



Who Is A Sinner?

David Dann

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul writes, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, we know for certain that everyone who has ever lived on the earth, with the exception of Christ, has sinned against God. However, we sometimes have trouble distinguishing between who is a sinner and who is not.

While most would agree that someone who is practicing sin is a sinner, what about those who have stopped sinning, but have not done anything further? Some seem to believe that if they cease the practice of a certain sin, then they can just keep silent about it and the problem will eventually go away on its own. Is this what the Lord expects of us? Is a person no longer considered a sinner just because he has stopped the practice of whatever sin he may have been involved in? Or, is a person a sinner until he is forgiven by God and released from the guilt of his sin? Who is a sinner? According to God’s word, a sinner is:

One Who Is Practicing Sin

1. This involves sin of any form. Paul writes, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21). It makes no difference which particular sin one may be involved in. Any involvement in sin of any kind makes one a sinner.

2. This involves any degree of involvement in sin. Many seem to think that just a little bit of sin won’t hurt anything. However, John writes, “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Therefore, even involvement in so-called “little sins” would make one a sinner according to the Scriptures.

Is a person no longer considered a sinner just because he has stopped the practice of whatever sin he may have been involved in? Or, is a person a sinner until he is forgiven by God and released from the guilt of his sin?

Vol. XLII No. 21
November 5, 1998

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Editorial

Christ Ever Lives: My Assurance of Victory

Vol. XLII November 5, 1998 No. 21

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\$19.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$22.00

— Bulk Rates —

\$1.25 per subscription per month

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Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

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Mike Willis

One of the themes of the book of Romans is to show that the gospel provides for man an assurance of salvation that perfect law keeping cannot provide. Perhaps we have not emphasized that Christians have an assurance of salvation sufficiently to give God-fearing children of God confidence that the victory is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord. I would like to consider some of the texts that emphasize the on-going work of the Lord in assuring our salvation. His work on Calvary is completed, but his work in heaven is on-going and is a source of assurance to us that we truly shall be saved.

Romans 5:7-11

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

This passage reminds us of the grace of God in sending Jesus to die for our sins while we were yet his enemies. He extols the love of God by showing how rare it is that one would die for his enemies. One does not usually give his life for a “righteous man” (*dikaios*: the point is that this is a man who gives to everyone his due), although for a good man (*agathos*: one who is a benefactor, giving to others what they do not deserve) some would even dare to die. But Jesus went beyond this in that while we were yet sinners, yet his enemies, he died for us so that we might be reconciled to God.

The next phrase says, “much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” The “much more then” forms a contrast. If Christ died for us while we were his enemies, how much more then will he do those things needed for our salvation now that we have been reconciled to him and adopted by God as his children! “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). This passage calls attention to Christ’s resurrected life and continued existence in heaven as an assurance of our salvation.

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Intolerant Tolerance

Connie W. Adams

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32). But like Pilate, many cynics raise the question “What is truth?” It is thought to be so nebulous that anyone who thinks he knows the truth on anything is surely a bigot of the worst kind. (Surely if there are degrees of truth, there must be degrees of bigots as well.)

We are supposed to be tolerant of all forms of denominational error without being so overbearing as to compare that error with the truth of God’s word. Again Jesus said, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). How dare anyone oppose a false position espoused by a well-known and much loved brother! The culprit here is not the one who teaches error to the destruction of souls but, alas, the one who is so intolerant as to point it out. Any such attempt is sure to elicit numerous articles or lectures punctuated by knowing glances and nudges from some in the audience, on the subject of love, kindness, and understanding.

In the realm of morals, it is recommended that we have “openness” and that we be “broad-minded.” After all, adultery has been around a long time and many good people have given in to it. Why be so judgmental? And who would not lie about it to save embarrassment, or pain to family and friends. In such a case with such mitigating circumstances surely a lie is understandable, even if it is told in court under oath.

In the church, such “tolerance” has led to the acceptance of people in adulterous marriages, or who practice social drinking, gambling, and indecent attire. Woe unto that elder or preacher who is so intolerant as to speak out against all such. Especially in language that can be understood.

On the political field, those who advocate the high road in moral behavior are scrutinized to find some skeleton in their closets. When all else fails they can be branded as “right-wing religious extremists.” Sometimes even their sanity may be called in question. Such is the intolerance of the tolerant. Liberalism of whatever sort is insufferably arrogant. It claims for itself privileges which it refuses to extend to its detractors.

While we all have the civil and academic right to espouse whatever view we might choose, that does not mean that the Lord honors such choices. We all still have the right to search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11). Should it be clear from the Scriptures that a given doctrine or practice is not according to truth, that does not mean that those who have advocated them are the objects of hate. What it means is that their teaching or practice does not meet the divine standard.

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It is fair to point that out without being accused of sowing hate or discord and of challenging the personal honor of those who advocate such views.

Those who have expanded Romans 14 to include more than Paul did and who have viewed it as elastic enough to cover all forms of doctrinal and moral error have unwittingly contributed to some of this intolerant tolerance. We have been told that there are five or six different views which brethren have taken on marriage, divorce and remarriage (as if that subject belongs in Romans 14 at all). Surely we should not be so intolerant as to exclude those honest and sincere brethren who have differed on this. That subject is not addressed in Romans 14 but it is dealt with in other passages. Is it intolerant to insist that we faithfully adhere to what those passages say?

In American society at large, those who hold to the Bible as a standard of morals are variously identified as “Biblical fundamentalists,” “literalists,” “right-wing extremists,” or simply “nuts.” In entertainment they are portrayed in the most uncomplimentary light. In the news media they are misrepresented and regarded as unworthy of serious consideration. In education they have been sidelined and excluded from the process. We will have to exercise care to be sure that the same intolerant tolerance does not surface among us when there are doctrinal and moral issues at stake.

It is my conviction that some have already bought into it.

When men of knowledge, ability and character are marginalized by oblique references to their character as though they were sinister and out to promote some personal agenda, and all that without evidence, then intolerant tolerance has set it. It would be far more honorable to identify these men by name and cite the evidence to support these claims than to continually speak in an ever-widening circle of brethren as being “dishonorable.” Who are they? Do they have names. What is your evidence? While you are engaging in such besmirching of character, how about addressing forthrightly the issues at stake. Men of principle will not be silenced regardless of what names you call them. If that is the price for standing for truth, then so be it. Our Lord endured far more. We have not resisted unto blood!

What is truth? “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16).

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“Diminished Credibility”?

Larry Ray Hafley

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott spoke of President Clinton’s trashing of the office of the presidency. Said he, “I am disappointed in the way the highest office in the nation has been reduced in stature and diminished in credibility.”

“... Asked about Lott’s assertion that Clinton had diminished the credibility and stature of the office, (Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle) said: ‘I don’t believe so at all’” (*USA Today* [September 1, 1998], 5A).

Senator Daschle’s misguided defense of Clinton is about as frightening as the president’s brazen behavior. If Mr. Clinton has not “diminished” the credibility of the presidency, let Daschle tell us what forms of im-

morality would be required to do so. Specifically what would it take to reduce the stature of the oval office? Suppose Trent Lott or Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House, had done what Clinton has done. Suppose they had been sexually involved with one of their secretaries, lied about it, and then had been exposed. Would Mr. Daschle say, when asked if they had “reduced in stature and diminished in credibility” their respective offices, “I don’t believe so at all”? Would he draw that conclusion? I don’t believe so at all.

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Have We Left Christ Behind?

Bruce Reeves

From time to time I hear folks say things like, “We need to major in the gospels and minor in the epistles.” The implication being that if someone stresses doctrinal issues they are missing the point of the New Testament. There is no doubt that we must have the right attitude when teaching God’s word, but that is not to say we are to minimize the necessity of doctrinal truth!

Unfortunately, sound gospel preachers are being charged with preaching a “church-centered” message rather than a “Christ-centered” message. The statement that those who stress baptism, church organization, and the work of the church have left Christ behind is false.

Christ commanded baptism, so when we preach baptism we are preaching the gospel of the Son of God (Mark 16:15, 16). As far as the organization and work of the local church is concerned, that is a subject that has to do with the authority of Christ and we must always stress that.

Paul Was a “Christ-Centered” Preacher

The apostle Paul preached Jesus and him crucified. His preaching did not emphasize lofty words of eloquence and human philosophy, but Jesus Christ was the attraction and him alone. “And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1, 2). The question we are concerning ourselves with in this article is, since we know Paul preached Christ and him crucified, what exactly did he teach?

Paul Talked About the Shame of Religious Division

Some have the idea that preaching Jesus means that you never condemn anything or anyone for sinful activity but such is simply not the case. Involved in encouraging unity is the condemnation of division. Paul condemned the division at Corinth, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be

perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment . . . Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:10, 13). There were some who viewed preachers as competitive teachers, thus creating factions in the church. Paul had not asked that they do this, nor had Cephas or Apollos, but divisive men were using their names to promote their own agendas.

Was Paul preaching Jesus when he condemned this? *Absolutely!* We cannot preach Christ without preaching his word. There is no doubt in my mind that were Paul living today he would denounce the religious division in the world and plead with believers to stand on the word of God without compromise.

Paul Preached Against Sin

F. Lagard Smith (professor at Pepperdine University) said, “For our generation, tolerance has become the highest virtue (tolerance, that is, for everything and everyone other than those who would insist on absolute moral standards). . . if nothing is right and nothing wrong, then tolerance is the only option . . . So we have to tow the line on issues like abortion, gay rights, and radical feminism or we will be reported to the sensitivity police for being intolerant.” You see the stage has been set for divorce and remarriage, adulterous relationships, and homosexuality and since we are preaching Jesus we cannot condemn anyone; such ideas appear as a smoke-screen for sin. But Paul preached to the Corinthians about withdrawing fellowship from a disorderly brother (1 Cor. 5:1-13). In preaching church discipline, Paul was preaching the authority of Christ (1 Cor. 5:4, 5). To neglect such teaching would have been to neglect Jesus Christ.

Paul Preached On Marriage and Divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-40)

Many pulpits are silent on this, but Paul was not. Involved in preaching Jesus is preaching his law concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 states God’s will on the matter, “Let not the wife depart from her husband.” The word *chorizo* is the word for divorce in verse 11. If she departs she must either be reconciled,

The Christian And His Government

Dick Blackford

A true Christian is the best friend any government can have. This is not usually understood, especially by governments that have never grasped the meaning of true Christianity. Thus, Christians have often been persecuted as subversive to the government. In the Old Testament their own people governed the people of God, with God at the top. It was a theocracy. The Jew's religion and his government were intertwined. Apparently God felt this was necessary to insure that the promise he made to Abraham would be fulfilled, for God saw no need for such an arrangement after Christ came. In the New Testament, a man's government and his religion were separate. One could be a Christian while pagans ran his government.

The New Testament has very little to say about the roll of government. God did not believe in big government. He separated the "things of Caesar" from the "things of God"

if possible, or remain celibate. What Christ taught in the gospels, Paul taught in the epistles (Matt. 19:1-9).

Paul Refuted False Doctrine (1 Cor. 15:12)

We cannot truly preach Jesus Christ and reject what his word teaches us. Someone says, "But this was something that determined whether or not people were saved!" This is true, but what false doctrine does not influence people's salvation if it is a matter of faith? Including such issues as: the plan of salvation, the church, institutionalism, denominationalism, marriage, divorce, and remarriage . . . and we could go on and on.

The point I want us to all understand is though we refer over and over to the cross and though we say, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," the moment we leave scriptural authority behind is the moment we leave Christ behind!

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(Matt. 22:21). But he did provide for support of the government. There are certain things God's word teaches about the role of government, to which we should give note.

The Government's Rights And Responsibilities

1. *God ordained government and citizens are subject to it (Rom. 13:1).* If citizens resist the power of the government they are withstanding God and will be judged as to how they do in this matter (Rom. 13:2).

2. *Government is to reward good behavior and punish bad behavior.* "For rulers are not a terror to the good work but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise from the same" (Rom. 13:6). The government is to protect its citizens by taking vengeance on lawbreakers (1 Pet. 2:14).

3. *Government has a right to punish even to the point of death.* "For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). This extends even to the right of capital punishment, "for he beareth not the sword in vain." The sword was an instrument often used in capital punishment. Paul recognized that there were some crimes worthy of death and said if he had committed any of them he would be willing to die (Acts 25:11). "If any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed" (Rev. 13:10). Jesus told Pilate that his (Pilate's) power to release or crucify was given from above (John 19:10, 11).

4. *Government has a right to collect taxes (Rom. 13:6, 7).* Officers of the government must be paid since "they are ministers of God's service." Jesus taught that taxes should be paid (Matt. 22:15-22). Civil government would be needed even if everybody were Christians, for there are things to be done that are not the work of the church or the family.

The Christian's Responsibilities

Never do we read of Jesus or the Twelve seeking to overthrow the government, though it certainly would have made it easier on them. They never led a march or demonstrated against the Sanhedrin or had a “sit in” or went on a “hunger strike” at the halls of Pontius Pilate.

1. *To obey the law.* “Let every soul be in subjection to the higher power” (Rom. 13:1). No one is exempt.

2. *To honor, fear, and pray for civil rulers.* “Honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17).

Supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings are to be made for all men — “for kings that are in high places, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life . . .” (1 Tim. 2:2). “Fear to whom fear . . .” (Rom. 13:7). “Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; . . .” (Rom. 13:7). Even if the man is dishonorable we should honor the office (Acts 26:25). One is not required to agree with the government before he agrees to pay taxes. Jesus paid taxes to the government that crucified him.

What The Christian Cannot Do

1. *He cannot obey the government if it means disobeying God.* Some governments have required idolatry (Dan.3:7). Others have outlawed Christianity (China, Iran, North Korea, etc.). “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

2. *He cannot participate in an illegal overthrow of his government.* We are sympathetic toward those under an oppressive regime, particularly those who were under the former Soviet Union. There are yet many areas of the world that do not enjoy the freedoms we take for granted. Let us be reminded that Christ and the apostles lived under one of the most oppressive governments in history. Never do we read of Jesus or the Twelve seeking to overthrow the government, though it certainly would have made it easier on them. They never led a march or demonstrated against the Sanhedrin or had a “sit in” or went on a “hunger strike” at the halls of Pontius Pilate. There is no record that they picketed or threw rocks and bottles at their leaders, or tried to “out shout” their leaders or tried to shut down the government, or take the law into their own hands.

The Jewish rulers had a figurehead government with limited authority under the Roman Empire. They were intolerant of Christians and ordered Peter and John to stop preaching. The apostles were beaten on that occasion. Talk about a good time to call for an overthrow of the government. But they did not.

The Romans were also harsh with Christ and his disciples. Paul and Silas were imprisoned and beaten (Acts 16). They didn’t call for an overthrow of the government but they did exercise their rights as Roman citizens (Acts 16:35f). A disciple has the right to use any lawful means at his disposal for protection. Paul did (Acts 22:25-29; 25:11, 12). In a free society citizens are given the right to vote and decide peaceably who their rulers will be. Though one may be outvoted, he has the lawful right to express his preference. However, the teaching of Christ and the apostles is clearly against overthrowing the government under which he is living, regardless of its corruption.

3. *He cannot take personal vengeance on lawbreakers.* “Avenge not yourselves beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). One of the ways God does this is through civil government. The civil ruler is “an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4). The Christian cannot take the law into his own hands to render vengeance.

Conclusion

Because the Christian (out of honesty and conviction) honors, respects, and prays for his rulers, obeys the laws, pays taxes, and does not try to overthrow the government or take the law into his own hands, he is really the best friend any government can have. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov.14:34).

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Give Unto the Lord: Modern Idolatry

J.S. Smith

Introduction

Psalm 29, from the hand of David, is an expression of reverence toward the powerful voice of God, who spoke light and life into existence. David's mind takes him across the world that he knew, into heaven and right up to the throne of God as he sings of God's awesome and beneficent power. In so doing, he points out the absolute importance of worshiping only the God of heaven and denying the subtle temptation of idols.

The Text of Psalm 29

David begins Psalm 29 by speaking to the mighty ones in verses 1-2, which would likely indicate angels ("sons of God") in the original Hebrew language. His message is that these creatures should take diligence in attributing strength and glory to Jehovah and that they should worship him "in the beauty of holiness." Angels are messengers, ministering servants in God's scheme of the salvation of men (Heb. 1:14) and it is made obvious that they owe God their complete loyalty. Dividing their service with another master would be an act of rebellion and betrayal, as some even did (2 Pet. 2:4).

Holiness — undivided and unblemished loyalty to God — is a beautiful thing for angels and men. Idolatry in any form will divide one's loyalty and blemish one's record; hence, John warns us to keep ourselves from idols (1 John 5:21). Our God is a jealous God who is adamant about demanding every ounce of man's worship for himself and he has that right as creator, sustainer, and savior.

In verses 3-10, David attributes a number of superhuman abilities to the voice of God, implying the reason for respecting God's word on every subject. When men begin to question the authority of God's voice or deign to curtail, drain or amend his revealed will, the awe for God's voice

has diminished as an idol has taken a new throne. The New Testament magnifies God's voice in a special way (Heb. 1:1-4). God has spoken to us by Jesus, who also sent the Comforter to guide the apostles into revealing all truth to mankind, which we have inscribed for us on the pages of the New Testament. Figuratively, man must remove his shoes when approaching the Bible; that is, hold it in such reverence that it never be diminished in perception, "for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). Every word here was given through the precious breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

In this word, God has completely equipped his servants to do every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). In it, he has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). The system of faith and philosophy of life of God's creation is thoroughly described and delineated on these pages, lacking nothing (Jude 3). The word is an incorruptible seed that will never be destroyed or marred to the point that it loses its power to save (1 Pet. 1:22-25; Rom. 1:16). When we decide to take our stand in God's word, we take a stand on holy ground: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of

God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Of one particular part of the New Testament, God warned severely against man's presumptuous, self-willed hand (Rev. 22:18-19). While not as poetic as David's psalm, these passages form the same demand for reverence and heavenward devotion.

In Psalm 29:10-11, David reminds us of Noah's day, when God's sovereignty in creation was called into question by the wickedness of his brightest creatures, men and women; we all know how he answered from his throne in the heavens, just beyond the weeping clouds of a mighty, cleansing destruction.

**Our God is a jealous God
who is adamant about de-
manding every ounce
of man's worship for
himself and he has that
right as creator, sustainer,
and savior.**

Understand, David says, that God sits upon his throne forever and blesses his people. One is reminded of the words of Habakkuk: "The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the world keep silence before Him" (2:20). When all authority was given to Christ (Matt. 28:18) as monarch over his kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:16; 1 Tim. 6:15), man was reminded anew that it was not within him to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23) or make his own faith (Jas. 4:12). Man's dismissive attitude toward this divine rule was epitomized in ancient Israel at the end of the Judges period, when God's people rejected him by begging for a human king (1 Sam. 8:4-9). It was a yearning to be like the world that infected this formerly sanctified population. It was a conscious decision to be ruled by the passions of man rather than the compassion of God that caused their eventual downfall. It was a resignation to pushing God off his throne in the end, for Israel idolized her neighbors' systems, which excelled God's by a worldly estimation. Computers and rockets have not changed the psyche of man: a desire to be like the world will ultimately spur a coup-d'etat to remove God from his throne and crown an idol as apparent co-monarch or even absolute master.

"I Am a Jealous God"

To be jealous over something you possess is to refuse to share it with anyone else. Normally, that is bad; sharing is a godly attribute. However, some things can be exclusively claimed and sharing is actually the sin instead. For example, my wife's romantic affections belong to me exclusively and sharing them with another person would be sinful (1 Cor. 7:1-4). I am not only permitted to be jealous over those affections, it would be unhealthy were I not. That does not mean that I forbid her to talk to other people or deny her friendships, but when it comes to "eros," I am under no obligation to share; I must possess a godly jealousy (2 Cor. 11:2).

There is a throne in every man's heart and God jealously desires to sit there alone, refusing to share the seat with anyone or anything else, even the heart's human possessor. This was codified for ancient Israel in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-7); idolatry shattered the peace and was unacceptable to the true monarch (Exod. 34:10-17). God perceived a danger in close relations with an unsanctified world in adopting their ways and their idols, of making a covenant with idols and attempting to compel God to share worship with Molech, Baal, and Ashterah. His preventative was to remove the idols from Israel's paths (Deut. 4:23-24). Idolatry promised to bring a writ of divorcement from God; he is the sanctified bridegroom, refusing to share her affection with anyone else (Josh. 24:14-15, 19-20). The prophets spoke of God's punishment of Israel as the vengeance of his jealousy. Ancient Israel's history is provided to spiritual Israel, the church, as an example of the consequences of idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14-22).

Under the Law of Moses, God always referred to himself as being married to Israel, an adulterous bride who dallied with other husbands, other gods, even as her Groom pleaded for her return to the sanctified relationship (Jer. 3:6-14). The only cause for a divorcement from Israel was spiritual adultery and she was guilty. It remained only for God to plead for repentance until longsuffering was exhausted and divine vengeance translated into a bill of divorcement, which happened finally when the Chaldeans laid waste the temple of Jerusalem and slaughtered the priests. Under the Law of Christ, the Holy Spirit has cast the Lord in the role of bridegroom, wed to the church (Rom. 7:4; Rev. 21:2, 9; Eph. 5:25-32) and God maintains a jealousy for his sanctified people's worship (Jas. 4:4). Once again, idolatry is the stumbling block that will lead to spiritual divorcement.

Our "Modern" Idols

Our idols are not exclusively made of wood and stone, but often composed of flesh and blood, circuits and transistors, or paper and ink. Idolatry is an expression of worldliness, a mindset that exposes a conformity to the course of the world (1 Pet. 4:4), rather than a transformation to godliness (Rom. 12:1-2). The Scriptures call this disease "carnality," an addiction to the opiate of material fulfillment (Rom. 8:5-8, 13). These idols can take any number of forms and be known by any number of names:

Self (2 Tim. 3:1-2a)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves . . .

The religion of Humanism, taught in our schools since the 1930s, has made a molten calf out of self, teaching people to seek answers within their hearts rather than in God and to elevate their own self-esteem by any means. It is for this reason that our society finds it difficult to punish criminals or label anything a sin. It is for this reason that sexual perversions like homosexuality are cast in a favorable light and given protection from scrutiny or objection. Self becomes an idol when it is put before God and one's fellow man by self-indulgence, self-centeredness, selfishness, and self-serving (Rom. 2:8; Phil. 2:3-4). The Bible demands an honest estimation of oneself, based upon a sincere comparison of life to standard (2 Cor. 13:5). True, everlasting inner peace and joy are not achieved by lowering the standard (rewarding failure, sanctioning sin as a new form of righteousness), but by walking by faith (Rom. 2:10; 15:13). The movement to make self-esteem the idol of humanism devalues the only true and living God and promises only eternal enmity with God and an everlastingly low self-estimation in the confines of condemnation where even the worms enjoy a brighter existence. Self is an idol to us when we are more concerned with self-estimation than God's estimation of us.

Money (2 Tim. 3:1-2b)

Men . . . will be lovers of money . . .

Money is perhaps the clearest and oldest manifestation of modern idolatry (Col. 3:5). The love of money is called the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), for greediness pierces one's faith until it is nothing but holes (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Jesus was well ahead of his time by labeling covetousness as a powerful idol (Matt. 6:19-24). The subtle power of covetousness for the Christian is that it makes him think he can successfully serve two masters simultaneously, even when one of them is supposed to be Jehovah God. But when the attempt is made to put God and material wealth on the same throne of one's heart, a secret distrust in God and dissatisfaction with the hope of heaven is revealed to the Almighty who ought to be seated there alone. If allowed to continue, mammon will seem to gradually crowd God into a smaller and smaller corner of that throne. Money becomes an idol when we value its pursuit over the pursuit of godliness and Bible knowledge, when quantity time with God and family is reduced and our account in heaven suffers neglect that the account in the bank might increase. When your children grow up, no amount of money is going to buy back their youth that you might spend it with them more wisely.

No bank account will redeem the time for you once it is spent: the opportunity to pray and study, to teach and learn, will be exhausted forever (Eph. 5:15-17). When you reach the day of judgment and your bank itself is in element-melting flames, what will you have reserved for eternity (Mark 8:36-37)?

Pleasure (2 Tim. 3:1-4)

Men . . . will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

It must be noted that a love of pleasure does not have to be directed at sinful pleasures to be an idol; pleasure can be an idol even if the pleasure is otherwise harmless to the soul. A Christian fishing on Sunday morning has made a harmless Saturday pleasure into an idol because it is more important to him than worshiping God. A Christian who watches television on Wednesday night instead of attending Bible class has turned an inherently harmless pleasure into an idol because it is more important to him than God and his brethren. The love of pleasure then is idolatry whether the pleasure is inherently sinful or only sinful by its extenuating circumstances. Pleasure becomes an idol when duties to God are left derelict that fleshly enjoyment might be served instead (1 Tim. 4:8). When unlawful activities like sexual immorality, drug use, and lewdness are committed (Tit. 2:11-14), when otherwise harmless activities like boating and sleeping replace worship, home Bible study,

A Christian fishing on Sunday morning has made a harmless Saturday pleasure into an idol because it is more important to him than worshiping God. A Christian who watches television on Wednesday night instead of attending Bible class has turned an inherently harmless pleasure into an idol because it is more important to him than God and his brethren.

and personal evangelism, when a Christian is willing to sit for three hours at the football stadium, but grouches about a single hour in a padded pew, he loves pleasure more than God and, in fact, finds God most unpleasant (1 John 5:3).

Public Acceptance and Acclaim (Matt. 6:1-7, 16-18; 23:1-12)

But all their works they do to be seen by men.

The Pharisees had enlarged the means of making self an idol, feeding their self-esteem with the idol of public acclaim and acceptance. They were more concerned with the reward and acceptance of men than God. Spiritual Israel is sick with this most worldly idol, for she yearns to make the church look like the denominations and the Christians like the sectarians or the infidels. In the idolatry of public acclaim, some churches of Christ are building fellowship halls while tearing down the scripturally mandated barriers of divine and local fellowship. Christians are adopting a sectarian vocabulary and lifestyle that includes dancing, immodesty, and unity-in-doctrinal-diversity. Such Christians are no longer content to be a kingdom not of this world, yearning instead to be like the surrounding nations of men that have long since left book, chapter, and verse discipleship. Such are uncomfortable being called a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9-10) and want to fit in better in the world of ecumenical religion. We are tired of being the ones without music, who kick people out for getting divorced, dress like it is winter even in the summer, and think we are the only ones going to heaven. At least the Pharisees wanted to be different; we are dying to be the same as we bow before the idol of public acceptance.

Things (1 John 2:15-17)

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

These are the things of the world: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life, things that we so believe we

cannot do without that we sell our souls to obtain them. All these things are but vapors and perish with use, unlike our souls that can survive moths, rust and worms to appear before God in the last day; still we are desperate to possess them for a moment. The prettiest boat may never sink, but God will burn it up one day for sure; the biggest house may never fall but God will make it nothing one day. Our relentless and idolatrous pursuit of things reveals a lack of faith that God will provide our needs (Matt. 6:25-34). While we must work as agents of God in providing our needs (2 Thess. 3:10-12), denying God gratitude through a faithful and trusting life turns our mansion into a sand castle and provokes waves of retribution. Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness: worship comes before work; devotion to prayer and meditation comes before leisure reading and scholarly study; selfless acts of charity precede self-indulgence. Things become an idol when they define our inner identity more than our relationship with God and when their pursuit crowds out godly endeavors in our employment of time and material resources. Remember, "the only path to self-fulfillment is self-denial."

Men (Acts 12:20-23)

And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

The people of Tyre and Sidon made Herod their human idol, calling his voice that of a god. The Christians in Corinth endangered their own souls by dividing into parties behind unwilling preachers like Peter, Paul, and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:1-4; 4:6). The modern sickness called "preacheritis" is a form of idolatry that places an esteemed preacher's opinions and cogitations even above divinely revealed truth. ("If brother so-and-so believes and teaches it, it must be true.") Christians have been known to change beliefs held all their lives on the advice of a preacher respected much too highly and without the conviction of their own study and a reasoned conclusion. We make our preachers idols when we allow them to do all our study for us and establish our own beliefs from their conclusions without ever searching the Scriptures to see if such conclusions are accurate (Acts 11:17) and without thoroughly testing the prophets by their doctrines (1 John 4). Some Christians are forming cults of personality beneath the banners of their preacher as they redefine Romans 14 and God's divorce and remarriage law because of his charm, wit, and reputation. We are accepting false prophets in sheep's clothing because we can no longer discern the costume from neglect of personal attention to God's word. Or perhaps we are simply addicted to their message of peace — peace in the local church despite doctrinal disparity, peace with the sects despite a chasm of diverse beliefs, peace with God despite a love of the darkness (6:14-15). "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And my people love to have it so. But what will you do in

the end" (Jer. 5:30-31)?

Prescription for a Cure

What can be done to put away the idols among us. Begin by putting yourself in Joshua's audience, commanded to choose this day for yourselves whom you will serve (24:15): keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21). If you recognize the presence of idols in your heart or approaching its throne and desire to avoid the pitfalls of a divided loyalty, the Bible combines the simple prohibition of idols with divine wisdom on overcoming their lure. Primarily, it involves a conscious and committed decision to hate the darkness and love the light:

Walk as illuminated by the light of God's word (Eph. 5:8-12; Matt. 5:13-16). Renew your zealous mind with noble thoughts and objectives (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:8). Be led by the Spirit's influence through his revealed will (Rom. 8:11-14).

Conclusion

Worldliness will eat you alive in whatever form its idolatry takes. Do not believe the preacher who prophesies a false peace built on the tolerance of sin and error. There is no peace with God where the darkness is not loathed.

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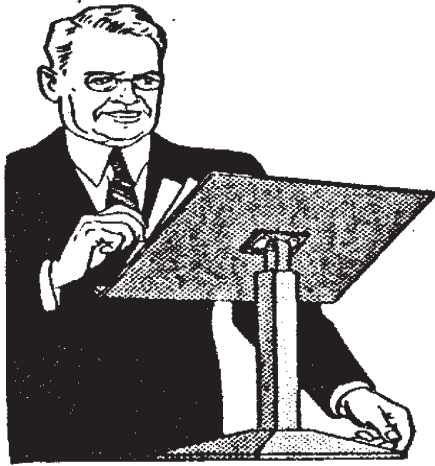
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Politically Correct Preaching

Bruce J. Dehut

Please bear with me in a little folly, even though it's not humorous, in the

first half of this commentary. If the message of Christ and the defense of the gospel were delivered politically correct (P.C.) it may resemble the following.

meetings a preacher will be sure to abstain from discussions on MDR, social drinking, modesty, etc. because it may hinder your opportunities from being invited back.

The preacher should be more concerned about pleasing God than being politically correct.

P.C. Repentance

John came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "If anyone would like to repent you really should, because the kingdom of God is at hand. But I don't mean to imply that you have anything to repent of because the thought of personal sin may lower your self esteem."

P.C. Character Protection Program

Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck. But I won't tell you who they are because that would be extremely rude for me to mention them by name, even though they have been delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

P.C. Conviction of Sin

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." And Peter continued by encouraging those guilty of killing the Messiah to get counseling so they could rid themselves of any personal guilt.

Also shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. And while they overthrow the faith of some, I will refrain from naming them because it might offend them or people close to them.

P.C. In Regards To Controversial Issues

Thou shall forbear from preaching or teaching on sensitive issues such as marriage, divorce and remarriage, especially if there is someone in a questionable relationship in the congregation. Sermons of this nature only alienate people and decrease your attendance and you can't afford to lose any more people due to offensive preaching. Also, when holding

There is also a brother who loves to have the preeminence among them and does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does although they continue prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. I will allow the circumstance to slide so as not cause a

commotion and I think it best for this member to remain anonymous so you won't think less of him.

P.C. Rules of Fellowship

Now I beseech you, brethren, if any among you seems to be sincere in their teaching, even though desperately wrong, you shall *not* mark or avoid them, especially if they have been preaching for a number of years, lest by *your* actions you are accused of enlarging your own party and forming a new denomination. And if there exist among you those who insist on exposing error, you shall shun them because they are just mean spirited people.

P.C. Job Security

Thou shall not support or defend any brother, church or publication that resorts to name calling because it may displease the elders or local church for which you're preaching and you may lose your job.

P.C. Resources

Unless otherwise noted, the above passages were taken from the books of "1st Opinions & 2nd Hesitations."

Politically Incorrect Preaching

I mean no disrespect of God's holy word by the preceding absurdities, but even though these instances seem ridiculous, they do happen in the body of Christ. The Bible, of course, is not politically correct in nature and God intended it to guide man away from serving self to being a fully obedient citizen of the heavenly kingdom. Below, the same issues will be addressed utilizing, not the opinions of man, but the Bible only.

P.I. Repentance

The scribes and the Pharisees loathed the idea that Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:16). He responds to their disposition of heart in the proceeding verse when he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to

repentance" (Mark 2:17). Which of us can honestly answer we have no transgressions to repent of? 1 John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

We are commanded to renounce a life of selfishness and to follow after the Guide to eternal life. Matthew 16:24: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"

P.I. Conviction of Sin

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and it is only when we take responsibility for our actions that we can ever hope for eternal glory.

P.I. In Regards To Controversial Issues

It is true a man of God should not be contentious (1 Tim. 6:3-4), and should attempt to live peaceably with all (Rom. 12:18), but not to the point of watering down the gospel message. The word of God should be preached in its entirety similar to Paul in addressing the Ephesian elders, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). A gospel preacher is ultimately answerable to the Lord and is not judged righteous because of his favor among men. 1 Thessalonians 2:4: "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts."

P.I. Character Protection Program

The apostles Paul and John found it necessary to refer to false teachers not in some ambiguous way, but by name, so no doubt was left in the minds of the brethren. This is a serious practice but nonetheless beneficial to the purity

of the church. A child of God should warn others of impending danger and that includes identifying those who would lead people down the path of destruction. The Holy Spirit, through the hands of inspired writers, had no problem in exposing individuals who were of this character and neither should we.

Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18)

Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20)

Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18)

Diotrephes (3 John 9-10)

P.I. Rules of Fellowship

We find ourselves guilty of the sin of presumption when we circumvent the will of God in regards to the topic of fellowship or any other issue where he has spoken. The Scriptures are very clear in identifying and noting those guilty of erroneous teaching. Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (ASV). "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14-15). A brother or sister is not mean spirited for heeding the commandments of God in reference to association and refutation of error. Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20).

P.I. Job Security

Paul warned Timothy "there would come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). But he also gave him the words to succeed as

Coming to the Defense of Sin and Error

Jonathan L. Perz

A common problem that always seems to surround sin and sinners is the need for people to come to their defense. We see this clearly in the controversy surrounding President Clinton and we see it in churches and homes. Often times, people will soften the blows of truth to comfort those they deem afflicted. Too often, people will condemn the righteous while comforting the sinner. Many times, excuses are made for sin and error. Is this God's wisdom or is it man's? Is this what the Bible teaches we should do or do we have things backwards? What does the Bible have to say regarding the defense of sin and error?

Exposing Error

When one is steeped in sin and error, the last thing they want is someone to expose their error, even though it is what they need (Eph. 5:11-12). In John 3:20-21, it is written, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he

who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Clearly, when a person has sin in his life, his eternal soul is in jeopardy. We know sin separates man from his God (Isa. 59:1-2). Therefore out of love, both for God and man, friends and loved ones must seek to expose those who are in error and save them from hell. In Galatians 6:1, the Bible says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted" (see also Jas. 5:19-20; Jude 22-23). These are the commands of God. Yet, this becomes extremely difficult when men come to the defense of sin and error.

Softening the Blows of Truth

Under the guise of love, defenders will seek to soften the chastisement of men who are speaking the truth in

a faithful evangelist. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). And be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

The gospel preacher who is constantly concerned about losing wages due to the fact he may step on someone's toes should find another profession. Paul was not motivated by personal gain but by the spirit of necessity and would have preached for free if need be. 1 Corinthians 9:16-18: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel."

P.I. Resources

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Conclusion

Whether you are an elder, preacher or teacher, I would exhort you to contemplate the seriousness of this composition and to either continue to stay the course or resolve yourself to stand more boldly for the truth.

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love. They themselves neglect to affirm the truth. Rather than admonish those in error, they comfort them. Rather than save them from eternal destruction, they let them fall headlong into it. This is tragic!

What defenders of error and sin fail to realize is that when a man speaks the words of God, it is the chastisement of God they reveal. In Revelation 3:19, the Bible says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (read also Heb. 12:5-11). This is what the word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, has the power to do (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16).

Yet, men dull the blades of truth by softening the blows of God. Defenders of sin and error use words like humbled, broken, crushed, distressed, and contrite to describe the sinner and pull emotion and pity from the hearts of those who must expose their error. Sometimes, such words are fitting and true and manifest themselves in godly sorrow and repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-11). However, more often than not the sinner — when confronted and exposed — becomes angry, upset, puffed-up, prideful, and defiant. These are not the fruits of humility. These are the fruits of a man lost in sin. These are the signs of a man who does not need watered down medication to cure the woes of his soul, but strong doses of truth to humble and heal him (Jas. 4:4-10; 1 Pet. 5:6-9).

Condemning The Righteous

Another problem with those who defend sin and error is that they condemn those who are standing for truth and righteousness. Those who justify wickedness attribute names and motives to those who seek to uphold the word of God (1 Kings 18:17-18). They are called mean-spirited, evil, unloving, and unkind. They are likened unto bulldogs, vultures, and carnivores. They are accused of attacking innocent people, making a big deal out of nothing, hitting men when they are down, and focusing on trifles and small vices of others. All of this, whether intended or not, clouds the waters of righteousness and diverts attention from those in sin.

Why can't men understand how God feels about such evasive and unrighteous maneuvering? The wise man wrote in Proverbs 17:15, “He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, even both are abomination to the Lord.” Again, in Proverbs 28:4, the Bible says, “They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.” The apostle Paul asked of the Galatians in Galatians 4:16, “Therefore, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”

This attitude needs to be likened unto one who despises a doctor for saving their life or a child who says, “I hate you” when he does not get his way. In a very physical sense, would I be despised of you for breaking your arm

by pulling you out of the way of an oncoming car? It is the same thing as condemning the righteous.

Never Make Excuses

Sin and error do not need excuses, they need exposure. They do not need defense, they need truth. There is no excuse that will make sin and error right in the sight of God. For that matter, there will be no excuses or defenders in the judgment — only the Lord, yourself and the life you have lived. There will be no loopholes, gray area or confusion — only a righteous and just examination of your life and a speedy judgment.

When we make excuses for sin and error, we do a grave disservice to the guilty. The Bible says, “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah” (Isa. 26:10). Again, in Jeremiah 23:14, the Bible says, “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.” Excusing sin now prolongs justice until the end, when it is too late.

Conclusion

It would be unfair to say that there are not cases of people suffering “unrighteous judgment.” It happens often. There are many false accusers who will give account of themselves before God. But, the apostle Peter gives the righteous man the correct attitude to bear in such cases (read 1 Pet. 2:19-20).

Overall, in Ecclesiastes 8:11, the Bible summarizes the danger of defending sin and error in one statement: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Next time we decide to take up the fight for those who commit sin and teach error, let us think hard on these words.

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Reflections

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The King and the Kingdom

Irvin Himmel

There is much misunderstanding centering around the kingdom of Christ. Too many people are getting their information on this subject from popular preachers rather than the holy Scriptures.

Kingdom Not of This World

When Jesus Christ was asked by Pilate, “Art thou the king of the Jews?” the affirmative answer was qualified with this explanation: “My kingdom is not of this world. . .” (John 18:36). The kingdom of the Messiah is not of this earthly realm; it is not a political kingdom; it was not granted by earthly power; it is not advanced by carnal fighting. “. . . if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Christ’s kingdom operates in the world but it is not “of the world.”

When asked by some of the Pharisees when the kingdom should come, Jesus answered, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21). The kingdom comes not with outward show such as armies marching, horses prancing, banners waving, crowds cheering, and music playing. It has no physical boundaries; the heart of man is the territory of the king.

The general expectation among the Jews was that the coming kingdom would be the restoration of national Israel. They anticipated a kingdom comparable to that over which David and Solomon reigned. They looked for some manifestation of the rule of God in the realm of the civil and external.

Many today have the same mistaken concept. Not recognizing the spiritual nature of the kingdom, they yet look for national Israel to be restored with the Messiah ruling over it.

Christ on David’s Throne

It was foretold in the Old Testament that David’s seed

would be given an everlasting kingdom. “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam. 7:16). “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me” (Ps. 89:35, 36).

The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and bring forth a son to be called by the name Jesus. “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:26-33).

Christ has occupied the throne of David since ascending back to the Father. The Holy Spirit revealed through Peter that Christ was raised up from the dead to sit on David’s throne (Acts 2:29-31). Sometimes the throne of David is called the throne of God. Solomon sat on the “throne of David” (1 Kings 2:12). In doing so, he sat on the “throne of Israel” (1 Kings 8:20) or the “throne of the Lord” (1 Chron. 29:23). Jesus, in being raised to sit on the “throne of David,” was elevated to the “Father’s throne” (Rev. 3:21). Just as David ruled over God’s people long ago, Christ (descended from David according to the flesh) rules over God’s people in the present age.

Kingdom In Existence

The Messiah’s kingdom foretold in the Old Testament began when Jesus returned to heaven and the gospel in its fullness began to be preached and obeyed on earth. While on earth, Jesus foretold: “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). The kingdom did not come with “observation” or “outward show,” or “signs to be observed,” but it came with power. Some of those addressed by Jesus would not experience death prior to the coming of the kingdom; they would live to see that marvelous day.

Why I Left the Methodist Church

Robert Jackson

I became a member of the Methodist Church at Charlotte, Tennessee, at the age of twelve. This was the result of being brought up in a Methodist family. I had been taught that one should believe in Christ and then join the church of his choice, and his choice as a rule would be the one of his parents. On June 5, 1948, I obeyed the gospel of Christ, thus leaving the Methodist Church. Since that time I have often been asked, "Why did you leave the Methodist Church?" I will try to answer this question as briefly as possible in this article.

I Did Not Leave Because . . .

First, I will state some of the reasons why I did not leave the Methodist Church:

1. *I was not made to leave.* There was no pressure from within the Methodist Church for me to leave.

2. *I did not leave because of the people in the Methodist*

Church. There are some of the finest moral living people in the Methodist Church that you would ever want to know.

3. *I did not leave the Methodist Church because it was not a popular church.* The majority of people were Methodists in my home town.

After my discharge from the Navy in 1946, I had again made my home in Charlotte, Tennessee. In 1947, Grover Stevens moved to Charlotte. I was attending many of the services of the church of Christ where he was preaching, and became very angry at some of the remarks made by brother Stevens. During this same time, brother Leonard Tyler conducted several meetings in this area which I attended and at which I was made angry. I became so mad at some of their remarks that I began to study my Bible to try to justify myself as a Methodist and at the same time to find error in their teaching, which I would have been happy to expose.

Paul made statements acknowledging the existence of the kingdom. He wrote to the Colossians that God has delivered us from the power of darkness, "and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Compare this statement with Hebrews 12:28. John referred to himself as a brother "in the kingdom" (Rev. 1:9). Clearly, the apostles understood that the kingdom had come following the events of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Kingdom To Be Delivered Up At Christ's Coming

In 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, Paul said, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . ."

It is a serious mistake to suppose that Christ is coming back to "set up" the kingdom. It is in existence now. He reigns now. The rule of Christ on David's throne is a present reality. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is

death." When Christ returns and the dead are raised, death will be no more. The King "delivers up" the kingdom to God. Having abolished all rule and authority and power that is in opposition to God, thereby putting all enemies under his feet, the King hands over the kingdom to the Father "that God may be all in all." The kingdom does not end but stands forever. Hence, Peter referred to it as "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11). Daniel prophesied that the kingdom of God "shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

Everyone who wants to be blessed eternally must put himself under the royal reign of Christ. To enter the kingdom one must be "born again," that is, "born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:3-5). Citizens in the heavenly kingdom are expected to honor the King, loyally serving and submitting to his laws. We who belong to Christ must never forget that our citizenship is in heaven.

2820 Huntanwood Dr., S.E., Decatur, Alabama 35603-5638

Finally, I saw that I was fighting a losing battle and I either had to obey the gospel or stay with the Methodist Church. I must say that it was a very difficult battle, knowing that I would be leaving that which I had been taught from childhood up, knowing that my personal friends would turn their backs upon me, and knowing the heartache that it would cause my mother to see her only child leave the family religion. I made up my mind to put God first and obey his will.

The results of my leaving the Methodist Church were due to the fact that error was exposed and truth was taught in a plain manner of speech and yet with love. I am deeply grateful to such preachers.

1. *Name.* The first impression that was made on my mind was that the Methodist Church was wrong in name. Such a name could not be found in the Bible. I was called a Methodist, but yet no one in the Bible was ever called such. I was taught that they were called Christians (1 Pet. 4:16; Acts 11:26). I immediately saw that I could not scripturally justify the use of the name Methodist.

2. *Wesley, the founder, not Christ.* It was made clear that John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church and not Jesus Christ. If I wanted to be a member of the church that Jesus built, then I could not be a Methodist. Such preaching stirred up my spirit to the extent that I became dissatisfied with being a member of the church that John Wesley built.

3. *Faith only salvation.* I had always believed that one was saved by faith only. This is exactly what the Methodist Church teaches about salvation. However, when I was told to read James 2:24, I was made to see in words that none could misunderstand that “faith only” was wrong. I began to read more and found out that Jesus required faith and baptism (Mark 16:16).

4. *Choice of baptism.* I had always been taught in the Methodist Church that there were three ways to be baptized — (1) sprinkling, (2) pouring, (3) immersion. I was led to believe by Methodist preaching that it was up to the individual to select his own choice. To become a member, I selected sprinkling. The preaching that I heard exposed this error. I was told to read Colossians 2:12 and then Ephesians 4:5. Even with a mind as weak as mine, I could see that according to God’s teaching there was but one baptism; but by Methodist teaching, there were three. I believed God.

5. *Instrumental music.* We had the instrument of music in the services of the Methodist Church, and were led to believe that it was only an aid in the worship. It was plainly proven to me that such was not an aid but an addition to the word of God. I then was reminded of John 4:24, that one must worship God in truth. I was told that my worship would be in vain if done by the doctrines of men (Matt. 15:9).

6. *How to raise money.* In the Methodist Church, we would have ice cream suppers, rummage sales, etc. to raise money for the church. The preaching that I heard by brother Stevens and others brought to my attention 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. This as God’s plan of having the church members raise its money; and the pie suppers, etc., were the ways of men.

These were a few of the things that caused me to see the way of my error. Of course, since that time I have studied and found out many other errors within the Methodist Church. I have never regretted my leaving the Methodist Church. I wish all would see their errors.

Thank God for Christ, his gospel and his church!

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What Does God Want of Us in This Life?

As we struggle with the challenges of life and death, the most challenging question of all is this: What does God want of us in this life? God answers that question in the Bible. He has made it clear from the beginning until now that he wants our love, trust, and obedience.

Adam and Eve were commanded to care for the Garden of Eden, to enjoy its fruit, but not to eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” — a tree which drew the boundary between good and evil. When they ate of that tree, they were driven in shame from the Garden and suffered the ravages of death (Gen. 2-3). Later, God commended Abraham as one who “will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen. 18:19). That is what God wants of all men.

The Bible is full of passages summarizing what God wants of us. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Our love, trust, and respect for God are shown by obeying his Word. Though God commands formal worship, he also teaches us to translate our worship into daily action. At all times and in all situations, we are to “hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate. . . . let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:15, 24).

When God taught the Jews to bring animal sacrifices for sin, he made it clear that “thousands of rams” were no substitute for sincere, daily submission to his will. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:6-8). Life is brief

and uncertain, filled with “labor and sorrow.” Knowing our time is short, our prayer should be, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:10-12). We find God’s wisdom in God’s Word.

Jesus summed it all up in these words:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

All the commandments of God teach us the true meaning of love for God and for our fellowmen. To violate God’s Word is to violate that love.

All the commandments of God teach us the true meaning of love for God and for our fellowmen. To violate God’s Word is to violate that love.

Knowing we have sinned and yet wanting us to be saved, God desires all men to hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Christ. Christ died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. On the basis of that faith, we must repent of all sin, confess Christ as God’s Son, and be immersed in water to receive pardon through his atoning blood. Truly, God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 2:38; 8:37-38).

When we obey these first steps of the gospel, God adds us to the church of Christ and then teaches us how to worship him and how to live for him each day. Thus, he redeems us from the destiny of hell and leads us to an eternal home in heaven. Ultimately, that is what God wants — for us to spend eternity with him in heaven!

3505 Horse Run Ct., Shepherdsville, Kentucky 40165

Thoughts on Worship and Service

Norman E. Fultz

When just three months out of high school, as a student in a college operated by brethren and where probably 98 percent of the students were Christians, and where the atmosphere was, for the most part, a far more spiritual climate than I'd ever seen, I "fell in love with it." The students' camaraderie, the devotional periods, the daily chapel services, and a daily "in depth" Bible class, made for a pleasant experience. The singing was more spirited, the prayers heartily offered, and every Bible lesson (be it in sermon or in the classroom) was joyfully received. The spirit soared! And to this day I'll tell you gladly that I wouldn't take anything for the two years I spent in such surroundings. It's all real, but it's not the real world in which most of us worship and serve regularly.

For years, though not with regularity, I've tried to attend, when I felt I could afford it, college Bible lectureships. Many hundreds of brethren from all over the country converge to hear the talented and well prepared speakers both in lectures and in classes dealing with challenging and stimulating subject areas. Several hours a day are devoted to such exercises. Renewing acquaintances, making new ones with those of like precious convictions, blending many hundreds of voices together in gospel songs under the leadership of a most capable song leader, being led in prayers that touch the heart, one's spirit can soar. It's all real, but it's not the real world in which most of us worship and serve regularly.

Having been privileged to tour Bible lands a couple of times has been a dream come true. Day after day visiting sites of real biblical significance can "make the Bible come alive." One finds himself wishing that every Christian could have the experience. On the first tour, after our Lord's day worship in which the 150 or so of us had worshiped in the "traditional site of the upper room," a fellow gospel preacher remarked as we were departing the service, "I wish I could bottle that service and take it back to my home congregation." The worship period had been somewhat less structured than are our services normally — singing from memory instead of with hymn books (except for the song

leader), standing through the entire service in a quaint old building of great historical moment (Even if not really "the upper room," we knew the events in the real "upper room" and the events which followed) in which the singing under the direction of an able leader seemed to resonate. In the observance of the Lord's supper, the communion was not passed to the congregation (no trays available). Instead the elements had been prepared and set out on a stage-like area, and in an orderly fashion we went forward and took a piece of the bread and a cup of the fruit of the vine and returned to our place. Then, when someone had offered thanks for the bread, we each partook of it at the same time. Likewise with the partaking of the cup. It was truly a most uplifting occasion sandwiched in between other emotionally exhilarating experiences such as visiting the Garden Tomb or standing on the Mt. of Olives. It was real, but it was not the real world in which most of us worship and serve regularly.

A few years ago while on a little outing at the Lake of the Ozarks, since the Bible camp attended by many young folk from this area was nearby, we paid the camp a visit. The area in which the camp was situated was peaceful, heavily forested, and remote. Excited youth, in spite of the summer heat and humidity, whose parents, many of them sacrificially, had provided the opportunity, enthused counselors, teachers and other helpers were enthusiastically going about their daily structured activities — Bible classes, chaperoned recreational pursuits, group meal times, evening devotional with speakers, singing and prayers conducted in rustic setting. It all lent an air of elation that one could get "caught up in." Emotions can run high. It's real, but it's not the real world in which we worship and serve regularly.

From the college campus, Bible lectureships, tours of the Bible lands, or Bible camp, we must return to the normal world in which we live our lives, worship, and serve in the normal course of things. In our congregational worship, the singing is perhaps not as spirited nor led by as talented a leader, the Bible classes are not two or three times a day

under closely regulated conditions where emotion along with knowledge can build, but twice a week, usually dealing with entirely different subject areas and separated by an awful lot of unspiritually oriented activity in the work-a-day world. The “daily grind” may take its toll and the spirit may suffer some bruises in the interim separating worship periods. The emotional highs are not there, and sometimes it appears that everyone is in the “doldrums.” The prayers may sound like so many parroted cliches mouthed with little fervor, albeit pouring forth from a devoted and sincere heart. The sermons may not be as uplifting at times; because they have the overall congregational needs with which to be concerned, not just some challenging topic which has roused our curiosity.

Instead of thinking that our emotions must be stirred to feverish levels, let us rather understand that *he is to be praised.*

Does all this mean that our regular periods of worship are any less spiritual or pleasing to God? Absolutely not, if we are worshiping in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Does it mean that our regular periods of worship and study must degenerate into a monotonous form? By no means! But if we must “feed on high emotional experiences” to be benefited in our service and worship, then we had best examine our level of spiritual maturity. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1). Prophesying might not give as much of an emotional high as some of the other gifts such as speaking in tongues, but prophesying would profit the church (v. 4). Even so, let us desire and delight in those special occasions and let our spirits soar under those circumstances. But realize that they are special times, and we must be prepared to go forward in the normal course of things — persistently worshiping and serving our God. Instead of thinking that our emotions must be stirred to feverish levels, let us rather understand that he is to be praised.

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It's Still So!

Johnie Edwards

The *Gospel Advocate*, a religious publication out of Nashville, Tennessee at one time taught the truth on “The Mission of the Church.” B.C. Goodpasture, the editor in 1948, said concerning the church providing recreation and entertainment for its members:

1. *Not The Mission:* “It is not the mission of the church to furnish amusement for the world or even for its own members. Innocent amusement in proper proportion has its place in the life of all moral persons, but it is not the business of the church to furnish it. The church would come off a poor second if it undertook to compete with institutions established for the express purpose of entertaining people. It would make itself ridiculous if it entered into such competition. Again, it is not the responsibility of the church, as such, to furnish recreation for its members. A certain amount of recreation is necessary to the health and happiness of the individual. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, it is said, and rightly said; but it is not the function of the church to furnish the play. The church was not established to feature athletics. Rather, it emphasizes the principle that, “bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things; having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Sometimes one would conclude, from the emphasis given to recreation, that godliness is for a little and that bodily exercise is profitable for all things.

2. *Not To Turn Aside:* For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a very great work to do, and it should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly, as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah, will it want to turn from its wonted course to relatively unimportant matters.”

How Sad

How sad it is to hear some of the men, who planted the seed to put the church into the business of providing

continued top of next page

amusement for its people, cry and try to reform those who have taken the church into areas none would have ever dreamed. We had better get to teaching that “. . . the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17), and to help folks understand the Lord’s church is not to leave its God-given mission to that of providing fun and frolic. We would ask, “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in . . . And if any man hunger, let him eat at home” (1 Cor. 11:22, 34).

4121 Woodyard Rd., Bloomington, Indiana 47404

“Sinner” continued from front page

One Who Has Stopped the Practice of Sin

1. *A person continues to be a sinner until he is forgiven for his sin.* Ceasing the practice of sin is not enough. One must obey the gospel of Christ before they can have their sins removed. With regard to this very situation, Peter instructed sinners to, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Although he had ceased practicing sin, Saul of Tarsus was told to “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

2. *A person must be freed from the guilt of his sin by the blood of Christ.* A sinner must come in contact with the cleansing blood of Christ through baptism in order to be freed from sin. With regard to this, Paul says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” and, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:3, 7). It is only at this point that one ceases to be a sinner.

One Who Does Nothing

1. *It is not enough to refrain from doing what is wrong.* The truth is that a person continues to be a sinner until he does what is right. James says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17). Those who believe they are justified simply because they are not engaging in certain sins are actually sinning themselves by not doing the things that should be done.

2. *We must walk with Christ.* Jesus says, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). We cannot “ride the fence” or sit idly by expecting to be considered righteous because we have abstained from sin. Instead we must actively do what is right, as much as we are able. The fact that we are not doing anything wrong does not mean that we are doing anything right.

Conclusion

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

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“Christ Ever Lives” continued from page 2

Romans 8:26-27

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

This text is designed to reassure Christians who are faced with the “sufferings of this present world” (Rom. 8:18) that God will help them through the difficulties of life. We may not understand everything that the Holy Spirit does to assist us, but this much is promised by the word of God. During those times that we are struggling through some problem and our sufferings are so great that we cannot find adequate words to express them (“groanings which cannot be uttered”), the Holy Spirit who knows our hearts makes intercession in our behalf to the throne of God.

Romans 8:31-34

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The crucifixion of Christ shows us that “God is for us.” If God is for the salvation of man, who can be against us? What power does anyone have to withstand God? He is the Almighty. Then he adds what God will do in addition to the sacrifice on Calvary: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). The sense of this text is that God will provide whatever is necessary for the Christian’s salvation in his on-going providential care for the soul of man. Not only does the Holy Spirit make intercession for us, the risen Christ who is seated at the right hand of God also makes intercession for us.

John 6:37-39

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will

of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Jesus personally reassured the disciples that he would keep them by saying that he would "lose nothing" of those who had been committed to his care.

John 10:28-29

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Jesus will protect his children. No man can pluck them out of his hand. (Compare to the promise in Romans 8:31-39 that nothing can separate us from the love of God.) The Lord promises those who are faithfully serving him a protection from the assaults made against their soul.

What Jesus Does For Us In Heaven

There are several passages that speak of Jesus' on-going work in the salvation of man's soul. Consider what the Bible says that Jesus does :

1. He ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." This text speaks of Jesus' work in heaven. How encouraging is the knowledge that Jesus in heaven looks down and sees the needs of one of his saints and approaches the Father to make intercession in behalf of that saint.

2. He is our divine advocate (1 John 2:1-2). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This passage states that Jesus is an "advocate" (*parakletos*: "1. one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant; an advocate. . . 2. one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor. . . 3. in the widest sense, a helper, succorer, aider, assistant," Thayer 483). How thankful one should be that he has an advocate in heaven pleading for his forgiveness when he stumbles into sin.

3. He helps those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18). "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The assistance that is provided for us during temptation is spoken of in the following passages:

a. He leads us out of temptation (Matt. 6:13). "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Jesus taught his disciples to pray for this divine help to overcome

temptation. The Father has promised to lead his children away from temptation and to deliver them from evil. This divine help, whether it proceeds from the Father or the Son, should give us confidence in being victorious over sin. John 17:15 offers the same promise, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

b. He will protect in temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The three promises of this text show God's continuing care for his children: (a) The Lord will not give you any temptation but such as is common to man (others have faced the same temptations before us and endured them successfully); (b) God will not allow one to be tempted above his ability to bear; (c) God guarantees that a way of escape will always be available to us so that we can withstand temptation.

4. He serves as our High Priest in heaven (Heb. 7:26; 8:1; 10:21). Jesus is described as our present High Priest who is serving on behalf of his saints in heaven. The argument drawn from his on-going priestly work is that we can have courage to draw near to the throne of God to find grace to help in time of need. "And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:21-22).

Conclusion

My Lord who loved me enough to die on Calvary lives in heaven. He wants his children to be saved, as exhibited by his sacrificial death. He ever-lives, seated at the right hand of God, to care for those for whom he died. He will do whatever is necessary to save his dear children, short of denying their own free-will.

I draw confidence that I can be saved knowing that Jesus is continuing his work in heaven to help me make it through the troubles and temptations of life. We will never fail for want of divine grace. May saints be encouraged to continued faithfulness by the assurance of the victory that is ours in Christ.

6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

Have you studied your Bible today?

Preachers Needed

Charleston, West Virginia: The Oakwood Road (873 Oakwood Road, Charleston, WV 25314) congregation is looking for a preacher to locate with them. Interested persons may write to the church, at the above address or call Frank Linville at 304-346-2700, Paul Stewart at 304-346-8177, or Henry Williams at 304-727-2466. Also e-mail may be sent to Paultstewart@iname.com.

Lake Charles, Louisiana: The church in Lake Charles is looking for a full-time preacher. Lake Charles is located midway between Houston and New Orleans on I-10, and is a city of about 80,000. Partial support is available. They average about 30 people and most of the membership is under the age of 50. If interested, please contact Larry Butler at 318-479-2162 (home), 318-491-3332 (work), Email: o1avsfan@aol.com, or Norman Harrison at 409-745-4825.

Globe, Arizona: The Globe Church of Christ is seeking a sound gospel preacher for full-time work. They are a congregation of 35-40 members. They do not have elders. They own their building and a three bedroom, two bath house for the preacher and his family. If interested, contact the Globe Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1373, Globe, AZ 85502.

Field Reports



Chuck Bartlett, 3347 Dovetail Mews, Mississauga, Ont L5L SE9: As of July 23, my wife and I, along with our three children, moved to the Toronto area to begin working with the church there. On our first Sunday, we had 23 people present. The church has been able to secure a suitable place to gather. It is less than 10 minutes from downtown Toronto, and the airport. The address is 408 Royal York Rd. The convenience is, the subway goes to Royal York Road, and a transit bus, travels from there and stops in front of our meeting place.

There has been a huge need for a church in Toronto for many years. With a population of 3 ½ million, there is much work to be done. Lord willing, David Dann will be moving to the area to labor with us. He is a fine young man, and full of zeal, which is what is needed. David is presently preaching in Jordan, Ontario, while he tries to raise his support so that

he can move here in November. If there is a church that is wanting to help David, his address is: 2863 Reg. Rd. 81, Jordan, Ont. LOR ISO (905) 562-4739.

Times of services: Sundays: Bible study 10:15 a.m.; Worship 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.; Tuesdays: Bible Study 7:30 p.m. If you are coming to the area, be sure to let us know: cbartlet@idirect.com (905)569-2497.

Larry R. Devore, P.O. Box 313, Medina, OH 44258: James Hahn of Lawrenceburg, Kentucky was with us in an excellent series of gospel meetings in October of 1997. Eugene Britnell of Athens, Alabama, was with us in a good meeting in May of 1998. We conducted our VBS in June with Paul Blake, Jim Walsh, Keith Storment, and Eric Keiper serving as speakers for the adult class. During this period of time we have had three to make confession of sin and one to place membership here at Medina.



Religious Debates

Jarrod Jacobs, a gospel preacher from White Bluff, Tennessee, will meet Roger Holland, a Baptist from Lafayette, Tennessee, on November 6-7, 1998 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the following propositions:

RESOLVED: "The Scriptures teach that baptism, to the penitent believer, is for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins." Jarrod Jacobs affirms, Roger Holland denies.

RESOLVED: "The Scriptures teach that one is saved by grace through faith alone, before and without water baptism." Roger Holland affirms, Jarrod Jacobs denies.

Each proposition will be discussed in one, two hour session. The speakers will alternate every thirty minutes.

This Bible study will take place at the Dickson Jr. High School auditorium, in Dickson, Tennessee. For additional information, write: JJacobs291@aol.com or call (615) 797-4090. All are welcome!

A debate on the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit between Marion Fox and Pat Donahue will take place near Tulsa, Oklahoma on January 14-16, 1999.

On Thursday and Friday night at 7:00 p.m., Pat Donahue will affirm: "The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit person-

ally dwells in the faithful Christian, and not just through the word." Marion Fox will deny.

On Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m., Marion Fox will affirm: "The Scriptures teach the Holy Spirit dwells in the faithful Christian only through the Word of God." Pat Donahue will deny.

On Saturday morning at 11:00 a.m., a one hour question and answer period will be opened to written questions from the audience. The hosting congregation is: Lee & Walnut church of Christ, 101 S. Walnut St. at Lee St., Sapulpa, Oklahoma 74067. Contact: Bob Patterson (918) 224-2024.

Marijuana Use Rising Among Teens, Study Says

"Washington — Drug use by young people increased last year, led by rising marijuana smoking among teen-agers who view it as a low-risk soft drug, according to a government survey Friday.

"Among those ages 12 to 17, 11.4 percent reported using some illicit drug within the past month when they were surveyed last year, compared with 9 percent in 1996. The drug of choice among the group was marijuana, with 9.4 percent using it last year. In 1996, 7.1 percent reported using marijuana" (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 22, 1998], A6).

Woman Is Accused of Starving Her Children

"Petaluma, California — A woman who allegedly starved herself and her two daughters while waiting for the Holy Spirit pleaded not guilty Wednesday to felony charges of child abuse.

Police said Kris Ellen Teixeria, 37, allowed herself and her two daughters to drink only water for the past three weeks.

"She said she was getting her directions from the ringing of her phone, which was supposedly telling her to remain upstairs to be closer to the Holy Spirit, Petaluma Police Sgt. Brian Perkins said.

"A hospital spokeswoman said the girls were expected to recover" (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 3, 1998], A16).

(Editorial Note: *Once one admits that the Holy Spirit operates directly, separate and apart from the word of God, how could he prove that he did not tell this woman to provide only water for her children? There is no use quoting the Bible to answer that, for the direct leading of the Holy Spirit transcends whatever one reads in the Bible. I would be interested in reading a response to this from one who believes in the Book of Mormon [for they ask ever person to pray to ask the Spirit to reveal whether or not the Book of Mormon is from God], a Pentecostal or other charismatic. I cannot see any logical reply that these people could give that would prove this woman who was starving her children was wrong in following what she perceived to be the leading of the Holy Spirit.)*

National Baptist Leader Admits Affair

"Kansas City, Mo. — The embattled leader of one of the nations largest black denominations admitted Monday to having an affair with a church worker and asked for the church's forgiveness.

"Board members of the National Baptist Convention USA did forgive the Rev. Henry J. Lyons and his mistress, both of whom also are charged with misusing millions of dollars in convention funds. Other ministers had different views.

"At this point, if Dr. Lyons had any love left for himself and the National Baptist Convention, he would step down," said the Rev. Charles Kenyotta of New York. To drag millions of people through all this mud is a shame. In the 118 years of our existence, we've never had a president this dumb" (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 8, 1998], A10).

(Editors Note: *We take no pleasure in reading of the sins of any man, much less of one who claims to be a preacher. This leader of the National Baptist Convention USA admitted having an affair and both he and his mistress are accused of misusing millions of dollars in convention funds. What is the worry? According to Baptist doctrine, Lyons cannot fall from grace, so his soul is not in spiritual danger. Or, will our Baptist friends just say that this is evidence he never was saved in the first place? The Boards' reaction to this is "to forgive Dr. Lyons and Ms. Harris," which means that he will continue to serve as head of the Baptist denomination despite such immoral conduct and misuse of church funds. No wonder some among us are not in distress when our President says "I'm sorry" and then hopes to continue to serve as President.)*

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