He was against it, (abortion) why did He not say so?" He included a tract that started with, "The word abortion does not appear in any translation of the Bible." It ended with, "But even if it did (condemn abortion), we live under a secular constitution, not in a theocracy." We have noticed that strange kind of behavior before. That is, those who uphold abortion often try to prove their case from the Bible, then show that even if they know the Bible condemns it, they do not care what the Bible says.

My reason for writing this article is a letter I received in response to a letter I had written to an editor in a newspaper. The letter raised a question about Jesus. It started off with "If He was against it, (abortion) why did He not say so?" He included a tract that started with, "The word abortion does not appear in any translation of the Bible." It ended with, "But even if it did (condemn abortion), we live under a secular constitution, not in a theocracy." We have noticed that strange kind of behavior before. That is, those who uphold abortion often try to prove their case from the Bible, then show that even if they know the Bible condemns it, they do not care what the Bible says.

However, we want to note some of the arguments for abortion. First, notice the argument that the Bible does not specifically condemn it by the use of the word "abortion." If one used that kind of logic (?), then one could not find reason to condemn a man for stabbing his wife with an ice pick. Any serious Bible student knows that one must apply Biblical concepts and principles to contemporary situations in order to make any valid conclusions. One must first determine whether the unborn child is considered a human being, and if it is, then the principle of "Thou shalt do no murder" applies.

There is abundant evidence that the unborn child is considered a person. We may note here that even the Supreme Court decision in the Roe vs. Wade case, and in all subsequent statements indicated that they did not know when human life begins. If they do not know, then it may begin at conception as the Bible teaches. Then if one kills the unborn baby, there is at least a possibility that one is committing homicide. Strangely enough, almost every court in our land would convict a person for legal negligence (at least) if he performed an act not knowing if

he is harming another person. If a person burned down a house without checking to see if a person was inside (or even if a dog or cat were inside) he would be arrested and found guilty, especially if there happened to be a spotted owl's nest, or an eagle's nest inside, not to mention a baby.

Note just a few references that show that the unborn baby is a person. The Bible refers to the unborn child in the same language it refers to infants and young children. In Luke 1:41, 44, the word "*brephos*" is the word used about John who leaped in Elizabeth's womb for joy when Mary told her about Jesus. This is the same word used about Jesus in Luke 2:12 where he was wrapped in clothes and laid in a manger. Even if the same word were not used, it would take a very vivid imagination to assume that an ordinary piece of protoplasm would leap for joy. The fact that John and Jesus were special persons has no bearing on the question as to when their life began. John was conceived just as any other person is conceived. References such as Jeremiah 1:5 and many others show very clearly that these persons were recognized of God as persons at their conception.

There are two other arguments that I do not recall any of my brethren addressing, so I will at least touch them. The first is that since Genesis 2:7 says that God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul, a person does not become a person until he breathes. There are two or three things wrong with this argument, but the primary one is that there is no comparison or analogy between the creation of Adam and the birth of a child. It does not take a logician or theologian to know that a lump of dirt—inanimate matter—was not a living being until it was given life. Even though the form of Adam was not living until God gave it life, can you imagine any person with any respect for God would think it would have been appropriate for someone (if there had been someone present) to come by and destroy what God had brought into being, even before it had life? But a fetus is not a lump of dirt. It is already alive, kicks, moves and responds to various kinds of external stimuli.

To illustrate how far the abortionists will stretch to try to prove their point from the Bible, even though most of them show that they care very little about what the Bible says, some take 1 Corinthians 15:46 which reads, "However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the

spiritual.” They claim that this shows that the physical nature of the unborn child precedes its spiritual endowment, so it has no spirit until it is born, or at least until some undefined point in its gestation. There are several problems with that, the most significant being that the verse has nothing remotely to do with the development of the embryo. The whole context clearly shows that he is contrasting the first Adam with the second Adam (Christ). The first man was from the earth—natural; the second is from heaven—spiritual. Even if it could be stretched to mean something else, it would not prove that the baby had no spirit before it was born, but only sometime after its physical parts were present—soon after conception.

Some have concluded from Exodus 21:22-25 that the fetus is merely *potential* human life. They think the passage refers to accidental miscarriage, where the baby is born dead. They conclude that since the punishment for accidentally killing an unborn child is less severe than the punishment for killing an adult, the unborn baby must be considered less than human. This presents two big problems. One is the determination of what the text actually says and the other in the application of the text.

First, the usual Hebrew word for miscarry is not used in this text. The word used here commonly refers to live births. Notice carefully that the text makes no distinction between harm done to the child and harm done to the mother. There are two circumstances contemplated in this passage. 1) An accident in which no harm comes to mother or child, and 2) An accident in which harm comes to either or both. When the latter happens, the law of retaliation applies. That is, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” The translation would read, “If any mischief happens—if the woman dies, or the child dies, then you are to give life for life.” So if we read it carefully, the idea clearly seems to be in harmony with all the passages that show that the unborn child is a person. It would be paraphrased something like this, “If men fight and cause the child of a pregnant woman to be born prematurely, yet neither mother or child is harmed, he shall be fined, according as the woman’s husband shall lay upon him. But if either mother or child is harmed, then he must pay with his own life, or an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

Another difficulty is the application of the passage

to the abortion issue. Even if one could prove without question that the text refers to accidental miscarriage rather than premature birth (which it is impossible to do), it would not justify abortion. In the case under consideration the injury is accidental, not intentional, as would be the case in abortion. Even then, it was punishable by law.

We have examined every argument we have ever seen that tries to uphold abortion, but it would take a small booklet to respond to each one of them. However not one of them even begins to prove that human life starts only after the baby comes from the womb. As indicated before, even the Supreme Court does not so affirm.—1068 Mitchell Avenue, Cookeville, TN 38501

## “ASK THE BLESSED DEAD”

As this blessed cause, so dear to our hearts, has maintained itself in all vicissitudes, has braved all opposition, and still flourishes with little combination among its leaders, will our forty years’ experience, if questioned, speak out and tell us the reason? I answer most unequivocally, it will. Its answer is in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 “...preach the word!” This is the only solution. This answer is complete. Ask the blessed dead, they will tell you... They preached the gospel. They were no mere essayists. They were not theorizers, not speculators. They preached Christ and him crucified. In this they were a unit. The same gospel was preached in every town, county, and school district. They used their Bibles. They read, quoted, illustrated, and enforced the Holy Scriptures. This lesson is all important. We must “preach the word,” not something about the gospel, but the gospel itself. Some of our preachers should sit at the feet of the departed veterans, and learn to speak and enforce Bible themes in Bible words. Let us have more Scripture, in its exact meaning and import; more gospel, more of Jesus, his will his mission, and his work. This was their power. It will be ours. Most of all, and last of all, we impress this lesson: preach the gospel in season, out of season. Preach it as Peter preached, as Paul preached it. Be not weak, nor ashamed of its facts, commands, and promise, as delivered to us by our fathers; and to them by the holy apostles. (An Excerpt from, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve*, [1875] by A. S. Haden, pp. 463-464).

# “KNOW THE LORD”

Gary McDade

Do you know God? Those who enjoy the benefits of the new covenant, including remission of sins, must first “know the Lord.” The Hebrews’ writer said, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:11-13). Knowing God is of greater glory to a person than wisdom or might or riches, as desirable as those three qualities are to some. Jeremiah wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Yet, how many people truly “know the Lord?” The atheist does not believe God even exists. He does not “know the Lord.” “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God” (Psalm 14:1). The agnostic does not know whether or not God exists. He does not “know the Lord.” “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). The person who does not study his Bible, which is the inspired word of God through which God has chosen to reveal himself and his will to man, has difficulty saying with any degree of confidence, “I ‘know the Lord.’” “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28).

The truth from Jeremiah 9:23-24 is that God does indeed exist, his will certainly is knowable, and even precise details of his nature can be identified, studied, appreciated, and within imposed limits imitated. Consider the riches of Divine Goodness. Observe Christ’s tender compassion in the gospels. A real interest in the things that delight the Lord will cause good to emerge in one’s life. By so truly admiring the Lord, we tend to become more like him. Jeremiah said the Lord “exercises” loving kindness, judgement, and righteousness.

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF LOVINGKINDNESS?** “For

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...” (John 3:16a). “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). “Love the brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17b).

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF JUDGEMENT?** “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement” (John 7:24). “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:12-13). “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?** “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:43). “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF GOD?** “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power” (Nahum 1:3). “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13). “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). “For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

In what do you glory? Is it in the things you have, your riches? Is it in your physical strength or power you exercise over others, your might? Is it your intellectual prowess, your wisdom? The higher calling of God urges us to understand and “know the Lord” and to delight in him.—1511 Getwell Road, Memphis, TN 3811-7299.

Some people have plenty to live on  
but nothing to live for.

# CONTRADICTION BY ADDING

Owen D. Olbricht



The Greek *psallo* has been a source of controversy ever since instrumental music has been introduced into church worship. It is translated “make melody” (Ephesians 5:19) and sing (1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13).

The early church, which was familiar with the Greek language, did not use instrumental music. Its use was introduced a number of centuries following the beginning of Christianity. Even though Jewish and pagan groups used it, Christians did not. Those who use it today are not following the practice of the early church as established by the Lord (Matthew 16:18) and instructed by the apostles. The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42).

**AN ADDITION.** An original lexicon was written in the German language by Walter Bauer. It was first translated into English in 1957 by William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich from the fourth edition of Bauer’s lexicon. This was revised and augmented by F. W. Danker and Gingrich in 1979. More recently it has been revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

The definition of *psallo* in the 1979 edition was, “sing, sing praise” (p. 891). The 2000 revision added “to sing songs of praise, with or without instrumental accompaniment” (p. 1096). If this phrase is to be added, then the suggested translation later in the definition should be changed. By not changing the suggested translation an obvious contradiction appears.

**CONTRADICTION.** The following is given in the definition after the above inserted phrase:

The original meaning of *ps.* (*psallo*) was ‘pluck,’ ‘play’ (a stringed instrument); this persisted at least to the time of Lucian (c.p. Par 17). In the LXX (Septuagint) *ps.* freq. means ‘sing,’ whether to the accompaniment of an instrument (Psalm 32:2, 97:5 al.) or not, as is usually the case (Psalm 7:17; 9:11; 107:1 al.). This focus on singing continued until *ps.* in Mod. GK means ‘sing’

exclusively; cp. *psaltes*=singer, chanter, , w. no ref. to instrumental accompaniment. Although the NT does not voice opposition to instrumental music, in view of Christian resistance to mystery cults, as well as Pharisaic aversion to musical instruments in worship (s. E. Werner, art. ‘Music.’ IDB 3, 466-69), it is likely that some such sense as *make melody* is best understood in this Eph pass. Those who favor ‘play’ (e.g. L-S-J-M; A. Souter, Pocket Lexicon, 1920; J. Moffatt, transl. 1913) may be relying too much on the earliest mng. of *psallo. ps. to pneumatē* and in contrast to that *ps. to voi sing praise in spiritual extasy and in full possession of one’s mental faculties* 1 Corinthians 14:15. Abs. sing praise Js 5:13...

Notice that when the definition of *psallo* is given for specific passages, instrumental music is not suggested as included in its meaning. The preferred meaning of *psallo* in Ephesians 5:13 is given as, “make melody,” 1 Corinthians 14:15, “sing praise,” and James 5:13, “sing praise.”

**CONCLUSION.** The addition of “to sing songs of praise, with or without instrumental accompaniment” contradicts the rest of the discussion in the article. Many of those who consult this lexicon will accept the definition as given in the beginning of the article and will not read farther into the definition to discover the contradiction. The truth can be found if the whole definition is read with the understanding that the beginning definition contradicts what appears early in the article. This confusion and contradiction did not appear in the 1979 edition of the lexicon.—305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120

“If one had to choose:  
better to have hardening of  
the arteries than hardening  
of the heart.”

# MAKE GOD REAL

Dustin Forthun

The answer to the question “Why are we losing our young people?” lies in the fact that God is not real to them. I must be careful to emphasize that God is real! We cannot make God real in the way that He made this universe and our life a reality, but we must make sure that God is a real part of who we are because for some God is not as real to them as He needs to be to ensure enduring faithfulness. For too many, God is a feeling and not a fact; He is a what and not a Who; He is a concept and not the Creator. For too many, God is just a name on a page rather than the Being around Whom we center every aspect of our lives.

When, due to a weakened faith, God is not as real as He needs to be in the minds and lives of aged Christians, we should not be one bit surprised that God is not as real as He must be to grant our young people faith that overcomes. Consider the two following ways that we can all make sure that God is very real to us in our lives.

**SPEND MORE TIME WITH GOD’S WORLD.** Nature is not God, but God can be seen in nature. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1). The existence of such a complex world as ours clearly points to the existence of a Being Who is responsible for such, and that Being is God. Armed with an eye for observation and a little knowledge of scientific facts (unlike the *Theory* of evolution), more time spent with God’s world made the Creator more real to the Psalmist who stated, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God...” (Psalm 14:1). Due in part to simply viewing God’s footstool (Isaiah 66:1), the Psalmist was convinced of the folly of any conclusion other than God is real.

Camping trips, viewing a sunrise or sunset, outdoor sporting activities, and the like have the potential to make God more real in the lives of those living on this celestial ball. Those wishing to do something for younger Christians would be well advised to point out a rainbow and tell of God’s promise to Noah, or use a sunrise to illustrate that Jesus is the light of the world, or take the occasion of a cloudy day (or perhaps even night) to stress the gloom of sin. Seasons in a year may be used to coincide with the passage of life and time; on and on we could go drawing lessons from God’s living illustration. O, how many different ways we may all point to scenes of this

world to get a clearer view of Him Who is above! “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine” (Psalm 24:1; 50:10-11).

**SPEND MORE TIME WITH GOD’S WORD.** As beautiful as this world is and as able as it is to attest to God’s existence, more is needed to know the Master’s Will. God’s revelation of Himself through nature is often called general revelation. The sun, moon, and stars equip mankind with the general knowledge that God is. These created works, however, are insufficient to tell man what the Creator wants. Neither a tree nor any other part of nature will give mankind a knowledge of God’s will. God revealed His Will with words. God’s revelation of Himself through the inspired words of His prophets and apostles is commonly referred to as specific revelation. It is God’s Word that tells us specifically how we must be beholden to the one who made it all.

Just as the sweet Psalms of Israel emphasize God’s world, they can also be seen emphasizing God’s Word as well. In fact, the longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119 which is an inspired tribute to God’s Word. In all of its 176 verses, Psalm 119 honors the Word of God mentioning it by one of its various descriptives (such as law, precepts, commandments, testimonies, statutes, etc.). The importance of God’s Word is undeniable. Psalm 119 is near the heart (middle) of the Bible (the middle chapter of the Bible is Psalm 118) just as God’s Word must be the center of our relationship with Him.

Like the Psalmist, we must say: “Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it” (Psalm 119:12, 113, 140). The Psalmist gave himself to a study and application of God’s Holy Message. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). This Psalmist exclaimed: “O how love I thy law!” (Psalm 119:97a) as must we all. To this elation over God’s Word, this servant of God combined action: “It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97b). Anything less than respectful study of God’s Word is cause for shame. “Then shall I not be ashamed,

when I have respect unto all thy commandments" (Psalm 119:6). 2 Timothy 2:15 with its charge to young Timothy to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" just may be a New Testament update of the thought of Psalm 119:6.

**CONCLUSION.** A faith that endures comes not just from seeing God's world, but searching God's Word. Anyone wishing to help in the guidance of any Christian would be wise not only to point to God's world but also point to God's Word "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17).

Christians young and old are being lost at an alarming rate. Of special interest to many Christian couples is the shipwrecked faith of their sons and daughters. More time spent with God's world and Word and the Awesome Being behind them both is sure to be a stabilizing force in the fight against error. A God who is real in our lives will be the object of real service, adoration, and worship.—6769 Lanes Ferry Road, Newbern, TN 38059

## A WARNING FROM THE PAST

"Fighting for the truth is almost a lost art. Men who are enjoying the benefits of the gospel unmixed with human error, are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the truth. Every inch of ground from that mysterious way of being saved, which was better felt than told, to the plain conditions of pardon as taught in the New Testament, was fought out for us by our fathers.

If someone before us had not fought for the truth, most of us might yet be in the fog of denominational teaching. This is not the time to temporize or make friends with error."—F.B. Srygley (*Gospel Advocate*, 1928)

## A NEED TO RESET OUR "WATCHES"

Dave Smith

The time has come for all Christians to reset their "watches." What, do you say? Let me explain.

It's quite obvious, as we see many church members succumbing to the pleasures of this world, that they've discontinued the "watch" that's necessary for eternal life. They're more interested in "enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25) and are even questioning if and when the Lord will return (2 Peter 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

The Christian life takes work. That's why we're told in Hebrews 11:6 that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." It's a life, if lived faithfully in God's service, that'll have its difficulties (2 Timothy 3:12). And it's a life in which our adversary, the devil, will do everything within his power to turn us away from the truth (1 Peter 5:8). Yet, we musn't cave in.

This is why we're admonished so many times to be on the watch. Note, for example, Jesus' words following His explanation of His return: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:42, 44). In the parable of the ten virgins Jesus ends by saying "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13).

But such instructions aren't limited to Jesus' personal ministry. The apostle Paul, as he draws his first epistle to Thessalonica to a close states, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6, see also 1 Corinthians 16:13). The apostle Peter as well warns us to "...be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

Many "watches" are in need of immediate resetting before our time is no more. Let's, therefore, turn from the allurements of this life, and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).—1665 Jamestown Road, Cobden, IL 62920

# I'M TIRED OF "CHURCH GROWTH"

John Gipson

Please forgive me if I sound like a heretic, but I'm tired of hearing about "Church Growth," a phrase which can mean something—or nothing. Perhaps I have read too many articles and books, or heard too many lectures on the theme. Whatever reason, I've grown weary hearing about it.

It's not that I long for a stagnant church. Quite the contrary. The church of the first century grew rapidly, and I would love to see it happen again in the 21st century.

I'm confident that I have been helped by a study of "Church Growth" over the years, but my problem lies with strategies designed primarily to recruit new members with little emphasis on evangelism. In short, I think we are missing the boat when we emasculate our message in order to appeal to the masses as if we were salesmen bent on pleasing customers rather than proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

The power of salvation lies not in publicity, entertainment, gimmicks, or emotional outbursts. It is to be found in the word of God, the Gospel. "The seed is the word of God...My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it...Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God with boldness...It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God...And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied greatly...Samaria had received the word of God...The Gentiles had also received the word of God...But the word of God grew and multiplied...When they arrived in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God...He was with the procounsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God...The whole city gathered together to hear the word of God...They were glad and glorified the word of God...And they stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them...You received the word of God which you heard from us...The word of God is not fettered...For the word of God is living

and active..."

It's still the gospel that is the power of God to salvation. It's the only thing that will bring life. "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). So preach the Word!

That's God's method of church growth!—*Keynoter*, (September 19, 2002) Sixth and Izard Church of Christ, Little Rock, AR 72203

## SINS THAT CRIPPLE THE CHURCH

Jim Martin

**Absenteeism:** "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

**Indifference:** "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot" (Revelation 3:15).

**Worldliness:** "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" (1 John 2:15).

**Unfaithfulness:** "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4).

**Selfishness:** "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4).

**Neglect:** "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation..." (Hebrews 2:3).

**Compromise:** "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

**Contention:** "...that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

**Ignorance:** "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).—*Mountain Home Messenger*, (August 7, 2002), PO Box 880, Mountain Home, AR 72654

proclaiming the saving word. There is no exception. Can one read the Bible and learn the truth? Of course, but he would still have human agency in the apostles and other inspired writers.

4. The church (another agency) supports the preaching of the truth (1 Timothy 3:14-15; 2 Corinthians 4:7; Acts 11:22). A plurality of congregations can do this by working together without destroying the autonomy of any congregation. If one congregation can send a preacher to assist another congregation in evangelism (cf. Acts 11:22), what is the difference in principle than that of sending money?

5. Alien sinners obey the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit, confirmed by the apostles, proclaimed by human agency, and supported by the church (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Romans 6:16-17). This involves more than mental assent and saying, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart."

Unless all of these agents are involved in conversion, there has been no scriptural conversion. God has provided this checklist by which we check the genuineness of our conversion.

**A THREEFOLD CHANGE INVOLVED.** Confusion is caused by a failure to analyze the process. Conversion involves a three-fold change—the heart, the life, and the state. Faith changes the heart from loving sin to loving God (Acts 15:7-9); repentance changes life (2 Corinthians 7:10); many mistake repentance for conversion; and baptism upon the proper pre-requisites, changes the state or relationship (Matthew 28:19, ASV; Acts 2:38). All of this is accomplished by the five agents discussed in the previous portion of this article. There is nothing that is miraculous or mysterious about scriptural conversion.—1613 19th Avenue S.W., Decatur, AL 35601

Marx's Manifesto, Evolution, et. al.); baptism for remission of sins and baptism to "join a church;" baptism/immersion and "sprinkling or pouring;" congregational singing and "mechanical musical entertainment;" and on and on ad infinitum. People are so used to their profanity of God's worship, they are insulted when we call them back to the Bible.

What God calls unholy must not be called holy. This profanity is called "blasphemy." Jews who regarded Jesus as only a man mistakenly thought it blasphemy for Him to call Himself "God" (John 10:33). However, one truly blasphemous phrase "Harlot-wood" has popularized in movies for more than twenty years is "holy s\_t!" Under Moses' law, God had Israelites bury their excrement "outside the camp" and with "an implement" they were to "dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp" and "therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you" (Deuteronomy 23:12-14). Paul considered his unconverted life as "rubbish" [excrement, wash water, garbage] now that he was in Christ (Philippians 3:8). To call "holy" that which God has never sanctioned or sanctified for His use is blasphemous profanity! It can be forgiven but only by repentance (Matthew 12:31-32; 2 Peter 3:9).

People have spoken of New York's "Ground Zero" and the "heroes of 9/11/01" with the reverence I wish they would use for God and His sacred things.—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

**E. L. Whitaker is remembered as saying,**  
*"When the liberals call you 'radical,'  
and the radicals call you 'liberal,'  
you must be just right."*



### **STRONG AND STRAIGHTFORWARD**

Thank you so much for printing strong, straightforward publications! What a statement for Christ! I couldn't put it down and read it cover to cover. Donna Duncan, Rome GA.

### **PASSES GG ON TO OTHERS**

I certainly enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner*. We have enjoyed it very much for several years. I pass it to someone else after I have read it. After my husband died I moved, please note my new address. I've enclosed a check to help pay for postage over the years. May God bless you, keep up the good work. Dollie Paschall, Puryear, TN.

### **LEARNED OF GG IN HTH/HTH**

I just read in the *House to House* publication about the *Gospel Gleaner* and that I should contact you to receive a copy. If possible will you please send 2 copies. We are members of the "Body" at the Bay Area Church of Christ in Mango, FL. This is just east of Tampa. We've just become involved with *House to House* and are very impressed with this publication and how we can use it to reach the lost. Thank you so much for offering your publication and I look forward to seeing it. I pray God's blessings for you. Bill Salzer, Lutz, FL. **NOTE:** *Gospel Gleaner* was featured recently in Allen Webster's *House to House/Heart to Heart*. As a result we had many additions to our mailing list. Thanks Allen!—Editor.

### **TIMELY ARTICLES**

I subscribe to the *Gospel Gleaner*, and I appreciate so much the great work being done through your efforts. I am always delighted with the selection of timely articles that speak to matters of vital interest to the church. Dustin Forthun, Newbern, TN.

### **GG ONE OF THE FINEST**

My name is Edd Sterchi, preacher for the church in Harrisburg, IL. I wanted to thank you for ordering my booklet "The Christian and His Finances." I am in the process of developing a weekend seminar centered around budgeting, handling money, etc. When I have it completed, I would like for you to review it. I am impressed with your work and your opinion would be very valuable to me. I also wanted to tell you how much I enjoy reading the *Gospel Gleaner*. I consider it one of the finest brotherhood publications. I would love to submit an article from time to time. Let me know if that would be possible. I have submitted articles in the past to *The World Evangelist* and *Upon the Rock*. I would be happy to send you samples or references if you so desire. Again, thanks and keep up the good work for the Lord. Edd Sterchi, Harrisburg, IL.

### **GG ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE**

I used to receive the *Gospel Gleaner* but somehow have not received the last few issues. I would enjoy receiving it again. I believe it is one of the most attractive periodicals among us. If you have any of the back issues of maybe a year or so that I can get caught up on the *Gleaner* I would appreciate it. I would appreciate the issue of Max Miller (I went to school at Bellview under brother Miller). He required a lot of memorization of scriptures which I have utilized in my preaching. I am in the process of moving to a new work. Thanks so much! Howell Bigham, Florence, AL

### **TEACHING THE GOSPEL**

I would like to compliment you on your commitment to teach the gospel to all men in such a way. I appreciate your stand in truth which is plain spoken in love and sound. It will help us to grow spiritually stronger. I look forward to every issue. Joseph WI-Afeszi, Ghana.

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Volume 18

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## **“MOVIES ARE JUST PORTRAYING REALITY”**

Robert L. Moss



To say that many things which come across the movie screen today are shameful, repulsive, immoral, degrading and embarrassing is a gross understatement. In fact it could probably be said that the majority of movies being made today fall into this category. Yet there are people, sadly to say even some in the church, who seek as it were to defend these films. One

of the statements heard in defense is, “Movies are just portraying reality.” At times such seems to imply that people who refuse to watch these movies are in essence hiding from reality.

First of all, simply because one refuses to watch these films that are offered does not mean that they are hiding from reality. The fact is there are some real events that have no business being exhibited on the silver screen. These events are not things that people should indulge in to satisfy their appetite for entertainment. Have you ever considered the fact that it is wrong for the actors to even be involved in these things as an acting role? What Christian man would stand for numbers of other men kissing, fondling, and being involved in situations which call for provocative dress or even nudity with his wife? Dare we think that our wives would put up with us being involved in this with other women? What Christian parent would sanction such actions among their children? Under such

circumstances we simply find sin being overlooked because it is said to be only “acting.” Does “acting” remove the immodesty from immodest apparel? The Bible condemns lasciviousness (Galatians 5:19). Involved in the definition of lasciviousness is the unchaste handling of males and females. Does “acting” remove the dirt from lasciviousness? Can one use vulgar language and be acceptable to God because it is “acting”? I recall when as a young boy attending a high school play I heard one of the senior boys use foul language as part of the play. This boy was the son of an elder in the Lord’s church. What kind of example did this leave? What kind of influence did this have on people’s opinion of the church? It is also the case that even though these films may be portraying some real events that unfortunately happen in life; they may not be portraying reality. For instance, it is true that adultery is a real event in life. Yet the Bible brings reality to light when it teaches us that such should be avoided because it is sin (Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 7:3). It is true that immodest dress is a real event in life. But again the Bible shows reality when it condemns immodest dress (1 Timothy 2:9; Galatians 5:19). Foul language is a real event in life. The Bible shows reality when it condemns immodest dress (1 Timothy 2:9; Galatians 5:19). Foul language is a real event in life. The Bible shows reality by terming such as sin (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; Exodus 20:7). Drunkenness is a real event in life. However, the Bible

(Continued on page 21)

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The subject of this interview describes himself as "A Mississippian by birth, a Tennessean by adoption." J. M. Powell is a scholar in the American Restoration Movement who has authored such books as *History of the Franklin (Tennessee) Church of Christ*. He co-authored two books, *The Church Is Building*, and *N.B.H.: A Biography of Nicholas Brodie Hardeman*. In 1987 he released, *The Cause We Plead: A Story of the Restoration Movement*. And just this year (2002) he issued a new biography of one of the great gospel preachers of the past, *The Man From Mars Hill: The Life and Times of T. B. Larimore*.



James Marvin Powell was born in Senatobia, Mississippi on March 12, 1907. A. H. Smith immersed him into Christ in 1920. He married Mildred Cliett on August 38, 1935. To this union were born two children: Patsy (Mitchell) and Monty Powell.

He received his education at David Lipscomb College (A.A.), Oglethorpe University (B.A.), Harding Graduate School (M.A.), and Lubbock Christian College (LL.D). Brother Powell began preaching in 1927. He labored with churches of Christ in Kentucky, Georgia and Tennessee. He has made two preaching and teaching tours around the world, including eight trips to the Middle East. Through the years he has served as a staff writer for several gospel journals including *Gospel Advocate*, *Minister's Monthly* and *20<sup>th</sup> Century Christian*. He worked with Blue Ridge Encampment for 32 years, including 25 years as director. He is a former adjunct professor for Alabama Christian School of Religion [now, Heritage Christian University], Nashville Bible School and David Lipscomb College [now, Lipscomb University]. He served as President and faculty member at Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, West Virginia for four years.

Brother Powell has been a student of Restoration history for over 55 years. His research has taken him to the actual sites of historical events in Ireland, England, Scotland and New England. Brother Powell does not see churches of Christ taking their "roots" from the American Restoration Movement.

In 1991 I conducted the following interview with J. M. Powell on the subject of preaching. I did this interview with a number of men that I considered to be faithful veterans of both pulpit and pen. These interviews were published in *Gospel Advocate*, *First Century Christian* and *Gospel Gleaner*. My interview with brother Powell is seen here for the first time.

**DENNIS GULLEDGE: How long have you been preaching the gospel?**

**J. M. POWELL:** I have been preaching since the 3rd Lord's day, 1927 - the month of August. I had just entered David Lipscomb College as a student and woefully unprepared for this first effort. My text was 2 Peter 1:1-11, notes of which I still have.

**DG: Can you recall the circumstances of your first sermon?**

**JMP:** Yes. A cousin of mine secured the appointment at the then Cedar Grove church ten or twelve miles from Nashville, Tennessee. I went to brother C.

P. Poole, a faculty member who suggested the text. He thought this seven point sermon would be easy for me. Was it easy? No.

DG: **How do you think the emphasis has changed since you began? Has the change been for better or worse?**

JMP: I do indeed think the emphasis in preaching has changed since 1927. In my judgment the change has not been for the better. As a people we are prone to go to extremes. Sixty (75, DG) years ago the preaching was designed to “skin the sects;” dwell on first principles. Simply preaching the word in my judgment will do all the “skinning” that is necessary. There is power in the gospel. T. B. Larimore’s advice to young preachers was simply to “preach the word.” As preachers we cannot do more; we dare not do less.

Today we have gone to another extreme. The opposite of the preaching of 60 (75, DG) years ago. In my view the most effective preaching is somewhere between these two extremes. I’m simply pleading for a *balance* in preaching. Expository preaching will get the job done.

DG: **Name three gospel preachers of the past or present who have influenced you the most in your preaching.**

JMP: Three preachers who have had a great influence on my life were: N. B. Hardeman, B. C. Goodpasture and A. B. Lipscomb—one of the most polished preachers I have ever known. All of the preachers have gone to their reward. God bless their memory. Other preachers who have influenced me in one way or another: J. P. Lowrey, J. Roy Vaughn and T. B. Larimore.

DG: **It seems that our brotherhood has seen a decline in debating over the past thirty years, or so. Do you agree that this is true, and if so, to what would you attribute the decrease in the number of public discussions?**

JMP: For one thing our preachers are too ecumenical in their thinking; we do not know what we believe. The last article I ever had published in *Gospel Advocate* some two or three (September 1998, DG) years ago had this caption: “What Has Happened to Gospel Preaching?” I got letters and phone calls from every part of the nation—I suppose from older church members and

those gospel preachers who think it important to “preach the word.”

DG: **What special word of advice would you like to pass on to young preachers who may read this interview?**

JMP: My advice is found in 2 Timothy 4:1-2. This will cure the ills that plague us.

This being an interview about preaching, perhaps it would be in order to select an excerpt or two from the aforementioned article written by J. M. Powell. The article is entitled, “What Has Happened To Gospel Preaching?” In it brother Powell made these salient points: “What has happened to gospel preaching? The gospel preaching that made us a great and numerous people is no longer heard in many pulpits across the land. When was the last time you heard sermons such as ‘What Must I Do To Be Saved?’ ‘The Conversion of the Eunuch,’ ‘The Identity of the Lord’s Church,’ ‘Proper Division of the Word of God,’ or ‘The Sin of Denominationalism’?... ‘The pulpits, periodicals and radio and television programs need preachers and writers who will preach and teach sermons with substance. As of now, this is not being done on a wide scale. The Bible—and the Bible alone—is the book that needs to be preached and practiced. A ‘thus saith the Lord’ must be the standard of our preaching” (*Gospel Advocate*, September 1988, pp. 8-9).

Barton W. Stone once describe the rapid spread of New Testament Christianity in this country as a “fire in dry stubble.” Brother Powell has done his part to preserve an accurate knowledge of the history of that raging fire. He has kept the restoration spirit alive for us today, and for generations yet unborn, through the books and articles he has written.—PO Box 345, Mabelvale, AR 72103

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## FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Guy F. Hester



There is so much trouble in this old world that we have come to expect the unexpected and no longer are we surprised at anything. Little value is placed upon human life. Laws have been passed that allow abortion on demand, euthanasia is looked upon by some as the humane way to deal with the problem of aging, Alzheimer's disease, terminal illness, etc. There is so much disregard for the value and sanctity of human life that it is no great surprise when we hear on the news of a sniper gunning people down at random with no regard to age, gender or nationality. None of us can even guess what the future holds in store for us. Where will terrorists strike next! Nuclear weapons and other weapons, chemical, biological, etc., of mass destruction in the Middle East as well as the Far East! Therefore, the relevance of our title "For Such A Time As This."

We read in the Old Testament book of Esther, "Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return to Mordecai this answer, God, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:13-16). The year was 481 B.C. Ahasuerus was king of Persia. Israel, the people of God, were in the province. The king had the leaders of 127 provinces to come for a celebration to last more than six months, 187 days to be exact. It was a time of debauchery, a feast of sinful immorality. The king sent for Vashti to come and show her beauty before all the princes, but because of her modesty, she refused. It was

suggested to the king that he reject Vashti and select another to be queen in her stead. The king accepted this suggestion and sent for Esther who was chosen. Esther was a Jewess. Her cousin, Mordecai, had offended Haman, who by trickery got a decree signed that all the Jews should be put to death. This was an unalterable decree. God stepped in and, in a providential way, delivered His people from the decree so that Christ might come of Abraham's seed as promised (Genesis 12:1-3). This account was written for our benefit (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

**Sin Was In Control.** Esther had come to the throne "for such a time as this!" The king and the leaders were selfish, wicked and immoral. Sin was in control! "When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2). What about our educational leaders, national and world leaders, and even religious leaders? Some church leaders are worldly.

**Leaders Guilty Of Neglect Then And Now.** When Esther became queen, it was a time of worldly pomp and show. It was a time when the king and the leaders of the provinces took a six months vacation for revelry and sin. The nation and its welfare, homes, children, education, etc. were all neglected. The leadership in our nation is guilty of the same neglect. We are losing many of our freedoms, immorality is rampant (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). We need both national and local leaders who will protect our freedoms and purify the streams of immorality.

It was a time of strong drink. We are rapidly becoming a nation of drunkards. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). "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. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart

shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Proverbs 23:29-35).

It was a time of depravity and degeneracy. It was a time when the king demanded that his own queen, Vashti, come before the drunken wicked leaders of the 127 provinces and display her body before their lustful eyes (Esther 1). How true in our own time! Peter well describes so many of our day: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:14). Queen Vashti had the moral courage to dare to do right and how badly this kind of character is needed in our day (1 Timothy 2:6-10).

It was a time when the sacredness and sanctity of marriage was at a very low ebb. The king was willing to get rid of the queen for no fault of her own. In our day, in this "Christian nation," one half of the marriages are ending in divorce courts (Matthew 19:3-9).

It was a time when human life was cheap. The leaders were willing to sign a decree to have two million Jews killed because one of them refused to bow to the wicked scoundrel, Haman! Not so very much unlike some Middle East political and religious leader of our day. Life today is cheap. The media is full of terrorism, murder, adultery, theft and hate.

It was a time that needed that great and good woman, Esther (Esther 4:13-16). She came into a position of great responsibility and her silence would have been sin. It was a time that needed people of conviction and prayer.

How sorely we need moral leaders of conviction who will not be silenced regarding the moral corruption of our own nation. Too many are more interested in popularity and votes than they are in doing what is right for our nation "for such a time as this!"

"For such a time as this" we need individual citizens who will stand up and say I shall not bow and tip my hat to the "Haman's" nor follow the lead of the "Ahashuerus" of today. I will follow Jesus regardless of where it may lead me in this life; because ultimately it will lead me to heaven where no sin and wickedness shall enter in.

"For such a time as this" we need good people, men and women of conviction and prayer, working to preserve our freedoms and purify the streams of immorality and wickedness in our nation.—  
g.hester@juno.com.

## WHY SOME SERMONS FAIL

Foster L. Ramsey

All sermons are not masterpieces. Even preachers admit it. Even a sermon that is a masterpiece to some will not be so recognized by others. Even the very best sermons fail to some extent. There are many reasons for such failures.

Some **sermons fail because** people give no heed. Paul was an inspired preacher. He was a "master pulpiteer," but Eutychus went to sleep (Acts 20:9)!

**Sermons fail because** people ridicule that which is preached. In the city of Athens, Paul preached of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Athenians mocked the sermon (Acts 17:32).

**Sermons fail because** people consider themselves to be unworthy of eternal life. In Antioch of Pisidia, the Jews were so envious of Paul and Barnabas that they contradicted the sermons that were preached (Acts 13:45).

**Sermons fail because** the hearer will not endure sound doctrine. They want to hear words and lessons that "tickle" the ears. They resent reproving and rebuking, and they reject the truth of sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

**Sermons fail because** false doctrines and fables already have been accepted, and the hearer has no room for the truth (2 Timothy 4:4).

# SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Allen Webster



Some religious people feel that as long as one has a sincere heart, the “little” details do not make much difference. Yet we don’t think this way about other matters which are not of eternal consequences. Consider:

If 99.9 percent is good enough, then...

Two million documents will be lost by the IRS this year.  
811,000 faulty rolls of 35 mm film will be sold this year.  
22,000 checks will be deducted from the wrong bank accounts in the next 60 minutes.

1,314 phone calls will be misplaced by telecommunications services every minute.

12 babies will be given to the wrong parents each day.

268,500 defective tires and 14,208 defective personal computers will be shipped this year.

403,206 tax returns will be returned incorrectly this year.

2,488,200 books will go out every 12 months with the wrong cover.

5,517,200 cases of soft drinks produced in the next 12 months will be flatter than a bad tire.

Two plane landings daily at O’Hare Airport will be unsafe.  
3,056 copies of tomorrow’s *Wall Street Journal* will be missing one of the three sections.

18,322 pieces of mail will be mishandled next hour.

291 pacemaker operations will be botched this year.

880,000 credit cards in circulation will turn out to have incorrect cardholder information on their magnetic strips.

\$9,690 will be spent today, next Thursday, and every day in the future on defective, often unsafe sporting equipment.

55 malfunctioning automatic teller machines will be installed in the next 12 months.

20,000 incorrect prescriptions will be written this year.

114,500 mismatched shoes will be shipped this year.

\$761,900 will be spent in the next 12 months on tapes and compact discs that won’t play.

107 incorrect medical procedures will be performed today.

315 entries in *Webster’s Dictionary* will turn out to be misspelled (*Insight*, Syncrude Canada, Ltd.)

**A LITTLE FAITH IS INSUFFICIENT.** Jesus noticed the “small stuff.” He commented on the fall of a sparrow

(Matthew 10:29-31), a vine and branches (John 15:1-5, a lily (Matthew 6:28), the cry of need in a noisy crowd (Mark 5:25-34), a cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42), and a widow’s mite (Mark 12:42). He records and rewards the “little” things (Matthew 25:31-46; 16:26; Revelation 20:11-15). One small thing that brought His comment on four separate occasions was “little faith.” Worry (Matthew 6:30), fear (Matthew 8:26), doubt (Matthew 14:31), and an unwillingness to trust the Lord to take care of them (Matthew 16:8), all led the Lord to reprove them for having too little faith. Have we outgrown worry—or do we still lose sleep over things the Lord will handle? Have we conquered fear—or do we sometimes feel ourselves sinking back into it as Peter sank into the Sea of Galilee? Have we overcome doubt—or do we sometimes wonder if God will keep His promises? Do we completely trust the Lord to take care of us—or do we find ourselves stubbornly unwilling to let Him handle His part?

**A LITTLE FAULT MAY RUIN A CHARACTER.** A person may be very talented, but have one fault, and be a failure. Did you ever hear someone say, “I like that fellow, except he is always talking about himself?” Or, “She is a good person, but she is lazy.” Or, “He will give you the shirt off his back, but he’s bad to hit the bottle.” A little pride (Proverbs 16:18; 29:23), envy (James 3:16; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 3:3), greed (Acts 5; cf. Judas), lust (Matthew 5:27-29), or malice (Ephesians 4:31; 1 Peter 2:1; 1 Corinthians 14:20; 1 John 3:20) can lead to big problems. A little social drinking (Proverbs 20:1) or being a little “critical” (Matthew 7:1-2) can bring on great consequences. The tongue is a little member, but it can kindle great strife (James 3:5).

**A LITTLE SIN CAN CONDEMN US.** God watches the “small stuff.” Jesus said, “...Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful *in a very little*, have thou authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17; cf. Matthew 25:21). James said, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (2:10). Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, suffered inglorious defeat upon the battlefield and dogs licked his blood (1 Kings 16-18). It is interesting to note the beginning of his downfall: “...Ahab worshiped Baal *a little*” (2 Kings 10:18; cf. 1 Kings 16:31; Ezekiel 16:47; Ecclesiastes 10:1).

**A LITTLE FALSE DOCTRINE CAN POISON THE SOUL.** God has always been a stickler for doctrine. The word *doctrine(s)* is found forty-nine times in the New Testament. It is the key word of three books in the New Testament—First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8). He expects us to “test our teachers” on doctrine (1 John 4:1). Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). On the last page of the Bible, God wrote: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19; cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6).

“Small Stuff” can lead to big trouble. What about a decimal point out of place? One dollar lost in nation-wide sales can bankrupt a company overnight. What about a spark in the wrong place? What about a ball bearing or gas filter not functioning properly? What about a little hole in your tire? Like little acorns make the mighty oaks, little departures from the truth make big digressions (cf. 2 John 9-11).

Solomon said, “Little foxes destroy the vines” (Song Of Solomon 2:15), which relates to the Jewish agricultural economy. Grapes were a staple item, so watchmen protected vineyards from the thieving animals. Sometimes a watchman guards against bears, while foxes entered undetected and ruined the crop. So it is in many churches. We guard against what we call “big” departures from the faith, but dismiss small ones thinking they make little difference. A combination of foxes may do as much damage as a bear. The poet phrased it:

A pebble in the steamlet scant  
hath changed the course of many a river.  
A droplet on a tiny plant  
hath warped the giant oak forever.

No man has made the right approach to God until he understands the importance of small things. “Sweat the small stuff”—it matters.—PO Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

## I WILL LEAD ON GENTLY

G. K. Wallace

A good leader will display tender consideration for the old, young weak and unfortunate. Jacob knew this when he said to Easu, “I will lead on gently.” He realized “If they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die” (Genesis 33:13). A good leader will not overdrive.

We may “overdrive” by continual controversy about “words to no profit” (2 Timothy 2:14). It is so easy to reject the weak if they have not reached the heights of the strong (Romans 14:1). It is tempting to condemn the young if they do not know life as we who are older know it. We may require of the young and weak a degree of courage and other graces which in their case may be only buds.

We may “overdrive” by preaching nothing but severe truth, threatening and punishment, and never emphasize the great promises of God. It is ours to console as well as to condemn. The great comforting passages of the Bible should not be reserved for funerals only.

We may “overdrive” by manifesting austerity, suspicion and harshness toward those who disagree with us. We must do good unto all men (Galatians 6:10). To return good for evil is indeed a golden rule (Matthew 7:12). Faultfinding has a place, but not to the neglect of worthy praise. “Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). We may discourage even the strong by dwelling upon the woes and trials of Christianity and saying little or nothing about its joys.

Jesus has a special place in his heart for the poor and downtrodden. He was tender and kind to the most sinful. Even to those who would become leaders he said, “I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). We should not drive like Jehu,

(Continued on page 15)



## WHY ONLY 10 COMMANDMENTS?

John T. Polk, II



*Why are there only 10 commandments? What is the rest of the Bible for?*

That is a very good question that points to the ignorance and confusion created by those who "keep the 10 commandments" today.

### THE DECALOG BATTLEGROUND

The "Deca" [=10] "log" [=word or commandment] has represented the conflict between religion and paganism, certainly in our society, and in many others, also. Some impose them to elevate morals, some oppose them to destroy religion, some suppose them over all mankind, some repose on the subject of their influence, but none can dispose of them entirely.

Those who argue from the non-constitutional position of "separation of church and state" [those words never occur in the United States constitution document! jtpII] oppose the Decalog probably because the first four of them are purely religious in that they define man's relation to God; and the last six societal because they place limitations on man's relation to man.

Those who argue from the unscriptural position that the Decalog is the "perfect moral code" seemingly ignore the fact that society refuses to legislate a weekly "holy day" or that state buildings are covered within and without with idols taken from mythology.

Certainly posting the Decalog on walls will not change society because all people are not raised "in covenant" with Moses' laws like the Israelites were! This religious graffiti whether in the form of billboards or placards is mostly offered like "pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6) because "to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure" (Titus 1:15). The effectiveness of God's Word is witnessed, not in how many public places it is viewed, but in how completely private hearts are shaped by it (Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 5:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3).

"10 Commandments," however, has become a figure of speech for complete mastery of some subjects. There are "10 Commandment" books for how to succeed in: gambling, business, understanding one's own self, marital and parental relationships, dieting, drinking alcohol, etiquette, emailing, political campaigning, sexual pleasure, ad infinitum. This, along with the base of 10 in mathematics, has popularized the notion that "10" is a complete presentation of any subject.

Although the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution (a.k.a. "The Bill of Rights") were ratified on December 15, 1791, they certainly are not all the amendments that have been made to that constitution! The first 10 commandments in Moses' Law were never intended to be the perfect moral/religious code of conduct, but occupied a similar place to the "Bill of Rights" in U.S. constitutional law. They are only the introduction to the rest of that law. No one should think that only observing the "Bill of Rights" makes him/her a legal citizen, or that all U.S. Law has been fulfilled. If that were so, Congress should disband immediately! Neither should anyone presume that an Israelite would have fulfilled all Mosaic Law by only keeping the first ten. They were not all there was to God's Law then, and neither are they today.

### THE DECALOG DOES NOT SAVE ANYONE TODAY BECAUSE

1. *It is not universal law.* It was never given to goims (Gentiles, or non-Israelites), that is, anyone but Israelites. God specifically ordered Noah to "Make yourself an ark" (Genesis 6:14) and obedience to that command in Noah's day saved (Cf. 1 Peter 3:20), but no one else could be saved by obeying that same command. Just so, the Decalog was the opening part of "the statutes and judgments" God gave to "all Israel" (Deuteronomy 5:1). Moses said, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive" (Deuteronomy 5:2-3). Nowhere in the

Old Testament are these statutes and judgments enforced upon any other nation than Israel! The outsiders required to keep these ordinances were only those “strangers” sojourning among the Israelites (Numbers 15:13-16), not strangers living outside of Israel. By contrast, however, the law of Christ is for “every creature” (Mark 16:15-16) whether Jew or Gentile (Romans 1:16; Galatians 3:13-14).

2. *It was to lead to Christ, not supplant Him!* Paul said this in Galatians 3:19: “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” “The Seed” who answered God’s promise to Abraham was Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). God’s Law through Moses was never intended to do anything except lead those who were following Abraham to Christ (Galatians 3:15-29). Jesus’ covenant is not like the one God gave to the Israelites when He delivered them from Egypt (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:5-13). Hence, the word “new” is used for Christ’s Law (Matthew 26:28-29); Mark 1:27; John 13:34-35; Acts 17:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:14-15; Ephesians 2:11-17; Hebrews 8:1-13). God never planned to use Moses’ Law again!

3. *It is not enough.* It is not a “perfect moral code” because God never intended it to be so, the rest of the details were contained in the rest of Moses’ Law. One can observe it but still: hate (Cf. 1 John 3:15), curse and swear without using God’s name (Cf. James 5:12; Ephesians 4:29; 5:3-4); beat someone half to death (Cf. Romans 13:10); and refuse to: love (1 Corinthians 16:14), forgive (Matthew 6:15), honor marriage (Hebrews 13:4), earn a living (Ephesians 4:28). One could ignore what Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” The very fact that other Scriptures must be used either to explain in Moses’ Law what was meant in the Decalog, or to state the requirements of Jesus’ Law proves that the Decalog by itself was never intended by God to completely cover morals or worship under either Law! There is no specific worship described in the Decalog.

If only “the 10” were observed under Moses, Israelites could have been saved with no: creation proof of

God’s existence, law of marriage, circumcision, worship sacrifices, ark of covenant, altars of sacrifice or incense, menorah, tabernacle/temple, priesthood days of Pentecost or Atonement or Passover. None of these are mentioned in the Decalog, but since these were required of those living under Moses, it is proof positive that God never intended for the Decalog to be all that was necessary to observe.

If only “the 10” can save us today without observing Jesus’ Law, then: one can be saved and never: love God and Christ, believe in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God, repent of sins, be baptized into Jesus’ death for the remission of sins, observe the Lord’s Supper, worship on the first day of the week, sing and make melody in the heart, give [h-m-mmm, no wonder people observe Moses’ 10 instead of Jesus’ Law, jtpII].

4. *Jesus used none of them to summarize obedience to God!* Jesus was asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” His answer gave two, neither of which are found in the Decalog. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’” (Cf., Matthew 22:37-40, NKJV). The “first” is from Deuteronomy 6:5 and the “second” from Leviticus 19:18, but the Decalog is only recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21).

Since “all the Law and the Prophets” hung on these two commandments, then: (1) Jesus never believed the “sabbath day” was an eternal, universal, unchanging command that even Christians would observe. It was one of the details that changed from Moses to Jesus; (2) the Decalog did not summarize either “the Law and the Prophets” (Moses’ Law) or Jesus’ Law (Matthew 5:1-7:29 and the rest of the New Testament); (3) there was a higher, deeper purpose for observing God’s Law through Moses than the mere details contained in that Law. The details were not unimportant but should have reinforced the deeper meaning of God’s Law (Zechariah 7:8-13; Matthew 23:23). God changed the details (“the law”) through Jesus Christ, but the higher, deeper purpose for observance is

(Continued on page 13)

# BUT THAT'S MINE!

Jimmy Palmer

Ask yourself the following question: "Is it easier for me to give someone an item that I count as 'mine,' or is it easier to give that same someone an item that is theirs to begin with, but with which I have been entrusted?" Surely your conclusion is, of course, "I would more easily relinquish that which is someone else's to begin with, rather than having to 'give up' something that is 'mine.'" In your life as a Christian, a faithful child of God, have you ever considered: "What is mine versus what is God's?" Let's make a list with two headings—God's and Mine. But before we make any assignments, let's first define possession and lay some ground rules. "Come now let us reason together" stated the prophet in Isaiah 1:18. Let us examine God's word—that lamp to our feet and light to our path—whereby we gain guidance and understanding (Psalm 119:104-105).

We must first understand the question of how one determines ownership before we can make our list. One way to determine ownership is to distinguish items by marking them with an insignia. In Mark 13 we see Jesus speak of such when the Pharisees attempted to trap him in a discussion of whether or not one should pay taxes. The Lord said, based on the fact that the coin bore an image and inscription of Caesar, the coin was then Caesar's. Has God marked what is His? Indeed He has. In Genesis 1:26-27 we read that God made mankind in the image and likeness of the Godhead. We are made in the very image of God, we bear His image, and based on the same reasoning that Christ made with the Pharisees, we are His. We are not our own. We are God's. Whose image do you bear?

A second way of understanding ownership is that when one makes something, it is accepted that the creation then belongs to the one who made it. Should you build a house, or a boat, or a paper airplane, would you not say: "Look what I have done...this belongs to me"? In Hebrews 3:4 the principle of ownership by building is addressed, and we know that "He who built all things is God." The inspired Psalmist recorded in Psalm 24:1-2 that the Earth, all its fullness, all who dwell therein is the Lord's, for He has made it all. The incredible creation itself both bears the markings of, and declares the glory of a true and living God (Psalm 19:1). Who made you?

Another way of determining ownership is through purchase. When you buy something you rightfully consider

it as your own. Ownership takes place after you exchange something of value, such as goods or services. What does the Bible say God has purchased? Acts 20:28 tells us that God has purchased the church (see also Ephesians 1:14). And with what did He purchase it? The blood of His only begotten Son was given in exchange (1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 9:11-12). The Lord our God paid a price none of us could pay in order to "redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good work" (Titus 2:13-14). Who paid the price for you?

Now that we have shed the light of God's word on our question of ownership, shall we make the list? Is that even still necessary? Did we not conclude that all of mankind is God's for He made it in His image? Did we not determine that the Earth and everything in it is God's for He made it? Did we not learn that the church of Christ (the name itself implies ownership) is His for He bought it with His blood? What, then, is left? Of course, not a thing is left we might call our own. Our side of the list is blank.

So, what are we to make of this study? We can know and understand that everything is God's. We can know that He has entrusted each of us with that which we are to use to His glory (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Call to remembrance the initial question I posed: "Is it easier for me to give someone an item that I count as 'mine,' or is it easier to give that same someone an item that is theirs to begin with but with which I have been entrusted?" I believe the scriptures make it crystal clear that you are "not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We must understand that all we claim as "mine" is really "on loan from God," to be used to His glory. Are you ready to follow the example of the Macedonians as "they first gave themselves to the Lord" as recorded in 2 Corinthians 8? Will you, this day, choose to give yourself and all with which you've been entrusted so that it might be used to God's glory? Are you willing to acknowledge that all is God's: "my" money, "my" possessions, "my" children, "my" abilities, "my" time, "my" life? Are you prepared to give with greater readiness and with greater ease keeping all these things in mind?

What will your answer be?—You may contact Mr. Palmer at [jmpalmeraaa@yahoo.com](mailto:jmpalmeraaa@yahoo.com)

# ARE YOU CARNAL?

T. Pierce Brown



Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying,

and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

It is interesting to note that the word “carnal” in verse one is from *sarkinos* and the word in verse three is from *sarkikos*, at least in the text that we have. It is my judgment that whenever the Holy Spirit uses a different word that may seem to be synonymous with another, that He does so with a purpose in mind. We may not yet understand the purpose.

Some commentators suggest that the word “carnal” means “unregenerated.” However, it should be evident that it does not. Verse one specifically says, “unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” Those to whom he wrote were saints (1 Corinthians 1:2). They were not just “called to be saints” as the KJV puts it, but were “called saints.” They were sanctified, or set apart as Christians. However, they were as babes in Christ, who were still acting, in some cases, as unregenerate men might act.

It is probable that the word *sarkikos* is a word that suggests a more serious condition than *sarkinos*, for in Romans 7:14, when Paul is describing himself in his condition before he became a Christian (as I view his statement), he says, “carnal, sold under sin.” In my judgment, Paul recognized that even as a Christian he would sin, but it is hard for me to imagine that he would say he was “sold under sin.” However, the Corinthians were not only babes in Christ, they were “walking as men” who were unregenerate, with hate, envy and strife being practiced. We need to make a Bible distinction between a man who sins occasionally or incidently as a result of some weakness or ignorance, and a man who continues in the practice of sin as the Corinthians were apparently doing on this occasion. In other words, there is a difference in a man who “walks like a man” in his regular walk, and a person who “looks like a man” at one particular moment.

So there may be two answers to the question, “Are you carnal?” If you have a carnal mind (Romans 8:6-7), set to be at enmity with God and are determined that you will do what you want to do regardless of what God says, then you are carnal (*sarkikos*). In that case, you are in a terribly dangerous situation, for Paul says, “To be carnally minded is death” (Romans 8:6). However, if you are merely temporarily acting like ordinary men instead of as a Christian, you are still carnal (*sarkinos*) and sinning, but are not in as serious a condition as you could be. Not all “carnal” things (fleshly) are sinful, as Paul shows in such passages as 1 Corinthians 9:11, but if one acts merely or primarily in terms of carnal (fleshly) desires, he will sin. This fact is so important that we think it worthy of additional emphasis, especially since we do not remember ever seeing or hearing it emphasized. Each of us must have fleshly things in order to live, for we are fleshly. Eve’s desire for pretty things (delight to the eye), or for tasty food was not sinful. But her focusing on what she wanted instead of what God wanted led her to sin. It will always be so.—1068 Mitchell Avenue, Cookeville, TN 38501  
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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist



## "PRACTICAL COMMON SENSE AND DISCRIMINATION"

William Lipscomb



Some will remember that our good Brother North, with a slight touch of sarcasm, intimated that the use of these powers in the examination of religious matters is not to be encouraged. Now it may suit my brother to surrender the privilege of being an intelligent thoughtful being.

Till I find in the word of truth some

specific command to that effect, I prefer to be just what God has made me and feel that I honor him by using the powers of judgment and discrimination with which he has blessed me. For one thing I am held accountable; that is, that I use these gifts honestly. I have the right—yes, more, it is a duty imperatively laid upon me—not only to “see with the eyes and to hear with the ears, but to “understand with the heart,” before I can become a partaker of the offer of redemption in Christ. To accept a matter simply because it is old and has the indorsement of distinguished and influential names honors neither God nor his creature, man. Usage, no matter how long continued, has no power to convert error into truth. The fact that the world has been for centuries dominated by some sort of ecclesiastical tyranny gives no reason why we should, in the face of the gradual unshackling of the human soul, resist the breaking of the bonds of servitude by a blind, unquestioning acceptance of what has passed for right in ages gone by. There is no call that we, by a superstitious reverence for what is hoary with age, should endeavor to stay the onward march of true religious freedom, as with steady tread it moves toward the goal of untrammelled personal responsibility.

God asks of no man the acceptance of that which he cannot understand. He offers to the world the way of redemption, simple, plain, intelligible. He has befogged it with no mysteries; he has robbed it of life by no dry, meaningless formalism. He has given it to the world as the “wisdom which is from above,” instinct with power to

fight its battles in the “rough and tumble” of human activity. It stands ever ready to meet the severest scrutiny of any one who will, honestly and honorably, seek to put to the test its ability to make good every claim of being the source of unalloyed blessing to man. “By their fruits ye shall know them” is a challenge to the world for a fearless examination of every influence exerted upon human hearts and every effect upon human character. As the ages go by and history, individual and national, repeats its lessons of instruction and warning, stronger grows the confirmation of the worth and enduring ability of the provision which has been given for the complete redemption and restoration of man. Turn on the searchlight of “common sense,” apply the most sensitive test of “discrimination,” and the perfection of what has been done but stands forth the more clearly developed in the fullness of its power to meet and sanctify every need of the human soul. I should be ashamed to offer my fellowmen a cure for every ill of mortality that hesitates to undergo the closest examination of its merits or that fails in the hour of honest trial to vindicate its claim to supremacy over any and every scheme proposing to bless man. Its power to save, redeem, and exalt is the implanted vital purity of its principles penetrating the innermost recesses of the heart of man, and there enthroning themselves as the source and inspiration of every thought and act.

Thousands of men today are standing aloof from the demands of the gospel, simply because it has been presented either as a ceaseless wrangle of bitter contention; as a blinding, befogging mysticism, a dry formalistic routine of meaningless ceremonies; or as a gala-day parade of childish frippery and worldly blare and fantasy as destitute of religious significance as the beating of the Hindoo tomtom. Man finds in all the hubbub of so-called “religious activity” nothing that takes hold of life, nothing that vigorously calls out the energies of manhood, nothing that treats him as a thoughtful, intelligent being, or impresses upon his heart that it means something to belong

to Christ. The frothy pretense that makes such a showy exhibition of itself under the name of religion fills his soul with unutterable disgust. He calls for that which has in itself the solid worth of real power. He asks for something more soul-satisfying and substantially real than shallow, fitful claptrap of modern revivalism. The artful trickery resorted to in these latter days to convert (?) the world and swell the roll of "additions" offers nothing that invites the careful, thoughtful discrimination of those desiring something real, strong, and vigorous. No wonder he is more than willing to leave the manipulation of the whole business to children and that class of restless, discontented women to whom home keeping and the duty of caring for the family are "burdens too grievous to be borne."

The glory of the religion of Christ is its perfect adaption to every need of man, a complete answer to every question concerning origin, present existence, and eternal destiny—a full treasure house of outfit and implement for the whole battle of life. It is lacking nowhere; it stands ready for every emergency and is willing to rest its claim to divine birth upon its ability to do for man what all the philosophies of earth and wisdom of the sages have failed to accomplish. It challenges to fullest the tests of practical common sense and the severest discrimination, honestly and fairly applied. To look upon it as a beggar for a pittance of the world's favor, or as seeking aid, comfort, and strength from any sort of worldly support or protection from decrees of courts or human legislation, is to rob it of its God-given supremacy and dethrone it as the master potency in shaping human destiny for time and eternity. All it asks is a practical, real, unhindered entrance and absorption into the vital energies of existence, and the privilege of bringing forth fruit in a natural, unrestrained, unforced way. The right to do this no honest heart can consistently refuse. When it fails to meet every call upon its vigor, to seal with success its claims amid the most arrogant pretensions of human wisdom, and to make good its right to be the supreme agency in the renovation of human character—to be, indeed, "the power of God unto salvation"—men will have a just excuse for slighting its offers and setting at naught its demands. But standing before the world today, unwasted in its vigor even by the faint-hearted service of its advocates, and undaunted by

the bitterest, most dishonest and unscrupulous attack of its enemies, it fears not the trial of its worth and Heaven-born strength by the most searching test of "practical common sense" and just "discrimination." This is the religion my Master taught and commanded his elect ones to proclaim to the world in his name. This is the religion which he freely offers to man, a remedy for the ills of time and a passport to all that is pure and transcendentally glorious beyond the river of death. To accept or reject is a matter left to the decision of every responsible human creature in the exercise of the powers of mind, heart, and soul with which God has blessed him.—*Gospel Advocate*, November 5, 1905 (Photo from, *The Gospel Advocate Centennial Volume*, Gospel Advocate Co., 1956. Used by permission).

## WHY ONLY 10 COMMANDMENTS?

Continued from page 9

still the goal (Hebrews 7:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:3-5; Romans 13:8-10).

Since Jesus has come, the Old Testament is "for our learning" (Romans 15:4), lessons (1 Corinthians 10:1-11), and to surround us with "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 11:1-12:2), but not for our obedience to its details of law (Romans 3:19-26). Jesus' law will judge those of us living today, not Moses' (John 12:44-50).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

## OUR PLEA

No book but the Bible.  
No creed but Christ.  
No name but the divine.  
No plea but the gospel.  
No aim but to save.  
In Christ — Unity.  
In opinion — Liberty  
In all things — Charity



## CHEER UP, MY BROTHER

(Acts 18:8-9)

M. W. Kiser



Our title is from the hymn, "Farther Along." God means for His people to be encouraged while doing heaven's business (1 Corinthians 3:9; 15:58). The bravest of men sometimes are afraid. Even Iron, when it gets in enough fire will melt! Elijah (1 Kings 19:4); John the Baptist (Luke 7:19-20); and the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 7:5). We don't need miracles and visions. We have everything ready at our own disposal to help (2 Peter 1:19; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 24:35). Three ways we can cheer up our brethren.

### I. WE MUST ANSWER THEIR DISCOURAGEMENT PROBLEM. ("Be not afraid...") Why are some discouraged?

- A. They think they cannot do anything.
  - 1. Some have willed to be unused and unusable (like muscles).
  - 2. You can be cheery and say "amen!"
  - 3. And, what is their reward? (1 Samuel 30:24; Matthew 10:41).
- B. Their talents are few.
  - 1. Do what you can! (Matthew 25:14-30.
  - 2. Our greatest enemy is still "fear."
  - 3. "A little man with one talent can be a nuisance to the devil and a champion for Christ."
- C. The work is difficult.
  - 1. That which is easy to do is usually not worth doing.
  - 2. Look at Moses before Pharaoh (Exodus 3:1-2; 13:17-21).
  - 3. The devil roars before those who do him damage.
- D. They are not appreciated.
  - 1. It doesn't take much to tickle or torture

sensitive people.

- 2. Joseph, nor David, knew any appreciation till they had finished.
- 3. You did not enter the Lord's army to be honored by men.
- E. They see so little success.
  - 1. What if farmers measured future prospects by present failures?
  - 2. Non-success is trial of faith to be expected (Luke 8:11-14).
  - 3. Lord's business has two parts, "Ours" and "His" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

### II. WE MUST ASSURE THEM OF THE DELIVERING POWER. "speak and hold not..."

- A. What is that power? (1 John 5:4; Ephesians 6:17; 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:6).
- B. How is that power produced? (Romans 10:17).
- C. Why does faith cause us to preach?
  - 1. Because we are debtors (Romans 1:16-17).
    - a. As steward, we must be faithful.
    - b. The very love of God constrains.
  - 2. It is the only way to perpetuate the faith (2 Timothy 2:2).
    - a. Will the next generation fault us for forgetting them?
    - b. The Restoration movement sets on a solid foundation.
  - 3. Because of the common lot of man (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 3:17-19).

### III. WE MUST ANCHOR THEM ON THE DIVINE PROMISES.

- A. The promise of His presence. "I am..." (Romans 8:31; Matthew 10:39; 2 Corinthians 12:9).
- B. The Promise of His protection. "No man..."

(Matthew 10:28; Acts 18:10-17; Romans 8:35-39).

C. The Promise of His plan. "I have..."

1. We preach to glorify God; therefore we are successful whether anyone is converted or not!
2. God's way is sufficient. We don't need a monkey show!

Consider the last verse of "Farther Along." How meaningful then those words of our title!—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

**I WILL LEAD ON GENTLY**  
Continued from page 7

but lead like Jesus. We move a lighted candle slowly lest it go out. A fire almost expiring can be put out by a strong wind. A tender plant can be watered too much. In dealing with the weak we would do well to follow the hospital rule: "Walk softly and speak quietly." We are all little children first and have to learn to walk. "The Lord's servant must not strive." We must have "a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another...and love which is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:12-14). These qualities help to make a good leader. (*Torch of Truth*, Winter 1990)

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# “BOOK, CHAPTER, AND VERSE”

Dave Miller

In recent years, an increasingly popular sentiment has arisen which maintains that the explicit citation of Bible book, chapter, and verse in pulpit proclamation is somehow unsophisticated, ineffective, or inappropriate. With this emerging mentality has come a dramatic reduction in both the amount of scripture incorporated into the sermon and the extent to which the sermon's subject matter is derived directly from biblical texts. Many preachers now pad their sermons with appeals to modern “experts” in theology, psychology, and sociology. They pride themselves on staying abreast of the “latest thought” available from the academic community and draw freely from this body of information as source material. We have “set ourselves up” for an extremely dangerous and spiritually destructive circumstance which historically has heralded the decline of God's spiritual nation (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Joshua 1:18; Psalm 1:2; Hosea 4:6).

Please consider why Gospel preachers ought to provide their listeners with direct Scriptural citations:

**SUCH A PRACTICE HELPS HEARERS LEARN THE BIBLE.** Countless are the times that one's grasp of the content and structure of the Bible is facilitated by knowing precisely where a particular doctrine, principle, or truth is taught in Scripture. One learns and memorizes passages by reading and meditating for oneself (Acts 17:11; Luke 16:29; 1 Timothy 4:13). If the preacher does not use and identify Scripture in his sermon, he is at the very least failing to contribute to his hearers' acquisition of Bible knowledge. Perhaps he is even hampering this extremely vital process.

**QUOTING SCRIPTURE** and requiring direct citation minimizes the tendency to make vague allusion to Scripture and, in so doing, to fail to take context into consideration. Error is often undetectable when disguised in the garb of a few familiar-sounding words or phrases severed from their original context. Even when inspired writers refrained from giving a specific Old Testament source, they were careful to quote the passage verbatim (cf., Hebrews 2:6ff, 4:4-7, 5:6). Doctrinal deceptions are constantly being foisted upon the simple and innocent (Romans 16:18) by the denominations and false brethren as they evade decisive and definitive contextual support for their erroneous religious views. Many disagreements and misconceptions

would be settled and clarified if individuals did not justify their religious views by saying, “Somewhere in the Bible it says...”

**DIRECT SCRIPTURE CITATION** impresses upon the hearer that the preacher is not speaking “of himself” (cf., John 7:16; 8:28; 14:10), or asserting his own ideas (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 1:20-21, but rather permitting God to speak for Himself. Explicitly telling the audience where the words are found in Scripture emphasizes to them that they are accountable to God—not the preacher. It is His words (not the preacher's) that are “powerful” (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12) and able to save them (James 1:21). Additionally, even academia held that it is only fair and ethical to give full documentation when alluding to the work of someone else.

**FINALLY, GIVING HEARERS** sufficient information for them to locate a passage is appropriate because Jesus and others did essentially the same thing. Of course, chapter and verse divisions were unavailable in apostolic times; but faithful speakers gave sufficient indication by which their claims could be verified. Though occasionally a speaker would preface his Biblical quotation with a simple formula such as “It is written” (Matthew 4:4, 7), he usually included more details which enabled the listener to “zero in” on the specific text. Study carefully the following passages and notice how the inspired speaker provided clues to the specific source by identifying the Old Testament book, author, or canonical division (e.g., law, Psalms, or prophets—Matthew 3:3, 12:39, 13:14, 15:7, 24:15; Mark 7:6; Luke 20:42, 24:44; John 1:23; Acts 1:20, 2:16, 25, 3:22, 13:33, 35, 40, 15:15, 28:25).

Christians living today are not addressing Jews who were so familiar with the Old Testament that they needed to be reminded of a passage. We are addressing the denominations and the irreligious—all the more reason to specify our Scriptural source.

Why do some seem so reluctant to give book, chapter, and verse in their preaching? Perhaps some are threatened by the practice because their own knowledge of Scripture is inferior to that of those who are able to do so. Perhaps some have embraced false doctrines which cannot survive the straightforward scrutiny of scripture. Avoiding explicit scriptural citation facilitates religious seduction.

Maybe to them, constantly quoting Scripture does not fit well with the modern, "sophisticated," "educated," "smooth" approach. Such "education" is akin to what Paul called "false knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20). Such "smoothness" sounds like the "smooth things" which Isaiah denounced (Isaiah 30:10).

Brethren, there will never come a time when culture or historical circumstances will warrant an abandonment of straightforward, Scripture-quoting proclamation of God's word. Let us not be ashamed (Romans 1:16) of the Bible. Let us present it faithfully to lost humanity and do all we can to encourage them to "check it out" (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21) as did the noble Bereans!—*Dave Miller recently took the position of the Chairman of the Department of New Testament Studies at Apologetics Press Inc., 230 Landmark Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117.*

## WHAT I OWE MY HOME CONGREGATION

Frank L. Cox

Unto the Church of the Lord in every locality, I am under solemn obligation to the extent of my ability, but unto my home congregation, I am under special obligation.

*I want my home congregation to radiate a wholesome influence in the community.* Therefore, I owe it the example of a good life. For it I must "live soberly, righteously and godly" (Matthew 5:13, 16).

*I want the strangers who enter the door of the meeting house to feel at home, to learn to love us, to return from time to time.* They are our guests; I must entertain them. I owe it to them, and to the church to show myself friendly. I must not stand back and wait for others to greet them; this I must do (Hebrews 13:2).

*No congregation can make progress without faithful and efficient leaders.* To a certain extent, the members of the church make or break their leaders. To the end that our leaders may be stronger and more efficient, I must give them my support. I must pray for them. As long as they are true men, I must not embarrass them in the work

(1 Timothy 5:19).

*My home congregation has financial obligations which are due at regular intervals.* Whether I give or do not give, these obligations must be paid. If it is right for my congregation to pay its obligations each week, it is right for me to give each week. Though circumstances may force me to be absent at times, my contributions should find their way to the treasury of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

*I know that the very existence of my congregation depends upon the attendance of its members.* In fact, the attendance is the life of the church (Hebrews 10:25). For this reason, I must attend the services...all services I can. For all that I have, I would not have said that my congregation perished because I would not attend the meetings.

*I want my home congregation to grow, to multiply in members.* Therefore, I must set to the noble work of winning souls for Christ (Luke 19:10). This I can do by preaching and persuading; this I can do by persistent effort; this I can do by bringing them to our meetings.

*My home congregation cannot thrive in a frigid atmosphere.* I must not by my carelessness allow the church to become a place where hearts are chilled. I must make it a place where hearts are warmed. Therefore, I owe it to my heart, the warmth of my life, I must forgive and forget (Matthew 6:14-15).

Wishing to be honest, I must meet my obligations to the best of my ability. I must with the help that God gives, play my part in the incomparable work of building up the body of Christ.

### THE BEST BIBLE SCHOOL TEACHER I EVER HAD

- 1) Always was there,
- 2) Always was on time,
- 3) Always had a smile,
- 4) Always had patience,
- 5) Always had the lesson prepared,
- 6) Always taught the Bible,
- 7) Always urged the class to stay for worship,
- 8) Always prayed for his pupils,
- 9) Always checked on me when I was absent.

# CULTURAL WOMAN'S ROLE

Owen D. Olbricht



Are the instructions in Scriptures concerning the role of woman simply a reflection of the cultural practices of the day? What was the involvement of women in the religious activities of the Greek and Roman world? Was Paul's instruction based on the attitudes of the culture where the churches were established?

## PAUL'S INSTRUCTION

A careful consideration of Paul's teaching concerning women reveals that Paul was not appealing to the customs of the day. Rather he stated that women were to follow God's ordained plans for them.

In three different passages he appealed to God's order from creation when writing concerning the role of women. He wrote:

"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9).

"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. ...If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:34, 37).

"For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

These passages clearly teach that God created woman for man. For this reason, her relationship to men is to be one of submission.

This was not true of the women in the Greek and Roman world. They were much more involved in community affairs and religious activities than many think. Instead of encouraging women to follow the culture of the day, Paul's instructions for women were counter cultural. Women had

leading roles in the pagan world.

"Substantial evidence exists to indicate that women held many of these public offices and were expected to exercise their public religious duties just as men were. Women's names are recorded in a wide variety of official inscriptions recording-and honoring-their public service and generosity. They maintained temples and sponsored games, processions, and sacrifices."<sup>1</sup>

In agreement with this Abrahamsen wrote, "Women served as priestesses and other leaders in most pagan cults, including Diana, Isis, Livia, Dionysos and Liber and Libera. They were active participants in liturgies, composed hymns and rites, administered temple and cult finances, organized feast day celebrations, played music and made leadership decisions that affected large numbers of people."<sup>2</sup>

"Nevertheless, the Hellenistic age was generally a time of the emancipation of women...But in spite of the opposition, women in Paul's day had considerable freedom of movement, rights in marriage and divorce, and in some places and in some cults, the right to hold public and religious office... Nevertheless, most Greek women had abandoned the veil and were experimenting with countless styles of coiffure."<sup>3</sup>

Statements by Luke in the book of Acts indicate that women were proactive in religious matters and community affairs. They were involved in the persecution of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidia Antioch. "But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region" (Acts 13:50). This passage does not say that women were leaders in public worship, but it does indicate that women were prominent in the city and as such were mentioned along with the chief men in expressing their religious prejudices against Paul and Barnabas.

Also women are mentioned as leaders in the community in Thessalonica. "And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas" (Acts 17:4).

Paul and Peter wrote of the relationship between the wife and husband. They did not appeal to custom when writing concerning this relationship.

"Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church... Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:22-24).

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18).

"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands... For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in the God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter 3:1, 5-6).

### CONCLUSION

God's instruction for women that was given through Paul was not based on cultural practices. He was not teaching that what he wrote was just for women of that time, in that culture, and in that setting and not for Christian women in future times and different cultures. What he wrote was based on the order which God planned from the very beginning. Those who follow culture and not Scripture in any age are going contrary to divine will. God does not want His followers to engage in religious practices because that is what the crowd is doing (Exodus 23:2). He wants them to live by His teaching.

"According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 18:3-4).—305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ross Shephard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Women and Christian Origins*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 86.

<sup>2</sup>Valerie A. Abrahamsen, *Women and Worship at Philippi: Diana/Artemis and other cults in the early Christian Era*, (Portland, Maine: Shell Press, 1995), 194.

<sup>3</sup>William Baird, *The Corinthian Church—a Biblical Approach to Urban Culture*, (New York, NY: Abingdon

Press, 1964), 121, 122.

## THE POWER OF PREACHING

Dan Winkler

*Preachers are my heroes.* As the son, grandson, brother, father, and brother-in-law of preachers, it's hard not to be biased. I reflect with joy on the privilege of hearing Gus Nichols, Guy N. Woods, Franklin Camp, G.K. Wallace, Ira North and men of their spiritual stature. I remember them to be men who lovingly and logically proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Jesus.

Preachers [by their method, their message, or their beautiful Christlike demeanor] have been my mentors. Men like Hugo McCord, Raymond Kelcy, Batsell Baxter, Wendell Winkler, William Woodson, Tom Holland, and others faithfully invested themselves into the lives of younger men. So many of us owe them so much!

Some want to:

**REPLACE** gospel preaching with dramatic presentations.

**REPRESS** gospel preaching with a message of compromise.

**RESHAPE** gospel preaching into "feeling good" pep talks.

**REDUCE** gospel preaching to a brief necessity.

But let's remember the words and plan of God himself: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2); "How shall they hear without a preacher?...as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:14-15).

Thank the Lord for Bible preaching...and for the Bible preachers of our glorious past, our exciting present and our great future—Crieve Hall Church of Christ, 4806 Trousdale Dr., Nashville, TN 37220-1304

# THE "JESUS" INSCRIPTION

Wayne Jackson



James, the brother of Jesus, is mentioned several times in the New Testament. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says that on a visit to Jerusalem, he saw "James, the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19). Matthew mentions James, along with Christ's other half-siblings (Matthew 13:55-56).

Following his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7). James was a significant influence in the Jerusalem church (see Acts 15:13ff; 21:18-19; Galatians 2:9), and the best evidence indicates that, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he authored the book of James.

There is also extra-biblical testimony regarding James. Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, refers to the death of "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James." He also records that James was stoned to death (*Antiquities*, 20:9.1).

Eusebius, an historian of the fourth century A.D. refers to the earliest testimony of Hegesippus, who also mentions the stoning of James, "the brother of the Lord," and says that he was buried near the temple (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.23).

Now, suddenly, James, and more importantly Jesus himself, have made today's headlines. According to an *Associated Press* article, "Jesus Inscription Found?" by Richard N. Ostling (released today—October 21, 2002), an empty ossuary (limestone burial box) has come to light that contains this inscription: "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

The inscription has been dated at about A.D. 63. If the reference is to the "James," "Joseph," and "Jesus" of the New Testament documents, then this is one of the most explosive archaeological discoveries ever made. According to Herschel Shanks editor of the prestigious *Biblical Archaeological Review*, this would be "the first appearance of Jesus in the archaeological record."

While this discovery is bound to be contested and debated for some time, Andre Lemaire, at France's Practical School of Higher Studies, a specialist in ancient inscriptions, believes it is "very probable" that the find is

genuine. Initially there appears to be prima facie evidence which points to its authenticity.

1. The Jews buried their dead in ossuary boxes between 20 B.C. and A.D. 70; this discovery (at A.D. 63) would fit into that time frame.

2. The writing style (Aramaic) is consistent with the time of James and Jesus.

3. Two scientists, affiliated with the Israeli government's Geological Survey, conducted a microscopic examination of the inscription. Their investigation revealed "no evidence that might detract from the authenticity."

4. The fact that the inscription contains the name of the father (Joseph), and brother (Jesus) of the deceased (James) has been described as "very unusual." Only one other such example in Aramaic has been found. Scholars have concluded therefore, that this particular "Jesus" must have had "some unusual role or fame." The circumstances surrounding the life and death of Christ would certainly fit that mold.

This discovery is likely to ignite controversy from several quarters. Predictably, Bible critics will attack the evidence. A few misguided skeptics deny that Jesus ever lived, and so they will "choke" on this.

Some Roman Catholics will more-than-likely be disturbed since they do not believe that Jesus had any siblings due to their dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary — a view, in fact, which is not supported by the evidence.

At this point it is too early to make impetuous and dogmatic judgments — but the possibility that this discovery is authentic is exciting indeed.—PO Box 55265, Stockton, CA 95205

*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

*(Ephesians 4:32)*

# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Wayne Brewer



One of the most spiritually productive things that a Christian can do is read the Bible. The Holy Spirit inspired men to write down the Word of God so that it could be read. Giving just a few minutes per day to read the Bible will draw one close to God, provide a greater understanding of His will, and enables one the courage and strength

to defeat Satan's temptations. Remember, Jesus knew the Word and when tempted responded to Satan, "it is written..." (Matthew 4:4). Consistently reading the Bible for just a few minutes per day enable one to read through the whole New Testament in about a month. That is right! Reading the Bible for about fifteen minutes daily allows one to read completely through the New Testament monthly.

Reading God's Word is important, but there is something that enhances the reading of God's Word and that is searching the Scriptures, or Bible study. The Bereans were more noble minded because "they searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). Not only did they read the Bible, but they searched the Bible, and because they searched the Scriptures they could discern between right and wrong, and truth and error. As long as the Bereans continued to "search the Scriptures daily" they would be spiritually strong. Jesus encouraged people to study the Word. When speaking to the Jews, He said, "Search the Scriptures..." (John 5:39). The Jews had been reading the Scriptures, but in their reading they had not found Jesus, so Jesus says, "Search the Scriptures...and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). They had read, but they needed to search and study, and they needed to study because they were stumbling over Jesus. There is great value in reading God's Word, but there is also the need to study God's Word.

The study of the Bible means searching for the context and the immediate context, such as knowing who made a statement, or to whom a statement was made. Without knowing the context some often try to apply things to all Christians of all times when the context was for the Apostles or some other people only in the first

century. Studying the Bible means trying to understand the meanings of words as they were used in the first century, in the original languages. Modern versions often give a modern usage of a word rather than a first century meaning of a word. One does not have to know the original languages first hand to understand the Bible because one can consult Bible dictionaries, word study books, etc., to know how a word was used 2,000 years ago. The study of God's Word also means understanding how the Bible authorizes: using commands, apostolic approved examples, and inferences. Failure to understand how God communicates will only lead to finding error rather than truth.

Ultimately a study of God's Word should lead to obeying the Word. It is not enough just to know what God says, defend the truth, or be able to teach it to others. The challenge is to obey the Word of God.—1363 Hwy 270 E, Sheridan, AR 72150-6711

## **"Movies Are Just Portraying Reality" Continued from front page.**

shows us reality when it condemns drinking (Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Homosexuality is an ever increasing real event in life. Yet once again the Bible reveals reality as it condemns homosexuality (Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11).

While it is true that Hollywood portrays some real events in life these films are promoting sinful acts as normal and acceptable. That my friend is not reality! God never has accepted these actions and others like them nor seen them as normal. If Hollywood wants to portray reality, let them teach that these things are sinful and will damn one's soul; refuse to promote them in roles and portray those things that are good and wholesome in the sight of God. We as Christians must be careful in what we indulge for entertainment. By the way, just who is hiding from reality?—Hillcrest Church of Christ, 1037 West South Street, Neosho, MO 64850-2092.

# WHEN THE PRINCESS BECOMES A SLAVE

Neal Pollard



Everybody loves a “rags to riches” story. It has been the story of America where average people from immigrants to entrepreneurs have made something from nearly nothing. Spiritually, a person comes to Christ adorned with filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), but those obedient to Him enjoy the “exceeding riches of His Grace” (Ephesians 2:7, cf. Ephesians 1:7).

Sadly, the story often works the other way. During the Great Depression many people lost it all, financially. This society is filled with pathetic, compulsive people whose drive to gamble has undone their families and squandered their fortunes. Likewise, spiritually impoverished people saturate the globe (cf. Revelation 3:17). The book of Lamentations records a nation of people who, in God’s eyes, had gone from princess to slave. The weeper writes,

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits (Lamentation 1:1-3).

This is a vivid description of what sin will do to a person (Romans 6:23) or a nation (Proverbs 14:34). Notice what happened to Judah, God’s precious people, when she went from princess to slave.

**There were tears (Vs. 2).** “She weepeth sore...and her tears are on her cheeks.” Interestingly, the Hebrew word for weep in this verse is also found in Genesis 27:38, where Esau lost his exalted position in Isaac’s household and was relegated to a lower place. In Judah’s exile, Jeremiah foresaw the bitter weeping of a people who were

reaping a harvest of sorrow because of their sins (31:15).

Becoming a Christian brings great joy (1 Peter 1:8-9). Those in the New Testament converted to Christ began a life of rejoicing (cf. Acts 8:39). Conversely, falling away from Christ will inevitably strip one of that joy and leave him only with bitter tears. For many, such happens in this life; for the lost, it will happen throughout eternity (Matthew 13:42, 50).

**There was discomfort (Vs. 2).** Making herself a slave to sin, Judah found no comfort from it. When sinful pleasure becomes painful, and it will (1 Timothy 5:6), it offers no solace to comfort those it has afflicted! Judah, the slave, “had no comforter” (1:9, 17). Those who serve sin (Romans 6:17) have a hard taskmaster. Yes, “the way of transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15). Eternal discomfort awaits the servants of sin (Luke 16:25).

**There was betrayal (Vs. 2).** Judah made some foolish choices for friends (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33), all of whom “dealt treacherously” in betraying her. Did Judah suppose she could really count on the wicked to be loyal to her? When Christians make friends of the world, which alliances show hostility to God (James 4:4), what should they expect of fornicators, adulterers, murderers, thieves, extortioners, and drunkards? Fidelity? Deliverance? Support?

**There was captivity (Vs. 3).** For Judah, it was a physical captivity in the land of Babylon. Freedom was replaced by slavery. Such has always been the case since Eden (cf. Genesis 3:16ff). Peter tells God’s people today, “...By what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved” (2 Peter 2:19, NAS). Jesus warned, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

**There was affliction (Vs 3).** “Affliction,” as used in this verse, “expresses the state of pain or punishment resulting from affliction” (Harris, Vol. 2, 684). It is synonymous with “poverty” (Brown, 777). Sin has wages, and one reaps what one sows (Galatians 6:7). Judah was just like Israel (Jeremiah 3:7-8), and they too sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). Sin is not just futile; it is counterproductive. It robs one of peace (Jeremiah 6:14), strips one of joy (Lamentations 5:15), wounds one with guilt, sorrow, and loss (Jeremiah 6:7), and leaves one for spiritual dead in the ditch of sin

(cf. Luke 10:30). As it has been said, "When you are through with sin, it may not be through with you." Sin afflicts the soul.

**There was restlessness (Vs. 3).** Judah found no rest in the life of sin. This is no surprise to one who trusts the Bible. Thanks to sin, Judah had "forgotten their resting place" (Jeremiah 50:6). Jeremiah 50:7 depicts the Lord as the resting place, "the place where the flocks lie down to rest" (Keil, Vol. 8, 271). This brings to mind the twenty-third Psalm, where David is mindful of that spiritual haven where he is made to "lie down in green pastures" (Vs. 2). Jesus promises rest to those who escape sin in coming to Him (Matthew 11:28-30). Otherwise, for an eternity, one will be destined for "no rest day or night" (Revelation 14:11).

**There was defeat (Vs. 3).** Judah was overtaken between the straits. What imagery to describe the ultimate result of sin! Mark it down, sin brings defeat! Sin which overcomes leads to the worst imaginable state (2 Peter 2:20). Even Christians can be "overcome with evil" (Romans 12:21). Brethren are overtaken in faults (Galatians 6:1). Sin promises the victory, but only faith can produce (1 John 5:4-5).

Parker commented on this passage, saying, "Judah did not go into captivity because of her excellency or faithfulness; she was driven into servitude because of her disobedience to her Lord. What was true of Judah will be true of every man amongst us. No man can sin, and prosper" (Exell, 1).

Christians are royalty in Christ (1 Peter 2:9). Christians are part of God's family (Galatians 4:6). For a Christian to forsake the Lord for the world is utter folly (cf. 2 Timothy 4:10). Such choose to be eternal paupers who have within their grasp "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for them (1 Peter 1:4). Do not exchange the true riches (Luke 16:11) for Satan's fool's gold!—6585 Cold Harbor Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

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## WHEN COMING TO WORSHIP

When we come together to worship God, there are some things that we should bring along, and there are some things that we should leave at home.

### **We should bring along (John 4:24):**

**A Cheerful disposition.** Worship will be joyful. A pleasant smile. Others will be encouraged.

**An open mind, ready to learn.** The preacher's efforts will be more successful

**An honest heart.** We can worship with a clear conscience.

**An humble and contrite spirit.** Worship will be more acceptable to God.

**A rested body.** Tired bodies often cause one to drop off to sleep. One does not worship while asleep.

### **We should leave at home (1 Corinthians 11:24-29):**

All home and business problems and worries.

The plans for the week.

Thoughts and plans about the vacation.

All envy, malice, ill will and insincerity.

Author Unknown

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

Psalm 122:1, NKJV



### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT**

Enclosed is a contribution for the *Gospel Gleaner*. We have really enjoyed the sound articles. May God bless your efforts. Jesse & Sue Smith, Greenwood, SC.

### **IMPRESSED WITH ARTICLES**

I have just read your publication and was very impressed with the wonderful articles upholding the truth. Please put me on your mailing list. And thank you very much for this favor. Incidentally, one of your contributors, John Polk, is married to a niece of mine. Living so far apart I have never had the opportunity to hear him preach but from his articles I can see that he is a very good preacher of the truth. Lorene McAlister, Abilene, TX.

### **WILL APPRECIATE GG**

I would appreciate receiving *Gospel Gleaner*. Although we are active members at Asbury United Methodist Church, I enjoy receiving HTH and always find the articles uplifting and instructional. Thank you for your assistance. Gaylen Pugh, Madison, AL.

### **ENJOYS GOOD ARTICLES**

I would like to receive the monthly paper *Gospel Gleaner*. I enjoy reading good articles. Thanks Katherine Parham, Flintstone, GA.

### **STAND FOR TRUTH**

Please add my name to your mailing list for the *Gospel Gleaner*. For several years I received the paper. I appreciate your stand for the truth and may you ever continue that stand. Frank Paris, Alamo, TN.

### **ENJOYS READING GG**

I sure enjoy reading the *Gospel Gleaner*. I picked up an issue at Emmett, Idaho. Please add me to your mailing list. Thank you very sincerely. Dixie Brightwell, Ontario, OR.

### **SIGN US UP!**

Greetings in His precious name. Please sign us up for a subscription of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Our dear brother Max R. Miller used to send us a copy — but he's gone home now, and we sure do miss him!!! May God bless your efforts in the furthering of the glorious gospel that is so desperately needed. The truth is getting terribly clouded in many congregations, how sad. Enclosed please accept our check. Thank you kindly for your work. Lewis and Christine Blair, Thompson's Station, TN.

### **LEARNED OF GG IN HTH/HTH**

I am writing this letter to ask if my name and address can be put on your mailing list to receive the paper entitled *Gospel Gleaner*. I read about it in the *House to House* paper and would like very much to get it regularly. I am hoping that it has a lot of Bible studies as I enjoy doing correspondence Bible studies by mail when I can find them. The *House to House* paper had many studies in it and I've enjoyed it a lot. I got the *House to House* for the first time only a few weeks ago and I read it many times. I will be more than happy to pay for a subscription of the *Gospel Gleaner* so please let me know the price. Junior Darby, Bonifay, FL.

### **LEARNED OF GG IN LOCAL BULLETIN**

I learned of your publication from a local church of Christ bulletin where they indicated subscriptions to the *Gospel Gleaner* are available by forwarding my mailing address. I'd appreciate it very much if you would add my name to your distribution. Thank you, I look forward to your next edition! Randy Reasons, Memphis, TN.

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