



The Assault Continues By Different Means

Jay Horsley

How do we possibly make sense of the latest headlines?

February 13, 2004 from the East Coast: “Massachusetts lawmakers recess without gay marriage ban.”¹ This is because on February 4, 2004: “Massachusetts court rules ban on gay marriage unconstitutional.”²

From the west coast, February 13, 2004: “More Than 50 Gay Couples Are Married in San Francisco.”

California family law states that “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.” Nonetheless, the San Francisco county clerk issued the women, Phyllis Lyon, 79, and Del Martin, 83, an official marriage certificate and said the act was legal. They were married by the county assessor.³

It was worse the next day: “Same-Sex Couples Head to S.F. for Valentine’s Day.” Over 600 more “weddings” took place.⁴

Lest we think that these problems as relegated to the fringes (both geo-

graphically and culturally) of our nation, consider the attempts to replicate these events in the heartland.

The *Houston Chronicle* reported on February 13, 2004: “Gay couples to apply for marriage licenses here.” But thankfully they were turned away because “Harris County clerk’s office . . . would not process the applications since “Texas law explicitly denies it.”⁵ Because these officials had the courage to uphold the law, the headline the next day read: “16 same-sex couples turned away by clerk.”⁶ Thankfully some still have courage that the court and legislature in Massachusetts lack and respect for the law that those in San Francisco flout by “glorying in their shame” (Phil. 3:19).

Why? Why? Why?

As our laws and the laws of God are ruled unconstitutional, are challenged and openly disobeyed, we can easily be left dumbfounded and discouraged. How can something so basic as marriage — the first institution given among men (Gen. 2:23, 24); the very foundation of
see “Assault” on p. 440

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Because of My Enemies

Mike Willis

Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue (Ps. 5:8-9).

In David's prayer to God, he calls on God to lead him in the paths of God's righteousness because of his enemies. It is a prayer that should be on the lips of all of Christ's disciples.

The men who are David's adversaries are called *Á™rers* which is defined by Brown, Driver and Briggs as an "(insidious) watcher" (1004). The word appears also in Psalms 27:11; 56:2; 54:7; 92:11.

The word describes those who are watching every step the righteous take in order to find something with which to accuse them. The *Pulpit Commentary* describes such men as "those that lie in wait for him" (Revised Version margin), lest, if he were to make a false step, they should triumph over him, and so he should bring discredit upon the cause of God and of his saints" (notes on Ps. 5:8). In the homiletical section, C. Short writes,

The unrighteous lay in wait for him — threatened his safety. There was "no faithfulness in their mouth;" they used slander and treachery when they dared not use open violence. Their inward part, their souls, were full of evil designs and purposes. "Their throat is like an open sepulchre," which yawns for his destruction. Their speech, fair and smooth, to flatter and put him off his guard and lure him on. With them, mouth, heart, throat, and tongue are all instruments of evil; and their malice was such that he needed the care and guidance of the righteous power above (37).

The seriousness of the evil disposition of wickedness can also be seen by the fact that the Apostle Paul uses Psalm 5:9 to prove universal human wickedness in Romans 3:13 saying, "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." One mark of man's sinfulness is his conduct toward the righteous — he insidiously watches the righteous to catch them in some false step and uses this to attack and destroy them.

We witness this disposition in politics daily. Should even the hint of something improper be detected in the Bush administration, the Democratic party jumps on it as proof that a change in administration is needed — as a way to see "Enemies" on p. 441



Keeping the Heart

Mark Mayberry

Introduction

The heart is man’s chief treasure. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (KJV). Other versions differ slightly: “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life” (NKJV); “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life” (NASB95); “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (ESV); “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (NRSV).

What is the Heart?

When the Bible speaks of the heart, it does not primarily refer to the physical organ within our chest that pumps blood. If such were the case, we could “keep the heart” by exercise and a proper diet. Obviously, it is good to follow a healthy and active lifestyle, especially since our body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Yet ironically, many people place far more emphasis on their physical rather than their spiritual well-being. Their primary concern is with the wrong heart. This earthly tabernacle shall one day return to dust, but the soul will live through all eternity (1 Tim. 4:7-10). Therefore our primary concern should be with the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

According to Strong/Thayer, the Greek word *kardia*, occurring 156 times in the NT, translated “heart,” carries the following meanings: “(1a) that organ in the animal body which is the centre of the circulation of the blood, and hence was regarded as the seat of physical life; (1b) denotes the centre of all physical and spiritual life; (2a) the vigour and sense of physical life; (2b) the centre and seat of spiritual life; the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavours; of the understanding, the faculty and seat of the intelligence; of the will and character; of the soul so far as it is affected and stirred in a bad way or good, or of the soul as the seat of the sensibilities, affections, emotions, desires, appetites, passions; (3) of the middle or central or inmost part of anything, even though inanimate” (2588).

BDAG say the word refers to “[the] heart as seat of physical, spiritual and mental life . . . (1) as the center and source of physical life; (2) as center and source of the whole inner life, w. its thinking, feeling, and volition . . . ; (a) in an all-inclusive sense: said of God’s or Christ’s awareness about the inner life of humans; (b) of inner awareness; (c) of the will and its decisions; (d) of moral decisions, the moral life, of vices and virtues; (e) of the emotions, wishes, desires; (f). esp. also of love; (g) of disposition; (h) The human heart as the dwelling-place of heavenly powers and beings . . .

In biblical terminology, the heart represents the inner man, also known as

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the soul or spirit. Sometimes it refers to the understanding (Rom. 1:21); sometimes it refers to the will (Heb. 3:8), sometimes it refers to the affections (Prov. 23:26) and desires (Prov. 23:26); sometimes to the memory (Ps. 119:11), and also the conscience (1 John 3:19-21).

How Is It To Be Kept?

Since the heart is the seat of our understanding, we must grow in knowledge (Deut. 6:6-9; 2 Tim. 3:13-17).

Since the heart is the seat of volition, we must submit to the authority of God (Matt. 7:21-23; 12:46-50).

Since the heart is the seat of attachment, our affection must be centered on spiritual things (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-2).

Since the heart is the seat of recollection, our memory must be filled with the things of God (Ps. 143:5-6; 2 Pet. 3:1-2).

Since the heart is the seat of character, our conscience must be pure, tender and receptive (1 Tim. 1:5-7; 18-19).

Why Is It To Be Kept?

Why should the heart be guarded/kept? Because out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23; Luke 6:45). It is the root of the tree, the foundation of the building, the head-waters of the river, the mainspring of all moral action (Matt. 15:10-20; Mark 7:20-23).

Conclusion

Men are often concerned with externals, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:6-7). He weighs the heart of man, judging its thoughts and intents (Prov. 24:12; Heb. 4:12-13). Is your heart right with God?

All who do not share a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ are like a man dying of heart disease, desperately in need of a heart transplant. Citizens of the Kingdom of God must have a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek. 36:26-27). Has your heart been renewed through obedience to the gospel (2 Cor. 5:14-17)? Are you a new man in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28)? Will you not obey the gospel while there is time and opportunity?

Sources

Adapted from Daniel H. King, *Keeping The Heart*, Earl Robertson, ed., *Preach The Word*, (Fairmount, IN: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1981), 34-36.

Note: A full text version of this article, including verses, is available at the following URL: <http://www.ascoc.org/biblestudy/sermons/Heart-Keep.pdf>

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Seven Abominations

Bobby Witherington

The Hebrew word *ebah* is defined as: “abominations; loathsome, detestable things” (*Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, by W.E. Vine). Concerning this word (*ebah*), Mr. Vine further observed, “When used with reference to God, this nuance of the word describes people, things, acts, relationships, and characteristics that are ‘detestable’ because they are contrary to His nature” (*Ibid.*).

Yes, there are many things which are “detestable,” or an “abomination” to God — things so designated because they are “contrary to his nature.” In fact, most people would probably be surprised if they examined a good Bible concordance and took note of the many occurrences of the word “abominations,” or if they actually listed the different “people, things, acts, relationships, and characteristics” that are described as “an abomination” to God. To say the least, those who wish to maintain a proper relationship with God would do well to determine what he regards as “abominable,” and then make every effort to avoid such.

Of the many things which are “an abomination to” God, seven such items are listed in Proverbs 6:16-19, verses which read as follows:

These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an *abomination to Him*. A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

These verses constitute what has been called a “numerical proverb.” The point of significance in a proverb of this nature is this: By such a manner of speaking, the Lord clearly delineated things which he regards as “detestable,” or as “an abomination.” In the paragraphs which follow we shall discuss each of these items in greater detail.

“A Proud Look”

In the Marginal Reference we are told that this expression may be literally rendered as “haughty eyes.” However, the point of emphasis is not just the “eyes” or the “look,” but the temper of mind which the “look” expresses. Pride

is the opposite of humility, and it never fails to bring heartache and misery. In fact, in Proverbs 16:18 we read that “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” In Proverbs 29:23 the inspired writer said, “A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.”

Pride is ruinous to nations as well as to individuals. The Old Testament lists numerous examples of nations upon whom God sent judgments, and by which the affected nations fell. Included in that list were the Moabites, the Philistines, and even God’s people, Israel, and Judah. Hence, we read of “the pride of Moab” (Isa. 16:6), “the pride of the Philistines” (Zech. 9:6), “the pride of Israel” (Hos. 5:5), “the pride of Judah” (Jer. 13:9), etc. And in each instance when “pride” is used to describe a people, it is used in a context which discusses a judgment which either had occurred, or yet would occur, and concerning which the people’s “pride” was a contributing factor. The “bottom line” is this — each of us has sinned so frequently and so grievously (Rom. 3:23) that it ill behooves any of us to be proud. Contrariwise, it does behoove us to “be clothed with humility,” being ever mindful of the fact that “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5; cf. Jas. 4:6).

“A Lying Tongue”

It is not difficult to discern why a “lying tongue” is particularly odious to God. Lying is against God’s very nature. In fact, God is so infinitely “holy” that it is “impossible” for him to lie (Heb. 6:18; cf. Tit. 1:2). That being the case, God’s “word is truth” (John 17:17). Elsewhere it is called “the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), and it is only by means of “the word of truth” that we can be made “free” from the shackles of sin (John 8:32).

In contrast, the devil is called “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). Satan is the one who “deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9), and he often “deceives” people through his lying “ministers” who “transform themselves into ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15).

Amazingly, some religions teach that it is alright for one to lie if, in so doing, it will advance their cause. Catholics call it “Mental Reservation,” and Jehovah Witnesses call it “Theocratic War Strategy.” But lest we be too hard on “outsiders,” I mention the fact that from different sources I am now hearing of some brethren who teach that lying is sometimes permissible. However, as it relates to private conduct, lying may be more common than we realize even among those who outwardly oppose lying. It is often justified (?) on the basis that “the intent is good,” or that it is only a “little lie,” or it is a “white lie,” etc. Nonetheless, after we complete our efforts to color-code or to reduce the size of a lie, a lie is still a lie; it is still “an abomination,” and “all liars will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8).

“Hands That Shed Innocent Blood”

Murder is herein condemned. Murder has always been wrong. In Genesis 9:6 God commanded that murderers be put to death. In Exodus 20:13, while listing the Ten Commandments to Israel, God said, “You shall not murder.” In the New Testament, in Galatians 5:21, it is categorized as one of “the works of the flesh,” and we are told that “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!”

Yes, murder — all murder — is sinful. But please note in particular that our text specifically mentions “hands that shed innocent blood.” Many people are murdered, but they are hardly “innocent,” whereas every baby is innocent (cf. Matt. 18:3; 19:14). Yet every day, under the guise of legalized abortion, nearly as many babies are slaughtered in the womb of their mothers as were slain on September 11, 2001 in the bombings of the World Trade Center. By no means would I minimize the cowardly, dastardly deeds of those who represent the lunatic fringe of the Islamic religion. But it should be pointed out that some terrorists are working in the open — in abortion clinics all across America — they are not all hiding in caves in Afghanistan!

“A Heart that Devises Wicked Plans”

This is the root of all sin problems. It is “out of the heart” that “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,” etc., proceed (Matt. 15:19; cf. Matt. 12:34). When a man’s heart becomes “the devil’s workshop,” then watch out — something bad will happen! In essence, God says “give me your heart” (Matt. 5:8). Friend, you owe it to yourself (and to God) to make sure that you never allow your heart to become the devil’s garbage dump!

“Feet . . . Swift In Running To Evil”

God said, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15). However, in contrast, some feet are “swift in running to *evil*,” and therefore are “an abomina-

tion.” But feet that are controlled by “a heart that devises wicked plans” are feet that are “swift in running to evil.” Perhaps one intended message is this — clean up your heart, and your will have no trouble with your feet.

“A False Witness Who Speaks Lies”

Legally speaking, this is a step beyond that of a “lying tongue.” What is herein condemned is perjury — lying under oath, or invoking the Holy name of God, and then deliberately stating that which is false. Before the law of the land, it is a crime; before God it is “an abomination.” But it is also a common occurrence, as people lie under oath in order to protect themselves, release the guilty, or to smear the innocent. God does not look kindly upon such action.

“One Who Sows Discord Among Brethren”

This particular “abomination” is last in the group of seven, as listed in our initial text, but it is certainly not least with regards to the harm it causes. It is bad to sow discord, but it must be even worse to sow discord “among brethren.” It is still both “good” and “pleasant” for “brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). When the Lord’s people are “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2), when they are “fervent in spirit” (Rom. 12:11), when they abound “in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58), and when they do their utmost to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), there is virtually nothing that can stop them in their attempts to “spread the borders of the kingdom.” But when “discord” comes in among “brethren,” then forward movement is often brought to a screeching halt. One may sow discord by bringing innovations into the worship and work of the church. Discord may be sown by preaching error. And it can be sown by an unkind word, an unbridled tongue, or an unforgiving disposition. It may be sown by a “liberal” who introduces error, or it may be sown by a “conservative” who tries to make his conscience everybody else’s guide. But, regardless of the way in which discord is sown, “one who sows discord among brethren” is described as “an abomination.”

Conclusion

In five of the seven “things” which “the Lord hates” and which are “an abomination,” a part of a person’s body is mentioned — either the eyes, the tongue, hands, heart, or feet. Yes, while we dwell in our physical bodies it is so easy to sin; it is so easy to be caught up in what God hates, and which he calls an “abomination.” That being the case, it is vitally important that we regard our bodies as the property of God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), and that we use the members of our bodies as “instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13). Consider ye well!

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Does the Church of Christ Have a “Clergy”?

Randy Blackaby

Ask most members of the churches of Christ whether the Bible speaks of a “clergy” and most will emphatically tell you NO! And, based on denominational usage and English dictionary definitions, they are right.

But . . .

The Bible does speak of a “clergy” in 1 Peter 5:3. Before you scramble for your Bible, let it be noted that few translations use the actual word “clergy” which appears to be a transliteration of the Latin form of the Greek words *in cleris*. The Latin Vulgate manuscript does use the word “clergy.”

The King James Version translates the Greek word “God’s heritage.” The New King James Version says “those entrusted to you.” The Revised Standard Version renders it “the charge allotted to you” and the New Revised Standard has “those in your charge.” A literal rendering would be something like “not lording it over the lots.”

The context of the opening verses of 1 Peter 5 is instruction from the Apostle Peter to the elders of the church. In the third verse they are instructed not to become lords (i.e., take secular-type power) over this *clergy*.

What does this mean and who are those who compose this clergy?

As always, it is important to look at context to reach a fair understanding. Peter addresses “the elders who are among you” in verse 1. In the next verse he tells the elders “to shepherd the flock that is among you.” Then, in the third verse he exhorts them not to be lords over this *clergy* or *heritage*, but be examples to *the flock*.

The “clergy” is, according to the context, synonymous with “those among you” and “the flock.” We can readily conclude that it is a reference to the *church*, specifically local congregations.

But where did this concept come from and in what sense is the church a clergy?

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon (dictionary) says the original use of the Greek word concerned an object used in casting or drawing lots. Bible students will recall that the children of Israel drew lots for land in Canaan and received their portions (Josh. 18-19). The Levites were God’s special possession or heritage or lot under the Old Law system. In Deuteronomy 10:9 it says: “Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance, just as the Lord your God promised him.”

The King James Version translates the word in question as “heritage” which refers to people with an inheritance by birthright. When the children of Israel cast lots to receive their land, that land was their inheritance from God. But the Levites were particularly chosen for consecration to God’s work and therefore received no land in Canaan. God was their inheritance and this was their heritage.

Now, based on this peculiar or special relationship of the Old Testament priesthood to God, there developed in denominational circles the idea of equating *preachers* with the Levitical priesthood. Thus, Catholics, Episcopalians, and others have a separate priesthood and most denominations distinguish their preachers as “clergymen.”

But let’s look carefully at what the New Testament teaches us about priests, preachers, and clergy.

First, about priests. Hebrews 7:11 and following declares that God has created a new priesthood. Then, in 1 Peter 2:5, we are told that the church is “a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Then, in verses 9 and 10, Peter declares: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people

Did You Come To Worship?

Bart Campbell

When you go to a play ground, you expect to play. If you go to a bowling alley, you expect to bowl. You go to the bank and you expect to conduct business, either personal or professional. In all of these, your mind is set to a standard of conduct that you follow within those environments. But why is it that when we come to church, to participate in the environment of worship, we sometimes conduct ourselves in a completely different manner than what that environment dictates.

Many of our denominations today have put more emphasis on recreational activities than on worship. Some people have become “bored” by what used to be typical of the worship period. So these denominations have abandoned the “traditional” forms of worship and replaced them with “special” worship services (sometimes called the “non-traditional” or “contemporary” services). This new form of worship allows for more recreational or socialized activities which maintains a heightened interest in the worship.

There is a time and place for recreation. There is a time and place to socialize. But is this the mission of the church as set forth in the New Testament? Is not our worship that is offered by the church to be geared to what God wants more than what will be appealing to us? Preaching the gospel, partaking of the Lord’s supper, singing, educating and strengthening one another as members of the body of Christ, and worshiping God in spirit and in truth, are the things that God has charged us to do when we come together to worship him (Mark 16:15; Eph. 4:12; John 4:24). We should be satisfied to *be* and *do* what he expects of us when we assemble to worship him. As his servants, honoring his authority, we must be content to do what he has outlined and authorized in his revealed word (Matt. 28:18).

Globe, Arizona

of God.”

So, every member of the church is a priest, capable of offering spiritual sacrifices.

Secondly, let’s look at preachers. In Matthew 23 Jesus sternly denounced the elevation of teachers to high positions and the wearing of honorary titles. He could be speaking today when he said: “But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at the feasts, the best seats in the synagogue, greetings in the market places, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven.”

So, every member of the church is on an equal footing. There is no distinguishing of Christians. Our work may vary but as in any body, all parts are necessary (Rom. 12:3-8).

Finally, as to New Testament clergy, the church is the group “chosen” or “called out” by God in a manner similar to the calling of the Levites. But it is the whole group that is this “heritage” or people of inheritance by birthright, not preachers or pastors alone.

In writing to the saints and faithful in Christ who lived in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said that in Christ Jesus “we have obtained an inheritance.” Peter said it is “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).

So, dear Christian, you are God’s clergy because you have an inheritance awaiting you in heaven by birthright. You obtained that heritage when you were born again as you buried your old life and sins in the water of baptism.

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The School of Hard Knocks

Aaron L. Veyon

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just

It has been said that it takes courage to stand up and speak, and this is true in many instances; however, I must admit that there are times that it takes more courage to sit down and listen.

as a father the son in whom he delights (Prov. 3:11-12).

Since the time I was a child I remember hearing my father occasionally refer to “the school of hard knocks.” As a wee lad I thought it was an actual school – and by its very name I was certain that I did not want to go there. Naturally, it didn’t take long before I realized that the “school of hard knocks” was just a figure of speech referring to the hard lessons that one learns throughout their life. Now that I am much older (though I consider myself a young man), in retrospect, I have spent more time than I care to admit in that school. But I must say, after all, that there are some lessons that can only be learned the hard way. Occasionally a child fails to heed the warnings of a parent and inevitably touches a hot stove. Such a child does not usually need a second warning. And so, it is often the hardest lessons that yield the best results.

Some time ago I had to do a lot of soul searching. I have always tried to live up to my potential as a Christian and to do the Lord’s will with all my might. I have never been afraid to give a “thus saith the Lord,” regardless of whether people would hear, “or whether they would refuse” (Ezek. 3:11). I tried to be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill my ministry (2 Tim. 4:5). I had established friendships with sound brethren throughout the Lord’s vineyard and

had looked up to many of them, sometimes to a fault. I jumped in the ring when it came to dealing with various controversies, and with the whole of my being I have contended earnestly for the faith time and again (Jude 3). Certainly I have no regret for these in and of themselves, for these are things that we must do, as is appropriate.

However, there were times when I became . . . what I guess I would call “overzealous,” for a lack of a better term; and in my zeal I occasionally became outspoken. Many times I was sure that my approach or way of thinking was the right one, only later to realize that I had missed the mark. There were not a few times that I would watch older brethren just sit quietly by while some spiritual battle seemed to be raging, and I would wonder if they had the backbone to stand for the truth as I was willing to do. (Now here is one of the first lessons that I learned in the school of hard knocks: that things are not always as they seem.) While I am certain that there are brethren who sometimes shy away from their duty as a Christian when it comes to the difficult tasks, I am equally certain that there are brethren who may appear to shy away, yet in reality they are dealing with the situation. These are the ones who patiently monitor, carefully approach, and gently handle “brotherhood problems” with longsuffering. Their years of service and experience have taught them that there is often a better way of handling things. It has

been said that it takes courage to stand up and speak, and this is true in many instances; however, I must admit that there are times that it takes more courage to sit down and listen.

In light of this, is zeal to be blamed for impetuous behavior, such as I had once exhibited? Zeal is a wonderful attribute, if handled responsibly. The apostle Paul said, “. . . it is good to be zealous in a good thing always” (Gal. 4:18). In fact, godly zeal is one of the earmarks of those who are being saved (Tit. 2:14). However, there is such a thing as misplaced zeal. Paul said of the unbelieving Jews, “. . . they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2).

I must admit that I too have failed in that area at times. There were a number of occasions in which I was “gung ho” to defend the truth but did not possess the necessary skill to wage the battle aright. I wielded the Scriptures, but did not always have the wisdom that is required to rightly divide them, though I thought I did (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). (Ah, ignorance can be a very bitter pill at times, wouldn’t you agree?) Through the process of spiritual maturity, I had begun to notice a disturbing trend that still seems to permeate the brotherhood from time to time. Truly, throughout the history of man there have been, and no doubt will always be, false teachers (cf. Matt. 7:15-20). Unfortunately, some of them have been, and no doubt will be, some of our own brethren (cf. Tit. 1:10-16). Yet sometimes, in an effort to root out and expose false teaching brethren, which we must do (Eph. 5:11), in their zeal, I’m afraid that some manage only to jerk the hide off of the sheep. I myself have come dangerously close to doing this very thing. Only some hard lessons of life saved me from pursuing that any further.

Herein lies some of the most difficult lessons brethren will ever have to face. We have an obligation to learn and understand the difference between actual false teaching and differences

that brethren may have that God never intended to be a test of spiritual fellowship (cf. Jude 22-23). I’m not talking about unity-in-diversity. Doctrinal error is doctrinal error, and we cannot have fellowship with those who teach it, no matter who they may be (Rom. 16:17; 2 John 7-11). What I am talking about is keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). To understand and make proper application — this requires experience, humility, guidance, and wisdom — not human wisdom, but only that which God supplies (cf. Jas. 3:17).

All in all, as I have contemplated these things, I couldn’t help but think that there might be some good that can come of this. I don’t mean just for myself, for I would be benefited whether or not I wrote an article about it. Rather, I was hoping that, if I shared what I have learned with others, perhaps I could help them in some way, shape or form, as they struggle in similar areas as I have, not that I have attained perfection (cf. Col. 3:12). I’m still a work in progress.

From my estimation, the two greatest spiritual attributes borne from the “school of hard knocks” are humility and longsuffering. Just as 1+1=2, so do these two attributes, working together, result in spiritual maturity. And from this union are borne wisdom, compassion, and trust (among other things). I believe that these virtues are the natural offspring of spiritual maturity.

An interesting thing about humility, to me, is that it is arguably one of the most important words in the Bible. Without it we can never be fully free from partiality, self-righteousness, retaliation, unrighteous judgment, etc. Without humility, many things will be ill affected, such as love (cf. 1 Cor. 13; cf. Tit. 2:4), the “golden rule” (Matt. 7:12), the forgiveness of sins (cf. Jas. 4:6-10), and eternal salvation (Matt. 18:3-4), just to name a few. Truly, the humbling process may seem somewhat grievous at first. At times, it can

be a terrible feeling to be humbled. It hurts; it’s often embarrassing; sometimes it shakes your confidence. But when the dust settles, we see that it serves its intended purpose. I suppose we could call this, “spiritual growing pains.” The reason that there was a problem to begin with is because there was a lack of spiritual maturity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:10-12). It has been my experience that the humbling process of the “school of hard knocks” will help a person grow up in a big way.

Longsuffering can be a scary word to people sometimes. I believe the reason for this is because many do not possess it; in fact, in many cases, it seems to them to be unattainable. Longsuffering basically means to suffer long with, be patient, persevere. If we do not practice patience in our lives, we will likely become impetuous, slow to hear, quick to speak, quick to wrath — and these things do not produce the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:19-20). I believe that the “school of hard knocks,” through its humbling process, helps to develop longsuffering in a person. If it does not, then all that person has for his troubles is humiliation.

The hard lessons of life are of greater value than we sometimes care to admit. The wise man Solomon once said, “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid” (Prov. 12:1). If we do not learn from our past mistakes, we are doomed to repeat them (as the saying goes, more or less). The Bible speaks of those who never did learn from their scandalous blunders. The hard-hearted Jews are a good example of this (Heb. 3:7-4:13; Acts 7:51-53). The Bible also speaks of persons who found out the hard way that their decision making was poor from the beginning. Such was the case with Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon (1 Kings 12:6-16). I realize that even the older and wiser among us are not always right. They do not always have “the” answer. Just like

Unkept Promises

Frank Himmel

Those who believe that Jesus will one day return and set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem frequently argue that this *must* occur because the land promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament have never been fulfilled. What does the Bible say?

The Promise to Abraham

God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation and give to that nation the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-3, 7). The borders were specific: “from the river of Egypt (the Wadi el Arish, not the Nile) as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18). The time was also specified: following a 400-year bondage and when the iniquity of the Amorite was full (vv. 13-16). (The Amorites were living in Canaan in Abraham’s day.) The land promise was repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and Jacob (Gen. 28:13).

Moses led the Israelites, Abraham’s family/nation, out of Egypt after 430 years of bondage (Exod. 12:40-41), just as

God had promised. In anticipation of conquering Canaan, God told Moses to set aside three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River. He then added, “And if the Lord your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers . . . then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three” (Deut. 19:8-9).

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel’s leader. The book bearing his name details the conquest and division of the promised land. The end of that record says, “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it” (Josh. 21:43). “Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” (v. 45). This fact is confirmed by appointment of those three additional cities of refuge God had promised (Josh. 20:1-9).

In his farewell address, Joshua made a passionate plea to Israel, based on the complete fulfillment of God’s promises.

us young whipper snappers, they are human and capable of failure. However, to totally disregard their counsel is irresponsible and foolish. They’ve been where we are, or were. They now have the advantage over us in matters of knowledge and wisdom (cf. Prov. 1:2-7). For this reason alone they deserve our respect and admiration (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1). I thank God for my older and wiser brethren. I thank God for their guidance, their wisdom, their patience, and their persistence in helping me to grow and find my way (cf. Prov. 12:15).

In conclusion, dear ones, if you find yourself facing a humbling experience, let me exhort you to weather it; do not resist it, but let it have its perfect work (cf. Jas. 1:2-4). As difficult as it may seem, even this will be of spiritual benefit to you, if you allow it (cf. Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Therefore, try not to groan too much if you

find yourself going through the “school of hard knocks.” Sometimes it’s the only real education that you will ever get. So if you suddenly find yourself enrolled in that school (so to speak), let me encourage you to major in humility and minor in longsuffering. Hand in hand these two attributes will get you where you need to go; and I guarantee that you will graduate to a better and far more rewarding life in Christ. “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11).

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He argued that just as surely as God had kept the good words he had promised, so he would also keep his threat of removing Israel from the land if the people were unfaithful (23:14-16). Joshua's argument was nonsense if premillennial notions of unfulfilled promises are true!

Some contend that God gave Israel their land in a sense, but not to the full extent he promised. The sacred historians disagree. "Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt" (1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 9:26). This was precisely what had God promised Abraham.

The Return Promises

Israel got their land. But just as Joshua warned, when they were unfaithful to God, he removed them from it into captivity. Yet God had made another promise: that if, in captivity, they repented, he would return them to their land (Deut. 30:1-10). And so, the prophets who foretold the captivity also prophesied a restoration. Jeremiah said the captivity would last seventy years (Jer. 25:11; 29:10-14), then God would restore a remnant of his people (23:3). Isaiah also spoke of the remnant (Isa. 10:20-24). God did not promise to bring them all back!

This promise, too, was fulfilled. Assyria and Babylon were the captors of God's people. At end of the seventy

years of captivity in Babylon, God raised up Cyrus of Persia to defeat the Babylonians. In his first year, Cyrus issued this proclamation: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!'" (2 Chron. 36:23). This decree was in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (v. 22).

One group returned under Jeshua and Zerubbabel, another under Ezra, and later a third with Nehemiah. Interestingly, these also testified that God had kept his land promise (Neh. 9:8).

Conclusion

The Bible is clear — God's promises regarding the nation of Israel living in the land of Palestine were long ago fulfilled. There is nothing here to support the idea of a future earthly kingdom ruled by Jesus. Neither is there any Bible-based reason for modern Jews living in Palestine. Politicians need to learn this as well as preachers.

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Revival Canceled Because of High Blood Pressure

John Isaac Edwards

23, in hopes of witnessing genuine Bible tongue-speaking. Along with two others, I tried to visit the revival of the Faith, Hope and Charity Church, Thursday, January 23, in Columbus, Georgia. Much to our surprise, the service was canceled when we arrived.

According to Mr. Bowers, the "pastor" of the church, the guest speaker from Columbus could not come because he was suffering from high blood pressure. This incident is unfortunate, but I believe it says some things.

We have received correspondence from individuals who are members of the Faith, Hope and Charity Church, in response to articles we have written in "What Saith the Scripture?" and have documentation to substantiate such, where they claim Holy Spirit baptism and the ability to speak in tongues as the apostles of the New Testament.

Now, if they claim "the gift of tongues," then they ought to have the other eight gifts of the Holy Spirit as well, which include "the gifts of healing" and "the working of miracles" (1 Cor. 12:8-10). The apostles, who received the baptism of

the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2-8, 26; 2:1-4), made the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the dead to raise. If you claim to have what the apostles had, then you ought to be able to do what the apostles did! What I want to know is this: Why couldn't one of their own have gone to the man with high blood pressure and healed him? Why this ought to be a very small thing, compared to making a lame man walk, a blind man see, or a dead man raise. You would think that if a man really has the Holy Spirit as he claims, the Holy Spirit would not have allowed him to miss an opportunity to join himself with some "non-believers" and convince them of the truth!

We are not amazed by this, however, for the very chapter, from which they derive their name, shows the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit have failed, ceased and vanished away (1 Cor. 13:8-13). "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23).
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Scriptural Authority

Irvin Himmel

Paul wrote to Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Only by consulting the Holy Scriptures are we able to ascertain the mind of God. Christ sent forth the apostles to reveal and proclaim the truth as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. As the ambassadors of Christ those inspired men spoke and wrote what God wanted mankind to receive. Paul encouraged others to hold to what they had been taught, “whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15).

We must be careful to teach the Scriptures and to practice nothing which lacks scriptural authority. We should constantly examine ourselves to make certain that we are abiding in the doctrine of Christ.

1. There is scriptural authority for immersion but no authority for sprinkling or pouring. In the Bible people who were baptized “went down into the water” and “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39; Matt. 3:16). The word “baptize” means in New Testament usage to bury, dip, or immerse. Baptism is spoken of plainly as a “burial” followed by a “resurrection” (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). The Bible says nothing about sprinkling or pouring for baptism.

2. There is scriptural authority for singing praise to God but no authority for playing mechanical instruments of music. The New Testament teaches singing as an act of praise in a number of passages (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19; Heb. 2:12; Jas. 5:13). The playing of mechanical instruments of music, either to accompany the singing or as a separate rendition, is never found in the praise of Christians while serving God on this earth. The command to sing is a specific directive that excludes other kinds of music.

3. There is scriptural authority for the church to take up collections but no authority for selling chances, hav-

ing suppers to raise money, or having church rummage sales. The first-century Christians were taught to lay by in store on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). They were instructed to give cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity (2 Cor. 9:7). Christians may earn their income in any honorable endeavor, but the financing of the work of the church is through the freewill offerings of the members on the first day of the week. This is the divine pattern or plan. It should be followed by twenty-first century disciples.

4. There is scriptural authority for elders in the local church but no authority for a universal bishop. In the New Testament, when men were qualified, elders were ordained “in every church” (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). These men are called bishops because they are overseers (Acts 20:28). Their oversight is limited to “the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:1-2). Christ is the “chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4), and there is absolutely no authorization for elevating one bishop above the others, or for selecting a universal bishop.

5. There is scriptural authority for teaching justification by faith but no authority for teaching justification by faith only. It is by faith that we are justified and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Belief (faith) in Jesus is essential to the remission of sins (Acts 10:43). A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:28). However, the New Testament strongly denies that justification is by faith only. James wrote in language too plain to be misunderstood, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). The faith that justifies is not an inactive and passive assent of the mind. The faith that saves is a working, obedient, active confidence that shows compliance with God’s will.

The word of Christ will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Let us make sure we have scriptural authority for all that we teach and practice. That which lacks scriptural warrant should be discarded. Whatever is scriptural and right should be embraced.

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Cheerleading Attire and Modesty: An Honest Admission

Harry Osborne

Several years ago, a young lady approached Leslie and me asking if we would buy some fund-raiser items. When asked what it benefitted, she said it was for her cheerleading squad. Our hearts sank as we knew the immodest dress normally associated with cheerleading outfits, but we hoped these outfits might be better. After noting the fact that cheerleading uniforms in our school days were not modest, we asked the high school girl how she would describe the ones she wore. Her reply was this: “On the top, it’s a halter, and on the bottom, it’s a cover for my panties.” No, things had not gotten better, but worse. Worst of all, the girl was a Christian. Her parents and other members of the congregation defended her wearing such while condemning the one preaching against it. Their attempted defenses even involved impugning the one who preached against such a practice for daring to think that the clothing was immodest or sexually suggestive. The defenders of cheerleading attire claimed that the world did not even think of such things when looking at cheerleading outfits. However, my attention was caught last week by an article on the Fox News web site that dealt with the dress of cheerleaders. It not only admitted that things are getting worse, but also that cheerleading attire has historically been associated with sexual suggestiveness. Please consider the following:

Pom-poms, tiny skirts and big smiles are cheerleaders’ trademarks, but the eternally perky sets are flashing a lot more than pearly whites on the sidelines this football season. The teasing sex appeal of classic cheerleading uniforms has been replaced in Philadelphia and a few other stadiums with mini two-piece ensembles that flash skin from cheek to cheek, stirring a variety of reactions from fans.

“I would say it achieved the ‘wow’ factor, which is something we were going after,” said Philadelphia Eagles’ cheerleading director Barbara Zaun. “Jaws were dropping when they debuted on Monday Night Football Sept. 8.” The Eagles hired celebrity bridal gown designer Vera Wang to create new 2003 cheerleader uniforms, which do away with the skirts, in favor of boy shorts and a plunging top.

But not everyone is pleased with the revealing new look. “I think it’s sad. I wouldn’t want my daughter to be a cheerleader if that’s how she had to sell herself,” said Marie Wilson, a football fan and mother of three, who added that the games are a family event for many and having the camera zoom in on a cheerleader’s cleavage can be uncomfortable.

However, Zaun contended that many fans appreciate the latest fashions. “It’s exciting for male fans to see these gorgeous women in outfits that enhance their figures,” she said. “We’ve gotten an overall positive response from the fans.” Ben McRoberts, a 26-year-old football fan in

New York City is one such admirer. “Every dude digs a cheerleader outfit,” he said. And many female fans also appreciate the new uniforms, according to Zaun, who said women admire Wang’s work and the athletic physiques the cheerleaders maintain. Wilson . . . said it’s absurd that the team hired such a prominent designer to craft an outfit that looks like it “could’ve [been] pulled off the bathing suit rack at JC Penney.”

The Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders were the original stadium-heaters, wearing sexy western-inspired uniforms since the squad formed in 1972. They have stuck with their look . . . that once had jaws dropping around the world, but now seem tame in comparison. The ensemble has only been

slightly modified six times since conception.

The Eagles' outfits marked Wang's design debut on the gridiron and Zaun said having a well-known designer ensured attention for the cheerleaders and the team. "We wanted to be the first squad to have an internationally recognized designer design our uniforms, to set the Eagles cheerleaders apart from other squads," she said. "We feel they are glamorous, sophisticated and cutting edge." McRoberts said he wouldn't classify cheerleaders as classy, but as "extra eye candy thrown in the game" whose "main purpose is to act as sex appeal."

Over a three-year span, Wang worked on the uniforms, meeting with the team owner and actual cheerleaders to make sure the fit was right and comfortable for their routines. Eagles cheerleader Amanda Morris, 24, said the uniforms are keeping up with the times, as the squads swap rah-rahs for dance routines. "We practice all week in sports bras and shorts, so it's comfortable for us to perform in a similar uniform."

Whether cheering or jeering the new looks, Morris said even if the game is going poorly, crowds will stick around to watch the cheerleaders perform — and the fans' fascination with the uniforms has been obvious. "People who are already sitting up close use binoculars," she said. "They can't get enough of us." Such fans will have their peepers locked on the fall uniform . . . consisting of a black mini-skirt and Grecian style top. Wintertime means tight black dance pants, a white leotard top and a three-quarter sleeved sweater that's "open at the chest," Zaun explained.

Despite attempts to go for a wow-factor, McRoberts said many guys prefer the nostalgic skirt uniform to the itsy-bitsy offerings today, explaining that cheer-lust goes back to high school when cheerleaders were considered untouchable. But Morris is convinced the new outfits will eventually win all fans over. "We knew it was going to be a little shocking, a little different, but every team has their persona and this is ours," she said.

That is in the honest, albeit lustful, admission of the world! Yes, cheerleading attire has been sexually suggestive, immodest and revealing — and it continues to get worse. Yes, it is seen in the same light as modern swimwear. The Bible clearly condemns all such lustful displays, instructing "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment" (1 Tim. 2:9).

The Bible says the modest clothing that should be worn is associated with "shamefastness." What does that mean? The original word referred to a sense of shame or modesty which is rooted in the character. In other words, it is that inner decency which recognizes the lack of clothing to be shameful. The word of God speaks of the lack of full clothing or "nakedness" as being shameful (Rev. 3:19; Isa. 47:3; 2 Sam. 6:20; Jer. 13:26). However, the Bible term "naked"

does not always refer to nudity, but also to a lack of the needed clothing for one's protection (Jas. 2:15-16). The book of Job speaks of one who "stripped the naked of their clothing" (Job 22:6). How could one strip the clothes off of a person who was already nude? Thus, the "nakedness" which is shameful is not just total nudity. Isaiah spoke of the uncovering of the thigh as resulting in nakedness being uncovered (Isa. 47:2-3). Since many modern fashions totally expose the thigh, how do you think God views them? "Shamefastness" is that which would cause one to blush if seen without being fully covered. It is a rare quality in our time! However, it is a quality demanded of those who would please God.

The Bible also says that modest clothing is associated with "sobriety." The sobriety under consideration is not solely speaking of being free from intoxication due to alcohol, although that may be involved, but is describing a state of sound judgment. W.E. Vine makes these comments (*Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, IV:44-45):

It is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising, or at all events from arising in such strength as would overbear the checks and barriers which "shamefastness" opposed to it.

Sobriety does not seek to define its "persona" with "shocking" dress, the "wow-factor" or "cutting edge" styles suggestive of the worldly lusts. It stays far away from such. Sobriety does not try to be the "eye candy" of "sex appeal" for the leering and lustful. It acts to subdue and constrain the lusts of man.

Should we defend and encourage young ladies in their efforts to wear the attire of modern cheerleaders? God forbid! The Bible-mandated characteristics of shamefastness and sobriety would keep one from wearing that which is designed to be the sexy, revealing, and provocative styles that are synonymous with cheerleaders in our society.

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WOMAN: A BIBLICAL QUEST

by Owen D. Olbricht



The goal of this study is a quest to find out what the Bible teaches concerning God's design for woman in the home, in the church, and in the community.

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The Identifying Marks of a Fool

David Dann

For the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work iniquity: to practice ungodliness, to utter error

against the Lord, to keep the hungry unsatisfied, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail (Isa. 32:6).

It is no laughing matter for a person to be a fool in the true sense of the word. A fool is literally a senseless person who despises true wisdom. Jesus often warned his listeners against acting foolishly with regard to spiritual matters (Matt. 7:24-27; 23:16-22; Luke 11:37-40).

It is tragic for an individual to go through life as a fool. Therefore, the Bible is full of warnings and admonitions concerning fools and foolish behavior. God's word gives us insight into several identifying characteristics of fools. We would do well to compare our conduct with the Bible description of the fool's conduct. We may not think that we are fools until we view our behavior in the light of God's truth.

According to the Scriptures, the fool is identified by the fact that he possesses any or all of the following characteristics.

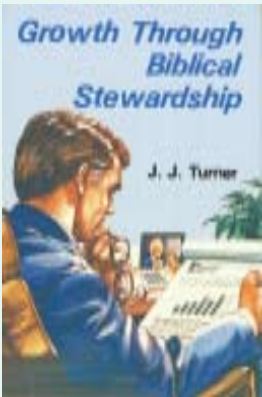
1. The fool despises instruction. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). By the very definition of the term,

a fool is one who has no practical use for true wisdom and valuable instruction. The fool cannot stand to be corrected, because he believes he is always right. The fool will pay the price for his attitude toward wisdom and instruction. "He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray" (Prov. 10:17).

2. The fool denies the existence of God. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good" (Ps. 14:1). Perhaps the most fundamental and basic spiritual truth is the fact of the existence of an all-powerful creator. The harmonious design of the physical universe is evidence enough of God's existence, for as David says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Only one who has chosen to act in flagrant opposition to wisdom would conclude that God does not exist.

3. The fool spreads slander. "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18). Slander is defined as speech that is intended to defame the character of the person about whom it is spoken. It is a sin of the tongue that is condemned throughout the pages of the Bible. Paul warned Timothy to turn away from those who were "unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good" (2 Tim. 3:3). The person who engages in slander will be displeasing both to God and his fellow man. "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases" (Prov. 26:20).

4. The fool trusts in his own heart. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Prov. 28:26). One who makes all of his decisions apart from the counsel of God's word, much less the counsel of wise men, is a fool. For, "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). The fool will not listen to anyone else, because he always believes his way is best. In contrast to the behavior of the fool, God instructs his people to, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own



Growth Through Biblical Stewardship
by J.J. Turner
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understanding” (Prov. 3:5).

5. The fool vents all his feelings. “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Prov. 29:11). Perhaps one of the most commonly shared characteristics of the fool is the tendency to say more than should be said in a given situation. Christians are not to behave like fools. James says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19-20). But the fool exercises no self-control when provoked. He simply says whatever comes to mind, and lets his temper rage unchecked. It is not hard to identify a fool when he is in the midst of an argument.

6. The fool repeats his mistakes. “As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly” (Prov. 26:11). A single isolated indiscretion will not necessarily cause one to be rightly looked upon as a fool. This is due to the fact that one of the defining characteristics of the fool is that he is doomed to repeat his foolishness over and over again. He may receive correction and proper instruction, but it will do him no good, since he despises instruction. Christians are prohibited from sinning (1 John 2:1; 3:9). We are not to continue to fall into the same errors that we should have previously overcome. Instead, we should learn from our mistakes and move on. However, the fool will continue to commit the same sins and make the same mistakes day after day, and year after year.

Conclusion

These are just some of the identifying marks of the fool presented in Scripture. Our responsibility is to honestly examine our own lives in light of what the Bible teaches. If we find that we possess any of the characteristics of the fool, then it’s time to make some changes for the better. Remember, “The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall” (Prov. 10:8).

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It’s Hard Not To Rejoice

Larry Ray Hafley

It is difficult, but we must not do it. “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Prov. 24:17). If it is not hard for you to squelch a squeal of fiendish glee when your tormentor tumbles, let me congratulate you and ask you to go on to another article. I want to talk to the rest of us folks.

What does our rejoicing in the fall of another say about us? It says:

1. That we may be envious or jealous of another. Thus, because of our sinful rivalry, we rejoice when one stumbles. This the Bible condemns (Phil. 2:1-4).

2. That we are carnally minded and walk as men and not as God would have us to do (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

3. That our eyes are not upon God, that we are not “looking unto Jesus,” but unto our own petty, selfish interests (Rom. 12:9-21).

4. That vengeance, not peace and friendship, is the motive of our hearts. If so, we seek that which does not belong to us — “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

5. That we are rejoicing over the fall of one for whom Christ died, and for one in whose death God takes no pleasure (Ezek. 33:11).

6. That our standards for success and failure are brought down to the level of the fallen. Surely, our goals and glee are higher than that (Phil. 2:16, 17; 1 Pet. 1:6-8)!

7. That we are looking at things through the perishing perspective of the outer man and not through eternal spectacles of the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

8. That we ought to be glad Jesus does not have the same attitude toward us — “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

If I say I will not rejoice when my enemy stumbles, but neither will I help him up, I may as well sneer when I praise God.

Lord, how small we are in heart before thee. Help us to grow in thy grace and goodness!

Fighting Lions and Bears

Jarrold Jacobs

The title above may seem odd to you, but rest assured, everything about that title is “scriptural”! Not only this, but it has applications in our lives (Rom. 15:4). Long ago, when David was told he could not fight and kill Goliath because of his young age, he ably defended his ability to fight and slay Goliath, the “man of war.” He told Saul, “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:34-37).

Of course, we know that David was used as God’s instrument for killing Goliath and putting to flight the armies of God’s enemies (1 Sam. 17:49-53). David, with just a smooth stone and slingshot, brought down the giant, beheaded him, and became a hero to the nation of Israel (1 Sam. 18:7)! Certainly, we are all familiar with this account. Perhaps after reading this account of David, we have looked at our lives and made a vow to God that if there are ever any “giants” to fight in that spiritual sense, the Lord can be assured we will be there to fight them (2 Cor. 10:4-6)!

A Testing Ground

A question or two is in order, though, as we think about Goliath. First of all, if you think you’re ready to fight “Goliath,” ask yourself how many “lions” and “bears” you have killed. You see, David knew he was ready to fight Goliath based on his earlier “testing” with that lion and bear. He knew God had

delivered him from the lion and bear, and he knew God could deliver him (and all of Israel) from Goliath, and the Philistine army. Friend, if you haven’t fought the “lions” and “bears” yet, how can you know you’re ready to take on “Goliath”?

Furthermore, when we realize that our lives are a series of choices, decisions, habits, and consequences; if we don’t make the right choices today, how can we be assured we’ll be going the right direction tomorrow? In other words, if David had not been tested with the lion and bear, do we honestly think he would have been fighting Goliath? If he had not learned to trust God in the “little” things, would he have been trusting God for the “big” things (1 Sam. 17:37)?

Who Will Fight the Lions and Bears?

Sadly, too many Christians wish to sit back, take it easy, and allow others to take care of their “light work,” while they wait on the “big” things, or what they determine to be the “important” things to occur. In reality, what happens is that these are the same folks who, rather than jumping to the Lord’s service in the “big fight,” will sit on the sidelines, encamped and entrenched on the mountainside (1 Sam. 17:3). They will watch and wait while the enemies of God blaspheme and taunt God’s children (1 Sam. 17:10-11, 16). Then, these folks (who were waiting and watching for the “big” thing to happen) will insult and insinuate false motives to those who fought their “lions” and “bears” and are ready to step up and serve the Lord in a greater capacity. If you don’t believe that statement, look at the disdain and disrespect shown by Eliab to David in 1 Samuel 17:28. If Eliab or any of the others had been what they were supposed to have been, there would have been no need for David to have fought Goliath!



As it was, David had to do the soldiers' job because they would not do it!

Sadly, this situation is played out much too often in the lives of Christians. Brethren, could it be that we are resentful of some folks because we know they are doing "our" job? For those satisfied to "play church" and "take their pew," it unnerves and upsets them when they see others doing what they know they ought to be doing. In 1 Samuel 17, if David had just delivered the food his father sent and talked with the men and moved on, Eliab never would have said what he did. Yet, when David stayed, asking questions and showing genuine concern for his countrymen, Eliab rebuked him! How hypocritical!

Have You Fought the Lions and Bears, Yet?

Brethren and friends, ask yourself how many lions and bears you have fought in your life as a Christian. Have we killed any yet, or are they feasting on the flock?

1. Have we killed the lion of lust that enters the camp and says, "You can look, just don't touch!"? (See: Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; 1 John 2:16.)

2. Have we slain the bear of boasting that destroys souls through pride and an arrogant attitude? (See: Prov. 8:13; 29:23; Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.)

3. Will we kill the lion of fear which scares us into inactivity because we are afraid of what might happen, or what someone might say about us because we serve God? (See: Matt. 25:18, 24-25.)

4. Will we slay the bear of apathy, who encourages us to "hibernate" and be engaged in a spiritual slumber when we ought to be awake, alert, and vigilant? (See: Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14; Rev. 3:2.)

5. Will we kill the lion of procrastination that would have us waste our years in vain pursuits rather than live our lives for God? (See: Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5.)

6. Have we slain the lion of selfishness whose work efficiently and subtly results in lost souls? Honestly, can we think of *any* sin that does not have its root in selfishness? The fact that one transgresses, or omits God's commands rather than being obedient to him is an outgrowth of selfishness, pure and simple (2 John 9; Jas. 4:17)! Have we put selfish interests aside in order to selflessly serve our Lord? (See: Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-2.)

7. Have we killed the bear of false doctrine which tries to teach us man's ways instead of God's way? (See: Matt. 15:8-9.) False doctrine, like the mighty bear, can bring "swift destruction" upon its prey if we are not careful (2 Pet. 2:1).

Conclusion

May this lesson help us to better appreciate fighting the lions and bears. Upon our defeating such "small" things as we have listed above, we can then ready ourselves for the "big" work.

This is what happened to David! His fighting and defeating the lion and bear prepared his heart, and strengthened his faith in God as the One who was caring for him and supplying his needs.

The same is true today. God is still in control of things. Our God rules and he cares for his children. Do we believe him (Heb. 11:6)? The Bible says his ears are open to their prayers (1 Pet. 3:12). Are we praying to him (1 Thess. 5:17)? God wants all men to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Have we been forgiven of our sins (Mark 16:16)? God wants us to serve him faithfully all the days of our lives (1 Cor. 15:58). Are we living in such a way as to please him (Col. 3:17)?

Are we sitting back and saying, "Lord, I'll let some things go, but don't you worry. When 'Goliath' gets here, that is when I'll come through for you." Or, are we fighting the "lions" and "bears" day by day, keeping our focus on the goal of heaven (Phil. 3:13-14) and preparing ourselves for eternity and for "Goliath"?

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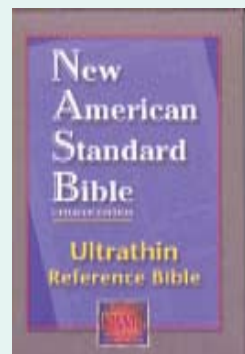
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Get the Facts

Donnie V. Rader

All too often brethren hear some rumor or are treated to one side of a story and swallow it all. They may jump to conclusions, spread the story, and even condemn those they have heard about. This has always been true, but is perhaps worse in the day of e-mail.

It may be that some do this with evil intent. However, others may do this with pure motives because they have confidence in the source of their information.

If we would listen the Proverb writer we would gain a little wisdom and keep ourselves from trouble. Two of the Proverbs come to mind as I reflect upon the problem described.

He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him (Prov. 18:13).

Matthew Henry comments:

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing by which they hope to gain applause.

1. Some take a pride in being quick. They answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take up a cause suddenly; and, when they have heard one side, they think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other; they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas, though a ready wit is an agreeable thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that do business.

2. Those that take a pride in being quick commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict enquiry into; and, if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17). This tells us that there may be another side to the story. There may be information that has been omitted. Again Matthew Henry comments:

This shows that one tale is good till another is told. 1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no. 2. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit that the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses and cross-examine them, and show the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear both sides before we give judgment.

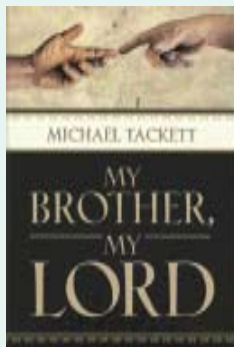
From these Proverbs we learn a valuable lesson. Before we swallow a story, retell it, and pronounce condemnation upon another, we would do well to *get the facts!*

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MY BROTHER, MY LORD

by Michael Tackett



A rare perspective of New Testament times through a close-up view of James, the brother of Jesus. Glimpses of Jesus as the common man from Galilee, “the carpenter’s son.” A study about James and the inheritance he left us through his writings.

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“Not Everyone That Saith Unto Me, Lord, Lord . . .”

Jim McDonald

The following verse from Jesus’ sermon was his warning regarding his teaching. The application is, if we want to enter heaven we must do the Father’s will.

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

When Joel prophesied of the coming of the Spirit (which prophecy began to be fulfilled in Acts 2), he said, “And it shall be that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

From Jesus’ warning in Matthew 7, it is evident that “calling on the name of the Lord” means more than just saying “Lord, Lord.” It also requires more than just faith. Paul alludes to Joel’s prophecy in Romans 10 when he said that the Lord “is rich unto all that call upon him. For, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” (Rom. 10:12-14). Observe that before one “calls” on the Lord, he must believe, so first one “believes,” then one “calls.”

In short, to “call upon the name of the Lord” is to call upon his authority, to do what he commands in order to receive his blessings. Peter promised that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He then told those who asked, “Brethren what shall we do?” to “repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins and ye shall receive

the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37f). Sadly, many sincerely believe they have served and are serving Christ, but will learn at the judgment they had not; they were workers of iniquity.

Jesus concluded his sermon with a familiar parable: the parable of the two builders (Matt. 7:24-27). One of the builders was wise, he built upon the rock. The other was foolish, he built upon the sand. It is recorded that both men heard the sayings of Jesus. The difference was that one did the words he heard (the wise man) and the other did not do what he had heard (the foolish man). It is still a wise man who hears and does; a foolish man hears but does not do.

Everyone of us is building “his house.” He is either a wise or foolish builder. The question of monument is: “What kind of builder am I?” What kind of builder are you?

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by Neil R. Lightfoot

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“Assault” continued from front page

all society; the God approved place for children to be reared (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:4); the institution affirmed by our Lord as a permanent one between *a man* and *a woman* (Matt. 19:4-9) — be so perverted as to be thought to include two men or two women?

The assault has been underway for years. Marriage between *a man* and *a woman* did not become besieged and benighted institution all at once. Portions of our culture have been rejecting God’s teaching on marriage for a long time.

Over one hundred years ago the Mormons tried to reinstitute polygamy. The government nearly destroyed the Mormon Church before they grudgingly acquiesced to the law of the United States — laws were based squarely on the law of God regarding marriage.

Then we enforced marriage laws even at gunpoint and the Mormons only surrendered their extra wives because they knew that the government was more than willing to shoot. This was the same society that made even consensual adultery illegal in many states.

But in later generations, when some were not content to live with only their one wife, and wanted (like the Pharisees of Matthew 19) to marry and divorce at will, laws were changed to accommodate them. Now we have “no fault” — and no stigma — divorce.

Going further, the hippies of the previous generation experimented with the communal marriage concept. That way they could fornicate at will while claiming that they had something even better than traditional marriage. They were rightly viewed as perverse radicals and libertines. Thankfully we did not change the laws of marriage to accommodate their lusts.

Others went even further still in their thinking and wanted even to end marriage itself. Foremost among these were radical feminists. Thankfully society did not change its laws to fit their conceptions and abolish marriage. But these radicals did not go away — they simply cohabitated with each other and built their entire lives based on a pattern of rebellion against God — but they did not go away.

The latest assault on marriage, the one we see played out daily before us, is the attempt to devalue marriage to the point that homosexual relationships are viewed as being equal to (and equally approved as) what God gave. If we compromise with this, what will Satan present as the next “improvement”?

Tellingly, aged unrepentant rabid feminist lesbians (leftovers from the moral darkness of the 60s) were the

first homosexuals to marry each other with civil sanction in our nation’s history. They did so not for love, not to form a family, not for anything else except to help “the cause” — the cause of destroying God’s version of marriage. As the New York Times recorded:

Although Ms. Lyon, who met Ms. Martin in 1953, said she opposed marriage for straight and gay couples during the women’s movement, she said it had become an increasingly important political issue for gay men and lesbians in the last two years.

“It’s of crucial importance for the movement,” Ms. Lyon said. “We are fairly well united behind this because it’s being fought against so hard by the other side. If we let them beat us down on this one, it will be a long time before we make other advances.”⁷

Homosexual “marriage” is not an extension or promotion of marriage; it is another step on the path of putting an end to it.

Sadly, even in the heartland, many religious leaders are helping the libertines, the profligate, the homosexuals and all others who defy the order of God by blessing “marriages” that God does not approve while discouraging those which he does.

Marilyn Meeker-Williams, pastor of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church (Houston), told the gay couples, “God’s blessing is with you.”

Although the Methodist Church does not permit same-sex marriages, she said, “a lot of us are working hard to change that.” Until she can perform such marriages, she said, she is not performing any marriages. “We haven’t had a wedding in our church in years,” she said.⁸

Behold the sad fruits of sin: the woman “pastor” won’t marry a pure young couple seeking the blessing of God as they begin their lives together as a family until she is allowed to perform the same rites for the sodomites who want their unholy lives approved of by society.

Footnotes

- ¹ (<http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/02/13/mass.marriage/index.html>).
- ² (<http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/11/18/samesex.marriage.ruling/index.html>).
- ³ (<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/13/national/13CALI.htm>).
- ⁴ (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,111414,00.html>).
- ⁵ (<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/topstory2/2401763>).
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“Enemies” continued from page 2

destroy President Bush. If military personnel at a relatively low level commits a crime even in a foreign country, the attack dogs call for the resignation of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. Such men are not the vigilant watchdogs of liberty who guard the public from wicked and misguided rulers. Rather, these men are those who are willing to destroy good men in order to promote a political agenda.

The sad truth is that there are religious men who watch every footstep faithful Christians take for the same purpose. If they can find any hint of scandal, any sign of dirt, any misstep, or any word that may be twisted to give it another meaning than was intended in its original context, it is used for the purpose of destroying the reputation of a godly man. Such conduct is the mark of human depravity, even if it is engaged in by those who profess to be preachers of the gospel!

When righteous men see a brother stumble into sin, they follow the teaching of Christ which forbids one to have pleasure in the sins of another (1 Cor. 13:6 – “rejoiceth not in iniquity”). Rather, they seek to restore the fallen: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2). “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:19-20). If that is not the attitude one has when he sees his brother overtaken by sin, this should be a red flag that something is wrong in his own life!

There is other truth that needs to be understood from this passage. David recognized what damage one could do to the Lord’s righteous cause by his stumbling into sin. Perhaps he knew this from experience. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and subsequently tried to cover it up, Nathan rebuked him saying, “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. . .” (2 Sam. 12:14). Such is what happens to the cause of Christ when preachers turn aside into sin. Because this is so, this verse is an exhortation to righteous living. The verse is an appeal for God’s help to keep oneself from stumbling into sin based the use that the wicked will make of that sin.

Keep Yourself Pure

“Flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). Too many preachers, deacons, and some elders have brought shame on the Lord’s cause by committing the same sin as David committed with Bathsheba. Some have stained their lives with pornography. In every case, the Lord’s enemies will use such acts of immorality to undermine the Lord’s gospel.

Think about the damage that has been done to the Roman Catholic Church by the incidents of sexual abuse that have been committed by their ordained priests. The sinful abuse of children was bad enough, but the Catholic Church compounded the problem by denying it, covering it up, and shuffling the priests around from one diocese to another which resulted in them having opportunities to commit their sins again and again. Such contact not only cost the Catholic Church millions of dollars, it damaged their reputation. The same thing happens in a local church when one of its leaders becomes involved in similar sins.

“Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17). Churches are sometimes hurt by dishonesty. Sometimes the treasurer steals from the treasury or the elders might become involved as well. When this happens it hurts the church. Churches need to be scrupulously honest by posting their financial statements for all members to examine.

The support of gospel preaching in foreign fields has been damaged by preachers who were not fully reporting the total support they received to the individual churches supporting them. On some isolated occasions, men have been exposed as taking salaries well beyond their needs. Preachers who are receiving support need to be scrupulously honest by listing *all* of those churches from which they receive funds, as is the general practice of most gospel preachers.

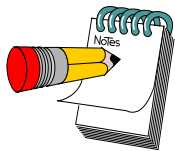
“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). Churches have been hurt by members who have a reputation for not paying their bills. Local folks say, “If that’s the way Christians act, I want no part of it.”

Conclusion

Peter exhorts saying, “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (1 Pet. 3:16-17).

We cannot control what the ungodly do in their conduct toward the righteous, but we can control our conduct. By keeping ourselves pure, we limit the criticisms that the ungodly can make against us. One way of measuring one’s life is to look at the charges one’s enemies makes against him. Jesus’ life was sinlessly pure; one sees this from the charges his enemies made against him (he heals on the sabbath, he eats with sinners, etc.). When one’s enemies have to find nit-picking criticisms to make against him, that is a pretty good indication that he is walking in purity.

Quips & Quotes



Ruling Clears Way For Gay Marriages

"The New York Times — the highest court in Massachusetts declared in an opinion issued Wednesday that only full marriage rights for gay couples — not just civil unions — would comply with the states' constitution, clearing the way for same-sex marriages to begin taking place by mid-May.

"It would make Massachusetts the first state in the United States to permit same-sex marriages" (The Indianapolis Star [February 5, 2004], A5).

Gay-Marriage Compromise Fails

"Boston — The Massachusetts Legislature defeated two constitutional amendments Wednesday that were both designed to override a court decision that established same-sex marriages in the state.

"In a highly charged constitutional convention that lasted nearly six hours, legislators narrowly voted down an amendment that would define marriage solely as a union between a man and a woman. Then, by a slightly wider margin, they defeated what had been billed as a compromise amendment: one that would have defined marriage as a heterosexual institution but also would have allowed same-sex couples to form civil unions" (The Indianapolis Star [February 12, 2004], A3).

Governor Signs Bill Banning Gay Marriage

"Columbus, Ohio — Gov. Bob Taft approved one of the country's most-far reaching gay-marriage bans on Friday, saying its adoption was urgent because the nation's first legally sanctioned same-sex weddings could take place as early as this spring in Massachusetts.

"The bill also prohibits state employees from getting marital benefits for their unmarried partners, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

"When the law takes effect in 90 days, Ohio will become the 38th state to adopt a 'defense of marriage act' and the second to deny benefits to some employees' partners. Indiana is among

the states that ban gay marriage" (The Indianapolis Star [February 7, 2004], A4).

CNN: 4,450 Churchmen Accused Since 1950

"New York — A draft of the upcoming national survey of sex abuse claims against Roman Catholic priests has been viewed by CNN, which reported Monday that 4,450 clergy have been accused of molesting minors since 1950.

"The draft survey said 121,000 abuse claims have been filed against the U.S. churchmen during that period, CNN reported.

"The survey — overseen by the National Review Board, a lay watchdog panel formed by the American bishops — is being conducted by researchers from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York" (The Indianapolis Star [February 17, 2004], A12).

L.A. Lists 656 Claims of Abuse by Clergy

"The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles — the nation's largest — released a detailed study Tuesday on sex abuse of minors by its clergy since 1930, reporting among the highest number of claims against a U.S. diocese to date.

"Los Angeles church officials say that, over the decades, they received allegations from 656 people who said they had been molested by 244 priests, deacons, religious brothers, seminarians and one other person.

"More than 5,000 priests worked in the archdiocese during that period" (The Indianapolis Star [February 18, 2004], A4).

Flouting Church Law

"In the heady days of February when San Francisco allowed homosexual marriages, Bethany United Methodist Church pastor Karen Oliveto presided over nine such ceremonies. The problem is that the United Methodist Book of Discipline states that pastors should not bless homosexual unions or allow the unions to be blessed in their churches.

"A few weeks later, a church jury in Bothell, Washington, voted to acquit Karen Dammann, a lesbian pastor on trial for violating church law. The Discipline states that 'self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve' as pastors.

"The jury panel was simply unwilling to enforce the obvious,' James V. Heidinger, president of the Methodist renewal group Good News, told Christianity Today. 'We need a willingness of clergy to abide by our church laws" (Christianity Today [May 2004], 19).

N.Y. Ministers Perform 25 Same-Sex Marriages

"New Paltz, N.Y. — Another 256 same-sex couples were married by Unitarian Universalist ministers here Saturday, even as pros-

ecutors consider filing charges against the clergywomen.

“The Revs. Kay Greenleaf and Dawn Sangrey started performing gay marriages in New Paltz last week after a restraining order was issued to prevent village Mayor Jason West from doing so.

“West faces 19 misdemeanors and possible jail time for officiating at weddings Feb. 27 for couples who lacked a license.

“Ulster County District Attorney Donald Williams is reviewing whether Greenleaf and Sangrey should face similar charges” (The Indianapolis Star [March 24, 2004], A6).

Jehovah’s Witnesses Discussing Grievances

“Nashville, Tenn. — Present and former Jehovah’s Witnesses who claim they were sexually abused by congregation leaders gathered in their first national caucus Saturday, sharing grievances about the religion’s handling of abuse complaints and discussing legal strategy.

“William Bowen, former leader of a Kentucky congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, said Saturday that more than 6,000 alleged sexual abuse victims have contacted a group he founded in 2001 to express ‘outrage at being silenced by the bad institutional policies’ of the faith.

“The religion’s procedures ‘can decimate the lives of the innocent and empower predators to get away with the crime of rape,’ Bowen said.

“His group, called silentlambs, was holding the caucus, which runs through today and drew about two dozen participants. . . .

“As members of the faith understand biblical teaching, an accusation of wrongdoing must be supported by two people with direct knowledge, which silentlambs says is impossible in most molestation cases. Without such corroboration, the accused person is deemed innocent, silentlambs says, and victims and parents can be ‘disfellowshipped,’ or excommunicated, for slander if they speak up.

“Brown disputed silentlambs’ contention that Witnesses are discouraged from taking abuse complaints to secular police. Official policy says elders should report abuse allegations to police if state laws require this, as is now the case in many states” (The Indianapolis Star [March 28, 2004], A4).

Debate

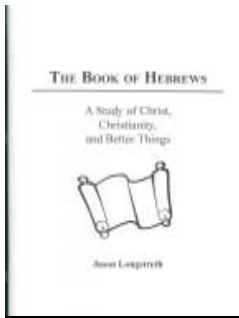
Pat Donahue (of Harvest, Alabama) will debate Charlie Pratt, President of “The Church of God of the Union Assembly” denomination, on July 29-31, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. at the Knoxville (Tennessee) Expo Center, 5441 Clinton Hwy. The topics will be:

- The Frequency of the Lord’s Supper
- The Miraculous Gifts
- The “Sinful Nature” of Man

This public discussion will be conducted as part of the Church of God’s annual national convention. Based upon previous conventions, about 2000 members of this denomination are expected to attend. Pat requests your attendance if you are within reasonable driving distance to avoid being vastly out-numbered by their members.

More information about the debate (including a printable flyer) can be found at www.thechurchofgodua.org, or by contacting Pat at 256-721-0726, PatDonahue@gtcinternet.com. Call David Simmons at 865-531-1535 for information about area hotel discounts that have been negotiated by this event.

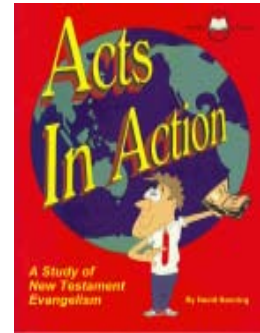
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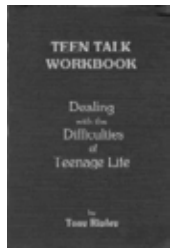
Jason Longstreth



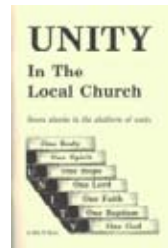
The Edwards



David Banning



Tony Ripley



Billy W. Moore



George DeHoff



Robert Harkrider



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