

TRUTH

A Daily Spiritual Life

Eric Norford

1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” This might be a simple matter and we may feel we will never fall away from the grace of God. However, Satan will try to ruin us. He will try to make us give up. He will entice us with worldly pleasures to draw us away from spiritual things and start serving the things that we once served. We need to be reminded that being a child of God is a daily life, not just being at services every Sunday and Wednesday; although that is part of being a child of God, there is more. This article is designed to help us grow and be stronger in the Lord.

Jesus tells us that the seed that is planted in the good ground will grow and produce fruit (Matt. 13:8-9). In order for us to be rooted in the good ground and bearing fruit, we must recognize the importance of daily attention to spiritual things.

We must establish daily spiritual habits. First, we must search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), give attendance to reading (1 Tim. 4:13); second, we must exhort (encourage) one another daily (Heb. 3:13), attending every service of the Lord’s people brings encouragement

(Heb. 10:25). Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:11, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The bread is the word of God (Matt. 4:4). We need food everyday in order to live and function; from a spiritual standpoint we need the word of God more in order to live and function as Christians. We find the apostles teaching the people daily in the first century (Acts 5:42). The early church shows us that they had daily fellowship with other Christians and they grew (Acts 2:46). We oftentimes take our gathering together for granted. We should allow the word of God to help us grow.

2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us that “the inward man is renewed day by day.” Our inward man is spiritual, it belongs to God, it is Christ living in me (Gal. 2:20). No matter what goes on around us in the world, we should be strengthened spiritually every day. This will not be the case if we neglect to give attention to the needs of our soul.

There are four ways to strengthen our souls. (1) Set aside time everyday for reading the Bible and meditating upon what the word says. As a suggestion, do it when you first wake up and before you go to bed at night. Take more than five minutes to do this. (2) Pray everyday.

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***“And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free”
(John 8:32).***

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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis001@cs.com.

All business matters should be addressed to O.C. Birdwell, Jr. who serves as Executive Vice-President for the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He is available by phone at 1-800-633-3216 or by mail at P.O. Box 858, Athens, AL 35611.

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It's Official, Fornication and Adultery Are Increasing

Harry Osborne



Over the past months, statistics released from the federal government confirmed what any rational person already knew — fornication and adultery have been increasing over the past decade. As a matter of fact, the increase has been dramatic. The number of couples living together outside of marriage has gone up 71% since 1991. Many of those have been previously married, but are now merely “shacked up” with someone else. The overwhelming evidence from other studies regarding drug abuse, crime, violence, homelessness, and poverty suggests that a common factor is the leading cause for these social ills — the breakup of the family. Furthermore, studies regarding the breakup of the family show that marital infidelity, or adultery, is present in the majority of marriages which end in divorce. The evidence is both overwhelming and indisputable that sexual promiscuity and infidelity are pandemic in our culture.

We really do not need studies to expose the obvious. Open eyes and common sense tell us the same thing. The American family is in deep trouble and has been for some time. A younger generation is not learning about commitment and trust when they see mom and dad show the opposite to each other by breaking the commitments of marriage and betraying its trust. Is it any wonder that many of them are sexually promiscuous in ever more shocking ways?

Sexual purity is viewed as a vice in this society rather than a virtue. Some schools now teach curriculum advocating the right of teens and pre-teens to be sexually active. It condemns those who restrict sex to marriage. Humanistic propaganda claims that we shackle children and deprive them when we forbid sexual conduct satisfying any desire. However, they fail to say what their so-called “freedom” and “pleasure” bring. The “free love” movement brought us AIDS, rampant venereal disease, girls heart-broken from unwed pregnancy, boys in fear of early fatherhood, grandparents forced to raise a new family, the murder of 1.5 million unborn children each year, single parent families trapped in poverty, broken homes, shattered trust, tears beyond number and the list could go on. God was right about fornication (1 Thess. 4:1-7).

This country is in need of a restoration of faithfulness and fidelity in the home. The most effective tool to return moral values into our society is to see “Fornication and Adultery” on p. 600

Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

MUCH WORK NEEDED

Jesus said, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38). The gospel is needed everywhere there are people. I know of no place in this country where the need is greater than in some of our great western states. We have just spent a month working in southeastern Idaho with the small church at Blackfoot. In this great state there are only a few small congregations. While this is strong Mormon country, you find the presence of various denominations which have been able to gain a foothold and grow. There is no reason the truth of the gospel cannot take root with sufficient workers and effort. There are many places in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana (not to forget North and South Dakota) where work is needed. There are a few institutional churches in these states, but they are not numerous and are committed to the same errors as such folks practice elsewhere. It would help for a couple of families to go settle in several different towns or cities and go to work. If you are in a business that could be established in such a place, you could be of great value to the cause of Christ if you would consider such a move. Men need to be supported to preach the gospel and supplied with adequate wages and funds with which to work in reaching out to teach on radio or in the newspapers. Why not get out a road atlas and look at those states. See how vast they are in size. Something really needs to be done to sow the seed of the kingdom in these places.

ANYBODY’S DOG

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). While this passage is often cited to prompt young people to make wise choices about their friends (a well-needed admonition), the context of the passage is the resurrection. Paul warned about those who “erred” concerning the resurrection in 2 Timothy 2:16-18, and said they overthrew the faith of some. The message? If we run with those who teach error we stand in danger of being corrupted or of having our faith overthrown. There are some men who are strong on certain subjects depending on whomever they happen to be with at the time. In Kentucky we have a saying that aptly fits such characters. We say that they are anybody’s dog that will hunt with them! We all need to have such strong convictions of our own that we are not affected by those around us and can stand on our own two feet and give an answer for our own faith (1 Pet. 3:15).

SOUND SPEECH OR SOUND SILENCE?

“But speak thou the things that become sound doctrine” (Tit. 3:1). There is a time to shut up and listen. “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a shame to him” (Prov. 18:13). But there is a time to speak and be

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heard. During the institutional division of 50 years ago, there were a number of men who talked a good fight for the truth in private with a few friends but they would not write or preach about the needs of the hour. Then there were others who were non-committal, even after several years. When asked where they stood, they said “they were still studying the matter.” It reminds me of the fellow who had what he said was a fighting owl that could whip anyone’s rooster. Well, a man with a fighting rooster worked up a contest between the owl and the rooster. They were turned loose to begin the fray and the rooster was giving the owl a bad time. Finally, the owner of the rooster said to the owner of the owl, “We had better call this off before my rooster kills that owl.” The owner of the owl said, “Don’t worry about the owl, he’s studying the matter”! Perhaps the question of Joshua is appropriate. “Why halt ye between two opinions?” There is a time to think, to ponder. But there is a time to decide what you believe and then have the courage of your conviction. Brother, are you studying or stalling?

DIVERSIONARY TACTICS

On our way home from Idaho, we stopped in Cody, Wyoming where for 60 years there has been a rodeo every day through the week during June-August. One staple of the rodeo is the clown. In fact there are usually at least two. These not only tell jokes to amuse the crowd while cowboys are getting set on the broncos or bulls in the stalls, but they are highly essential in the arena to distract the horses or bulls especially after they have discharged their riders. This quick diversion allows the riders to get out of the way of the angry animal who might want to trample

or gore the ex-rider. These clowns have to be agile, quick and quick-witted.

I have noticed that in religious discussions there are diversionary tactics as well. If you can’t answer the question, then quickly change the subject! Get your antagonist diverted onto another train of thought and that gets the heat off of you. If you don’t want to deal with the issue of the scriptural right of the church to build and maintain a benevolent institution, then charge your opponent with being hard-hearted and with being an orphan-hater. If the subject is the scripturality of the sponsoring church arrangement in evangelism and you cannot provide the proof, then charge your brother with being against cooperation, or evangelism at all. If the subject is whether marriages are scriptural after a divorce for some cause other than fornication, you could change the subject and argue that your friend hinders evangelism or that he just wants to tear up families. If you feel the heat in a discussion on unity-in-diversity, then divert attention from the right to extend the right hand of fellowship to one who teaches erroneously to some inconsistency on the part of your antagonist. Don’t forget to bring up the covering question or the war question for that is the end of all argument with some! But after the clowns have diverted wild horses and bulls, they are still wild horse and bulls. And when we have diverted a question of scriptural importance, truth is still truth and error is still error and the Lord still said “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11-12).

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The Chronology of the Bible (2)

Mike Willis

The Bible Material in Genesis 1-11

The evidence for the chronology for Genesis 1-11 must center on three chapters: (a) The creation narrative in Genesis 1; (b) The ten generations between Adam and Noah (Gen. 5); (c) The ten generations between Noah and Abraham (Gen. 11). We will begin by looking at the two chronology/generation charts.



100 years from his life after the birth of the firstborn. The exceptions are Jared, Methuselah and Lamech, in two of which (Jared and Methuselah) the LXX agrees with the Hebrew. The Samaritan Pentateuch disagrees with the Hebrew text in the lives of Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech, but never agrees with the LXX against the Hebrew

text. According to the Hebrew text, the Flood occurred 1656 years after creation; according to the LXX it occurred 2242 years after creation and according to the Samaritan Pentateuch in 1307 (Wevers 68). Scholars are disagreed on how trustworthy the Samaritan Pentateuch is.

Of those who accept the Hebrew text as the superior reading, there is universal agreement that the flood occurred 1656 years after creation if one adds up the relevant information in the Hebrew text. The text also gives the following chronological sequence (Chart 2).

Tribal Families								
Name	Masoretic Text			LXX Version			Samaritan Pentateuch*	
	Age at Birth	Remaining Years	Age at Death	Age at Birth	Remaining Years	Age at Death	Age at Birth	Remaining Years
Adam	130	800	930	130	780	910	130	800
Seth	105	807	912	105	787	892	105	807
Enoch	65	300	365	65	300	365	65	300
Methuselah	187	540	727	187	540	727	187	540
Lamech	182	520	702	182	520	702	182	520
Noah	500	350	850	500	350	850	500	350
Jared	162	800	962	162	800	962	162	800
Enoch	65	300	365	65	300	365	65	300
Methuselah	187	540	727	187	540	727	187	540
Lamech	182	520	702	182	520	702	182	520
Noah	500	350	850	500	350	850	500	350

The Bible is very careful in providing the chronology from creation to Abraham. The text of Genesis 5 follows this pattern: “A lived **x number of years**, and begat **B**. And the days of **A** after he had begotten **B** were **y number of years**.” There are ten generations between Adam and Noah and the above chart gives the information recorded in Genesis 5 (Chart 1).

One notices a pattern to the variants between the Masoretic text and the LXX which, with three exceptions, adds 100 years to the age of the patriarch before the birth of the firstborn and subtracts

The ten generations of Genesis 11 are also given according to the pattern of Genesis 5 — “A lived **x number of years**, and begat **B**. And the days of **A** after he had begotten **B** were **y number of years**.” In the comparison with chapter five, the form has changed in that the structure does not contain the total number of years that a person lived nor the statement “and he died.”

Chronology		
Name	Age at Birth of Son	Year of Name At His Birth
Adam	130	—
Seth	105	130
Enoch	65	235
Methuselah	187	300
Lamech	182	487
Noah	500	669
Jared	162	831
Methuselah	187	1018
Lamech	182	1200
Noah	500	1700
Shem, Ham, Japheth		1956
Placed in 600th year of Noah		2556

However, the information about the total number of years that a person lived is given by implication, though not expressly stated. Here is the information provided there (Chart 3):

Patriarch	Masoretic Text		LXX		Samaritan		
	Age at Birth	Age at Death	Age at Birth	Age at Death	Age at Birth	Age at Death	Years Lived
Noah	50	950	50	950	50	950	900
Japheth	10	100	10	100	10	100	90
Cainan			10	100			
Shelah	10	100	10	100	10	100	90
Eber	14	144	14	144	14	144	130
Phleg	24	244	24	244	24	244	220
Reu	32	327	32	327	32	327	295
Sera	39	394	39	394	39	394	355
Nahor	29	294	29	294	29	294	265
Terah	70	205	70	205	70	205	135
No. of Years	1000		1000		1000		

Between Arphaxad and Salah, the LXX adds the name of **Cainan**. It adds: “And Arphaxad lived a hundred and thirty-five years and begot Cainan. And Arphaxad lived after he had begotten Cainan, four hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And

Cainan lived a hundred and thirty years and begot Sala; and Cainan lived after he had begotten Sala, three hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters, and died.” One might be ready to dismiss the variant reading as a LXX addition. However, in the lineage of Christ given in Luke 3, Cainan is included (3:36), demonstrating the presence of the name in the genealogies of the first century and adding Luke’s inspired testimony to its inclusion in the text here. Including Cainan brings the list of names to ten making it correspond to the ten generations in chapter 5. The LXX most probably reflects a variant textual reading that has not been preserved in existing Massoretic texts.

Adding the information gleaned from Gen-

One will notice that with the inclusion of Cainan, the list in chapter 11 corresponds with that in chapter 5 in that both have ten generations. In both cases the genealogy ends with one who had three sons: Noah (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and Terah (Abram, Nahor, Haran). In both cases the most important son is listed first (Shem/Abram). The fact that there are ten generations may encourage one to think that the generations have omissions in them, that the “ten generations” is a memory device. However, this does not explain the careful detailing of the years a person lived before giving birth to the next generation. There is no purpose in giving those numbers unless the author wishes his readers to understand that they were sequential.

One will notice that the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch are in agreement against the Masoretic Text on the ages of the various patriarchs at the birth of the designated descendant and that they consistently add 100 years with two exceptions (Nahor [50] and Terah). This significantly extends the years between the Flood and Abram. Scholars generally believe that the Massoretic Text is the superior reading.

Name	Age at Birth of Son	Year of Birth at Birth of Son
Noah	50	1750
Shem	10	1800
Japheth	10	1810
Cainan	10	1840
Shelah	10	1850
Eber	14	1864
Phleg	24	1888
Reu	32	1920
Sera	39	1959
Nahor	29	1988
Terah	70	2058

(Haran was born 1776 years after creation)

esis 11, we have the following (Chart 4):
 * The LXX has 130 years for Cainan prior to the birth of Shelah. However, the LXX consistently adds 100 years to all of these figures; since I have followed the Hebrew numbers by rejecting the added 100 years in other places, I also have made this adjustment on this number.

Putting this information together, we arrive at an approximate age of the earth. The date for Abraham varied from 2166 B.C. to

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Will you now bear your cross and follow him? “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Going the Second Mile

Kevin Maxey

During New Testament times the Roman military had the right to compel Jews into their service. Like a policeman commandeering your vehicle today, a Roman officer could commandeer a Hebrew's service in the first century. A soldier could make someone carry his heavy load for a set distance. Imagine if you worked at a roadside market and a soldier commanded you stop everything, immediately pick up his backpack and carry it for one mile without question. Would you not be disturbed, irritated, and annoyed by such a request? You would have to leave your table, your work, everything, and submit to this demand. You would lose valuable work time, and maybe even your goods would be stolen while you were gone. Not only would you have to march, transporting a heavy load for one mile, but you would have to hike one mile back. Instead of being bitter and angry, Jesus says, “Whoever compels you to go one

mile, go with him two” (Matt. 5:41). Don't just go one mile. Be willing to go two. Christ challenges you to go beyond what is expected. Don't just demand your rights. Refuse to bitterly complain about what you have to do. Go the second mile in the service of others, even your enemies.

With Your Family

Homes filled with self-serving parents and self-centered children will explode with conflict. Wives, do you fight tooth and nail against your husband or do you submit to him “as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22)? Fathers, do you let your children run wild or do you train and admonish them in the Lord (Eph. 6:4)? Children, do you try to get away with doing the least possible amount of work around the house? Ladies, do you nag, criticize, and belittle your husband, or do you love, honor, and respect him (Tit. 2:4; Eph. 5:33)?

Men, are you too busy leading a life of recreation that you are not leading your family to Christ? Mothers, do you do the bare minimum required of a homemaker or do you rise early and work willingly (Prov. 31:13, 15; Tit. 2:5)? Young people, do you do your chores half-heartedly, or do you go the extra mile and do even more than is expected? Yes, you may obey your parents, but do you “honor” them (Eph. 6:1-2)? Fathers, do you spend as little time as possible with your children, or do you shower them with your attention? Husbands, your responsibility to your wife doesn't end with the paycheck you earn. You provide for her, yes, but do you nourish and cherish her (Eph. 5:29)? Are you doing the bare minimum in your family or will you go the second mile?

With Your Job

Are you lazy and indifferent about your job? Yes, you are showing up to work, but are you working with all your might? “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your

1750 B.C. depending upon various items for discussion which are previously mentioned. Rounding 1976 years to 2000, one arrives at an approximate time for the creation of Adam, according to the genealogies found in Scripture at approximately 4166 B.C. to 3750 B.C. One can understand and appreciate Ussher's chronology which dated creation at 4004 B.C. The earth is approximately 6000 years old based on the Bible evidence.

One might speculate about missing generations in the biblical narrative which could add a few thousand years to these figures, but the text of Scripture from Genesis 2 through Revelation simply will not allow room for the spans of time asserted by evolutionary theory. I certainly

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis1@cs.com

might” (Eccl. 9:10). Do you work hard only when others are watching? You must do your best even when no one is looking, “not with eye service, as menpleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6). Have you decided not to give your best because you have been unappreciated or mistreated? Jesus expects a second mile effort even then. “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh” (1 Pet. 2:18). Those of you who work in positions of authority, do you take advantage of those who work under you? “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (Col. 4:1; Eph. 6:9).

With Your Brethren

As a Christian, you are enlisted in the Lord’s army with fellow soldiers (Eph. 6:10-18). How are you fighting? Are you leaving your brethren to fight on the front lines while you retreat to the back of the pack? Are you doing your share? Imagine the strength of the church if every single Christian determined to go the second mile. Don’t squeak by doing the least. Go the second mile. Attend faithfully. Teach classes. Serve your brethren. Care for the sick. Get involved. What about when brethren discourage you, let you down, and even sin against you? Will you hold a grudge the rest of your life, or will you go the extra mile with love, patience, and forgiveness? “Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Col. 3:12-13).

With the Lost

What kind of efforts are you making in sharing the gospel to the lost? Do you think, “Well, we put an ad in the paper and a sign out on the road. That is enough. If they are interested in Christ, they will come,” and that ends your efforts in evangelism? Inviting someone to a gospel meeting once or twice a year does not absolve you of your responsibility to teach the lost during the rest of the year. You certainly would hope that others would go the extra mile to save you from physical danger, but will you go the extra mile to save others from spiritual danger? Paul was so determined to spread the gospel he traveled many extra miles in order to save the lost. Stephen preached the gospel even when it cost him his life (Acts 7:59). New Testament Christians were so committed to teaching the lost that they continued spreading the gospel even when they had been kicked out of their homes (Acts 8:1, 4). “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23).

With Your Enemies

“Wait a minute, I can understand going the second mile for my family, brethren, and the lost, but don’t tell me I have to go the extra mile for my enemies too!” “Love your

enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:44-45). You may not retaliate or return evil for evil, but do you love your enemies? Will you go the extra mile and do something good for those who do you harm? Will you take the time to pray for those who abuse you? This is important because your relationship with God depends on it. You must go the second mile with your enemies so “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (5:44). God’s children love even their enemies.

Jesus Went the Second Mile For You

While you are contemplating the full implications of what Jesus asks you to do for him, remember that he went the second mile for you. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus bore the cross and walked up to Mount Calvary to be crucified for you.

Will you now bear your cross and follow him? “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

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How much “leniency” did Jesus promise those who truly thought they were doing “many wonderful works” in his name (Matt. 7:21-27)?

Showing Leniency Toward Error

Larry Ray Hafley

We have been advised to show leniency toward religious error. To do this, (1) we must not condemn those who employ women preachers (1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12). (2) We must not object to the use of guitars and pianos in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). (3) We must allow the observance of Christmas and Easter in the church (Matt. 15:8, 9). (4) We must not criticize those who are not “as convinced” as we are on the necessity of baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). This is what it will take, we are told, to show leniency toward those in error. Brethren, that is not leniency. *It is total surrender!*

First, leniency is not ours to give. That is the Lord’s prerogative.

Second, how much “leniency” did God show Adam and Eve? One bite, one sin, and they were cast out! How much “leniency” did he show Nadab and Abihu when they offered fire which he had not authorized for use in worship (Lev. 10:1, 2)? How much “leniency” did Jesus promise

those who truly thought they were doing “many wonderful works” in his name (Matt. 7:21-27)?

Third, if we may grant leniency in the areas above, what about leniency toward those who want to replace the eldership with a Pastor and a board of deacons? What if they are not “as convinced” as we are about “elders in every church” and want to use a denominational form of government (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:2)? If we may show “leniency” and adapt denominational forms of worship, *why may we not show the same tolerance for their patterns of church government?* Should we be “legalistic” and insist on a New Testament eldership, or should we show “leniency” and endorse the Pastor system in churches of Christ?

Fourth, what of “leniency” on moral issues? Shall we accept adulterous marriages because some are not “as convinced” as we are on what constitutes adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)? If we may tolerate their music, why not their marriages? The next step, of course, will be homosexual marriages. Though we may privately “excuse” an occasional adulterous marriage among us, shall we draw the line (for now, at least) at homosexual relationships? Be assured the next generation will not stop here. Then, what? When does leniency become lawlessness?

Fifth, if we may approve women preachers, may we appoint women elders? (Nevermind that Scripture forbids female elders, 1 Tim. 3:1, 2)! According to their argument, if brethren grant permission, a woman does not usurp authority when she teaches “over the man.” Alright, then, *if* the congregation agrees and accepts her, what would be wrong with a woman elder?

Sixth, if it is granted that we may show leniency and accept religious error, what shall we say of passages like James 5:19, 20: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the

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From a biblical perspective, a miracle would be an event in the physical world, brought about by God's intervention, or by God interrupting or transcending the laws of nature.

Bible Miracles — Have They Ceased?

Bobby Witherington

According to Webster, a miracle is defined as “an event or effect in the physical world that deviates from the known laws of nature.” From a biblical perspective, a miracle would be an event in the physical world, brought about by God's intervention, or by God interrupting or transcending the laws of nature. For example, by the known laws of nature, we cannot explain Jesus walking on water (Matt. 14:25), nor can we explain an iron ax head floating on water (2 Kings 6:4-7). In order for these miracles to occur there had to be an act of God to interrupt or to transcend the laws of nature in order to make possible that which was otherwise impossible. Of course, God's right to intervene or transcend the laws of nature is not to be questioned. Surely the Maker of a law has the right to change or modify a law which he has made. God is the author of both natural and spiritual law, so he surely has the right to change or alter those laws.

truth, and one convert him; Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins”? Why is such a passage in the Bible, if false doctrine may be glossed over and accepted by our spirit of leniency (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:16-18; Tit. 1:10-13; 2 John 9)?

Seventh, does this leniency and tolerance apply to us? We are told to show leniency and accept religious error, but they who so advise us do not show the same leniency toward us. When we disagree with their advice, what do they do? Do they show leniency and accept us? No, they cast us out. Some leniency that is!

We acknowledge that many religious groups claim that God is still performing miracles today, and that he is using them as his human instrumentality. However, this should raise certain questions in the minds of thoughtful people. For example, why would God miraculously authenticate two preachers who represent two religions which teach opposing doctrines? Would that not be tantamount to God fighting against God?

In asking, “have miracles ceased,” we are not asking “have miracles ever occurred?” I do not for one moment question whether God miraculously created Adam from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). Nor do I question whether God created Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side (Gen. 2:21-23). But I do ask, “Is God continuing to miraculously create full grown men from ‘the dust of the ground,’ and does he continue to create full grown women from ribs taken from the sides of men?” The fact that God's “understanding is infinite” (Ps. 147:5), and that God is “Almighty” (Gen. 17:1) necessarily infers that God could still create men and women in the same way he created Adam and Eve. For that matter, God could (if he wanted to) grow watermelons on pecan trees, but I deny that he does grow watermelons on pecan trees!

From what has been said it should be evident that this writer does not deny the actual occurrence of a single miracle recorded in the Bible. Nor is this writer questioning the great power of God. But this writer is asking, “Have Bible miracles ceased?” Of course, if they have not ceased, then they continue to be performed today even as they were in Bible days.

However, before answering the question, “Have Bible miracles ceased?” it is important that we observe a few facts about the miracles which are described in the Bible.

Bible Miracles Were Manifested in Five Areas

1. Over nature. On one occasion Jesus was sleeping in a boat, and “suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! we are perishing.’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm” (Matt. 8:24-26). I have no doubt but that the winds and the sea really did obey Jesus. But I deny that the winds and the sea are obeying people today!

2. Over disease. “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matt. 4:23). “Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed” (Acts 5:16). Today it is different. Miracle workers (?) of today don’t deal with “all kinds of disease,” and they have many failures. They don’t touch withered limbs, amputated legs, or other physical afflictions which are obvious to the naked eye.

3. Over unclean spirits. Jesus “cast out the spirits with a word” (Matt. 8:16). The apostle Paul cast “a spirit of divination” from a certain slave girl (Acts 16:16-18). I affirm that, based upon Bible teaching, people today are not demon-possessed, and that if this is true, then no one can cast out of a person that which is not in that person! However, for those who claim that people are demon-possessed and that they are God’s instruments for casting out demons, in the words of an evil spirit who witnessed similar fraudulent efforts in the first century, I am inclined to say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Acts 19:11-15).

4. Over material objects. With five loaves and two fish, Jesus fed “about five thousand men, besides women and children” (Matt. 14:16-21), and “they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.” If the same God is still enabling people to perform the same miracles today as in the past, then why don’t a few modern miracle workers go to some of the third world countries, pray over their meager food supply, and feed the multitudes of hungry souls?

5. Over life itself. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43, 44). Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-41). Others were raised from the dead. The great miracle workers (?) attend funerals — even of their closest loved ones — but how many are raising people from the dead?

Characteristics of Bible Miracles

1. They were instant. To the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, one who had “an infirmity thirty-eight years, Jesus said “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” And immedi-

ately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked” (John 5:5-9). There was no waiting around for this person to gradually improve; his cure was immediate!

2. They were complete. To a lame man at the gate of the temple, Peter said “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6). In the next chapter we learn that he was “made whole” (Acts 4:9). He was not almost cured; he was completely cured.

3. They were undeniable. Concerning the healing of the lame man at the temple, even the enemies of Peter and John said, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:16). But miracles (?) of today are easily denied — even by those who want to believe they are happening!

4. Various conditions prevailed. Sometimes faith was present, sometimes it was not present. Sometimes they were performed because of the faith of the people performing the miracle. But now-a-days, after a failure is obvious, the common retort concerning the people still afflicted is “they didn’t have enough faith” — thereby adding insult to injury!

5. They were always successful. A case in point illustrating this statement is recorded in Acts 5:15,16: “So they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”

Miracles Have Ceased!

Because of having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), the apostles were able to work miracles, and they often worked miracles, and by which the Lord confirmed “the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:19; cf. Heb. 2:3, 4). However, Holy Spirit baptism was a promise made to certain people (Acts 1:5), and as a promise it was fulfilled. Now there is “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), it being baptism in “water” (Acts 8:36, 38), and it is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Others, upon whom the apostles laid their hands (Acts 8:18), received “spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 12:1), which included “the working of miracles” (1 Cor. 12:10). However, according to 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, these miraculous or spiritual gifts were to cease upon the completion of the word of God. And, inasmuch as the apostles were guided into “all truth” (John 16:13), then divine revelation was complete by the time the last apostle died. Inasmuch as no one today receives the baptism of the Spirit, inasmuch as no apostles are around to impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of hands, and inasmuch as revelation is complete (and that people today are able to perform miracles. Could this the purpose of miracles has been served), then we deny

When Does A Good Thing Become A Bad Thing?

David Dann

world (1 Tim. 5:16; Acts 6:1-7).

In addressing problems that had arisen among the brethren in the church at Rome, the apostle Paul writes, “Let not then your good be evil spoken of” (Rom. 14:16). Such a statement from the pen of the apostle suggests that it is possible to turn a good thing into a bad thing. In other words, an activity may be perfectly good in and of itself, but the use that we make of it, or our attitude towards it may cause it to become an evil thing.

This point can be illustrated in a number of ways with regard to our physical lives. For example, one aspirin may be a good thing, in that it relieves a headache. However, taking several aspirin could turn a good thing into a bad, or even deadly, thing. Another example would be joining a community service club. This would be a good thing, as far as it allows for much good to be done in the community. However, if the club were to take priority over worship in the life of an individual, then the good thing would turn into a bad thing. Upon noticing these possibilities, it is important for us to consider these things with regard to our lives as Christians. In our service to the Lord, when does a good thing become a bad thing?

1. When the good thing is not authorized by God’s word. Paul writes, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). Therefore, the activities that we engage in must be approved by the authority of the word of Christ. A good thing can become a bad thing when we act without the authority of Christ. For example, there are many things that would be good for individual Christians to engage in, but would be wrong for the church to engage in. It is good for individual Christians to engage in recreational activities together. However, this good thing would be turned into a bad thing if the recreation were to be provided by the church, since there is no authority for the church to involve itself in such action. It is a good thing for individual Christians to provide for the needy of the world. However, this good thing would be turned into a bad thing if the church involved itself in providing for the needy of the world, since the mission of the church includes providing for needy saints, rather than the whole

2. When the good thing hurts others. With regard to the individual responsibilities of Christians, Paul writes, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). We may engage in a good activity to the point where it could actually damage our family relationships and, ultimately, our relationship with the Lord. For example, a man may spend much time studying the Bible, which is certainly a good thing. However, if the man spends all of his time studying, and no time providing for his family, then the good thing becomes a bad thing, and the man is considered “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Or, a wife may give much time and attention to raising and caring for her children, which is a good thing. However, if she focuses on her children to such an extent that she neglects her husband, then the good thing has become a bad thing. We know this to be true because Paul writes, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:33). A good thing can become a bad thing if our extensive involvement in it causes us to hurt others.

3. When the good thing causes us to leave other good things undone. James writes, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17). Certainly we can sin by not doing what we should just as easily as we can sin by doing what we should not. While an activity may be good in and of itself, our involvement in it may cause us to leave other good things undone. For example, a preacher may spend a lot of time visiting brethren, which is a good thing. However, if he spends too much time visiting, he will not have adequate time to study, and the good thing would become a bad thing (2 Tim. 2:15).

Conclusion

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Are you doing good?

2 Wesley St. #5, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M8Y 2W3

Jesus equated the “gospel” to “my words” in Mark 8:35-38, so all he taught in the New Testament is “gospel.”

Grace and the Gospel (3)

Frank L. Smith

We have been writing the last two weeks about the gospel to determine whether it is limited to the announcement

of the deity of Jesus and his death and resurrection for our redemption. Some teach that if men believe that, and are baptized they are in Christ and regardless of what they believe and do religiously beyond that, we should all be in fellowship. The Scriptures do not so teach. The gospel Jesus told the apostles to preach included all he had commanded them (Matt. 28:20). Jesus equated the “gospel” to “my words” in Mark 8:35-38, so all he taught in the New Testament is “gospel.”

Last week we showed that “the faith” is another term used in the Scriptures for the “gospel” and it includes all the revealed will of God through Jesus Christ.

Still another term is used to speak of the whole counsel of God which Paul and the apostles preached; it is grace. “For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Grace being the chosen word or the whole fullness of the New Covenant, all that dwells in Christ or men” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 129). Grace is here contrasted with the Law, as Paul does likewise in Romans 6:14 in speaking of the rule of conduct by which Christians are to live as servants in Christ’s kingdom. It is really the same contrast as made in Hebrews 1:1-2 of those things Jesus now speaks to us and the things God spoke to the old covenant people by the prophets.

In Acts 14:3 Paul and Barnabas were in Iconium “speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the *word of his grace*.” And in verse 7 they had moved on to other cities and “there they preached the *gospel*.” So we conclude that *grace* and the *gospel* are the same so far as the message to be preached is concerned. In Acts 20:32 he commended the bishops of Ephesus to “the word of his grace” which is able to up and to give the inheritance among the sanctified. This word of grace would help them to withstand the false teachers of whom he warned. It was the same word Timothy was to preach in 2 Timothy 4:1-4, for it was to

accomplish the same end. And this was the same thing Paul and Barnabas preached above. We believe the terms are similarly used by Paul in Colossians 1:5, 6 (Rom. 16:25).

“The grace of God hath appeared instructing us to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). Grace teaches us. It teaches us how to live as children of God. This is why Peter exhorted us to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus” (2 Pet. 3:18). When we do as grace teaches then we will not be condemned in the day when God “shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16). When we preach all of *grace* we are but preaching the gospel, and when we preach the *gospel* we are preaching salvation by grace, the free gift of salvation through the righteousness which is in Jesus.

Grace is not some mysterious bathing of our souls by an overpowering act of God. It is the love of God shown through the gift of his Son upon the cross and the purification of our souls in obedience to truth, not by our own works but by his mercy when we comply with his terms. When we obey the demands of grace, then we leave sin and walk in the Lord by his divine way. Those who do not accept God’s grace by keeping his commandments are not in his fellowship. The whole New Testament is his *grace* that came by Jesus Christ and all is bound upon us as the terms of salvation. The gospel is the same truth, telling the good news of salvation, God’s power to save us when we believe and obey it.

From Truth and News, Huffman Church of Christ, March 15, 1972

The Battle Cry of the Qur'an

Tim Haile

The Qur'an unequivocally sanctions the use of carnal methods in fighting the opposition. Contrary to this approach, the Bible disapproves the use of force in either defending or advancing the Lord's kingdom (Matt. 26:52; John 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). . . . I urge the reader to build his faith on the Bible, not on the uninspired and contradictory teachings of a self-proclaimed

Since the tragic and deadly September 11 hijacking of American planes by militant Muslim terrorists, much discussion has taken place about Islamic ideals, goals, and objectives. Many Muslims have been quick to condemn these attacks, and for this we are thankful. We are relieved that not all Muslims share the view that God's cause is advanced through means of terrorist attacks and intimidation. However, this denouncement by non-militant Muslims demonstrates the division that exists in the Islamic world and that has existed among them for centuries.

Most religious groups are divided among themselves, in their philosophical approach to their particular religious standard. Some are liberal and others are conservative. This division also exists in politics, economics, social policy, and in other areas. In religion, the liberal's interpretive approach is less restrictive than that of the conservative. He does not take the standard so literally, nor bind it so rigidly as the conservative. Conversely, the conservative views the standard as being unchangeable and inflexible. I believe these two dissimilar approaches can be seen in the modern religion of Islam.

You may be wondering, "Of what concern is this to non-Muslims?" From what is taught in the Qur'an regarding carnal tactics in the advancement of Islam, I am convinced that it should be of vital interest and concern

to every non-Muslim!

It has been reported by many in the news media, and explained by a great many religious and political pundits, that these horrific September 2001 attacks were carried out by "radical extremists" who are not loyal to Mohammedan faith principles as taught in the Qur'an. Though it may be true that the actions of the terrorists do not represent the feelings of most Muslims, it is not true that their actions are in violation of the teachings of the Qur'an. Even a cursory reading of the book indicates otherwise. Though it requires more space and reading, I have included full contextual quotes from the Qur'an so that the reader may be able to easily see that I have not misrepresented Mohammed's true intentions for his followers with regard to mortal combat.

Distinguishing Between Literal and Figurative Language

Before I begin with my exegesis of pertinent Qur'anic passages, I want it to be clear to the reader that I do appreciate the difference between literal and symbolic language. The rules of language dictate that the immediate and remote contexts of a particular word or phrase are what determine its meaning. For example, the New Testament speaks of "fighting" in the Lord's cause. Paul told Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1Tim. 6:12). The immediate context tells us how to conduct this fight. It speaks of fleeing materialism,

pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness” and “confessing the good confession” (1 Tim. 6:11, 12, 13). Thus, like Paul’s own “good fight” (1 Tim. 4:7), Timothy’s “fight” was a spiritual one, not a carnal one. This distinction is well illustrated in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Ephesians 6:10-17. Paul said, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” Just as our “weapons” are not carnal, neither are the “strongholds” that we oppose. The apostle went on to describe these “strongholds” as being false ideas and concepts. Our duty is to “demolish” men’s “arguments,” not their physical lives (2 Cor. 10:5). Our “sword” is “the sword of the Spirit,” not one of shaped and sharpened steel (Eph. 6:17).

On one occasion the inhabitants of a particular Samaritan village refused to accept Christ. We then read, “And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them’” (Luke 9:51-56).

Jesus rebuked his disciples for their idea because his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. This is why his servants do not fight, with carnal weapons and tactics, nor wage a carnal war against others (John 18:36). A spiritual kingdom cannot be advanced or defended by carnal, physical, militant means.

The “Fight” of Islam

As you will see, the Qur’anic passages that I have quoted in this article do not speak of a spiritual “fight of faith.” They use terms and phrases that make clear reference to physical war, bloodshed, and death. This should not seem strange to us considering the bloody beginnings of Islam. After proclaiming himself

to be the last of the prophets, and his message, the Qur’an, the last revealed book, Mohammed and his followers were persecuted and driven from the city of Mecca. He eventually moved to Medina where he was given supreme authority. He then waged a successful war against the Meccans. Being victorious, he then proceeded to either expel or slaughter his opposition inside Medina and by A.D. 630 he became the most powerful leader in the Arab world.

Those who exalt Mohammed as their spiritual leader and “the last prophet,” exalt one who advanced his religious agenda by violence and bloodshed. His religion, Islam, was founded upon the practice of intimidation, coercion, and terror. Dissenters were not just “avoided,” they were massacred. Furthermore, the Qur’an demands the eventual expansion of Islam into all the earth. “Surely the true religion with ALLAH is Islam,” and “whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers” (Qur’an 3:20, 86). Followers are ordered to “fight [transgressors] until there is no persecution, and religion is professed only for Allah” (Qur’an 2:194).

Many have said that Muslims are taught to fight only in self-defense. They are quick to quote the following from the Qur’an:

And fight in the way of ALLAH against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, ALLAH loves not the transgressors (2:191).

Though this particular verse does speak of defensive fighting, the remainder of the passage seems to extend beyond this. Notice the following:

And slay these transgressors wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worst than slaying. And fight them not in

and near the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them. Such is the requital for the disbelievers. But if they desist, then surely, ALLAH is Most Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is professed only for ALLAH. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the wrongdoers (Qur’an 2:192-194).

It is easy to see why Muslims are divided over the question of carnal militancy. This last verse tells followers to “fight until there is no persecution and religion is professed only for Allah.” This certainly appears to go well beyond mere self-defense.

The Qur’an Against Opposition Leaders

For the same reason that Mohammed originally established his own Islamic government in Medina, many Muslims of today do not recognize any non-Islamic government as legitimate. Why would they think this? Read for yourself:

O ye people of the Book! Believe in what WE have now sent down, fulfilling that which is with you, before WE destroy some of your leaders and turn them on their backs or curse them as WE cursed the people of the Sabbath. And the decree of ALLAH is bound to be fulfilled. Surely, ALLAH will not forgive that a partner be associated with HIM; but HE will forgive whatever is short of that to whomsoever HE pleases. And whoso associates partners with ALLAH has indeed devised a very great sin (Qur’an 4:48-49)

“Leaders” were to be turned on their backs because they had “associated partners” with Allah. Again, let us remember the immediate circumstances of the writing of the Qur’an. There was bitter fighting between Mohammedan forces and other Arabs and Jews. In the above, Mohammed penned a text that would vindicate him in destroying his opposition. This

particular verse gives the reason for “Allah’s” alleged anger against these “leaders.” They had “associated partners” with Allah.

Concerning “Associated Partners” and the “Godhood”

This is a prominent theme throughout the Qur’an. Condemnation after condemnation is pronounced against those who “associate partners” with Allah. Mohammed was referring to those who believe in the triune nature of the Godhead (“Trinity”). Muslims emphatically reject the notion that there is more than one person of God. Of course, the Bible speaks of God in three persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (John 1:1-2; Acts 5:3-4; Matt. 28:19; 1 John 5:7; Rom. 15:16). Observe what the Qur’an says about this belief:

O People of the Book ! exceed not the limits in your religion, and say not of ALLAH anything but the truth. Verily, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of ALLAH, and a fulfillment of HIS word which HE has sent down to Mary, and a mercy from HIM. So believe in ALLAH and HIS Messengers, and say not, “They are three.” Desist, it will be better for you. Verily, ALLAH is the only One God. Holy is HE, far above having a son. To HIM belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And sufficient is ALLAH as a guardian (Qur’an 4:172).

Indeed, they are disbelievers who say, “ALLAH, HE is the Messiah, son of Mary,” whereas the Messiah himself said, “O Children of Israel, worship ALLAH Who is my Lord and your Lord.” Surely, whoso associates partners with ALLAH, him has ALLAH forbidden Heaven, and the Fire will be his resort. And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers. They surely disbelieve who say, “ALLAH is the third of three;” there is no god but the One God. And if they do not desist from what they say, a grievous punishment shall surely befall those of them that disbelieve (Qur’an 5:73-74).

And they say, “ALLAH has taken to Himself a son.” Holy is HE! Nay, everything in the Heavens and the earth belongs to HIM. To HIM are all obedient (Qur’an 2:217).

Note carefully. Those who say there are “three” persons of God, and those who say Jesus is God or God’s Son, and those who say “Allah” is “a third of three,” await a “grievous punishment!” By reading all of the above texts (4:48-49, 172; 5:73-74) a true believer of the Qur’an is forced to conclude that “leaders” who affirm that God exists in three persons must be “put on their backs.” This is exactly what Mohammed did to such leaders.

Observe further:

Nay, ALLAH is your Protector, and HE is the Best of helpers. And WE shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved because they associate partners with ALLAH,

for which HE has sent down no authority. Their abode is the Fire; and evil is the habitation of the wrongdoers (Qur’an 3:151-152).

According to the Qur’an, those who express belief in the Godhood are unbelievers whose abode is “fire.” The Qur’an encourages its adherents to “cast terror into the hearts” of these who “disbelieve.” As we learned from the devastating September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, religiously motivated terrorists are certainly successful in “casting terror” into the hearts of their religious and ideological opponents.

Have I Misinterpreted These Teachings?

Many will say that I have misinterpreted these passages, and that the Qur’an limits these punitive measures to “Allah.” I wish my conclusions were wrong, however, I am afraid they are not. Consider the following:

Let those then fight in the cause of ALLAH who would sell the present life for the Hereafter. And whoso fights in the cause of ALLAH, be he slain or be he victorious, WE shall soon give him a great reward.

And why should you not fight in the cause of ALLAH and for the rescue of the weak men, women and children who say, “Our Lord, take us out of this town whose people are oppressors, and give us a friend from Thyself and give us from Thyself a helper.”

Those who believe fight in the cause of ALLAH, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of the Evil One. Fight ye therefore, against the friends of Satan; surely Satan’s strategy is weak.

Hast thou not seen those to whom it was said: “Restrain your hands, observe Prayer, and pay the Zakāt.” And when fighting is prescribed for them, behold a section of them fear men as they should fear ALLAH, or with still greater fear; and they say “Our Lord, why hast thou prescribed fighting for us? Wouldst Thou not grant us respite yet a while?” Say, “The benefit of this world is little and the Hereafter will be better for him who fears ALLAH; and you shall not be wronged a whit.”

Wheresoever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you be in strongly built towers. And if some good befalls them, they say, “This is from ALLAH;” and if evil befalls them, they say, “This is from thee.” Say, “All is from ALLAH.” What has happened to these people that they would not try to understand anything?

Fight, therefore, in the way of ALLAH — thou art not made responsible except for thyself — and urge on the believers to fight. It may be that ALLAH will restrain the might of those that disbelieve; And ALLAH is stronger in might and stronger in inflicting punishment.

O ye who believe! Fight such of the disbelievers as are near to you and let them find hardness in you; and know that ALLAH is with the righteous.

Verily, ALLAH loves those who fight in HIS cause arrayed in solid ranks, as though they were a strong structure cemented with molten lead (Qur'an 4:75-79, 85; 9:123; 61:5).

“Fighting” is “prescribed” by Allah! But what kind of “fighting?” This is very important. It should be very obvious to every honest reader that the “fighting” of these verses is physical, carnal warfare. For example, he speaks of “selling this life for the hereafter.” He speaks of being eternally rewarded because of being “slain” in battles for Allah. He speaks of “rescuing weak men, women, and children.” He criticizes those who urge others to restrain their hands (from fighting) and focus only on spiritual acts like “prayer” and paying the “Zakāt.” He condemns those who “fear men as they should fear Allah.” He goes on to identify their “fear” as the fear of “death.” He also identifies this death as physical death. He tells them that since they will die one way or another, that they should, therefore, “fight in the way of Allah.” He tells them that if they will fight, perhaps Allah will “restrain the might” of their disbelieving enemies. How can this refer to anything but carnal warfare?

One reason for Mohammed’s views about the use of physical combat in the advancement of Islam comes from his misconception about the end of the Mosaic age. From the following you can see that he used the example of “fighting” in Moses’ day to defend the practice in his day, and for future generations. He wrote:

And fight in the cause of ALLAH and know that ALLAH is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Who is it that will lend ALLAH a goodly loan that HE may multiply it for him manifold? And ALLAH receives and enlarges. And to HIM shall you be made to return. Hast thou not heard of the chiefs of the Children of Israel after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs, “Appoint for us a king that we may fight in the way of ALLAH?” He said, “It is not likely that you will not fight, if fighting is prescribe for you?” They said, “What reason have we that we should not fight in the way of ALLAH when we have been driven forth from our homes and our sons?” But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back except a small number of them. And ALLAH knows the transgressors well (Qur'an 2:245-247).

Mohammed’s conclusion was that since God “prescribed” and “ordained” fighting for the Jews (in the conquering of Palestine, and in the punishment of godless nations), then his followers must fight as well! This is a terrible misuse of Moses’ example, and a dangerous misapplication of divine orders. We are not under those Old Testament instructions to “go in and take possession of the land flowing with milk and honey.” Those instructions were given to the Jews of old, and they were fulfilled under the leadership of Joshua. They were not given to Mohammed,

and they are not intended for us today.

Why Do Muslims Fight Jews and Christians?

The Qur’an answers this question quite clearly. I might point out that the expression, “People of the Book,” is found throughout the Qur’an, and it refers to Jews and Christians. Notice what Muslims are to do with regard to them:

Fight those from among the people of the Book, who believe not in ALLAH, nor in the Last Day, nor hold as unlawful what ALLAH and HIS Messenger have declared to be unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the tax considering it a favour and acknowledge their subjection. And the Jews say, “Ezra is the son of ALLAH,” and the Christians say, “the Messiah is the son of ALLAH;” that is what they say with their mouths. They only imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before them. ALLAH’s curse be on them! How they are turned away. If you will not go forth to fight in the cause of ALLAH, HE will punish you with a painful punishment, and will chose in your stead a people other than you, and you shall do HIM no harm at all. And ALLAH has full power over all things (Qur'an 9:29, 30, 39).

Islam opposes Christians because they recognize Christ as being equal to God (John 5:18; 10:30; 14:9; 12:45). The Qur’an says, “The case of Jesus is like the case of Adam. (God) created him out of dust” (Qur'an 3:60). The Bible describes Jesus as self-existent and eternal (John 1:1-2; Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8). Islam opposes Judaism because it professes Moses and the prophets, but denies Mohammed. The Quróan also accuses the Jews of lying for their claim of slaying Jesus, the son of Mary. Islam contends that Christ was not really crucified (Qur'an 4:158). The book also condemns the Jews for taking interest on loaned money (Qur'an 4:162).

Primarily, however, Islam and the Qur’an, are most critical of Jews and Christians because of their rejection of Mohammed as the last of the prophets.

“Allah’s Reward” for Militancy

The Qur’an frequently promises Allah’s favor and reward to those who are slain in battle. Notice the following excerpts:

And if you are slain in the cause of ALLAH or you die, surely, forgiveness from ALLAH and mercy are better than what they hoard. And if you die or be slain, surely unto ALLAH shall you be gathered together (Qur'an 3:158-159).

Think not of those, who have been slain in the cause of ALLAH, as dead. Nay, they are living, in the presence of their Lord, and are granted gifts from HIM; Jubilant because that which ALLAH has given them of HIS bounty; and rejoicing for the sake of those who have not yet joined them from behind them, because on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve. They rejoice at the favour of ALLAH and HIS bounty, and at the fact that ALLAH suffers not the reward

of the believers to be lost (Qur'an 3:170-172).

So their Lord answered their prayers, saying, "I will suffer not the work of any worker from among you, whether male or female, to be lost. You are from one another. Those, therefore, who have emigrated, and have been driven out of their homes, and have been persecuted for MY cause, and have fought and been slain, I will surely remit from them their evil deeds and will cause them to enter gardens through which streams flow — a reward from ALLAH, and with ALLAH is the best of rewards" (Qur'an 3:196).

Notice from the above verses, that forgiveness, mercy, fellowship, gifts, remission of sins, and heavenly reward, are promised to all who fight and are slain in mortal combat in the way of Allah.

The Qur'anic Death Wish

The Qur'an also speaks of great reward for those who willingly sacrifice themselves in battles for Allah. Consider the following:

Do you suppose that you will enter Heaven while ALLAH has not yet caused to be distinguished those of you that strive in the way of ALLAH and has not yet caused to be distinguished the steadfast.

And you used to wish for such a death before you met it; now you have seen it face to face, then why do some of you seek to avoid it.

And Muhammad is but a messenger. Verily all Messengers have passed away before him. If then he dies or is slain, will you turn back on your heels? And he who turns back on his heels shall not harm ALLAH at all. And ALLAH will certainly reward the grateful.

And no soul can die except by ALLAH's leave, — a decree with a fixed term. And whoever desires the reward of the present world, WE will give him thereof; and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, WE will give him thereof; and WE will surely reward the grateful.

And many a Prophet there has been beside whom fought numerous companies of their followers. They slacken not for aught that befell them in the way of ALLAH nor did they weaken, nor did they humiliate themselves before the enemy. And ALLAH loves the steadfast.

And they uttered not a word except that they said, "Our Lord forgive us our sins and our excesses in our conduct, and make firm our steps and help us against the disbelieving people."

So ALLAH gave them the reward of this world, and also an excellent reward of the Hereafter; and ALLAH loves those who do good (Qur'an 3:143-149).

The above passage demonstrates why Muslims are di-

vided over the practice of suicide. Some passages seem to warn against suicide. However, under the circumstances described in this particular passage, a devoted follower of Mohammed may commit suicide while combating anti-Islamic sentiment, and receive an "excellent reward in the hereafter." That is, he is rewarded for "wishing for death" in the cause of Islam. I believe we have just seen some of these "death wishes" executed right here in our own country on September 11, 2001.

Islamic Military Tactics

In the Qur'an, Mohammed dealt with far more than just spiritual rights and services. He was an experienced and effective military leader, and he taught his skills and logistical tactics to his followers. He recognized the importance of both physical and financial support. He repeatedly instructed followers to fight "with their wealth and with their lives." Consider the following:

Go forth, light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of ALLAH. That is best for you, if only you knew (Qur'an 9:41)

Those who believe in ALLAH and the Last Day will not ask leave of thee to be exempted from striving with their wealth and their persons. And ALLAH well knows those who keep their duty to HIM (Qur'an 9:44).

Surely, ALLAH has purchased of the believers their persons and their property in return for the heavenly Garden they shall have; they fight in the cause of ALLAH, and they slay and are slain — an unfailing promise that HE has made binding on Himself in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful to his promise than ALLAH? Rejoice, then, in your bargain which you have made with HIM; and that is the mighty triumph (Qur'an 9:111).

Those familiar with war and military tactics know what are the fundamental requirements for conducting a successful military campaign. They are personnel and provisions. Mohammed sought to rally support, not just in terms of fighters, but also in terms of financial backing. He understood the concept of logistical support.

Furthermore, he knew quite well, the value of military intelligence. Notice these words from the Qur'an:

O ye who believe! When you go forth to fight in the cause of ALLAH, make proper investigation and say not to anyone who greets you with the greeting of peace, Thou art not a believer. You seek the goods of this life, but with ALLAH are good things in plenty. Such were you before this, but ALLAH conferred His special favour on you; so do make proper investigation. Surely, ALLAH is Aware of what you do (Qur'an 4:95).

Mohammed told his fighters to "make proper investi-

gation.” He emphasized that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish your friends from your enemies. The possession of material goods may not necessarily mean that the person is your enemy. This is quite interesting considering the turn of events that resulted in vast wealth being concentrated in Arab nations. The combustion engine created a high demand for oil, and several of the Arab countries have been well situated to take advantage of the high oil demand.

Another of Mohammed’s strategies was to send out “parties” into various parts of the earth for search and reconnaissance. He wrote:

It is not possible for the believers to go forth all together. Why, then, does not a party from every section of them go forth that they may become well-versed in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may guard against evil. O ye who believe! Fight such of the disbelievers as are near to you and let them find hardness in you; and know that ALLAH is with the righteous (Qur’an 9:122-123).

Remember, we have already observed from other pas-

sages that Mohammed’s idea of “fighting” disbelievers involved far more than just a war of words. In his mind, religion and carnal warfare were wholly connected. Whereas, we might think of investigating other religious beliefs for the purpose of learning and teaching, Mohammed encouraged such in connection with “fighting.”

Conclusion

As I indicated at the beginning of this study, not all Muslims believe that Islam encourages, or even approves the use of deadly force in the defense and/or spread of Islam. However, no one can successfully deny that Mohammed approved of such. His political and religious power was purchased with the blood of his allies and his adversaries. His book, the Qur’an, unequivocally sanctions the use of carnal methods in fighting the opposition. Contrary to this approach, the Bible disapproves the use of force in either defending or advancing the Lord’s kingdom (Matt. 26:52; John 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). The Bible says vengeance belongs to God and that we are to “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19-21). This is in stark contrast with what *125 Hilltopper Dr., Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101*

In Thy Days

Johnie Edwards

The phrase, “In Thy Days” is found in 1 Kings 11:12 and has reference to one’s lifetime. Our earth life is made up of days and it’s important that we know about our days.

1. Number Our Days: The Psalmist penned, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Our days are so few on this earth that each day needs to be accounted for. Wisdom demands that we make the best of each day. It is as Paul wrote the Ephesians, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16).

2. All Our Days: “For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told” (Ps. 90:9). Our earth days soon pass and our life here is described “as a tale that is told.” It doesn’t take long to tell a tale! And, so is life.

3. The Days Of Our Years: The days of our years are described as, “Threescore years and ten” (that’s 70 years); and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years (that’s 80); yet is there strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). The average life span now is about 74 years. By the way, how old are you?

4. Today: Today is really the only day we have. No wonder Paul said, “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). Make good use of today as there is really no tomorrow; for when tomorrow gets here, it will be today.

4121 Woodyard Road Bloomington, Indiana 47404

Herman Mason

January 6, 1913 - August 9, 2002

I held a meeting for the Winding Road congregation in Parkersburg, West Virginia on August 10-16. On the morning of August 9, I called to tell the brethren about when I would be arriving and was told the sad news that brother Herman Mason, who formerly preached for the Winding Road church, passed away that morning.

He was buried in the Pennsylvania Run Cemetery in Louisville on August 13, 2002. One family (Randy and Joyce Vanfossen) from the Winding Road church made the journey from Parkersburg to Louisville to attend the funeral, leaving at 4 a.m. and getting back at 6 p.m. in time for the evening services. They related that only about twenty people attended brother Mason's funeral. What a tragedy! Apparently the brethren in Louisville did not hear of his passing in time for the word to circulate among faithful brethren. His funeral was conducted in the premillennial Livingstone church in Louisville, having been arranged by family members. Brother Mason had no sympathy for premillennialism, but the family turned there to arrange the services when the church in which he held membership would not allow the funeral to be conducted in their building, as I understand the facts.

Herman Mason was born in Ontario, Canada (I do not know what city) on January 6, 1913. He died Friday, August 9, 2002 at Baptist Hospital East in Louisville. For many years, brother Mason was a bachelor but married his wife Virginia Kessler Mason while preaching for the Harrodsburg, Kentucky church. Sister Mason lives in Louisville but is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Brother Mason is also survived by a sister, Edith Kneeshaw, who lives in Canada.

I have tried to reconstruct the names of the places where brother Mason preached and came up with the following list. I could not reconstruct the years when he worked with these places: Peoria, Illinois; Palatine, Illinois; Kirkwood,

Missouri; Harrodsburg, Kentucky; Ravenswood, West Virginia; and the Winding Road church in Parkersburg, West Virginia.



Although I had heard of brother Mason's reputation for many years, I first became acquainted with him when he moved to the church in Ravenswood. His experience helped give stability to that young church. He was respected by the men of the congregation and they listened to his wisdom to help them work through the various problems facing them. After preaching for many years at Ravenswood, he decided to move to Winding Road.

He was good for Winding Road and Winding Road was good for him. The church at Winding Road experienced good, solid growth during his years there and, more importantly, peace! Brother Mason faithfully taught the congregation the word of God and encouraged the brethren. As the years passed, he grew old (he was 89 when he quit preaching at Winding Road). The brethren could see the debilities of old age affecting brother Mason. In some congregations, younger brethren might become impatient with an old man preaching and decide that "we have to make a change" for the good of the congregation. These brethren discussed the situation among themselves and decided, "You can't just throw aside a man like that. You don't throw away old horses." They suggested to brother Mason that they needed to develop themselves and asked if they could take turns preaching every other week, relieving him two Sundays a month. Brother Mason agreed and he continued serving with Winding Road until last year.

As his wife's health began to deteriorate, brother and sister Mason decided that they should move to Louisville where sister Mason's children could help care for them. They moved there last fall. I was in a meeting at Hebron Lane last fall at which time Ron Halbrook, Andy Alexander, and I visited brother and sister Mason, about two weeks

Conservative Alternative to Girl Scouts Building Membership

Jason Pierce

(CNSNews.com Staff Writer, April 17, 2002)

“(CNSNews.com) — The Girl Scouts of America, 3.7 million strong, have in recent years made the use of the word ‘God’ optional in the Girl Scout Promise and have adopted a neutral stance toward homosexuality, unlike the Boy Scouts of America, a group that bars homosexuals from serving as scout leaders.

“Convinced that the Girl Scouts no longer reflects traditional values, Patti Garibay of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1995 developed an alternative organization — the American Heritage Girls. The group started with only 100 girls from the Cincinnati area, including surrounding areas in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, but today has swelled to 1,200 members.

“Now, the American Heritage Girls are looking to expand nationwide, and have already staked a claim in Santa Rosa, California and Abilene, Kansas.

“Garibay said she was motivated to leave the Girl Scout organization when the group decided it would take no position on homosexuality.

“That was a red flag for myself, because I had been a Girl Scout leader for 13 years, and was very involved,” Garibay said. “As a Christian woman, I was saying, ‘Boy what is going on here? This doesn’t sound right.’”

after he moved to Louisville at 89 years old. They were obviously having some problems getting their apartment straightened up because their health was failing, but brother Mason said, “Do you fellows know any church looking for a preacher?” His spirit was yearning to preach though his body was worn out. — **Mike Willis**

“Garibay said she and some other parents began to investigate the other changes that officials from the Girl Scouts of America were pushing.

“We realized in 1995 that we weren’t going to be able to change much with our local council, much less with our national council, so it was time to start something new,” Garibay said.

“Among the first decisions made by Garibay and other organizers of the American Heritage Girls was to create a Christian-inspired oath for the girls: ‘I promise to love God, Cherish my family, Honor my country, and Serve in my community.’

“Garibay said religious faith is essential to teaching the girls about values.

“We are based on Judeo-Christian values, non-denominational,” Garibay said. “Our troops are all chartered by churches, or private schools, civic groups; therefore they own the program, just like the Boy Scouts.”

“That way, if they would like to put an emphasis on a doctrinal kind of belief, they can do so,” she said.

“The American Heritage Girls rely on members and friends of the organization for financial support.

“When asked whether the group is open to taking money from the government or organizations like the United Way, Garibay said: ‘No. And it’s not easy not doing that.’

“That would defeat our purposes if we did, because we would be tied to non-belief systems,” she said.

“Garibay said the American Heritage Girls are much like the Girl Scouts, in that girls work toward merit badges, have

ranks, and do service projects. Many American Heritage Girl activities are based in the outdoors, in order to teach the girls outdoor survival skills like horseback riding, canoeing, and the building of campfires.

“But American Heritage Girls are also taught traditionally feminine skills, like sewing, cooking, and laundry as well.

“Yes, we do say these are skills you are going to need ladies, and you might as well learn them,” Garibay said. “We believe the girls should be happy in whatever choice they make in life, and that homemaking is just as honorable a profession as being a lawyer.”

“We are certainly not putting chains on these girls, saying this is all you can do,” she said.

“In July of 2001, Alexis Ranniar, a spokeswoman with the Girl Scouts of America, said that in some areas of the country, depending on community norms, the scouts ‘may offer educational workshops on topics in human sexuality,’ said Ranniar. Those topics ‘are discussed from an informative, rather than an advocacy view,’ Ranniar added.

“However, since Garibay believes it is the parents’ responsibility to discuss sexual matters with their children, her organization does not address such issues, with the exception of helping girls understand Christian, abstinence-based programs.

“We don’t believe that you teach people about sexual function without morality,” Garibay said.

“We believe that it is important to have a moral foundation when you are doing character building with kids, and that is where we are concerned that the Girl Scouts have fallen away to moral relativism,” Garibay said. “There is no foundational belief that says it is right or wrong. We have an emphasis on service, but also on importance of a spiritual belief, of religion in your life, or the importance of family, and the importance of honoring and serving your country,” she said.

“Ellen Christie Ach, a spokeswoman with the Girl Scouts of America, refused to comment about the American Heritage Girls or the policy differences between the two groups.”

**Superior to a kind thought
is a kind word; better than both is
a kind deed.**

“Daily . . . Life” continued from front page

Daniel prayed three times a day, everyday (Dan. 6:10) and he was in a foreign land in captivity. (3) If possible, spend time every day with other Christians. This can help encourage us to be closer and our spiritual life will grow. (4) Daily seek opportunities to do good for others (Gal. 6:10). Remember, if we do good to someone, we have done it unto Christ (Matt. 25:31-40).

It is important to have a daily spiritual life. When you close your eyes at the end of each day, you should be able to know that you have used this day in a way that pleased God. *Today*, you are one day nearer to the end of your life and one day closer to God.

If he then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

How’s your daily spiritual life?

From Leader, Lakeland Hills Church of Christ

“Fornication and Adultery” continued from page

instill the solemn commitment of honor in God-ordained marriage and the sanctity of that relationship. Fidelity to the sacred promises made in marriage and the loving bond of trust found in such families are the solid foundation upon which all other societal structures can be built.

Remembering Our Vows

Over 25 years ago, my wife and I exchanged vows. Those vows are a sacred promise between the two of us and our God. In every wedding ceremony I have preformed, both the man and the woman made vows which went something like this:

Do you take this man/woman to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health? Do you promise to him/her your undying love and life-long devotion? Do you promise to honor and cherish him/her? FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, will you keep yourself for this one and this one alone until death severs the tie that binds?

If you are married, do you remember taking a vow like that? Do you remember answering something like “I do” to these questions? That was a lifelong commitment! It was a solemn promise. To betray it would make one, in simple words, a liar.

Breaking that commitment of fidelity in adultery not

only makes one a liar to the spouse and the people before whom the promise was made at the wedding, but also before God. God was a witness to the promise as well (Mal. 2:14). God demands that vows made before him must be kept. Notice what he says:

If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth (Num. 30:2).

The context following the above passage shows a woman has the same obligation. The New Testament notes that we are obligated to keep our promises whether by vow or simple affirmation (Matt. 5:33-37). Simply put: God expects us to keep our word.

Responsibility of Fidelity

Regarding the commitment of marriage, does God really expect and demand life-long fidelity within marriage? His word is plain concerning the matter:

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

That makes it pretty plain. God does not condone sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship. The only place where such union can take place is within a God-ordained marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-5). Shacking up may be common in our time, but it will bring God's judgment on all who participate. Neither will God tolerate adultery in any form. Even the common practice of divorce and remarriage does not give one the right to another sexual union in God's eyes. Here is how he views the practice:

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has

married another man (Rom. 7:2-3).

God does not even approve of sexual relations with a second person if we divorce the first mate and marry the second. It is still called "adultery" by God. Why? Because he views seriously our lifelong commitment made in the first marriage and he will hold us responsible for it. The only exception permitted by God for divorce and remarriage reinforces his disdain for adultery:

And I say to you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery (Matt. 19:9).

Serious Consequences

Fornication and adultery are not trivial matters! They show a terrible problem in one's character. Fornication shows a lack of respect for God, for the other involved and for self. It robs another of what the fornicator has no right to take and squanders that which the fornicator has to give outside of marriage. The adulterer betrays his or her spouse, the solemn vows made and the God of heaven. Each sin has tragic and far-reaching consequences. We must not view fornication and adultery lightly or something about which we laugh.

Instead, let us show and teach respect for marriage and its commitments. In doing so, we will lay the groundwork for marriages that are severed only by death in our own lives. Our children will learn most of what they know about fidelity and commitment from seeing our actions. We may also show the light of truth and godliness to a world increasingly given to immorality and cause them to return to God. Whether or not we help to cause a spiritual revival in our society, remember that the God who is witness to our actions demands trustworthiness to our vows and purity in our lives.

2302 Windsor Oaks Ave., Lutz, Florida 33549

Testimony of the Evangelists

by Simon Greenleaf

Greenleaf (1783-1853), eminent Professor of Law at Harvard University, applies to the Gospels the same rules of evidence that are administered in courts of justice. He thus demonstrates the validity of the Gospels as trustworthy historical accounts. Paper. #12005

\$9.99

Preachers Need-

San Angelo, Texas: The Green Meadow church of Christ is looking for a sound, full-time preacher. The church is presently able to fully support a preacher, has elders, and has a new building with room to expand. Attendance averages in the mid-70s. There is a need for someone good in personal work. This is a sound congregation at peace. If interested, contact Robert Raif at (915) 942-8050, Russel Payne at (915) 949-0571, or Jim Neddo at (915) 944-8147.

Bradenton, Florida: The church in Bradenton is looking for a gospel preacher. Their attendance averages in the low 30s and they can provide partial support. It is a beautiful area with a great deal of opportunities. If interested contact Phil Nye at 941-727-3619 or 941-727-7445 or by mail: Bradenton Church of Christ, 2306 53rd Ave., West, Bradenton, FL 34207.

Shidler, Oklahoma: The church in Shidler, Oklahoma needs a full-time, energetic preacher for a small congregaton of 10 to 12 members. Their town population is about 400. About 10 to 15% support is available from the church. Those interested should contact the church at P.O. Box 474, Shidler, OK 74652 or call 918-793-3902 after 6 p.m.

Quips & Quotes



Dorris V. Rader

"On July 26, I underwent surgery for an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm. It was done the tried and proven way which required completely opening up the abdomen and manually placing the new synthetic material inside the aorta, then wrapping it securely and closing up everything.

"Aurelia, the family, and I want to tell brethren all around the country how deeply we appreciate the great outpouring of love and concern for us in this critical time. I can't begin to count the phone calls, cards, e-mails to family and other personal expressions of genuine concern. Last, but by no means least, the prayers going up from so many was a source of consolation, beyond expression.

"I am glad to report that the doctor says everything went well with the surgery and I'm now hopefully on the road to a complete recovery. I'm looking forward as soon as possible to be back in the pulpit, telling the story of our Redeemer." Dorrie V. Rader, 415 Mooresville Pike, Columbia, TN 38401

Rich, Religious Less Likely to Divorce

"Washington — Hoping to avoid divorce? It helps if you're wealthy, religious, college-educated and at least 20 years old when you tie the knot. Couples who don't live together before marriage have a better shot at staying together as do those who parents stayed married.

"By age 30, three in four women have been married, but many of those unions dissolve. Overall, 43 percent of marriages break up within 15 years, according to a government survey of 11,000 women that offers the most detailed look at cohabitation, marriage and divorce ever produced.

"... The survey, released Wednesday by the Centers for disease Control and Prevention, found that 70 percent of those who lived together for at least five years did eventually walk down the aisle.

"But these marriages are also more likely to break up. After 10 years, 40 percent of couples that had lived together before marriage had broken up. That compares with 31 percent of those who did not live together first.

"That's partly because people who live together tend to be younger, less religious or have other qualities that put them at risk for divorce, said Penn State Professor Catherine Cohan.

"Other findings:

- Children of divorce: Women whose parents were divorced are significantly more likely to divorce themselves, with 43 percent splitting after 10 years. Among those whose parents stayed together, the divorce rate was just 29 percent.
- Age: Nearly half of those who marry when younger than 18 and 40 percent when younger than 20 get divorced. When older than 25, it's just 24 percent.
- Remarriage: More than half of divorced women — 54 percent — get married again within five years. These rates have been falling since the 1950s, when 65 percent of divorced women remarried.
- Children: Half of the women who had children before marriage were divorced in 10 years. Nearly as many couples who never had children also wound up divorced.
- Nonreligious: Of those who don't affiliate with any religious group, 46 percent were divorced within 10 years" (The Indianapolis Star [July 25, 2002], A4).

Quran Required Reading at UNC

"Chapel Hill, N.C. — New students at the University of North Carolina took part Monday in discussions of a primer on the Quran after a federal appeals court refused to halt the summer reading program.

"Attorneys for a conservative Christian group had asked the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond to stop the discussions. Members of the Virginia-based Family Policy Network and three unidentified freshmen contended the assignment was unconstitutional.

"The appeals court's decision Monday upheld a ruling last Thursday by a lower-court judge. Terry Moffitt, board chairman for the Family Policy Network said the group had no plans to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Monday's discussion groups drew extensive media attention, with journalists squeezing into rooms with students.

"I'm excited to read the headlines tomorrow: "Students Read Books, Discuss Ideas." That's some real sensational stuff," quipped religious studies professor Carl Ernest.

"About 4,200 incoming freshman and transfer students were assigned to read about 130 pages of 'Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations,' by Michel Sells, a religious professor at Haverford College.

"The Christian group said the assignment should have been prohibited because it promoted Islam. Lawyers for UNC-Chapel Hill said such a ban would mean a loss of free speech rights for students. . . .

"Officials had said a new student could decline the assignment but would have to write an essay explaining why. But they have also said that students who do nothing face no sanctions" (The Indianapolis Star [August 20, 2002], A3).

(Editor's Note: The University of North Carolina decided to ask incoming student to read a book about the Quran. Conservative denominationalists objected. Liberals in the press have given these conservatives fits because of their objections (The Indianapolis Star [August 29, 2002], A20). Writers assert that reading the Quran is healthy and shows the openness of American society. Certainly there is a marked difference in the American culture which allows its citizens to read all sides of various views. However, there certainly is an inconsistency in how American culture treats Christianity and how it treats the Muslim religion

Can you imagine what reaction these same liberals would have if the University of North Carolina asked incoming students to read a book about the Bible or to read the Bible? The ACLU and other liberal organizations would file lawsuits prohibiting the state propagation of religion; not so when it is the Islam religion.

I would hope that the American way was one of "justice toward all," where people on both sides of such issues are treated with equality. Do you think that is the way it is in America on the creation/evolution debate, abortion, homosexuality, etc.? This inconsistency is what is provoking conservative denominationals to object to the University of North Carolina decision.

Science and Religion

Sandy Sasso wrote an editorial in the August 6, 2002 Indianapolis Star (A8) in which she wrote as follows:

But what about religion? Is religion at odds with science? Is the person of faith one who knows the whole truth; one who can, relying on divine authority, be absolutely certain? I think not. Good religions like good science needs to

remain constantly open to new knowledge and insights. Every religious system is a way of living in openness and in search of the sacred. Because we are human, limited by our time and experience, what we come to know about the divine is only and always a partial knowing.

Religion does not intend to explain how the universe was created, but it does intend to tell us how we ought to live in the universe. There are, apologetics notwithstanding, religious texts that have glorified war as holy, taught the superiority of one particular group of believers over others and treated women as inferior creations. Such texts were based on an understanding of how to live in the world that is no longer valid.

What was once believed to be true has, with increasing globalization, cultural exchange, theological and ethical reflection, proven to be false. Our ancestors did not know all there was to know about faith. Their understanding of religious truth was filtered through their particular and limited experience. Humility, a paramount religious virtue, requires that we continually test what we believe to be true.

Just as science can be harmful if it does not keep pace with changing knowledge, so religion can be dangerous if it stagnates and remains closed to change. We know all too well of religious beliefs that have led to burning people at the stake, blowing people up in pizza parlors, buses and university cafeterias and trampling upon the humanity of others. To do this in God's name is to take God's name in vain. Just as unsubstantiated claims cannot presume to be science, so these acts of hate cannot claim to be religious."

Does religion need to be constantly open to change? It should be, if the Bible is man's quest for God. It should not be if the Bible is a divine revelation from God! Of course, men should constantly study that word to be sure that they understand what it says, rather than having accepted traditional interpretations that may be inaccurate. But, when that divine revelation is understood correctly, it should be accepted. It is not open to change. For example, the Bible teaching that there is one God, that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God, that Jesus rose from the dead, that miracles occurred, etc. is not open to constant change. These teachings are either true or false. If they are true, the Bible should be accepted as God's divine revelation; if they are false, the Bible should be rejected as a book filled with many erroneous doctrines and beliefs.

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