



Exploding the Myth of Moderate Use

Alcohol: The Poison of Serpents, The Venom of Cobras

Randy Blackaby

Television commercials and movies depict drinking as sophisticated. Wine connoisseurs fulfill the picture painted in Proverbs 23:31 as their swirl it in the cup, watch it sparkle and sniff its “bouquet.” But Proverbs declares that once drunk the sparkle turns “and at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.”

But drinking of alcoholic beverages has cursed the lives of millions (maybe billions) of people. It is the root of a high percentage of divorces, the cause of much spouse and child abuse and crimes of every sort, a factor in more than half of fatal auto accidents and the lubricant that loosens men’s and women’s morals and leads to nearly unimaginable degradation.

Teenagers are faced with the temptation to “just try it” and adults with the compulsion to be “sociable.” No one sets out to be a drunkard. Like all sin, it looks attractive as a means to relax and “loosen up” after a hard day. But it becomes the gateway to virtually every

sort of sin and misery.

Despite these facts, there are Christians who defend “moderate drinking.” They acknowledge that the Bible condemns drunkenness and that drunkards will not be a part of the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). They agree that drunkenness denotes a lack of wisdom and dissipation (Eph. 5:15-18). They know that such is a “work of darkness” (Rom. 13:12-14) and that spiritual leaders in the Lord’s church can’t be “given to wine” (1 Tim.3:2-3; Tit. 1:7-8).

They know that alcoholic beverages are described as a “poison” (Deut. 32:33) and that this is true both literally and physically. They have read that alcohol possesses the characteristics of a sedative, a hypnotic, an analgesic, and a narcotic. They know it is a habit-forming anesthetic.

But, they promote moderate use of such beverages. They see little or nothing wrong with controlled social
see “Alcohol” on p. 536

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Lest We Forget

David Flatt

There are many teachings in the Scriptures that we must not forget. Since there are so many subjects in God's word, sometimes it is needful to call these teachings to our remembrance. Paul instructed Timothy concerning this very thing: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). In the remainder of this article, I seek to call to our memory some Bible teachings that we must not forget.

We must not forget the Lord. God created the heavens and the earth and gave mankind the breath of life. The Israelites were warned not to forget the Lord who had delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians. "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:12). We must not forget the Lord because only he can make us wise in his way of salvation. The Psalmist wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:7-8). If we forget the Lord, we will forget that it is through him that we have salvation.

We must not forget the Gospel. The good news of the Savior contains words of instruction to salvation. Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Not forgetting the gospel means that we must study. Studying the gospel is the only way to guard against forgetting it. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

We must not forget the benefits/blessings of the Lord. The richest of blessings are found in the Lord. Again, the Psalmist wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2). Very early in the existence of the world, some understood that there were benefits in serving the Lord. There is nothing that man receives that does not come from God (Jas. 1:17). However, *spiritual benefits are found, only in the Lord*. The apostle Paul taught, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Salvation is found only in the Lord.

We must not forget the works of God. We must never forget that the Lord has done many great and wonderful works for us. "The heavens declare see "Lest We Forget" on p. 537

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“What Shall a Man Give in Exchange For His Soul?”

Connie W. Adams

Jesus raised questions which got to the very heart of things. “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” “The baptism of John, was it of heaven, or of men?” “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” In Matthew 16:24-26, he dealt with the crux of discipleship in a few words and then raised the penetrating question which heads this article. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

This is a “hard saying” to many. The first rule of discipleship is self-denial. Contrary to current emphasis on self-esteem, you are not first! If you think you are, then you cannot serve the Lord. Self fulfillment comes only in a life of complete surrender to the majesty and authority of Jesus Christ. That is what it means to accept him as “Lord.” “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33). In fact, we can’t even be *second* and serve the Lord. “But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others” (Phil. 2: 3-4). The Lord comes first, others come next, and we come in third! That is a far cry from the petty selfishness of the “me first” crowd.

The next rule of discipleship is “take up his cross.” Luke adds “daily” showing continual acceptance of the duties associated with serving Christ. “And follow me” indicates daily continuance in all that phrase includes. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.”

One who seeks to secure the interests of life to the neglect of his soul “shall lose it.” That is, he loses the only life that really matters. One who loses his life, not just in martyrdom, but in total surrender in service, making himself a “living sacrifice,” shall find the only life that counts.

In verse 26 Jesus contrasted gaining all the world holds and losing one’s soul. That would be saving his life while losing it. What would be a fair exchange for the soul?

There are at least three things to consider here.

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WE HAVE SOULS

Man is composed of “spirit, soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23). “Body” (*soma*) is the house in which we dwell. “Soul” (*psyche*) is the animate part of our existence. We have a life principle, breath. We hold this in common with the animal creation and some passages mean nothing more than this when using this word. The context determines this. “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is the rational part of our being. It is made in the image of God. It is to this “spirit” that God addressed his revelation. Through this “spirit” we understand the things of God and hold our communion with him. “Spirit” is the vital link between God and man. But sometimes the word “soul” is used to mean the same thing as “spirit.” This is the case in Matthew 16:26 when Jesus deals with the soul — life. Losing one’s life here is not just equated with shortness of breath.

There is a part of us which will never die. In Matthew 17:3, Jesus, on the mount of transfiguration, met and talked with Moses and Elijah, both of whom had left earthly existence hundreds of years before. They had not been annihilated. They had form, consciousness, and rationality. Something about them was dead, yet something else lived. In Matthew 22:32, Jesus rebuked the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection after-life, by quoting Exodus 3:6: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Jesus clinched it when he said “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” When God made that statement in Exodus 3:6, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all been dead a long time. Yet, God was the God of the living, not the dead. The conclusion to be drawn was beyond doubt. Something about them was alive.

THE VALUE OF A SOUL

The world and all it contains is not worth one single soul. If you owned all the real estate on every continent on earth; if all the jewels and precious substances of earth were heaped together until they constituted a mountain range of glitter; and if every imposing structure erected through the ingenuity of man were yours, and you then died and went to Hell, the Lord’s question stands. What did it profit you? You would still have died a pauper.

The true value of a soul can best be understood by the lengths to which God and Christ went to save it from eternal punishment. “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us,” manifested his amazing grace by emptying Heaven of him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He took on the form of a servant, to be spit upon, denied, and rejected by the very nation whose greatest nobility was in providing his lineage. He was betrayed by a friend, mocked in trial, made the object of ridicule by crude soldiers, and finally delivered to be crucified by a Roman procurator who thrice proclaimed his innocence of any charge worthy of death. He was scourged and finally nailed to a cross where he died between two thieves. His

agony was intense. If you ever wonder how precious your soul really is, then please think of these events. All of that happened because we have souls for which God cared. The salvation of your soul is the most important issue with which you have to deal.

TRADING SOULS FOR UNWORTHY THINGS

How sad to see so many foolishly exchanging their souls for *wealth*. “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9). Money has no character of its own. It takes on the character of whoever has it. But some have given their lives to the pursuit and protection of it. That is a poor trade.

Some are trading their souls for what is called a “living.” We must eat, sleep, be clothed and housed. We were created with the ability to work to provide these things for ourselves and our families. But to devote all of our time and energy to that while neglecting the interests of the soul is foolish trading.

Some trade their souls for pleasure. While there is pleasure in sin (Heb. 11:25), all pleasure is not wrong. To delight in family and social ties and find suitable recreation is worthwhile. But they must not supplant the needs of the soul. “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Some brethren do not believe this. They teach their children that athletic activities are worth more than Bible study or gospel preaching. When that conflicts with Bible study, or worship activities and the ball game, soccer game, band camp, summer camp, comes in first, then pleasure has trumped the training and development of the soul. Is this the meaning of self-denial? Is a family reunion, a ball game, a fishing trip to an area where it is too far to meet with saints on the Lord’s day, better than being at the table of the Lord at the appointed time? Are boats, campers, fishing gear, golf and tennis equipment, TVs, VCRs, DVDs, computer games, and popular magazines important items for the family budget, while support of the Lord’s work and useful books and supplies to help develop our spiritual needs of only questionable value? Are you trading your soul for any of these things? Are you teaching your children to make the same trade?

I have known of several in my lifetime who have traded their souls for *fame*. Young people with great musical skills and talent are often bitten by this bug. It is extremely hard to keep one’s balance in the heady world of entertainment without giving into the temptations and pressures associated with “paying your dues.” The call to political office has led some good people to compromise their principles. I have seen some sad spiritual shipwrecks in this area. To

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The Loss of Biblical Authority

David Anderson, president of the American Anglican Council commented on the August 5, 2003, confirmation of a practicing homosexual as New Hampshire's bishop. Said he, "The presenting symptom is sex, but that is not the issue." The issue is, he said, "the loss of biblical authority" (George F. Will, *Houston Chronicle* [October 15, 2003] 39A).

Mr. Anderson is correct. Some of our own brethren need to hear and be instructed. Whether we are dealing with Max Lucado's dropping the name, "church of Christ," or his use of mechanical instruments of music, or of lesser liberals and their assortment of societies and organizations, both evangelical and benevolent, along with their playgrounds and amusement and entertainment centers, the issue is the same. We may say, therefore, in perfect harmony with Mr. Anderson's assessment, "the present symptom is name change, mechanical instruments of music, dining rooms (a.k.a., "fellowship halls") and gymnasiums, but the real issue is the rejection and loss of biblical authority."

It is that loss, "the loss of biblical authority," which explains the existence of denominationalism in general (including its forms and institutions) and its items of "faith and practice" in particular. Embryonic denominationalism, now being openly espoused and embraced by those who are a decade behind Lucado in action, if not in thought, is of the same nature and eats and drinks from the same tables

be idolized as a star athlete is pretty heady stuff. Some have lost their way while climbing the corporate ladder. It is not wrong to be well-known for whatever you do and do well. Just don't trade your soul for fame. Preachers are not immune to this disease. We are servants, planters, and waterers, and we ought to do all that whether anyone notices or not.

We have souls which are precious in the sight of God and nothing in the world is worth more than saving them. What would you give in exchange for yours?

and wells of human pride and vanity.

When some doubt the days of Genesis 1, the serpent of Genesis 3, the world wide flood of Genesis 6-8, the falling walls of Jericho, and the great fish that swallowed Jonah, do not doubt that their spiritual heirs will deny the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Also, do not doubt that the issue will not be "the days of Genesis 1," rather, it will be "the loss of biblical authority," for, "They, being ignorant of God's authority, and going about to establish their own authority, have not submitted themselves unto the authority of God."

In any given controversy, do not be blinded by the particular item being swept aside and denied. Understand that larger considerations must be kept in focus. In Matthew 15 and Mark 7, the specific question was with respect to the disciples not washing their hands. The Lord reminded them that the matter had a broader theme, that of biblical authority, of either accepting and keeping the traditions of men or of rejecting and voiding the word of God.

Will's article went on to say, "The Rev. Martyn Minns of Fairfax, Va, an opponent (of ordaining homosexuals — LRH), says that in Minneapolis, 'When plain teaching of the Bible was referenced, eyes rolled, and with expressions of polite exasperation we were told that it was time to move on. The Bible simply hadn't kept up.'" Note the reference to the "plain teaching of the Bible." That is it! If the Bible teaches a thing, if it binds a behavior, if it establishes a pattern, we must receive, believe, obey, and follow it (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42; Phil. 1:27; 4:9; 2 Tim. 1:13). Whether we speak of water baptism's place in the plan of salvation, or the organizational structure and worship traditions of large, prominent religious bodies, it is all a matter of "biblical authority." "What saith the Scriptures?"

With respect to rolling their eyes and saying it is time to "move on" past the Bible, perhaps some of our brethren are not quite so bold and blatant in their denial of "biblical authority," but the result is the same. Cisterns are hewn out that can hold no water, and the truth of God is exchanged for a lie (cf. Jer. 2:13; Rom. 1:21-25). Let us beware, for

Children

Children are mentioned quite often in the Scriptures. While it seems many in our society have a very “cheap” or “dim” view of children, the Bible does not. The Bible uses the words “child,” and “children” some 2037 times. “Offspring” is a term used twelve times. God often praises children highly. Let us learn what God expects of children.

“CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS”

This phrase was used by Paul in Ephesians 6:1. He said, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20). For children to please God, they must be obedient to their parents. God said, it is “right” when you do it. One who is disobedient to his parents is placed in the same category as “unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, deceit, malicious, haters of God” and a host of other sins (Rom. 1:28-32).

Obedience to parents is something that pleases God, and it is something which can produce a long life on this earth! Why did Paul say this? It is because listening to, and obeying your parents can keep you from many dangers in this life. Your parents love you and want you to be safe. Therefore, they establish rules that they believe will help you stay safe. Listen to them, and obey them. God loves you, and your parents love you!

“THE FRUIT OF THE WOMB IS HIS REWARD”

Parents, this lesson is not only for “them,” but for “us,” too! David declared, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Ps. 127:3-5). The Bible says that children are a “reward” from God, not a curse! If you don’t believe this, talk to those who, for whatever reason, cannot have children of their own. Parents, let us remember to love our children and realize that their lives and futures rest in our

hands. Therefore, we have the responsibility to teach and train them (Eph. 6:4). Let us not provoke our children to anger (Col. 3:20). Let us train up our children correctly in the ways of God, so when they are old, they will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6). Let us thank God every day for his “reward” to us — our children!

CHILDREN CAN DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT A MAN IS QUALIFIED TO BE AN ELDER

“For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5). Remember, that an elder needs to have “children in subjection with all gravity . . . faithful children not accused of riot or unruly” (1 Tim. 3:4, Tit. 1:6). Just think children, you can help your father be an elder one day! What a responsibility that is. In describing the qualifications of elders, God declares that children play a vital role in his qualifications.

CHILDREN REFLECT THE VALUES TAUGHT IN THE HOME

As the home goes, so goes the nation. We know that statement is true. We know it is true because we recognize that our children reflect our values to the world. Therefore, if they are not taught right, it will be seen in the years to come when they have opportunities to have their influence felt. If one ever wants a good “mirror” to show what is going on in the home (good or bad), just look at the children! Often, they will reflect what is happening in the home. This is a fact. We may be able to “fool” people in town, but we cannot “fool” that little one who lives in the house with us. There are multiplied examples of this being true in the Bible, as well as “modern-day” examples of this in our lives and in the lives of people we know.

Finally, children will grieve parents (Gen. 26:34-35; Prov. 10:1) or make parents happy (Prov. 23:24-25) based on their decisions. Please make sure you make the right ones! Go to God for direction!
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A Story of Two Communion Tokens

My father-in-law came across an odd looking token. He had no idea how long it had been in his tool box and was without explanation of how it was put there. He cleaned it so the raised inscription could be read. It was a communion token.

Having lived a number of years in Virginia where the Episcopal Church has considerable strength, he presumed it related to Episcopalian practices. He called the local Episcopal priest in the Tennessee town where he then resided. The priest told him he had heard of communion tokens, but he did not think they had been used in the Episcopal Church. He suggested that the token might be of Presbyterian origin.

About two weeks before his death in 1991, my father-in-law gave the unusual token to me with the request that I find out more about it. A trip to the local library resulted in confirmation that it is a token which was used by Presbyterians. Further examination of the token has proved highly interesting, and its date and country of origin serve to remind of an event in the life of Alexander Campbell on the same date and in the same country. That event was a historic change of course in Campbell's life. And it involved a communion token.

The token which mysteriously found its way into my father-in-law's tool box appears to be made of pewter. It is approximately one and 1/8

inch by 13/16 inch and is octagonal in shape with a rim. The front side is inscribed:

SO.
RONALDSAY & BURRA
PARISHES
I. WATSON MINR.



1809

The inscription on the backside is a quotation pertaining to the Lord's supper:

I. COR. XI. 24
THIS DO IN
REMEMBRANCE



Several months before his death my father-in-law decided to clean out his tool box. All sorts of odds and ends have a way of accumulating in a tool box. In addition to nuts, screws, brads, nails, hooks, washers, wire, tape, string, staples, pencils, sandpaper, connectors, anchors, etc., there are such basis tools as pliers, screwdrivers, hammer, saw, measuring tape, adjustable wrenches, and a file. There is a tendency, when a job is finished, to throw leftovers into the tool box for sorting at a later date — maybe years later.

OF ME.

Two clusters of islands in the extreme northern part of Scotland are known as the Orkney and Shetland islands. South Ronaldsay and Burra (Burray) are two of the Orkney group. The minister for the South Ronaldsay and Burra parishes was I. Watson. The date the token was issued was 1809.

FACTS ABOUT COMMUNION TOKENS

A book on pewter collecting gives the following information:

In Scotland Communion tokens, made under the superintendence of church members in a stamp or mould designed for that special purpose, were adopted, after the model of the lead tokens used as early as 1560 by French Calvinists. Sometimes they were of lead, sometimes of brass, or tin, or pewter. Some were square, not more than an inch in width, sometimes round or hexagonal with rim. They were quite plain, and were marked as a rule with the initial letter or letters of the parish.

In the seventeenth century they were made larger, the date and a monogram being added, and the custom grew up of recasting them in new patterns whenever there was a new minister. By the eighteenth century the minister's initials were regarded as more important than the name of the parish.¹

The purpose of communion tokens was to prevent "unworthy" or "improper" persons from partaking. In their semi-annual assemblies the Scotch Presbyterians celebrated the Lord's supper. In America they followed the customs that were practiced in Scotland:

After a protracted and solemn address upon the deep meaning of the celebration and the duties of church-members, the oldest members of the congregation were seated at the table and partook of the sacrament. Thin cakes of unleavened bread were specially prepared

for the sacred service. Again and again were the tables refilled with communicants, for often seven hundred church-members were present. Thus the services were prolonged from early morning until nightfall. When so many were to partake of the Lord's Supper, it seemed necessary to prevent any unworthy or improper person from presenting himself. Hence the tables were fenced off, and each communicant was obliged to present a "token."²

A token was one's ticket of admission to the communion service. Only the approved could share in the Lord's supper. Presbyterian elders had the power of approval.

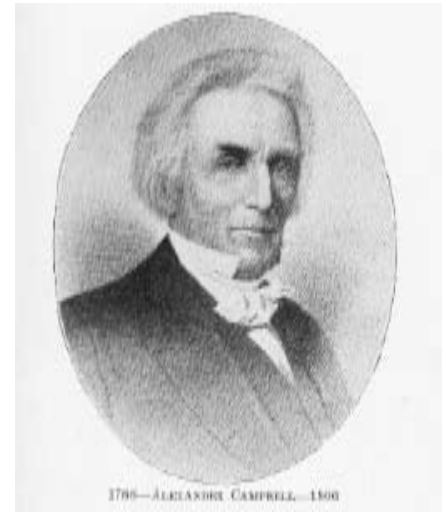
ALEXANDER CAMPBELL IN SCOTLAND IN 1809 (A TOKEN WITHOUT COMMUNION)

Thomas Campbell was a minister in the Seceder Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He sailed to America in 1807, partly because of his health and partly in the quest for greater freedom. In the spring of 1808, his family received a letter urging them to join him. His son Alexander had been in charge since the father's departure. Preparations were made for an immediate trip, but a smallpox epidemic caused painful delay. It was fall before the ship carrying Thomas Campbell's family set sail from Londonderry, Ireland. Weather conditions were unfavorable. The ship wrecked on the rocky coast of the sea near the Scottish island of Islay. That sobering tragedy led young Alexander to decide to devote his life to the ministry. Another decision was reached that the winter must be spent in Scotland, and this gave Alexander an opportunity to enroll in Glasgow University.

The brilliant mind of young Alexander Campbell, then about twenty years of age, was quick to learn. He came under the influence of Grenville Ewing and the Haldane brothers, James and Robert, who had left the Church of Scotland and organized independent congregations. He learned more of the views of John Glas and Robert

Sandeman, leaders in an independent movement in Scotland. His studies at Glasgow and the influences that made an impact on his thinking prompted him to seriously doubt the views of the Seceder Presbyterians and to find sectarianism disgusting.

The year was 1809. The place was Glasgow, Scotland. Alexander Campbell was nearing the end of his temporary stay at Glasgow. The semi-annual communion season of the Seceders was approaching.



He was in an unsettled state of mind and his doubts in regard to the character of such religious establishments occasioned him no little anxiety of mind concerning the proper course to pursue. His conscientious misgivings as to the propriety of sanctioning any longer, by participation, a religious system which he disapproved, and, on the other hand, his sincere desire to comply with all his religious obligations, created a serious conflict in his mind, from which he found it impossible to escape. At the time of preparation, however, he concluded that he would be in the way of his duty, at least, and that he would go to the elders, and get a metallic token, which every one who wished to communicate had to obtain, and that he would use it or not, afterward, as was sometimes done.³

Being from Ireland and without

letter or recommendation, Campbell was informed by the elders that it would be necessary for him to appear before the session for examination. He passed the examination and received the communion token.

The hour at which the administration of the Lord’s Supper was to take place found him still undecided, and, as there were about eight hundred communicants, and some eight or nine tables to be served in succession, he concluded to wait until the last table, in hopes of being able to overcome his scruples. Failing in this, however, and unable any longer conscientiously to recognize the Seceder Church as the Church of Christ, he threw his token upon the plate handed round, and when the elements were passed along the table, declined to partake with the rest. It was at this moment that the struggle in his mind was completed, and the ring of the token, falling upon the plate, announced the instant at which he renounced Presbyterianism for ever — the leaden voucher becoming thus a token not of communion but separation.⁴

One historian summed up the incident in this way: “Campbell had now crossed the rubicon, he was no longer with the Seceder Church.”⁵ Another author elaborated eloquently on the event:

The ring of that token, as it fell from his hands, like the ring of Martin Luther’s hammer on the door of the Wittenberg cathedral, announced the renunciation of the old church ties, and marks the moment of which he forever ceased to recognize the claims or authority of a human creed to bind

upon men the conditions of their acceptance with God. Henceforth, he resolved, with the help of God, to stand for the defense of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”⁶

This is the story of two communion tokens which were issued in Scotland in 1809. The one now in my possession was issued for the parishes of South Ronaldsay and Burra in northern Scotland, and someone brought it to America where it eventually in some unknown manner found its way into my father-in-law’s tool box. The other was used in Glasgow, Scotland, by a young man who was destined to become an influential leader in the great Restoration Movement, and whose action involving his communion token marked a significant turning point in his life.

Notes

- ¹ Masse, H.J.L.J. *The Pewter Collector*. Revised by Ronald F. Michaelis. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1971: 87-88.
- ² Montgomery, Charles F. *A History of American Pewter*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973: 87-88.
- ³ Richardson, Robert. *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. Vol. 1. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, n.d.: 189.
- ⁴ Richardson: 190.
- ⁵ West, Earl Irvin. *The Search for the Ancient Order*. Vol. 1. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1949: 52.
- ⁶ Grafton, Thomas W. *Life of Alexander Campbell*. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1897: 40-41.

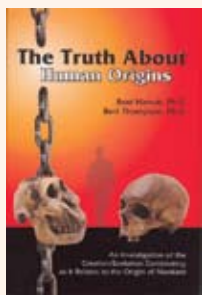
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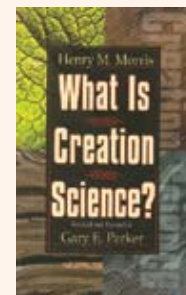


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The Vainglory of Life

When the apostle John condemned the world as unworthy of the Christian's love, he spoke also of the essence of the world and the different ways in which Satan uses the world in his approaches to ensnare God's people. You probably recall that he spoke of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life" (1 John 2:16). We have often spoken and heard others speak about the first two of these expressions, whereas the last of the three frequently receives little notice.

The word here translated as *vainglory* appears in only one other place in the New Testament — James 4:16. James' word is rendered *boastings* in older versions and *vauntings* in some newer ones. Linguistic sources tell us the word actually meant the speech of a braggart. Lenski says that it meant hollow, vainglorious pretense. Whatever affects to promote one's image or standing, especially on the basis of that which is empty (vain), would qualify as the vainglory of life, here condemned by the Lord's apostle.

Do we ever rely on empty shells, of which we boast powerfully, as the foundation of our lives? Is it possible that we have come to depend upon what is vainglorious as if it were a solid base for our efforts or those of our children? Do we sometimes seek to advance their standing among their peers by resorting to popularity, physical beauty, or intellectual prowess?

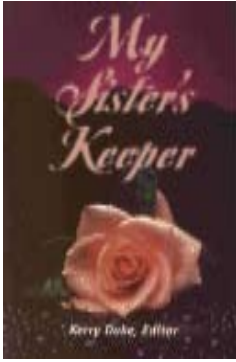
A MODERN CASE

How often have we witnessed otherwise good parents trying to rush their little girls into the fashion market and the business of beauty? Early attempts to encourage their interest in such endeavors through all kinds of pageants and contests (many of which do not rely on indecent clothing), even by rewarding their outward attractiveness, have frequently been the early steps leading to spiritual oblivion and moral downfall later in life. One of the closing verses in the description of the worthy woman in Proverbs 31 speaks of favor as deceitful and beauty as vain (hollow). Failing to heed such warnings has created a false culture of beauty. It is not so much that outward attractiveness is wrong, but that our reliance on it for significance in life is

a sin. As the years pass, those same small girls grow into young women, taking with them the attitudes fostered in the school of vanity (we don't call that piece of bedroom furniture a vanity for no reason). By the time they reach their teens, they frequently have developed such a pride in self that they are beyond the reach of spiritual appeals. Why? They have heard and heeded countless words of encouragement to develop and to show their beauty and approval of their efforts and have won the accolades of a beauty-conscious society. They have learned to strut like peacocks (as in *vauntings* above). Those who fail to notice or to commend what others are commending no longer really count, because their values and principles are quite different. Spiritual oblivion has cast her shadow over them because they no longer count spiritual culture as very important. Moral compromise has often entered the picture, as they have begun inching ever closer to the indecent and immodest so they can flaunt their attractiveness. They sometimes have begun entering those pageants where they appear in swimsuits. In doing so, they have also worked themselves into a new circle of friends, people who share their newfound principles, values, and tastes. They have much less regard for God's word than they could have had with different training. Spiritual matters are no longer of very much concern to them. To them the Lord's work is a bore and spiritual matters are trivia.

All that has been leading them down the path of vainglory has helped to instill a dependence on the hollow, the vain, the pretentious. While their speech might not be that of a braggart, their conduct, dress, and mannerisms "speak" loudly to call attention to their outward persons.

This case, based not on any single situation but on several occasions that this writer has encountered, is not imaginary. It is so real that it is frightening! It is only one area of vainglory. Elders, preachers, teachers, and parents need to know what vainglory is and do their best to equip people with proper attitudes so they can overcome it. —
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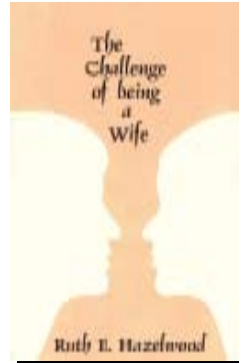
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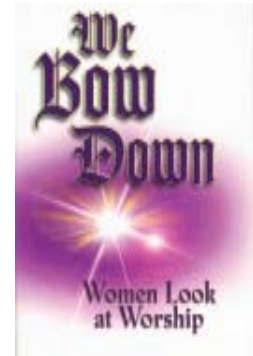
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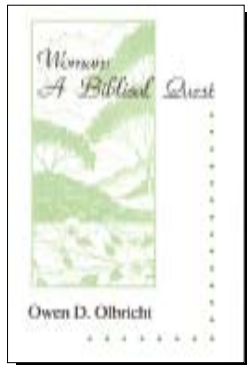
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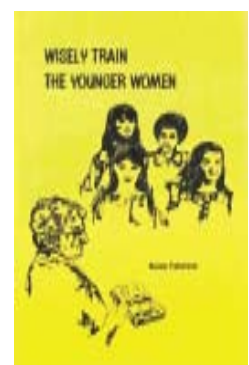
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The Graduation Class of 2004

We Salute You

Another year has come and gone. Many schools are closing out the year sending out another class to go on to a new real world of adventures living the American dream. Valedictorians and salutatorians have charged their class mates of high school and all levels of college to put forth their best towards the furtherance of discovery to create a better life. This class will be a class to remember in history as all classes are remembered with reunions in years to come throughout life.

In the local papers, pictures of the graduating classes are given throughout America. Year books will reflect the years of togetherness. Year books will inscribe the thoughts of events in the past and pursuits for the future. Teachers will encourage the class to strive for excellence. The faces and reflection of time will change as the years come and go.

Christian parents have a part in graduation classes. We as parents have taught our children the social etiquettes of life. Have we brought up our children in the Lord? “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:7).

Have we made their election sure in their heart? We know our children have the choice to make their own decisions, but have we really directed their foot steps? “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15); “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Prov. 16:9).

Examples are so important in the child’s life. “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Prov. 1:8). We need to be involved in the daily lives of our children. Our responsibility needs not to

be turned over to the world.

So many children are born into this life and quickly put in care centers to be nurtured by individuals which are not godly. It is your responsibility to raise that child. I am always impressed with Paul’s reference about Timothy’s life as a child, “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well” (2 Tim. 1:5). Even in times of distress, Jochebed took care of Moses. She made the preparations to save his life, “And the woman (Jochebed) conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months” (Exod. 2:2). Later we learn Jochebed was instrumental in the care of her son Moses. “Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?’” (Exod. 2:7).



Graduation is very late to expect a child to become faithful. Children need to be taught the foundations in Christ from birth. “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself

being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20). The oracles of God must be taught daily. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 4:11).

Our congratulations need to be sent to faithful children growing in Christ. Students in high school and college walking right need to be encouraged daily in their service to the Lord. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). The Hebrew writer warns

Prohibited and Permitted Desire

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew word *chamad*, a primitive root, which occurs twenty-one times in the OT, means “to desire, take pleasure in” (Thomas 2530). Carrying both a negative and positive connotation, this word can refer to either “(1) covet, lust, desire, i.e., strongly desire another’s possessions; (2) delight, i.e., to be fond of and take pleasure in an object or action; or (3) treasure, wealth, i.e., pertaining to a collection of objects which constitute far more than normal in society” (Swanson 2773).

In the NASB95, it is translated “attracted” (1x), “covet” (6x), “coveted” (1x), “delight” (1x), “desirable” (2x), “desire” (1x), “desired” (2x), “desires” (2x), “pleasing” (1x), “precious” (2x), “precious things” (1x), “took great delight” (1x) (Gen. 2:9; 3:6; Exod. 20:17; 34:24; Deut. 5:21; 7:25; Josh. 7:21; Job 20:20; Pss. 19:10; 39:11; 68:16; Prov. 1:22; 6:25; 12:12; 21:20; S. of Sol. 2:3; Isa. 1:29; 44:9; 53:2; Mic. 2:2).

A study of this word helps in the understanding of certain spiritual realities. Instead of creating us as puppets, God made man a creature of choice (Gen. 2:15-17; Josh. 24:15; Rom. 6:16-18). However, all choices are not equally

valid. God has delineated between good and evil. Man is constrained by these divinely established boundaries. As creatures of choice, God calls us to make the proper choices (Deut. 30:19-20).

Nevertheless, the process of making moral decisions is sometimes complicated. Sin does not always appear to be wholly repugnant. Rather, it offers the promise of pleasure (Heb. 11:24-26). At times, the pathway of disobedience can seem carefree and tempting (Ps. 73:1-9).

Despite appearance to the contrary, a libertine existence is not desirable. Unrestrained freedom leads to moral, spiritual, and political anarchy. On a personal basis, unrestrained license leads to servitude. Witness the substance abuser and the sexual addict. On a collective basis, it leads to societal collapse. Individuals and nations who reject the constraints of morality face the certainty of divine judgment (Gen. 6:1-7; Ps. 73:10-20; 2 Pet. 2:4-19).

PROHIBITED DESIRE

The trees in the Garden of Eden illustrate the difference between permitted and prohibited desire. The fruit of both were desirable. However, one was allowable while the other was not (Gen. 2:9, 15-17; 3:6).

us to be mature. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Heb. 5:12).

I send my best to the Class of 2004. I pray for their future. “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:23).

Please encourage the class of 2004 and all young people

to serve our Lord. Parents make provision *now* to teach your young child the promises of God. *You* are their example. Paul tells the Philippians, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (1:27).

To the Class of _____ “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

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Covetous desire was prohibited under the Law of Moses: You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, etc. (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). Such desire is destructive, both to personal relationships and peace of mind (Eph. 5:5).

Acting upon his covetousness, Achan violated God's ban regarding the spoils of Jericho (Josh. 6:17-19; 7:1, 20-21). Yet, his sinful deed was uncovered (Josh. 7:16-19). The price of his perniciousness was indeed high (Josh. 7:24-26).

When Israel possessed the land of promise, they were to purge the land of idolatry (Deut. 7:1-6). If, as a result of coveting, they failed in this regard, Canaanite abominations would ensnare them (7:25-26).

Sinful desire can take many forms (Prov. 12:12). Scoffers delight in their scoffing (Prov. 1:22). Thieves delight in their robbery (Mic. 2:1-2). Fornicators delight in their indulgence of sinful pleasure, but they do not count the cost (Prov. 6:23-35, esp. v. 25; Ezek. 23:1-35, esp. v. 6, 12, 23).

Yet, in all cases, the pleasures of sin are fleeting and vain (Job 20:20-21; Ps. 39:11; Heb. 11:24-26). Yielding to sinful desire brings injury and disgrace. Wisdom calls the sons of men to hear and heed: "He who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death" (Prov. 8:32-36; cf. 15:32). Isaiah speaks of the shame and senseless futility of such a course (Isa. 1:27-31, esp. vv. 29; 44:9-11).

PERMITTED DESIRE

Despite the baneful perniciousness of prohibited desire, there is such a thing as permitted desire. First and foremost,

we should delight in knowing and serving God (Pss. 1:1-3; 112:1-2). The law of the Lord is more desirable than fine gold (Ps. 19:7-10). Precious treasures are found in the dwelling of the wise (Prov. 21:20-21).

Application can also be made to courtship. In the Song of Solomon, the Shulammitte took great delight in her shepherd lover, but abstained from physical intimacy until marriage (S. of Sol. 2:3). She understood that love should not be aroused or awakened until "she/it pleases" (S. of Sol. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

Even in budding romance, young Christians should demonstrate chaste behavior, avoiding all impurity of thought, word, and action (1 Tim. 4:12; 5:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:22). When God's pattern of purity is respected, marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4).

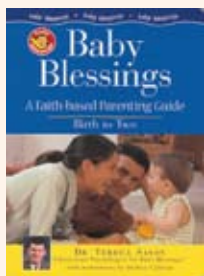
CONCLUSION

Let us recognize the distinction between prohibited and permitted desire. The Messiah's appeal is not carnal, but spiritual (Isa. 53:2; cf. 4:2). When one's delight is oriented toward the flesh, his mind is antagonistic toward God. However, when one's mind is set on the things of the Spirit, he knows life and peace (Rom. 8:5-10). May God help us re-orientate our desire so that it corresponds to that which is good, right, and wholesome (Phil. 4:8-9).

Sources:

NASB95 = New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. La-Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.
 Swanson, James. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.
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First Annual Lecture Series: “THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND”

During the week of July 12-15, the first annual Truth Magazine lecture series was held at the Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky on the theme “The Renewing of Your Mind.” Those who attended were edified and encouraged both by the faithful teaching of God’s word and by the pleasant association with brethren of like precious faith. Many who were not able to attend will benefit from the book which was prepared and the CD recordings of the lessons as presented.

THE ATTENDANCE

We were heartened and pleasantly surprised by the number of brethren who came. Brethren from twenty-one states and Canada registered at the lectures. We counted the attendance at several sessions. The Tuesday night crowd was right at 300. The early morning lectures began on at least two days with approximately 180 present and the number grew as the morning progressed. Our open forums drew great interest and large crowds, resulting in our best attendance at 300-350.

THE THEME

The lectures were built around the theme “The Renewing of Your Mind,” drawn from Romans 12:1-2, where Paul writes, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” On Monday night, I opened the series giving an overview of the entire series of lectures. This lecture showed that the danger of conforming to the world is much greater than conforming only to the moral standards of the world be-

cause we are confronted also by the world’s view of the church, worship, evangelism, Jesus, and the Bible.

During the lectures that followed, individual speakers then addressed each of these respective themes. We heard stirring and incisive lessons by Dan King on the morals of our age, Lewis Willis on the world’s approach to sexual morality, and Brett Hogland on the world’s view of marriage. Tuesday evening Weldon Warnock spoke to a large

crowd on the world’s view of child discipline. On Wednesday morning, Larry Hafley contrasted the world’s view of the church to that of the Bible, Russell Dunaway refuted the world’s view of religious unity, and Ron Halbrook presented an outstanding lesson on the need to keep our balance in the controversy over divorce and remarriage. Wednesday evening, after worship services in local churches, Connie W. Adams spoke on a renewed commitment to evangelism, fan-

ning the flames burning in our hearts to carry the gospel into all the world.

On Thursday morning, John Isaac Edwards contrasted the world’s view of Jesus with that presented in Scripture, Marc W. Gibson emphasized the need to recommit ourselves to sound biblical interpretation, and Jason Longstreth examined modern approaches to worship in the light of scriptural worship. The series was concluded on Thursday night with Bill Cavender’s sermon on “Recommitment to Biblical Authority,” urging us to rise above the world and its standards by recognizing Christ and his word as our final authority in all things.

THE EARLY MORNING CLASSES





In spite of the early hour, the 8:00 a.m. classes were well attended. Approximately 180 were present each morning, no doubt because of the interest in the topics presented. Larry Dickens presented a thought-provoking lesson on “Scientific Foreknowledge and the Bible.” Offering specific examples of scientific foreknowledge in Scripture, Larry reviewed the claims and arguments of men such as Martie Pickup and Phil Roberts that there is no scientific foreknowledge manifested in the biblical text.

On Wednesday morning, Harry Osborne presented a review of “the house church movement” that is common to many denominations and is now spilling into the Lord’s church through the influence of F. Lagard Smith and others.

The Thursday class period was presented by Bobby Graham on the subject of “Testifying in the Worship Assembly.” In this lecture brother Graham showed that witnessing and testifying in the New Testament refers to the work of the apostles in giving reliable evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. That concept is abused by people today offering personal stories, experiences, and feelings as “testimony” in an effort to lead the lost to faith in Christ, because no one today is an eyewitness of Jesus.

THE LADIES CLASSES

My information on the ladies classes comes from my wife and other ladies’ reactions. It was good to learn that the room in which the classes were held was packed. Vernita Goodall, who is manager of the C E I bookstore in Athens, Alabama, presented a slide show presentation of materials available for children’s classes. Anne Stevens presented an outstanding lesson on “A Biblical View of Femininity” and Bobbie Adams spoke on “Issues for a Preacher’s/ Elder’s Wife.” These were so well received that we will need a larger room to hold the ladies classes for next year.

EVANGELISM SERIES

While the ladies attended their classes, the men gathered to hear the series on evangelism at the first afternoon period. These were extremely interesting and enlightening. Brian Sullivan, a native Canadian preacher, told about the Lord’s work in Canada. He concluded that there are approximately 500 brethren in the various non-institutional churches in Canada. The secularism of Europe has spilled over into Canada at a faster pace than it has into the U.S., so finding people interested in Bible study is difficult.

In contrast to this, Karl Diestelkamp told of the spectacular growth of the gospel in Nigeria. He related that there are approximately 2000 non-institutional churches in Nigeria with some of them numbering as high as 800. From his report, I concluded that there are probably as many Christians in Nigeria who stand opposed to institutionalism as there are in America.

John Humphries was scheduled to tell of the Lord’s work in India. Instead, he had emergency surgery in Louisville (he came through the surgery with a good prognosis). His informative lecture is in the book and is well worth reading. We imposed on Johnie Edwards to fill his time slot by reporting on the preacher training program in Ellettsville, Indiana. Brother Edwards related that approximately 20-30 men attend the training program in Ellettsville each year and described the good work that is occurring there.

THE OPEN-FORUM

Steve Wolfgang was chosen to moderate the open forum at the Truth Magazine lectures and a better moderator would have been difficult to find. On Tuesday, the forum was open to any topic or questions which might be raised by the audience. Questions and comments about pornography drew the most extensive discussion, revealing a dark and spreading influence in society and even among Christians. Knowing that a few brethren have expressed misgivings about *Truth Magazine* sponsoring a lectureship, brother Wolfgang came prepared to address this matter. Though no one raised this issue, at the end he addressed it himself and offered anyone who might differ with him an opportunity to speak. No opposing view was expressed.

On Wednesday, Greg Gwin, Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, and Donnie Rader participated in a discussion of “The



Role of Civil Government in Divorce (Mental Divorce).” Brother Gwin designated the position of those who disagree with him as sinful and called on brethren to draw lines of fellowship in keeping with his definitions, explanations, and qualifications of what he calls “mental divorce.” Brother Halbrook pointed out that there are any number of views, scruples, and judgments among brethren on this subject, even though we are equally committed to preaching Matthew 19:9. Therefore, he urged all of us to be careful not to “splinter the remnant” by dividing the church over our individual judgments. Brother Osborne showed that the word “divorce” is used in three different ways by brethren, and, therefore, we at times make different judgments and reach different conclusions about the procedure for a scriptural divorce. Brother Rader presented a view which opposed any post civil-divorce cause which can give an innocent party the right to remarriage, but did not call for a division with those who have some judgments which disagree with his concerning details and procedures. This session was well attended and everyone’s demeanor was conducive to study.



On Thursday, Al Diestelkamp and Dick Blackford discussed Sunday evening communion. Brother Diestelkamp argued that the church has no authority to offer a “second-serving” of the communion to only a few people. However, he acknowledged that he could attend a church that dis-

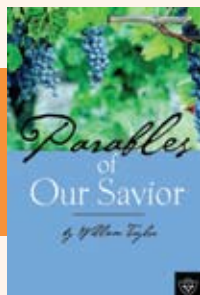
agreed with his judgment, so long as they did not require him to participate. Brother Blackford argued that the church has the right to offer the Lord’s supper anytime it wishes on the Lord’s day, even if only a few in the assembly participate. He also acknowledged that he saw nothing wrong with partaking of the Lord’s supper more than once on the Lord’s day (such as might occur were one to preach in two congregations on the Lord’s day).

Brethren were effusive in their comments about how well the open forums were conducted. The attitudes displayed were excellent. Everyone seemed to appreciate the manner in which brother Wolfgang conducted the series.

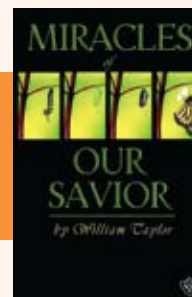
MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The Board of the Guardian of Truth Foundation was so encouraged by the large attendance and positive response of so many brethren at these lectures that we have agreed to sponsor another lecture program next year. The dates selected are **July 11-14, 2005** in the Holiday Inn Convention Center at Bowling Green, Kentucky. Mark your calendars. We will be making announcements later about the subjects and speakers; also, we will try to arrange some special rates at the hotels in the area. We look forward to seeing

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PARABLES OF OUR SAVIOR

by William M. Taylor

This book has 28 chapters covering the Parables of Our Savior with an excellent introduction to the parables. 452 pages.

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Going Home — May 22, 2004

The Bottom Line — After so many years away from God, this sinner is going back home!

There are many who agree with the old saying, “You can never go back home.” I beg to differ. For many years, I faithfully served the God of my youth including twenty years in which I preached the gospel of Christ. Then I left the faith.

While I tried to remain true to my heart and continue a relationship with God, my life was one in which I constantly rationalized my actions. And my actions were not good. As the children of Israel wandered in the Wilderness of Sin for forty years, I have spent the last fourteen years or so wandering in a world of filth and degradation. Separated from my God and my brethren, I chose to live a life that craved the flesh and everything that goes with it.

As Solomon said, I tried everything, but the end result was vexation. I watched as friends died from horrible diseases; I engaged in everything with open abandon. But even still, there was a void in my life that all my sin could not fill.

But recently I began to take that long, hard look in the mirror. The image was barely recognizable. What had happened to me? I had gone so far away from everything I once believed in that I could hardly face myself. Driven to my knees, I contacted one dear friend and asked to speak to him. Before I left my home, I destroyed every last trace of decadence I could find that reminded me of who I had been these last few years. With fear of judgment and anxious to renew my love for God, I prayed for the Father’s forgiveness. I have now made that repentance public during a worship service and have attempted to let as many as possible know of my restoration to the fold of God.

While I make no pretense to understand all the ins and outs of humanity, why one person gravitates toward a certain sexual identity, the one thing I know is that my behavior displeased my God. While I may not be in control of choosing orientation, I certainly do control my impulse

to fulfill those desires. No one has held a gun to my head and made me do the things I have done.

Reality casts a poor shadow upon hope. The road will be fraught with dangers. Of this, I am quite aware. Some brethren will never forgive my errors (for this they will have to give answer to God just the same), but I can now look in the mirror and realize that the blood of Christ has covered and cleansed by sins. As Joshua of old pronounced, “I will serve the Lord.”

A part of me desires to speak from the pulpit again. Only time will tell the amount of acceptance the church will have for my return to the fold. I fear an overburden of sorrow. But God is good and will use me as he sees fit. Humbly I will follow his will and trust in his plan for my life.

To those who may be reading this and thinking I have gone off the deep end, please think of the consequences we all will pay for going against the will of Almighty God. Perhaps you aren’t a believer. Look in the mirror. Jesus did give himself for us. And he is calling for you to come to him. The world is mired in the mud of fleshly desires, greed and hatred. Jesus gives us a way to joy, peace, and love. One can come home again. As the prodigal son, I have returned to my first love. While unworthy, I have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

For those who may be reading this and wishing to express a personal message to the author, feel free to email me at rkpruitt1@comcast.net. I solicit your prayers and kindness as I start a renewed journey of life; this journey terminates in the very presence of God. Be blessed. And thanks for reading.

1309 Rivergate Meadows Dr., Goodlettsville, Tennessee 37072

It is the shallow brook that babbles.

Facing the Fear of Death

Death is common. Death is a certainty. We are reminded of this every day. We may pass by a cemetery, read the obituaries, or stop along the road for a funeral procession. Consider how often death is mentioned in the Bible, approximately 370 times. Death (the absence of life) is used in three ways in the Bible: physical death wherein the body dies (Heb. 9:27), spiritual death wherein the soul dies (Eph. 2:1-2; Jas. 1:15), and the second death wherein the soul is separated from God for all eternity (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8). Facing physical death is on the minds of many every day.

The fear of death is also common (Heb. 2:15). It is common to many because many love this life too much. It is common because death is an untraveled journey. Death is viewed as a lonely trip by many. Death separates us from those we love. Like looking straight into the sun, many do not want to look straight into the eye of death. Many do not like to talk about or think about death. For example, we speak of the “fear of the unknown.”

Why fear? When we do not know about something, we fear it. However, we do not have to fear death. When we know what death is, we can better prepare for it. God’s word provides comfort, consolation, and courage on the daily reality of death. Let us consider how the Bible speaks of death, and let us learn how we can better face death.

DEATH IS A SLEEP FROM TOILS, TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

But when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place (Gen. 47:30).

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers (Deut. 31:16).

When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12).

Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders (1 Kings 1:21).

And the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised (Matt. 27:52).

These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. The disciples therefore said unto him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death: but they thought that he spake of taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead (John 11:11-14).

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not



this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:60).

For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption (Acts 13:36).

But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep (1 Cor. 15:20; see vv. 6, 18).

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep” (1 Thess. 4:14-15). (Note: The word “asleep” comes from the Greek work *koimaomai*. The Greeks used the word *koimeterion* from which we get the English word “cemetery”).

Friends, sleep at the end the day is something greatly needed; it is planned for; it is precious; it is temporary. We should look forward to our sleep at the end of a hard day. In the same way, we should look forward with anticipation to our sleep in death at the end of life. Sleep is a symbol of rest, and death is a rest from the toils of this life (Rev. 14:13; 21:4). In the life to come, there will be no more death (Luke 20:36), but in this life, we can look forward to our coming hour of rest.

DEATH IS A DEPARTURE FROM THIS LIFE TO THE NEXT

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried (Luke 16:22).

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).

“But I am in a strait betwixt the

two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better” (Phil. 1:23). (Note: Paul uses *kataluo*, loose down, in 2 Cor. 5:1 for the body, and he uses *analuo*, loose up, in Phil. 1:23 for the spirit.) Solomon wrote: “And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7; cf. Gen. 3:19).

“For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come” (2 Tim. 4:6). (Note: Paul uses *analuo* for the word “departure.”)

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead (Jas. 2:26).

“Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me. Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:15). (Note: Peter uses the word *exodos* for “decease,” meaning “departure”; see also Luke 9:31).

When we die, our spirit departs from our body, and it departs from this life. Death is a departure on a trip from one life to the next. Just as you would prepare to depart on a trip to a beautiful place (vacation spot, visit family and friends, etc.), so you can face death as preparing to depart to a beautiful place called heaven.

DEATH IS A REUNION WITH RIGHTEOUS LOVED ONES

And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people (Gen. 25:8).

And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11).

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

The righteous will be reunited with all the saints who have gone on before them. Have you ever prepared for a family reunion? Have you ever anticipated the joy of being with loved ones; seeing them; talking with them? There is a similar anticipation in death. The righteous look forward to being reunited with fellow-Christians when they die. The righteous are comforted in this life knowing that when they die they will be in the company of the faithful.

DEATH IS A UNION WITH CHRIST IN HEAVEN

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way (John 14:1-4).

We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better (Phil. 1:21, 23).

The righteous will be united with Christ in heaven. In death, the righteous one simply changes residences. Remember, Paul said to die is *gain!* Have you ever prepared for a union with someone special? Maybe a union with a newborn baby, or a union with a new spouse in marriage? You look forward to that new relationship don’t

Frank Himmel

God's "Holey" Calendar

Daniel 9:24-27 is God's holy calendar, a sort of timetable of coming events. Premillennialists insist that the last of these events has not yet occurred, that the calendar was put on hold, that we are presently in this gap or parenthesis period, and that God will one day (soon) resume his predicted sequence. This theory turns the passage into a "holey" calendar.

BACKGROUND

When God gave Israel the land of Canaan, he warned that, if they were unfaithful, he would remove them from

it. Captivity was not an arbitrary punishment. The land was God's land, and he decreed that it was to have a Sabbath rest. Every seven years, no farming was to be done (Lev. 25:1-4). Every seventh Sabbath year, or every forty-nine years, was a double Sabbath year, the jubilee (Lev. 25:8-55). It was a year of liberty, of divine deliverance and rest. These provisions reminded Israel of their unique relationship to God.

Israel was not faithful. Therefore, God decreed a punishment of seventy years of captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:11).

you? Even so, in death, the faithful Christian will be in a better place with better company.

DEATH IS A SEPARATION FOR ALL WHO ARE LOST

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us (Luke 16:23-26).

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15).

But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth

with fire and brimstone; which is the second death (Rev. 21:8; cf. 2:11; 20:6).

The "second death" refers to eternal separation from all that is good. The "second death" is Hell, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Hell is a place where there is no good company or good life possible. The light of God's presence does not shine there (Matt. 22:13; 2 Thess. 1:9). It is confinement to eternal punishment. It is this death, the "second death," that we should fear at all cost. Jesus said, "But rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. 10:28). You cannot live wrong and die right!

The next time you ponder the reality of death remember the words of the Psalmist, "Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15). Death is precious, not something to be feared. Like Balaam of old, you can say with confidence, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). And like Paul you can say with anticipation, "I am ready to die" (Acts 21:13). No, you certainly do not have to fear death. If you will just choose to have the right attitude and to live right, you can make a new friend out of an old enemy.

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Why seventy years? It was seven, the Sabbath number, times ten, a number of completeness. Captivity was to last “until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths” (2 Chron. 36:21).

In our text, Daniel had been reading in Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem was to be seventy years. That period was nearly complete and Babylon had fallen. Therefore, Daniel prayed God to fulfill his promise of restoration (Dan. 9:1-19).

God sent Gabriel with an answer. A new period was about to begin, one which would ironically result in both the true deliverance of God’s people and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The new period was to be seventy “weeks” or sevens, the counterpart of the previous period of captivity.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Six things were to be accomplished within the new period (v. 24). (1) Finishing or restraining the transgression. (2) Making an end of or sealing up sin. (3) Making an atonement for iniquity. (4) Bringing in an everlasting righteousness. (5) Sealing up vision and prophecy. (6) Anointing the most holy, either the most holy one or perhaps the most holy place.

The seventy weeks are divided into seven + sixty-two + one. During the first sixty-nine Jerusalem would be rebuilt. After the first sixty-nine, Messiah would appear and be cut off, the city and the temple would be cut off, the city would be destroyed, sacrifice and grain offerings would cease, and a covenant would be confirmed.

FULFILLMENT

Any attempt to correlate these seventy weeks (often viewed as weeks of years, hence 490 years) to an exact chronology is doomed to failure. Just as seventy years only approximated the Babylonian captivity (605-539),

the seventy weeks only approximates the time frame of these events. The idea of ultimate deliverance and rest in Messiah, symbolized by the Sabbath concept, especially the tenth jubilee, is the point.

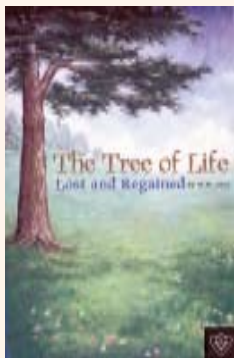
The first seven “weeks” are broken out, evidently to denote one jubilee, pointing to restoration to the promised land which began with Cyrus’ decree (cf. v. 23, 25). Nothing is recorded concerning the next sixty-two.

The final “week” is the focal point: Messiah will be cut off, the city and sanctuary destroyed, a complete destruction.

Is that not exactly what happened? Jesus made an end to transgression by making atonement for it. In so doing he brought in everlasting righteousness. He sealed up prophecy by fulfilling it, and was anointed by God. Nevertheless, he was cut off by his own people, a rejection which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It was a complete destruction of national Israel and its institutions as God’s arrangements. It was also a finish or end to Israel’s transgressions in another way — through judgment. And when Jesus’ new covenant of righteousness was revealed, prophecy was sealed up in the sense that it ceased.

Premillennialism puts a hole in God’s holy calendar after week sixty-nine. It ignores the stated starting point in Daniel’s day, does considerable mathematical gymnastics trying to make a symbolic calendar literal, disconnects God’s answer to the context and Daniel’s request, and ignores the New Testament fulfillment of all objectives for the period.

Do not be deceived. God’s plans are always on schedule. He has fixed a day in which he will judge us all through Christ (Acts 17:31). Are you ready for that day?



THE TREE OF LIFE LOST AND REGAINED

by W.W. Otey

Connie W. Adams says of this book, “This book is a summary of the scheme of redemption from the loss of man’s access to the Tree of Life in Genesis to his admittance to it in Revelation. It is perhaps the most devotional of all of Otey’s books. His chapter dealing with the faith of Abraham and Sarah in leaving Ur and going into a land God would show them directly affected the decision my first wife, Bobbie, and I made to go to Norway in 1957 to preach the gospel there. We had read the book together as a family devotional. It is good reading for a new generation.

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“Alcohol” continued from front page

How do they do so? They note the Bible passages that mention the accepted drinking of wine, including Jesus’ own creation of wine from water (John 2). They note that deacons and older women are only forbidden to drink “much” wine (1 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 2:3).

And some of their assertions are correct, to a point. Wine was used as part of an offering to God in the Old Testament (Exod. 29:38-41; Num. 18:12; Neh. 10:37, 13:5, 12). Ten percent of the first fruits belonged to the Lord, including the “new wine.” Such wine also was viewed as one of the blessings and comforts of life (Gen. 27:28, 37; Deut. 7:13, 11:14).

Besides Jesus’ creation of wine at Cana, he used the fruit of the vine as the emblem of his blood at the last supper. The Good Samaritan used wine externally as a medicine (Luke 10:34) and Paul advised Timothy to drink it for his stomach’s sake (1 Tim. 5:23).

Every Bible student with faith in God knows the Bible doesn’t contradict itself. So, how do we explain these apparent contradictions?

Two views have been generally set forth:

- That “good wine” in the Bible is unfermented, while the condemned type is fermented.
- That the wine approved for use was so low in alcoholic content that moderate use was possible.

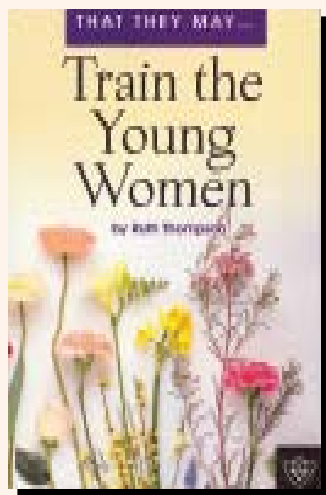
Let’s begin with the second idea and learn that the potency of ancient wines was nowhere near that of today’s “distilled” beverages. The wine of ancient time was natu-

rally fermented. New wine had no alcohol but as wine aged, the sugars converted naturally to alcohol. But fermented grape juice’s alcohol content can’t naturally exceed half the percentage of sugar in the juice. If the alcohol content rises above about ten percent the yeast cells die and fermentation ceases.

Most alcoholic wine in ancient times contained no more than five to eight percent alcohol, according to *“Archeology and Bible History.”* Further, the ancients typically diluted their wine with water. Only drunkards drank unmixed or uncut alcoholic wine. Sometimes wine was cut as much as 20:1 with water. A powerful mixture was considered that cut 3:1 or 3:2. To consume the alcohol in two modern martinis one would have to drink about twenty-two glasses of ancient alcoholic wine.

Remember that when the Bible speaks of “wine” it refers to all forms of “fruit of the vine,” alcoholic or just plain grape juice. The King James Version translates nearly all Hebrew and Greek words for grape products as “wine.” But there are six Hebrew words and four Greek works that describe grape products in different stages, including “new wine,” which was unfermented. Since Jesus created wine from water, it clearly could have been new wine or grape juice.

So, references to approved “wine” in the Bible don’t necessarily refer to alcoholic versions. And, if fermented, it was typically cut with water so that excessive drinking had to occur before drunkenness was the result. And grape juice could be preserved back then. It could be preserved for up to a year in sealed jars in Roman times. Grape juice also could be boiled to a syrup to nearly stop fermentation — and then water was added back to make a drink called



THAT THEY MAY TRAIN THE YOUNG WOMEN

by Ruth Thompson

One of the best ladies Bible study books available. There are fifteen lessons setting forth Bible principles for women in the proper conduct of their lives. The lessons are well prepared and organized, following the pattern set forth in Paul’s letter to Titus. There are seven chapters with the following topics:

- To Love Their Husbands
- To Love Their Children
- To Be Sober-Minded
- To Be Chaste
- To Be Workers At Home
- To Be Kind
- Being In Subjection to Their Own Husbands

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“sweet wine.” The sugar did not change to alcohol, thus preserving the sweet taste.

Like all exegesis of Scripture, we must interpret what we read about wine in context and in view of the overall teaching of God’s word.

Let’s think rationally and use the mind that God gave us. Would Jesus have miraculously created 120 to 180 gallons of strong drink at Cana, in light of what Scripture tells us about it being a poison and biting like a serpent?

Would Jesus have used “the poison of serpents” to represent the saving blood of the New Covenant?

Would Jesus have compared himself or his kingdom to the properties of intoxicating wine? It seems bizarre and contradictory that Jesus would command a perpetual use of a product that his own word warns against and condemns.

Would the Son of God, who taught men to pray “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,” put such a deadly temptation in our path by direct command?

In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul calls the communion drink a “cup of blessing” yet modern alcoholic beverages are a certain “cup of curses.” Can this be the same drink?

Can this “cup of blessing” be filled with the same material described at least four times in the book of Revelation as “the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His (God’s) wrath”?

Brethren sometimes seek to justify moderate drinking because they are convinced by an evil world that it is all right. Sometimes we want to think it is OK because some of our now gone but beloved relatives “sipped” just a little. I am told that my grandfather began his drinking on Sunday afternoons behind the barn with “just a little nip.” Before too long, however, he had beaten my grandmother many times, abused his children, and drunk up his meager livelihood in bars. He abandoned my grandmother and left her to raise their remaining children. He abandoned the truth, the gospel, and the Lord’s church. As you might imagine, I’m a little hard to sell on moderate drinking.

As a newspaper reporter in the 1970s and 1980s, I covered police, courts, governments, and social service organizations. Alcohol abuse and its after-effects dominated the agendas of each. Alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in America.

Statistics show that up to ten percent of alcoholics become such from their first drink. Is the misery and degradation of alcoholism worth the risk? Only a fool can affirm such.

If you still approve drinking in moderation, perhaps you’d like to try moderate crack cocaine use, or heroin, or perhaps you would enjoy Russian roulette.

As for me, I believe I’ll simply listen to the admonition of Ephesians 5:8-21: In love, I urge you to do the same and not wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction.

“Lest We Forget” continued from page 2

the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Without the work of the Lord, the earth would not exist. Creation proves his existence and power. Through the power of the works of God, we should desire to obey the great Creator and Architect. “That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Ps. 78:7).

We must not forget the Lord’s death. We must never forget the great sacrifice that was made on our behalf by the Lord. Jesus Christ willingly gave his life that we might have hope. In return, he has asked that we obey him and remember his sacrifice. Please notice Paul’s account of the Lord instituting this remembrance: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, *in remembrance of me*. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Even though we remember the Lord’s death on the first day of the week, his death must be on our minds each day of the week, or as the song says, “*lest we forget*.”

We must not forget that all die. We must not forget that our lives will end. Life is short and fleeting. Notice several passages that teach this fact:

Man that is born of a woman is of *few days*, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and *continueth not* (Job 14:1).

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof *falleth away* (1 Pet. 1:24).

And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as

the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. (1 Sam. 20:3).

For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away (Ps. 90:9-10).

Hopefully, considering these few truths have reminded us to serve the Lord. The list could go on; it could be unending. Certainly, there is nothing in God's word that we should forget. We must always remember that we are sinners, and that we need the forgiveness, mercy, and salvation of the Lord. If you need Jesus in your life, why not change today?

2770 Heckman Rd., Uniontown, Ohio 44685

Field Reports



New Congregation

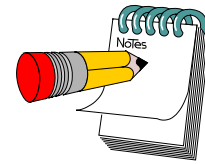
A new congregation has been established in Jefferson City, Missouri. Chris Peltz and his family have moved there. Chris worked in Louisville, Kentucky for the past five years with the Taylorsville Road church of Christ.

The new congregation meets at the Hampton Inn Conference Room located at 4800 Country Club Road, Jefferson City. They began with a five-night gospel meeting with Chris Peltz and Aaron Erhardt of Louisville, Kentucky doing the preaching. If you are visiting in that area or know someone living in that area who might be interested in the gospel, contact Chris at 573-220-2151 or 220-2454; e-mail: cmpeltz@juno.com

Preacher Needed

Merritt Island, Florida: The Merritt Island Church of Christ at 512 South Plumosa is in need of a full-time preacher. They are located in the Space Coast Area of Florida. They are a small congregation of 25 to 30. They own their own meeting house. If interested, please call Farley Adams at 321-636-8255 or Cloyce D. Walden at 321-636-8255 or mail your information to Merritt Island Church of Christ, P.O. Box 540591, Merritt Island, FL 32954. References requested.

Quips & Quotes



NEW AME BISHOPS REFLECT DIVERSITY

"Carolyn Tyler-Guidry had just a few hours of sleep Tuesday morning, but when she awoke, she was still living the dream of her lifetime.

"During an election process that didn't end until after 2 a.m. Tuesday at the Indiana Convention Center, Tyler-Guidry, of Los Angeles, was among the historic class of eight bishops selected to help lead the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"Two women and three Africans were elected bishops in the balloting that took place during the AME Church's worldwide conference, which winds up today" (The Indianapolis Star [July 7, 2004], A3).

Stone-Campbell Churches Explore Common Ground

"... The 1906 U.S. Census of Religious Bodies, for the first time, listed the instrumental and non-instrumental groups of the Stone-Campbell movement separately.

"But today some a cappella churches of Christ and the Christian churches/churches of Christ (instrumental) are interacting — and possibly even rethinking — more than a century of division.

"It is becoming clear, at least to many, that there can be fellowship and cooperation, even without total agreement on past contentious issues, that unity in diversity is truly a biblical doctrine," Victor Knowles said at the Pepperdine University lectures, Malibu, Calif., in May.

"Knowles, a Christian church member and founder of Peace on Earth Ministries, Joplin, Mo., has spoken at events sponsored by a cappella churches of Christ, including the 2004 Tulsa, Okla., International Soul Winning Worship.

"Several instrumental and a cappella churches are working together on the mission field, said Marvin Phillips, a coordinator for the Tulsa workshop. Phillips travels the globe for mission projects, including 'One Million Bibles for Africa,' and said that about one-third of his recent trips have involved cooperative efforts.

"In Lexington, Ky, — just miles away from where the 'Last Will and Testament' was signed — the a cappella Southside Church of Christ is partnering with the Broadway Christian church in a Spanish-language ministry. Both have contributed resources to the ministry, launched last year. The congregation varies its

More Combative Than Loving?

John Isaac Edwards

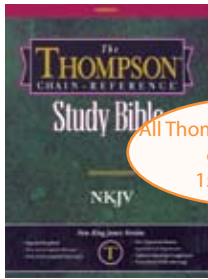
When we teach the truth and expose error, we are said to be more combative than loving. This implies that one who is combative is not loving, and one who is loving is not combative. This human thinking is not compatible with divine teaching.

1. Are You More Loving Than Combative? You would think that those who are so concerned about us being less combative and more loving would be more loving and less combative. When you call us down for being too combative and not enough loving, refer to us as "sneering" and accuse us of making "snide and mean-spirited" comments, are you more loving than combative or more combative than loving?

2. Were God, the Prophets, Christ or the Apostles More Combative Than Loving? If being combative is unloving and being loving is not being combative, then was God more combative than loving when he challenged the idol worshippers, "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth" (Isa. 43:9)? Was Elijah, the prophet, more combative than loving when he challenged the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18? Was Christ more combative than loving when he charged the scribes and Pharisees with transgressing the commandment of God by their tradition, called them hypocrites and said their worship was in vain (Matt. 15:1-14)? Was Paul more combative than loving when he said to Elymas the sorcerer, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). If you would not charge these with being more combative than loving, then why is the charge made against us when we do what these did? If you would not want to be "allied with such a sarcastic attitude," then do you not want to be allied with yourself when you reflect sarcasm? Would you not want to be allied with Elijah, when he "mocked" and massacred the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:27)? Why would you not want to be allied with such a sarcastic attitude, when Jesus was unashamed to be allied with such a man of God? (Matt. 17:1-5).

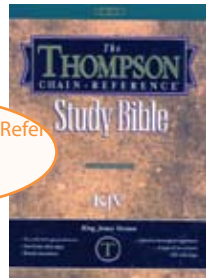
The truth of the matter is that to be combative is to be loving and to be loving is to be combative. Paul commanded Timothy to have "charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:5), and just a few verses later commanded the preacher to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). In the sixth chapter, Paul charged Timothy to follow after "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11), and in the very next sentence, declared, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). Combative soldiers of the cross are righteous, godly, faithful, loving, patient, meek men. Also, Jude commanded "mercy . . . peace, and love, be multiplied" unto the sanctified (v. 2) and then commanded that they "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v. 3). Earnest faith contenders are merciful, peaceful, and loving. How loving is it to sit in silence or stand at ease while men and women are "taken captive" at the devil's will (2 Tim. 2:26)?

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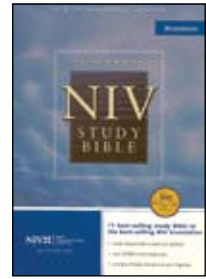
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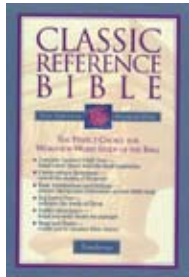


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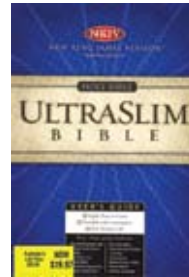
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