



“Progressing Toward Spiritual Maturity”

Richie Thetford

We read in Isaiah 44:4 that God’s people will “spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.” Our Christian walk should be a walk that desires to be pleasing to God first and foremost. When this happens, we will see growth and maturity take hold in our life. Every one of us should have a constant desire to progress toward spiritual maturity in all aspects of our life. There are several areas in our life that God wants to see us mature and develop. These are:

1. Fruitfulness: “Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10). God asks that we share his word with others. This is something that should be on all of our hearts. We should look for opportunities to share the good news to those we come in contact with.

2. In Christ: “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ” (Eph. 4:15). “That you may have a walk wor-

thy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). In order for us to mature in Christ we must learn what a good work is (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17). When we speak “the truth in love,” we are growing in Christ because we are speaking his truth and we are doing it in love, caring for the soul of another.

3. In Love: “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you” (1 Thess. 3:12). “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more” (1 Thess. 4:9-10). The true Christian test of life is whether one can show a genuine love for the brethren. For us to be able to mature in the sight of God, this is something that all of us must possess. As Paul stated, it is also an area in which we need to

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magazine

Vol. XLVII

No. 10

May 15, 2003

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— Subscription Rates —

\$22.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$25.00

— Bulk Rates —

\$1.50 per subscription per month

Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mike.willis001@cs.com.

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

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

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com
Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY

42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

“Be Ye Angry, and Sin Not”

Mike Willis

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil (Eph. 4:26-27).

In the context of Paul’s teaching that man should lay aside the sinful works of the flesh and clothe himself in the fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 4:17-32), this exhortation about anger is included. It is worthy of our deliberation.



Anger is Not Sinful

The passage does not condemn anger as sinful. Rather, it reminds one that a man is susceptible to a wide range of temptations when he is angry. That anger is not sinful is manifest from the number of expressions that speak of “the anger of the Lord” (the phrase appears in 32 verses) and the “wrath of the Lord.” Furthermore, while a man, Jesus manifested anger as the following text shows:

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them *with anger*, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other (Mark 3:1-5).

The example of Jesus and the expressions about the anger of the Lord mentioned before show that there are occasions in which anger is the proper response to certain action. God does not look upon evil without passion, nor do his children. The strength of one’s reaction to sinful conduct is directly related to the strength of his love for righteousness and truth. One should be angry when sinful conduct inflicts harm on the innocent.

Legitimate anger may be expressed by confronting the sinner with his sin. Spiritual maturity is shown when a person expresses to the one who has sinned against him his anger, the pain which the person’s sin has created for him, and his request that the man correct his sin.

see “Anger” on p. 312

Objections to Biblical Limitations on Woman's Role

Bobby L. Graham

From beginning to end under every dispensation, the Bible is clear about the role of woman in relation to men. Hers is a secondary role of submission to her husband in the family and to men in the local church (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15). Whatever the culture, the Lord always dictated his will on such matters on some other basis than culture. What the Scriptures mandated along this line was never the reflection of society's norms (current practice), though Christians were urged to conform to those norms not in conflict with God's will.

Instead of leading, they submit to their husbands or to elders. God consistently has placed man in the primary position of leadership. The wife/woman cannot submit to God without submitting also to her husband or to her elders. In the congregational relationship and in that of the family, elders and husbands also must submit to their wives/women in the exercise of their leadership (Eph. 5:21, 28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). Under the headship of the husband, the wife also has a charge from God to guide the household (1 Tim. 5:14). To discharge her task in this guidance, she submits first to her husband and then to her own family, because she must act in the best interests of her charges, not of herself alone.

This kind of teaching has become the focus of attack from those unwilling to accept the teaching of the New Testament. They have objected to this idea that there are limitations imposed on women in the Scriptures. A consideration of these objections is the purpose of this study.

Woman Haters. The unique role of woman in the home and in the church does not denigrate her worth, quality, dignity, or significance. Her divine assignment, in fact, serves to accentuate her supreme worth in the areas in which God has positioned her to function. Those objecting to woman's subjection have historically decried the writers of the Bible as woman-hating chauvinists, while the opposite is really the truth of the matter. Many have labeled Paul and others as despisers of women who were trying to oppress them. It was quite common to hear some modernist charge Paul with being an old bachelor who neither understood nor cared for women. Such a charge is altogether inconsistent with their writings. No one can fairly conclude this

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about Paul after reading his instructions to the husbands concerning their tender and gentle treatment of their wives. No more exalted status has ever been given to women that they enjoy in the ideals and principles of the New Testament. Neither Rome, nor Greece, nor traditional Judaism, nor the current modern “liberation” movement accords them such honor. In view of the elevating and ennobling influence of the teaching of Christ on women, there is absolutely no evidence for this charge.

Cultural Bias. Earlier we have alluded to this allegation. Some have recently referred to biblical restrictions on the role of women as merely cultural, reflecting the biases of the society of that ancient day. The truth stands out as quite different. Every passage dealing with such restrictions has within it the reasons for the restrictions, and they never were cultural. In 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, the apostle very carefully showed that the reasons behind the limitations were related to the creation and to divine law. Likewise in 1 Timothy 2, some of the same reasons were given for the restrictions imposed, with the additional one of woman’s being thoroughly deceived in Satan’s temptation. Paul’s admission that woman enjoys the first-class status of a full-fledged member of Christ’s body and his insistence that Christians live according to God’s will, not the norms and standards of society, shows the gospel of Christ to be trans-cultural and counter-cultural (Gal. 3:28; Rom. 12:2), not merely reflective of current society.

Historic Abuse Demands Liberation. The claim is that society (including religious leadership) has always deprived women of their deserved place, and that even husbands have abused their wives. According to the vocal proponents of such ideas, women now deserve to have their shackles removed. Let it be understood that no defense is made here for any society or religious leaders who promoted female enslavement, either officially or unofficially. No such abuse or deprivation of God-given rights or dignity ought ever to exist, though it sometimes has happened and still happens. Such never resulted from an application of biblical principles; in fact, the understanding and application of them would immediately erase all such abuse and mistreatment. Marriage as established and governed by God has never resulted in “institutional slavery,” as Hillary Clinton once charged. Divine restrictions must still be respected. Historic mistreatment of women does not justify anyone’s disregard of what the Lord has said. Furthermore, the limitations of the Scriptures will not hinder any woman from performing all of the service that God designs and desires.

Use Their Gift. Women who are blessed with a gift from God ought to be able to use that gift, according to even “conservative” religious people. One able to be a public speaker or lead a church ought to be able to function as a preacher or a pastor, it is claimed. While this argument might sound good to some, may we recall that such a

line of reasoning (?) has never been followed in the New Testament as justification for any role or function. If you can find it, then send the information to this writer. It is important for all to use whatever abilities they have from God, but within the framework of God’s will. No talent would ever allow anyone to go beyond the teaching of Christ or to ignore the restrictions found there (2 John 9). Women might sometimes function as teachers/speakers, if they maintain the restrictions.

Equal Position Based on Equal Nature. While woman has a nature equal to that of man, she does not have the same position or function that God gave to man. It might be useful to remember that Jesus on earth had equal ability with the Father at his disposal, but not equal position. In his decision to leave heaven for redemption’s work, the Lord voluntarily gave up his heavenly rank and glory to become a servant (Phil. 2:5-8). He never gave up his divine nature. Position (function) bears little relation to nature or worth; it relates more to divine assignment, which is sometimes based on need and qualification. Rank and position do not reflect value and importance of work in anybody’s case — Jesus’ or ours.

No Limitations Now. The contention is often heard that Galatians 3:28 removes all distinctions based on one’s sex, in that “there is neither male nor female.” In the context of this verse, however, Paul is not even hinting that all of these distinctions are removed. If this were his point, why would he direct a slave to return to his master in the Letter to Philemon, thus indicating that the master-slave relationship still obtained? If this were Paul’s point, why did he allow some Jewish national customs to continue without religious connection (like circumcision in the case of Timothy)? His point is that these distinctions do not bar one from full status in the church, enjoying all blessings in Christ. A Greek woman can be a Christian as readily as a Jewish man.

This writer has heard nothing from the proponents of “full rights for the women” that would overturn this teaching. The problem, as too often is the case, is that many will not allow the Lord’s teaching to overturn (correct) their notions or ideas. The only rights that any person — male or female — has are those that the Lord has given and the Bible recognizes. No one has the right to differ with God!

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Renew Promptly!

More Experiences During the Years of the “Quarantine” — 1954-1962

Bill Cavender

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, Awaits alike th' inevitable hour: The paths

There is a degree of melancholy in my spirit as I reflect upon and remember these times, events, places, and personalities of the past, and see in my mind's eye once again the faces and forms of many brethren who have lived and died and gone on to meet the Lord ahead of me.

of glory lead but to the grave.

This ninth stanza or division is the most familiar of the thirty-two which comprise Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard," composed in 1751. Gray (1716-1771) was the most famous English poet of the mid-eighteenth century. He wrote many "odes," "elegies" (laments, dirges), and "sonnets." This "elegy," written in an unnamed English country churchyard, should be read, studied, and mentally-digested by every English-speaking person in the world. No matter who you are or whatever station you may think you are occupying in your short lifetime in this world, this "elegy," understood and personally applied, will humble your spirit. I will ever be grateful to Mrs. Lacy Kincannon, who taught English to me for four years and Latin for two years, in J.B. Young High School, Bemis, Tennessee, 1941-1944. She required much memorization of English and American poetry in her classes. She would give extra credits to students who committed poetry and literature to memory, beyond and in addition to that which she required of every student. She instilled in me, and in a number of others, a great love for poetry and for our English heritage. Would to God that we had now, and could have again, such teachers as

Mrs. Kincannon and such school systems and curriculums of studies as our country had in the 1930s and 1940s.

Most all of the prominent brethren, elders, and preachers in the "quarantine" movement against the "antis" in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are now deceased. "The paths of glory lead but to the grave," whatever glory there can be, or imagined to be, in dividing churches and brethren, introducing human wisdom, human innovations, human institutions, and centralized programs of men into the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph. 5:5), a kingdom and church purposed in the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:8-12), foretold by Holy Spirit-guided prophets (2 Sam. 7:1-29; Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-3; 9:6-7; etc.), and brought into actual existence by the death of Jesus our Lord and through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God by Holy Spirit-guided apostles of Jesus (Matt. 16:18-19, Mark 9:1; John 3:1-8; Acts 2:1-47; 8:5, 12; 28:30-31; 1 Cor. 2:8-13; 15:24-28; Col. 1:13-14, etc.). All who promoted this terrible, tragic, permanent division among the brethren; all who opposed the revealed truth in the New Testament and were willing to make human additions to the church of Christ; all who changed their views, convictions, and preaching for sake of monetary advantage and notoriety and

prominent places — most have now been cast out into eternity, to meet the Lord in judgment, to give account of the deeds done in the body, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

In the previous essay in this series, I began mentioning some of the people and events which affected me personally during the years of the “quarantine.” By no means can I relate all of these occurrences. I could produce a book of many pages (as could any one of my contemporaries) if I were to write in detail from my written notes I made in those days, and from the papers of the brethren which publicly discussed and debated issues and innovations, problems and people. There is a degree of melancholy in my spirit as I reflect upon and remember these times, events, places, and personalities of the past, and see in my mind’s eye once again the faces and forms of many brethren who have lived and died and gone on to meet the Lord ahead of me.

Contiguous with the “quarantine of the antis” and the rise of “institutionalism” and “centralized cooperative programs” in “mainstream” churches of Christ, was the exaltation of men, a principle and practice which had been opposed, condemned, and rejected by brethren prior to the 1950s. Growing up in the Methodist Church at Bemis, Tennessee, I had heard and seen all of my young life, the preachers and church officials who were called “Reverend,” the “District Superintendent,” the “Presiding Elder,” the “Methodist Bishop of Tennessee,” etc. Often the Superintendent and/or the Presiding Elder came to Bemis to visit for a Sunday service and would speak. Occasionally “The Bishop” would come down from Nashville, visit the people, and speak to his “flock.” The local Methodist preacher was always prefaced by the term and title of “Reverend.”

“Reverend” Carnell, “Reverend” Deshazo, “Reverend” McDaniels, and “Reverend” Jones were the Methodist preachers I knew as a child and

young man. “Reverend” Jones was the Methodist preacher in Bemis when I went off to the Navy and he was still there when I returned home when the war was over, but I was no longer a Methodist! He was the only Methodist preacher in whose home I ever visited. He had a pretty daughter who was a school classmate of mine and I had a youthful “crush” on her for awhile!

When I became acquainted with “churches of Christ,” this was one of the features and marks of identity which were so obvious. Preachers in the “church of Christ” did not call themselves by “titles,” and the members of the churches did not address their preachers by “titles,” such as “Doctor,” “Reverend,” “Pastor,” “Bishop,” etc. All men in the churches were just “brothers” and “brethren,” and no one man was exalted above another. I soon learned that there are no religious titles in the New Testament, that even “brother” was not a religious title, and that Jesus our Lord condemned the exaltation of men who would wear and be called by religious titles (Matt. 23:1-12). I learned that only God is “reverend” (Ps. 111:9) and this adjective and term applying to God should not be used as a “religious title” to exalt men. I learned that “bishop,” “pastor,” “elder,” etc., are good New Testament words, referring to certain qualified men in local churches who do certain works for the Lord and who have designated responsibilities in a church (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:5, 7; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1-4, etc.). I learned that these words are not “titles” but descriptive words of the work men do for the Lord. I learned that the apostle Paul was not “the Right Reverend Paul,” and that the apostle Peter was not “The Holy Father” (John 17:11) and “The Pope of Rome.”

But in the ’50s we began to have “Doctors” among us, running out our ears and running all over the brotherhood. Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., among many others, would declaim against these “cheap degrees” and

harangue those brethren who were being “doctored” by the colleges, and condemn the colleges which were doing the “doctoring.” It was an obvious and glaring demonstration of favoritism, of cronyism, and men exalting the colleges and the colleges exalting the men. There was never any depreciation or degrading of brethren who had “earned” doctor’s degrees, who had done all the academic hard work and labor to achieve and earn a legitimate doctoral degree, in education, in medicine, in law, or in any other professional field. But there was, and is, a real cheapness when men who are Christians and who should know better, receive a “cheap” honorary degree from a college and/or university and then parade themselves about and among their brethren in self-exaltation, as if they had accomplished some great and notable work among the brethren or in other facets of society.

I went for a second meeting with the East Main Street church in Murfreesboro in March 1958. Brother George W. DeHoff, the preacher, had been “doctored” in 1957 by Harding College, in preparation for George’s becoming the President of Magic Valley Christian College, Albion, Idaho, in the fall of 1958. George began immediately to parade and advertise himself as “Doctor DeHoff.” I had somewhat to say about “religious titles” among brethren in a series of radio programs in the winter and early spring of 1958, on WGNS Radio in Murfreesboro, which program was on the air for a month, paid for by a number of brethren in Murfreesboro and Rutherford County. When I went for the meeting, I preached on these matters on Tuesday evening, March 25, along with eating and drinking in the meetinghouse, as East Main had begun doing that. George took great exception to what I had to say (some years before he would have said the same things!), made some caustic remarks publicly at the end of the service, and then we had about an hour’s private discussion afterwards.

On Friday morning of the meeting, brother Harris J. Dark attended the service. Brother Dark had a legitimate, hard-earned "Doctor's Degree" in mathematics. He had been a professor at Lipscomb College in Nashville when I was a student there, 1947-50, but was currently teaching at Middle Tennessee State College. He was one of the few men on the Lipscomb faculty who had an earned doctorate. He would not allow anyone to call him "Doctor Dark." He would tell all of us, faculty and students, that "if you deem me worthy, just call me 'brother Dark.'" I always admired Harris Dark for this and for many other fine qualities he possessed as a Christian and a gentleman. He had one of the most brilliant minds I have ever known a man to have. That Friday morning at the meeting, George arose and said, "We have visiting with us today Doctor Harris Dark. Doctor Dark will answer to Mr. Dark, to Professor Dark, to brother Dark, and to Doctor Dark, and I am asking Doctor Dark to lead our prayer this morning." Brother Dark did so but severely and openly rebuked "Doctor DeHoff" at the conclusion of the service that morning.



My notes of that meeting, written shortly afterwards, say: "Meeting Number 52. This was my second meeting with this church. Two were baptized, one was restored. Preacher here at the time was George W. DeHoff. George had recently been made president of Magic Valley Christian College, Albion, Idaho, and had also recently received an honorary doctor's degree from Harding College. He and I differed quite a bit on some things I preached in this meeting concerning wearing of titles, kitchens in meetinghouses, church support of human institutions, etc. I was invited back for another meeting in the spring of 1960 by the elders." But that meeting was canceled in the early months of 1959. DeHoff left this church in August of 1958, but before leaving he "padded" the eldership and the deacons with his own hand-picked men. Virgil Bradford came there in January of 1959.

In the spring of 1959, a major effort and "campaign" was begun in Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, and adjoining counties and cities of that area of Tennessee, to "get rid of all anti preachers" and to cancel their meetings. George DeHoff participated in this movement but it was mainly led by Virgil Bradford, by Charley Taylor, Sr., an older preacher who preached by Sunday appointments all over that area and who held many meetings for churches in that area, and by Charles Locke, who preached for various churches and who was "circulation manager" for *The Nashville Tennes-*

sean newspaper. These men scoured the county and the area, talking to the churches, putting on the pressure, getting the meetings of the "anti preachers" canceled.

This worked to a great degree. Other preachers were canceled besides me. Churches in that area which canceled meetings with me for 1957-1962 were: Deason, Fosterville, Mars Hill, Christiana, Walter Hill, East Main, Florence, Sharpesville, Rockvale, Bethlehem, and Crescent. Greenbriar, Bearwallow, and Sycamore Chapel in Cheatham County canceled meetings. Yet there were churches which took a strong stand for the truth. Shelbyville Mills in Shelbyville was one of the first and has stood like a "stone

wall" for the truth all through these years. Brethren Richard Poplin, Tommy Brown, Eugene Crawley, and others have stood for truth in Shelbyville through the years. The Bedford church in Bedford County did so. Brother Raymond Ragsdale preached truth there for many years. The Westvue church in Murfreesboro took a strong stand for truth, along with Almaville church in Rutherford County. Red Hill in Cannon County did

so, and soon afterwards a large group of some 50 to 60 brethren left the liberal "church on the hill" in Woodbury and began the West High Street church, which remains faithful until this day. The West Main Street church in Franklin stood strong for truth, as did the Mooresville Pike church in Columbia and the Lanton church in Maury County. Churches canceled me out. Friendships were severed and fellowships were broken. But Almaville, Shelbyville Mills, Westvue, West High Street and other churches in Middle Tennessee began to have me for meetings. Later there were many, many of them, all over that middle area of the state as more and more brethren and churches saw what the problems were, what the "issues" were all about, and took a stand for the truth of the New Testament and the Lord's church revealed therein.

I had two excellent meetings with the Crescent church in Rutherford County. In August 1953, I wrote: "Meeting Number 21. Ten days' meeting, 21 sermons. Three baptized. I stayed with brother and sister Mack H. Jones, Route 1, Murfreesboro, during this meeting." In July 1956, I wrote: "Meeting Number 39. This was my second meeting at Crescent, 8 days, 15 sermons. Eight people were baptized. They were: Ed Todd, Jr., age 23; Mrs. Jean Davenport, age 28; Elizabeth Coursey, age 12; James Coursey, age 15; Faye Eaton, age 12; Patricia Whitworth, age 11; Glenda Gaither, age 15; Faye Bryant, age 15. I stayed with brother and sister

Mack Jones, Route 1, Murfreesboro, during the meeting.” During this meeting I preached on “the issues” and spoke on “The Power and Authority of God’s Word,” “The Work of the Church,” “Faith, Opinions, and Expedients,” “The Church and Human Institutions,” and “The Needs of the Church,” among other subjects. The brethren all liked this, we had a great meeting, and they invited me to come again in the summer of 1959!

Brethren DeHoff, Bradford, Taylor, and Locke went to work. Along with others, the Crescent church yielded to their pressure and canceled a meeting scheduled for the summer of 1959. But a number of brethren in the congregation objected. So we had an “Old-Fashioned Tent Meeting,” September 14-23, 1959 on the property next to the Crescent meetinghouse, property owned by brother Joe Herrod, a member at Crescent. My notes of this meeting are: “Tent Meeting in Crescent Community, Rutherford County, Tenn., Sept. 14-23, 1959. Some of the brethren did not go along with the cancellation of my meeting in July, and asked me to have a meeting under a tent and preach on the issues and problems in churches of Christ. These brethren were: Fred Eaton, Batey Herrod, Joe Herrod, John Douglas, and Bobby Eaton. Curbs Haynes in Murfreesboro also assisted much. The elders of the Westvue church in Murfreesboro (brethren Bill Watts, Arnold Givens, Lillard Bailey, Jimmy Nelson, O.A. Lamb; Watts later left Westvue and went with a new, institutional church, Hamilton Drive) paid part of the expenses of the meeting. The meeting was held with good interest, large crowds, and much good was done. I stayed mostly with brother and sister Curbs Haynes and brother and sister Jack Kelton, in Murfreesboro. Also spent a night with brother and sister Houston H. Jones, Route 1, Bell Buckle, Tenn. One was baptized, Peggy Douglas, daughter of brother and sister John Douglas. People attended from five counties in Middle Tennessee. Preachers who attended were Tommy McClure of Franklin; Bill Lewis and Roy Fuston of Woodbury; Clifford Brothers, Jr. and Richard Weaver of Murfreesboro; Dorris V. Rader of Chapel Hill; Herschel Patton and Dick Poplin of Shelbyville; and Billy Ashworth of Franklin.”

There were some interesting “sidelights” of this meeting. Brethren prepared the field for the tent, rented chairs from funeral homes, and a large tent from Nashville. Brother Curtis Haynes, part owner of Haynes Brothers Building Supplies in Murfreesboro, sent a truck to Nashville for the tent. Several paid my expenses from Texas and paid me \$400.00 for the meeting, a ten night meeting. Those doing so were: Fred Eaton, Bobby Eaton, Curtis Haynes, Jack Kelton, Joe and Batey Herrod, and the elders of the Westvue church.

We printed a circular prior to the meeting, mailing it to every address on the rural routes in that area, with the sermon topics, inviting everyone to the meeting, with time at the end of each lesson for discussion, debate, comments,

etc., if someone wanted to disagree with what had been taught. The sermon topics were, in order: “Authority — Human and Divine” (a large painted cloth chart); “Impeaching The Wisdom of God” (a large painted paper chart); “The Unity of The Spirit” (a blackboard chalk chart); “Churches Can Cooperate” (large painted chart); “The Benevolent Work of the Church” (blackboard chalk chart); “The One Body — Ephesians 4:4-6” (a blackboard chart); “Second John 9-11,” preached at Westvue church on Sunday morning, Sept. 20; “Worldliness in the Church” (a blackboard chart, preached under the tent on Sunday night, Sept. 20); “The Church and the Individual,” Galatians 6:1-10; James 1:22-27 (large paper chart); “The Christian Church, The Bible, and the Church of Christ” (a large painted cloth chart); “What Doth Hinder Me?” Acts 8:36; Galatians 5:7 (a blackboard chalk chart). There were discussions after the services, all were friendly, no “institutional brethren” came to the meeting, but a good number of denominational neighbors did!

Prior to this meeting brethren Mack Jones, Leonard Whitworth, and others of the Crescent church went up and down the roads in that entire section of the county, asking folks not to attend this meeting, no matter who and what those folks and neighbors were in religious matters. Some came to the meeting out of curiosity. There were no untoward incidents. No one “got out of sorts.” One “faithful,” well-known preacher in that area, who was “preaching the principles” to the large county-seat church where he was their preacher, attended one night. He refused to announce this meeting on his daily radio program, lest it “should cause a problem” where he was “preaching the principles.” Later he was “fired,” the church was untaught, and the entire church went the liberal, institutional route in thinking, convictions, and practices, and his “preaching the principles” did not save anyone from error. *If you refuse to preach the truth of God plainly and identify to the people what and whom you are talking about, you will lose those souls every time. You won't save anybody by “preaching the principles!” Tell folks what you are talking about!*

That same summer, June 22-July 1, 1959, I held a third meeting with the Greenbriar church in Cheatham County, Tennessee, a ten night meeting. I had been very close to this church, as I had a weekly Monday night Bible class with them for over a year in 1950-51, when Marinel and I lived in Ashland City, the county seat, and preached for the Ashland City church. Too, I would preach every first Sunday afternoon of the month at Greenbriar. My notes of this meeting say: “Meeting Number 61. This was my third meeting with this church. Seven were baptized. They were: Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Dozier, Jean Louallen, Eadie Stewart, Sandra Mitchell, Sue Dozier, and Peggy Dozier. I again stayed with brother and sister Doyle Williams in Ashland City. Fine crowds attended, with the building being full several nights. The man preaching there, John Hurt

of Nashville, tried to stop the meeting the third night of the meeting (Wednesday, June 24) because I was going to preach on church cooperation and church benevolence on Thursday and Friday nights. He resigned when the brethren would not stop the meeting. He didn't show up anymore, and we had a fine meeting in every way." One other interesting (?) sidelight of this meeting was that brother John Stewart was going to "give him a whipping" if I preached on those forbidden Bible subjects on Thursday and Friday evenings. Brother Williams told me that "John is a coward, he won't show up, go on and preach, and we'll see that nothing happens!" I preached, nothing happened, and brother Stewart attended there no more. They asked me to return for another meeting in 1961, but within a year they canceled that appointment.

There were many, many other incidents and events during the "quarantine years," imposed by the *Gospel Advocate*. Brethren seemed to relish alienation and separation,

working violently and aggressively to effect division in the churches throughout our country, as the "quarantine" spread. By the early 60s, churches and brethren were alienated. There were lawsuits over property in some places. I do not recall any faithful brethren "taking the brethren to law" over property. It was always the "liberals" and "institutional advocates" who did so, to force faithful brethren out of congregations and to seize church property. Those were sad, sorrowful, tragic days and times. Within ten to twelve years a growing, peaceful, united religious body was split asunder by human wisdom, human institutions, and by exalting prominent men and congregations. (In our next article, we will go on to other matters.)

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Beyond Sad

Arnold Thompson

If we understand that people are uniquely human and genetically distinct both before and after birth why are



we aborting life? People directly involved in the act of abortion and their supporters were given the right to life. They were given the right to be born. "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). The right to be born stems from God and is sanctioned by all men who believe that, once conceived, we are equally alive and unique before our creator. So why abortion, where one lives and another does not? Whether the motivation to kill is caused by racial bias, irresponsibility, ignorance, or illicit sex, lives are wrongfully taken.

Millions of beautiful human lives are being ended through induced abortion. Are you or I to arbitrarily decide this?

Man's inhumanity to man seems never to cease. We remember with justified horror the racial bias that caused the untimely end of millions of human lives in the Nazi German death camps. Those people were also uniquely human and genetically distinct. Society denies the right of that government to do what it did.

Future generations will also look back in horror at us for our rampant legal abortion of babies.

Yes, it is indeed beyond sad

3602 W. Townley Ave., Phoenix, Arizona 85051

“Ye Are the Light of the World”

Jim McDonald

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put under the bushel, but on

the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

This excerpt from Jesus’ mountain sermon is an appeal for godly lives for its secondary purpose that it will have a good influence upon others. First and foremost, godly lives results from one coming to love God and hate the sin that separated him from God. Men should live godly lives because they want to do and be right with God and because love for God works a sincere and genuine love for other men. As with other things, Christians are called “lights of the world” because we imitate him who is the light of the world. Jesus said, “I am the light of the



world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). He is the true light (John 1:9). The true light is the source of power and energy, thus light.

Christians are “lesser lights,” reflective of that true light. When Moses gave the Holy Spirit’s account of God’s work on the fourth day of creation, he wrote: “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night” (Gen. 1:16). In a similar way, Jesus is the “greater light”; Christians are the “lesser lights.” The moon does not originate light; it only reflects the sun’s rays. In the same way Christians are “light reflectors.” The characteristic of light is to dispel darkness. A flashlight shining on a dark, moonless night cannot dispel all the night’s darkness but to those creatures in that darkness, its rays are what they see! Jesus said: “The people that sat

in darkness saw a great light, And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, To them did light spring up” (Matt. 4:16). So Christians as “children of Light” are to be “seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15). Since the purpose of light is to dispel darkness, it must be placed in a prominent place. It must not have a basket over it to obstruct its ray; it must be allowed to shine unencumbered to give light to all in darkness. We can let our lights (good works) shine that we may bring glory to ourselves. If that is the reason why we do good deeds to others or live good, clean, wholesome lives, their praise is all the reward we will receive (Matt. 6:1-4). But on the other hand, we must not do evil or fail to do good lest our good deeds should be seen of others. God knows our motives (as do we) and will reward us accordingly. A worthy son honors his parents and light bearing Christians glorify our heavenly Father!

Pearl Hatcher wrote the following familiar words:

Oh Christian, do not hide your light, for ye are the light of the World
But keep it trimmed and burning bright, for ye are the light of the world.
Go show to all the path of right, for ye are the light of the world,
Go bring the straying back to light, for ye are the light of the world.
Oh do not let your light burn low, for ye are the light of the world.
But keep it bright and onward go, for ye are the light of the world.

How are our lights burning, dear brethren?

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What Does the Future Hold?

W.R. Jones

When one has preached as long as I have, he is confronted with a great many questions. Presently, the most frequent question is, “Will we have another apostasy in the church of Christ?” My answer is “yes.” Of course, I am not a prophet and I cannot know the future, but an observation of our history and the word of God leads me to the conclusion that apostasy will come again. Paul wrote; “For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). I don’t take this to mean that God is pleased with factions, but they do provide a reason for cleansing and leaving the church purified that it may carry on in presenting the truth to a lost and dying world. When the Lord’s church becomes top-heavy with error or worldliness, relief is necessary. Jesus said, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come” (Luke 17:1).

Are we in the throes of an apostasy now? I think not! A general apostasy in the church is brought about by a corruption of the organization, mission, or worship of the church, and I don’t see that on the horizon at this time. Let us be careful in our zeal to fight for the truth that we not create a “straw man” apostasy. As a youth in rural East Texas, I learned that you shouldn’t lance a boil before it is ready. Teach the truth and warn against the possibility of apostasy. Help Christians recognize the signs of apostasy, but don’t try to conduct a war when the cause is not sufficiently present.

Are there signs of weakness among us that crack the door for the rise of apostasy? Yes, I believe there are. As I see it, this weakness demonstrates itself, not so much in the preaching of error, but in “watered-down” sermons. I have preached sermons in recent times that set forth the authority of the word and the identity of the church, and some Christians have made remarks that led me to believe they had

not heard such a lesson in years. Somebody is not minding the store when simple fundamental sermons astound some members who have been in the church for some years. No preacher should stay on the same subject all the time but, brethren, the world cannot know this marvelous gospel if we fail to tell it in all its strength and fullness.

As I fade off the scene, I am greatly concerned about the rising tide of worldliness within the body of Christ. I rejoice that we have many strong Christians who give no quarters to worldliness, no not for a minute, but that is not true of all. We are bombarded with iniquity on every side. In some cases it is being pumped into our homes via TV and videos almost around the clock. Instead of changing the world we are allowing the world to change us. We must not let the world shape us in its mold, “Be not conformed to this world . . .” we are admonished (Rom. 12:1-2). Why are we so being influenced by worldliness? I think some Christians are just in love with worldly ways and worldly things and don’t want to hear anything which condemns their interest. There are others who know it is wrong, but don’t have the courage to stand against it. There are others who are just ignorant because spineless teachers have dodged the subject.

Where shall we point the finger of blame? Point the finger directly at preachers and elders who are not exposing and condemning worldliness. Some leaders are so afraid of losing people from their membership that they opt to skirt the problem in many cases. When I was a young preacher, I heard a preacher proverb which said, “A congregation rarely rises above the strength, life and attitude of her elders and preacher.” Over my 60 years of preaching I have observed this to be pretty much the truth. How can we cure this evil malady? *Get back to the basics, to the fundamentals, and “tell it like it is.”* “But, I might have to move if I did that,” says one. My advice to such a one is this — have

faith and courage, preach the truth, condemn sin and error, and let the Lord plot your course. He promised to take care of you, and he will. Don't try to impose your personal "hang-ups," but preach the word, plainly and lovingly. This is what we so badly need everywhere.

The Problem We Face Is Liberalism

Let us define "liberalism." Liberalism is an attitude and because it is an attitude, a philosophy, a theology, it is difficult to get a grip on it. Because of this we have been compelled to debate the symptoms through the years. The *World Book Dictionary* gives a good definition of liberalism: "Tolerant, not narrow in one's views and ideas, broad minded, not strict, a liberal interpretation of a rule; giving the general thought, not a word-for-word rendering. In theology; a recent movement in Protestantism stressing the ethical nature of religion rather than its authoritarian and formal aspects. It emphasizes the freedom of the mind to satisfy its own spiritual needs." I preach a series on the "Fruits of Liberalism" in which I describe the rise of liberalism in the '40s and '50s. This article does not allow room for that discussion, but believe me, this is a problem that never does completely go away. I believe I see signs that it is rearing its ugly head again.

One advantage of living a long time, as I have, is the opportunity to observe things "come full circle." I witnessed the rise of the "Social Gospel" from start to finish. It started very small and became very large, because liberalism has no stopping place. Let one cow through the gap and the whole herd will follow.

I recently received an e-mail about a "Young People's Praise Weekend," called "Oasis 2003." Included in this program was a "lock in" at the Coppell Aquatic Center on Friday night which was to be hosted by individual Christians. It was announced that their speaker would be Hill Roberts, a physicist who has worked with NASA. The "lock in" promised a midnight surprise and the "Magical World of Arthur," which has been performed from Hollywood to Puerto Vallarta. Other features include games, movies, karaoke, hoops, volleyball, and foto fun. At the church building on Saturday a "Light the Fire . . . laid-back devotional and old-fashioned bonfire" was planned. On Sunday a "communion service" followed by another speech from Roberts and an "Acappella Praise Worship" to finish the event.

I appreciate Christians who take an interest in young people. I would like to think the brethren promoting "Oasis 2003" had drawn a *distinct* line between *individual action* and the *work and mission* of the church. I will give them the benefit of doubt. As I observed the rise of the "Social Gospel" years ago, I saw such events take on more and more importance and in the absence of strong preaching and leadership, *the line began to fade away*, and finally it

just didn't matter. I saw good brethren getting together to play ball. Later they became more organized and joined leagues to play denominational teams. Little by little they became known in the eyes of others as a "church of Christ team." In the absence of strong teaching in the congregation where they worshiped, *the line began to diminish* and in time it really didn't make any difference. *Brethren, we better keep the line bright.*

How to Avoid Liberalism in the Future

Remember this wise saying: "Those who do not remember their history are destined to repeat it." Remembering has always been important in the sight of God. The church at Ephesus was admonished to remember from whence they had fallen and turn back (Rev. 2:5; 3:3). If you have studied the Old Testament you know that Israel was guilty of this time and again. "They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt" (Ps. 106:21). Study the history of the church over the past 60 years and you will see what liberalism did to the church in the late '40s, '50s and '60s. Don't forget, not for a minute, that it can happen again.

Never allow yourself to want the church to be more than the Lord intended it to be. The Lord, who shed his blood for the church, never intended it to be a "social club," so don't desire it. He never intended the church to be an "arm of politics," so don't desire it. Christ never intended that his church be "compatible with the world," so don't desire it. As some preachers of old have said, "Just let the church be the church." Stick with evangelism, edification, benevolence to needy saints, and prescribed New Testament worship and you likely won't go wrong.

Never allow yourself to get carried away with the "big church syndrome." If a congregation is big in numbers as a result of "seeking and saving the lost," it is a wonderful thing. On the other hand if people get carried away with the "bigness craze," it can cause a church to compromise the truth and do some strange things. Along with the "bigness craze" comes the fear of losing members. For instance, the preacher presents a lesson on "authority" and certain weak members object, and threaten to leave and the elders give in, all in the name of maintaining large numbers. We can avoid this problem if the preacher will speak sound doctrine and the elders will back it up one hundred percent and let the chips fall where they may.

Never tolerate a preacher who ignores preaching on the identity of the church — things like worship, name, organization, mission, discipline, plan of salvation, establishment of the church along with exposing sin and error of every kind. We are a people of identity and when we lose it, we are nothing. Constant philosophical preaching may fill the pews, but it won't strengthen and stabilize the church of our Lord. Evangelists need to refresh their memory about their divine format, which is "preach the word! Be ready in

season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). Preachers need to learn an old East Texas proverb: “You have to put the salve where the sore is.”

Let us teach our children what they need to hear. We should teach our children what is meant by “sound doctrine.” Teach them that God “says what he means and means what he says.” Teach them that the word of God is not relative. Demonstrate a genuine respect for the divine constitution before your children. Teach them to hide the word in their hearts and to hate evil. “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11). “Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way” (v. 104).

Never allow some college or magazine run by brethren to do your thinking for you. I don’t think it is sinful for Christians to publish a magazine nor do I think it is wrong for brethren to operate an educational institution in which the Bible is taught. I have profited from both, but they must not become our guides. Read and consider what is taught and written, but get in the Book and see what the Lord has said. Consider history and you will see that the above are often the seat of apostasy when they lose respect for soundness.

Never move authority from the divine Book to the church. I saw this take place in the late ’40s and ’50s. It goes like this: (1) The church of Christ is the Lord’s church; (2) The church of Christ has the Truth; (3) The church of Christ adheres to the New Testament, *therefore what the church does must be right*. What happened? Little by little they moved authority from *the Book to the church*. When this becomes full grown, *anything goes!* The only way to stay sound is to constantly go back to the divine measuring stick, the New Testament.

May I offer a word of advice to brethren who are speaking out on what they view to be threats to the church. I know something about speaking out with the truth whether it be popular or unpopular. I spent over a dozen years of my life in an intense battle against the liberalism that made havoc of the church in the ’50s and ’60s. I think however, that some brethren are making a mistake in their approach in this present battle. What is the mistake? Some brethren are sending a message which says *every church which doesn’t deal with indications of weakness and error just exactly like we do or the quick response with which we respond, is an unsound church*. This is sad, because it is drawing a line of fellowship among churches too quickly. I know of churches that some brethren consider unsound which stand in doctrine and practice just where they stand, but they are looked upon as not being sound because they don’t deal with things quite the same way. It is possible for brethren to assume an attitude of “Me and my wife,

my son John and his wife, us four and no more.” I believe some, by word and print, are alienating churches and that is not what is needed.

Well then, what is needed? I don’t claim to be a well spring of wisdom, but I have been fighting for soundness and carefully observing for a long time. *I think what we need is information, fair and balanced*. Information presented without a divisive spirit. In the battles of the ’50s and ’60s I learned a valuable lesson — I saw the *power of the truth*. When confronted with rising “liberalism,” we will never save everyone, because some brethren stop their ears to the truth, but I have great confidence in our brethren when they are properly informed. We can’t coerce or goad brethren into taking a stand for what is right, but we can supply them with what is needed to make up their own minds. We survived the last division much better than our brethren did in the instrumental music, Missionary Society conflict, simply because we were better informed in the word of God, and we gave that information to the people. Let us not try to force our issues by drawing lines too quickly. Let us lovingly and forcefully give brethren what they need to hear and most of them will arise and stand on solid ground.

Let us avoid the party spirit. When there are pretty serious conflicts among our brethren, there is a tendency for us to develop parties. In my observation this has never helped us solve problems. We seem to think the more preachers and churches we can line up to our way of thinking, the more likely we are to win the battle. This is not so. Battles for the Lord are not won with a “party” but with the truth. During the battles of the ’50s and ’60s, I heard a good many brethren say; “W.R., name the preachers standing for or against this, and I will tell you where I stand.” They were simply saying, “I am willing to join the party if certain preachers are in it.” This is not the way you determine what is right and what is wrong. “You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free” is still true today.

If you profit from anything I have said, I am glad. On the other hand you may push it aside as the babblings of an old man. Whatever, I thank you for your considerations.

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Seeing Ahead by Looking Back (2)

H. Osby Weaver

Every apostasy that has occurred in the past finds those who have promoted them using similar arguments in efforts to justify their departure. It is hoped that calling attention to what they have said and looking at where they have gone will serve as a deterrent to those who are in the process of removing themselves from the faith.

Some may wonder why we need that kind of admonition at this time. Unfortunately we are experiencing a departure from the faith in a very subtle manner by those who declare that Romans 14 authorizes fellowship with religious teaching and practice with those in religious error as long as we conceive that they are honest.

They will not contend that we can fellowship all religious error — certainly not mechanical instruments of music in the worship, salvation by faith only, and such like. Since they place restrictions on what error *cannot* be fellowshiped, it seems to me that they should provide us with a list of what *can* be fellowshiped. Insofar as I know, no such list is available. If such lists were available, how long would it be before they would add to it?

The greatest danger that I see in this is not those misusing Romans 14, but the actions of those who declare that they do not believe the consequences that follow. As a result, they will use those who advocate this error in their gospel meetings, lectureships, seminars, and song leading. This error allows these false teachers on divorce and remarriage to go right along supporting and defending it while declaring that they do not believe it.

If the position is the truth, and they do not believe it, then it follows that they do not believe the truth. On the other hand, if the position on Romans 14 is false, then those using those who teach it are having fellowship with “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11). So which is it? Not believing the truth or fellowshiping error? Either or both is unacceptable to the Lord.

Those fellowshiping errors by using those who are teaching them are just one step away from completely

embracing the error. Look back at past departures and see. The next step for them will be affirming the error, embracing it completely, and standing with those whom they formerly said were promoting something which they did not believe.

If one thinks that he can deviate from the truth in some perceived, small way then stop, he is deceiving himself. Error does not work that way. The Galatians may have thought that they could do that according to the rendering of Galatians 1:6 (KJV): “I marvel that ye are so soon *removed* from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” The ASV notes what may have been considered an inequity and renders the passage: “I marvel that ye are so quickly *removing* from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel.” Instead of using the past tense as if something occurred in the past but does not continue, the ASV uses the present showing that once one departs, he seldom ever stops and stays in the beginning departure. All we have to do is look back and see how apostasies develop and it can be seen that once the departure occurs, there is seldom any stopping.

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“These men . . . they trouble our city”

Nathan Soliday

(Editors’s Note: Nathan is one of the deacons of the Westside church of Christ in Salem, Indiana where John Isaac Edwards preaches.)

A reading of Acts chapter 16 finds Paul and Silas preaching the gospel of Christ. During their journey, the truth was being spread, churches were being “established in the faith” and the saints “increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5).

After arriving in Philippi and converting Lydia and her household, they came upon a woman possessed with a spirit. This damsel brought her owners much gain through her soothsaying (Acts 16:16).

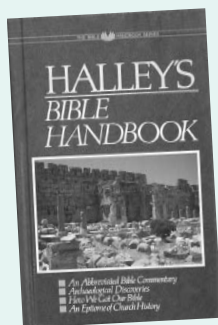
After many days of coming into contact with this woman, Paul, through the name of Jesus Christ, cast out the evil spirit from this woman (Acts 16:18). This brought a reaction from the damsel’s owners as they saw their livelihood and hope for gain was gone (Acts 16:19). Notice what these men charged Paul and Silas with, as they brought them into the city: “These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city!” (Acts 16:20).

Isn’t it interesting that as Paul and Silas were out working for the Lord, converting souls and helping to establish churches during their journey, that these men saw them as “troubling their city”?

This trend continues today, even among our own brethren, who seem to look upon those working to teach the truth as being troublemakers. Many faithful gospel preachers are being branded in this very way because of their strong desire to stand for the truth, and their desire to stop false doctrine in its tracks.

Notice who Paul labels as the troublemakers in Galatians 1:6-9: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be *some that trouble you*, and would *pervert the gospel of Christ*. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

It is not the one who is preaching the truth on these matters of the day who is causing the trouble. Paul tells us it is the one who perverts the gospel of Christ. May the Lord bless faithful brethren who continually stand for the truth, and who are working to stop the spread of false doctrine among our brethren today.



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The Shame of Nakedness

Steve Wallace

As we will note, this subject has to do with how we are to dress. A lot of people do not seem to care about how they dress, but as I hope we will all see, the Lord does care. A proper sense of shame will affect how we dress. However, we need to recognize that our sense of shame can be affected by other things and fail to operate properly.

Shame is a strong motivating force in people's lives. It constrains people not to seek too lofty a position lest they be seen by others to be unworthy of it and are made to feel ashamed (Luke 14:8-9). It can cause a person to be responsible and hard working because he would be ashamed to beg (Luke 16:3). It can motivate Christians to live like the world wants them to live. Hence, the Bible counsels: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (1 Pet. 4:16).

There are things we as Christians should be ashamed of and things we should not be ashamed of. However, as we will note in our lesson today, people can become confused with regards to things they should or should not be ashamed of. So it is with nakedness.

The Bible teaches nakedness to be a cause for shame (Rev. 3:18; 16:15). By contrast, before our first parents sinned "they were both naked . . . and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). As we will note, ever since our first parents sinned the Bible has associated nakedness with shame.

As we will note, this subject has to do with how we are to dress. A lot of people do not seem to care about how they dress, but as I hope we will all see, the Lord does care. A proper sense of shame will affect how we dress. However, we need to recognize that our sense of shame can be affected by other things and fail to operate

properly.

The Danger of Acquired Callousness

1. Failure to blush when we should blush. This failure was an indicator of how callous ancient Judah had become (Jer. 6:16). Normally, when we know something is wrong but do it anyhow, we feel shame. However, through continued sinning and because those around us see nothing wrong with a certain sin, we can sin and not be ashamed. This can happen with regards to nakedness. While not being a regular reader of Ann Landers, the following letter to her caught my eye under the headline, "Grinning and baring it is an honorable profession."

Dear Ann Landers,
You have printed letters from doctors, lawyers, nurses, secretaries, auto mechanics and schoolteachers, but I can't recall ever seeing a letter from a stripper. It could be that I am the first.

. . . When I entertain at a bachelor party, I explain the rules up front: not touching, no dirty language, no photos or videos, and no making dates for later. I do my number and ~~give them the circus~~ give them the circus's worth and

. . . . Those who think stripping is obscene should go to the beach and check out the latest swim wear. They'll see four inches of fabric held together with a string. I feel no need to apologize for my profession. It takes talent and poise to grin and bare it. — Just a working girl

(*The Stars and Stripes*, 10/8/95)

Our point is clear: One can get to the point where he or she is naked and not ashamed when one should be. It can still get worse.

2. “Glory in shame” (Phil. 3:19).

An example of this in our day is non-Christians who brag about drunkenness or fornication. Another good example is when a woman decides to dress provocatively to “impress” men (Prov. 11:22).

Surely all Christians can see the danger of such shamelessness as we have described herein. When we speak of the shame of nakedness, we must first understand what the Bible means by the word.

Nakedness in Scripture

1. The meaning of the word in Scripture. In the New Testament it is defined, “1. naked, stripped, bare. . . . 2. without an outer garment. . . . 3. poorly dressed. . . . 4. uncovered, bare” *Arndt and Gingrich* 167-168). The meaning in Old Testament is, “Naked . . . but naked is also used for — (a) ragged, badly clad. . . . (b) used of one who, having taken off his mantle, goes only clad in his tunic” (*Gesenius* 653). In Genesis 2:25 the word refers to nudity. However, in Genesis 3:7-10 it can be seen that one can be naked in spite of the fact that he or she is wearing clothes. The word “apron” in v. 7 means, “girdle, loin covering, belt” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon [BDB]*, 292).

In light of these facts, when is a person considered naked in the sight of God? When should one feel the shame of nakedness? Adam and Eve were not totally naked and yet they felt the shame of nakedness.

2. When God covered nakedness.

In Exodus 28:42, God commanded “breeches” to be made to cover nakedness. The word is defined as follows:

1. “Drawers” (*BDB*, 488)

2. “Trousers or drawers. This noun occurs. . . . five times in Ex and Lev and once in Ezk 44:18. Trousers were ordered by God in the interests of decorum” (*Theological Wordbook of the O.T. [T.H.W.O.T.]*, 1:445).
3. “Exodus 28:42, unto the thighs — i.e., to the bottom of the thighs where they adjoin the knee” (G. Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, 1:293).
4. “Priests called to officiate at the high altar . . . above the eyes of the watching multitude wore a cloth covering hips and thighs, made of fine linen like the rest of their garments” (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible [ZPE]*, 1:652).

In Genesis 3:21 God made “coats” to cloth Adam and Eve. The word is given the following meanings:

1. “A tunic . . . generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees, rarely to the ankles” (*Gesenius* 420).
2. “Tunic, a long shirt-like garment, usually of linen” (*T.H.W.O.T.* 1:459).
3. The tunics worn by Adam and Eve were of animal skins (Gen. 3:21). . . . The tunic worn by the priests had long sleeves, and it extended down to the ankles, and was fastened about the loins by a girdle (Exod 29:5, 8, 9; 39:27). . . . Joseph’s “coat of many colors” (Gen. 37:3, KJV) or “long robe with sleeves” (RSV) was lit *a tunic reaching to the feet*. . . .

Slaves, laborers, and prisoners wore a more abbreviated style tunic (sometime only to their knees and without sleeves) as appear on the Behistune Rock. In the Assyrian relief depicting the siege and capture of Lachish by Sennacherib (701 B.C.) there are Jewish captives (male and female) wearing long, dress-like tunics which reach almost to the ankles. (*ZPE*, 1:896).

As one reviews what we have learned under this point about nakedness in Scripture and the clothing God made, he should expect that when the thighs are uncovered a person is considered naked. This is what one finds in Isaiah 47:1-3. This is significant when one considers that nakedness is shameful from Genesis to Revelation.

Keeping Ourselves from Such Shame Today

1. Entertainment and recreation.

It must be asked whether movies and TV which portray nakedness are fitting for Christians to watch. The meaning of nakedness should influence one’s attitude towards going to beaches or swimming pools where members of the opposite sex are present in the swim wear common to our day. The above words of Ann Lander’s stripper about modern swim wear (she might be a little more unbiased in her view of such clothing than some brethren!) ought to make us realize we should not go to places where such attire is worn.

2. Dress with sense of shame.

There are simply items Christians should not wear when in public where the opposite sex can see them. Our clothing ought to reflect the difference in the clothing made by God versus that made by man. Coupling the meaning of nakedness with the Bible’s teaching on modesty (1 Tim. 2:9) should take such things as halter tops, shorts above the knee, low neckline tops and backless dresses out of the Christian’s wardrobe. “How little clothing can I get by with” is a dangerous game for God-fearing people to play.

Conclusion

As the summer once more approaches let us all think seriously about the clothing we wear and dress with a sense of shame and modesty. What we wear is part of our walk with God.

The Struggle For Truth: 1949-1956

Paul K. Williams

It was the summer of 1956. The letter from the 21st and Eisenhower church in Odessa, Texas read something like this:

We elders understand that you take the *Gospel Guardian* position. We gave you \$400 for your travel fund to go to South Africa. We do not believe a preacher should preach what the elders do not believe.

I replied:

I do not take a position because of any paper. I try to teach what the Bible teaches. Here is what I believe. . . . (I then outlined my position against institutionalism). I also believe that a preacher must preach the truth, regardless of what the elders believe.

They replied: "Send us our money back."

It was a strange time in the history of the Lord's church in America. When I met George T. Jones in East Texas he said, "Paul, I don't know what is going to happen. This church could split this week." Preachers and churches were taking their stand for or against church support of orphan homes and the Herald of Truth, and the complete split which had been threatening for some time was actually happening. In many ways it was frightening.

I was born in 1930 and grew up in San Bernardino, California. During my teen years brother Wright Randolph was the preacher, and I thank God for his teaching. He helped to put a strong foundation under my Bible study. I gained a conviction which I have never lost — that we must have biblical authority for everything we do.

In August 1949 after spending a year in the army near Tacoma, Washington, I married my long-time sweetheart, Helen Orendorff, and we drove to Abilene, Texas where I started my sophomore year. We were both 19. I took a major in Bible and a minor in Greek, graduating in 1952. Fellow students included Johnny Ramsey, Jimmy Jividen, Tex Williams, Foy and Bryan Vinson, Paul Earnhart, and

Bob Owen. Homer Hailey was my teacher for the first two years before he went to Florida Christian College.

The institutional issues were being discussed, but I was not as aware of them as I was destined to become. I remember that in about 1946-47 when living in San Bernardino, I subscribed to the *Bible Banner*, the publication of Foy Wallace, Jr. and Roy Cogdill. It happened that I happened to take it just as there was an ugly slanging match between Wallace and N.B. Hardeman, the president of Freed-Hardeman College. I canceled my subscription and wrote them to tell why. (You see, I have always been outspoken!) But, at that time, the issue was whether it is scriptural for churches to support colleges. This was an issue on which most in the church were agreed. All seemed opposed to church support of colleges.

It was while I was at Abilene Christian College that the sponsoring churches really got going, with the Broadway church in Lubbock (probably the biggest church of Christ in the world at that time) sponsoring the work in Germany, another Texas church sponsoring the work in Italy, and another the work in Japan. New colleges were established and new orphan homes. I remember Homer Hailey commenting that if a sponsoring church did nothing more than forward money to the preachers he couldn't see anything wrong with it. But of course, the sponsoring church was much more than a forwarding agency!

It was because of the work of the Central Church in Cleburne, Texas, the sponsoring church for South Africa, that I became interested in preaching in South Africa. Reuel Lemmons, their preacher, came to ACC and talked about the work. It was then I made up my mind to go, if possible.

It was my last year at ACC when the 5th and Highland church in Abilene took the sponsorship of Herald of Truth. It sounded great! A half-hour, professionally presented, nation-wide radio program on Sunday afternoons — at a bargain price! The Lutherans had "The Lutheran Hour," the Seventh Day Adventists had "Voice of Prophecy," the Catholics had Bishop Sheen. Now the church of Christ had

“Herald of Truth.” I recall being very excited about it.

On graduation in 1952 Helen and I drove to The Dalles, Oregon via San Bernardino. The elders in the San Bernardino church asked me to preach on Wednesday night, and I preached a stirring (I thought) sermon on the church’s responsibility to the community in which I used Galatians 6:10 to “prove” that the church should help the poor of the world as it is able. (I still have the notes.) Afterward one of the elders spoke to me and mildly suggested I needed to study the matter some more. And when I suggested to one of the men that he should take the *Firm Foundation*, he said, “I will take *Firm Foundation* if you will take *The Gospel Guardian*.” I agreed, and I am thankful to this day that I did. Both of these were weekly publications, and I read everything in them.

In The Dalles we were 90 miles east of Portland and 20 to 30 miles from the nearest two preachers. I was pretty well on my own to do my own studying, especially in those years before e-mail. I was not influenced by family, since my mother and my sister were the only two “family” who were Christians. I was hardly acquainted with any influential preachers. So study I did.

I saw right away that there was a serious issue to be decided. I already knew that church entertainment was not authorized. Now I needed to study about orphan homes and sponsoring churches, especially the Herald of Truth.

The first article of criticism of Herald of Truth which I recall reading was written by Glen Wallace, the preacher for the college church in Abilene. He wrote in the *Firm Foundation* questioning whether Herald of Truth could be called the work of the 5th and Highland church when the treasurer of Herald of Truth was not even a member of that congregation! But though the *Firm Foundation* carried that article, it was firmly on the side of the sponsoring churches.

The Gospel Guardian was going full blast writing against the church support of orphan homes and Herald of Truth. I will always be indebted to the powerful articles written by Yater Tant and Roy Cogdill and others. Always appealing to scriptural authority, they analyzed the defenses of institutions made by their supporters.

I prayed, and I studied. I talked to other preachers when possible. And more and more I could see that the sponsoring church system which makes the elders of one church the receiving, overseeing, and disbursing board for a work, just as the missionary society is, has no scriptural authority. The limitations of the oversight of elders found in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-3 are very clear. Their oversight ends with the members of the congregation where they are. And I saw that church support of orphan homes and colleges

were alike wrong. The church has authority only to send contributions to needy congregations.

This meant that I was out-of-step with the leaders of the congregation where I was preaching. We got along well, but my preaching about institutionalism and eating social meals in the church building was falling on deaf ears. As time went on and as these issues became more acute in the brotherhood, I could see that my time in The Dalles was coming to an end.

At the same time I decided that I had enough preaching experience to go to South Africa. So in 1956 Helen and I sold what little furniture we had, hooked the trailer to my 1955 Aero Willys, and started my fund-raising trip. I spoke for churches in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, and Tennessee. This is when I saw with my own eyes what the institutional question was doing to churches across the nation.

I made it clear in the letters I sent out that I was not going to have a sponsoring church. This weeded out some churches who did not invite me. However, many times when I spoke for a church it was unclear where the preacher, the elders, or the members stood on these things. This is how I happened to speak for the 21st and Eisenhower church in Odessa.

I treasure many experiences from that trip. One of the most precious was when Helen and I and our two little boys arrived at the home of brother and sister Robert Turner, who were clearly not expecting us. The hospitality of the Turners to this young, raw family was a great thing to us.

An experience which I do not want to repeat was when I spoke for the church in Huntingdon, Tennessee. The preacher, Orlan Hogue who was in his 30s, and his wife invited me to eat supper with them on Wednesday night before the service, but when I arrived their little boy met me at the door and said that “Daddy went to the doctor.” The family across the street told me to eat with them. It seemed that Orlan had collapsed in the post office that day. He had then come home but had a terrible headache and the doctor was rushing him to hospital in Memphis. At the service that night, the phone at the building rang during the song before my talk. One of the elders answered the phone then announced to the congregation that brother Hogue was on the operating table and not expected to live. I didn’t preach about South Africa that night! And brother Hogue died.

After months of fund-raising we had our \$2500 travel fund but only half of our \$400 per month support promised. And we heard that the South African government had refused a visa to a gospel preacher. So we gave up our plans. I was invited to preach for the Thayer Street, Akron,

Charging a Battery Which Has a Dead Cell!

Dennis L. Reed

More than forty years ago, I shared in the Lord's work with a faithful gospel preacher in Birmingham, Alabama, who was the only preacher among our black brethren in that area who truly stood firm for the truth and preached it with all boldness. Brother James Ashhurst, now deceased, was one of the finest men that I have ever had the opportunity to work with in my efforts to preach the gospel. Brethren Frank Smith and Bob Crawley, both now deceased, had the same confidence in this brother and diligently worked to help him in every way that they could to carry the gospel to the black people who made up almost half of the population of Birmingham during those difficult years of the 60s.

Brother Ashhurst was telling me one day about a brother whom he was trying to strengthen through teaching and said to me, "Brother Reed, helping this brother is like trying to charge a battery which has a dead cell — you can charge it, and charge it, and charge it, and it will still be

dead!" I thought then, and think even more today that our lack of effectiveness in providing strength, soundness, and knowledge to a great many of our brethren is being hampered tremendously by our having to try so hard to charge a battery which has a dead cell!

We have often heard that one of the most difficult tasks in life is trying to help someone who doesn't believe that he needs any help or else he is just totally satisfied with what he is now doing and doesn't want to be helped! So we are therefore confronted with the task of getting brethren to recognize the tremendous dangers which threaten their faith, and to provide them with the teaching, exhortation, and strength to encounter the enemy — but we find ourselves charging and charging, and charging, and then ultimately having to realize that our lack of success is simply because we are working with a "dead cell" — a mind or heart which is not at all willing to receive the needed instruction!

Ohio church and our plans to go to South Africa were not realized until 1968.

I want to say a word about attitudes during the years of sharp conflict. Brethren are never perfect, therefore we can always find fault with some things which they did. But I was impressed with the earnestness and love for the truth and love for brethren which I found in those who were taking a stand for the truth. There was prayer. There was self-searching. There was the willingness to sacrifice, because preachers were saying to one another, "You better have a trade because it looks like there won't be enough churches able to support preachers to accommodate us all." We were saddened and angered by the ungodly tactics and attitudes of many who were defending the institutions. We were devastated to see brethren we loved cling to their institutions even though they had been taught over and over that these things were not authorized in the Scriptures. And

we prayed and prayed for ourselves and for our brethren.

Brethren, those were testing times. But testing times continue in various forms all of the time. We are always being faced with having to study carefully to find the truth on different subjects. I appeal to my brethren to remember: We *must* have scriptural authority for what we do. Whether we talk about "non-sexual adultery" or "mental divorce" or the days of creation or the divinity of Jesus, everything must be settled by what the Bible says, not by what our friends or the brotherhood seem to believe. We must pray — and *study*. We must be honest with ourselves. Then we must contend for the truth and not apologize.

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There are so many brethren who just refuse to listen, and they refuse to open their eyes so that they can see! There are so many who don't even have the desire to examine any kind of spiritual issue. There are so many who are being deceived and beguiled with smooth and fair speech! There are so many who believe the falsehood being spread by the "union in perversity" brethren that "it just doesn't matter what you believe, teach, or practice — you can still remain in full fellowship with God and with your brethren!" There are so many who want the kind of preaching which entertains them and tells them how really great and faithful they are! We are really living in a generation where it seems that many of our brethren prefer to hear "smooth things" and "deceits" (Isa. 30:9-10).

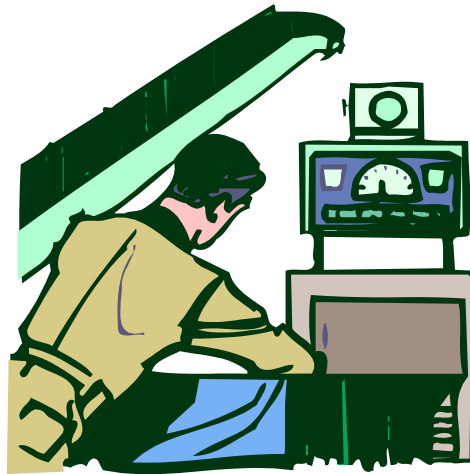
Yes, brother Ashhurst was right on target, "You can charge it, and charge it, and charge it, and it will still be dead!" When a person wants so badly to follow his or her own selfish desires, and when one so greatly desires to believe and practice what pleases and satisfies his own personal whims in religion, it becomes very obvious that you have a battery which is definitely going to resist a "charge" (Matt. 13:10-16). When you want to have fellowship with sinful doctrines and practices and still be justified in what you desire to do — then you have become as dead and useless to the Lord as any of our neighbors out there in the denominational world who are of that same persuasion! And besides all of that, you may well have developed a whole vocabulary of derogatory names and remarks that you can make about those who would dare to question what you are teaching, practicing, or fellowshiping! Those who refuse to come to the light will never receive the truth (John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:5-7; Eph. 5:6-14).

Yes, it is extremely difficult to drill through hardened material. We may well be trying to break through concrete walls, or we may well be plowing in rocky soil. It is becoming more and more evident that we are diligently trying to charge some batteries which have dead cells!

But make no mistake, we are still totally confident that the gospel of Christ is the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16-17). And we are absolutely resolved to never "grow weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13). But, brethren, we must be straightforward and candid about the problem which we are finding more prevalent with every passing day. Jesus described it in these words as he quotes from the prophet Isaiah, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes

they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15).

We cannot just throw away precious souls as we would a battery with a dead cell, so we must therefore look at the sober alternatives involved. Sometimes it may be as the Lord taught the disciples, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet" (Matt. 10:14). Or it may be necessary to turn in another direction, "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:5-11). Whatever the circumstances we encounter, we must continue to seek those who are "noble" enough to search the Scriptures. "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).



I shall never forget the beloved brother who said to me, "You can charge it, and charge it, and charge it, and it will still be dead!" Brethren, are you and I reacting to God's

truth as if we were like a battery with a dead cell? Are we in need of spiritual "eyesalve" to anoint our eyes so that we can see (Rev. 3:18)? Shall we be like Israel of old and have our hearts so hardened that we will not believe (Acts 28:17-31)? Shall we be so arrogant and so certain that we have complete vision that we are unable to see ourselves as we really are (John 9:39-41)? Could it be that we are so selfish and enamored with ourselves that we are blind to the hypocrisy in our own lives (Rom. 2:17-24)?

Please be soberly reminded, brethren, our willful blindness and hardness of heart will cause us to lose our soul if we don't "awaken" before it is eternally too late! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

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Gethsemane

Brian Anderson

Gethsemane is where the greatest battle of all time was fought and won — just a little ways out of Jerusalem. The word *Gethsemane* means “olive press.” Gethsemane is located across the Brook Kidron, near the foot of the Mount of Olives.



In the garden of Eden the first man fell through yielding to the wicked one; in a garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam conquered by yielding to the Holy One. Let’s look and see what this place, called Gethsemane, was to him.

A Place of Heaviness

He “began to be sorrowful and very heavy” (Matt. 26:37). Who can tell the weight of the burden that was laid on him? The prophet of old said, “The Lord . . . laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). What a burden. All the sins of the world on him. We get to thinking sometimes we’re carrying the burden of all the world. He did! When we think our burdens are heavy, think of Gethsemane.

A Place of Intense Suffering

He said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Mark 14:34). He was our substitute in death. “Christ . . . once *suffered* for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). “. . . for Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). The Hebrew writer said, “. . . that he might taste death for everyman” (Heb. 2:9).

Luke describes very vividly for us the intense suffering of Jesus. “And he being in great agony prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). He knew what he was about to suffer, and it wasn’t pretty. He was a human sacrifice. “He was bruised for our iniquities, he was wounded for our transgressions, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). May we today, see his suffering, and when we think we are suffering, think of Gethsemane.

A Place of Solemn Loneliness

He told his disciples to watch: “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40). The tender heart of the

man of sorrow yearned for fellowship, but “he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy” (v. 43). They slept during his agony, while his sweat was as it were great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). He looked but there was none to help. David prophesied “I looked for some to take pity . . . and for comforters, but I found none” (Ps. 69:20).

Later we see that not only did his disciples sleep, but later one even denied he even knew him (Matt. 26:69ff). Once that awful deed was done, Luke records, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter” (Luke 22:61). What kind of look do you think the Lord gave Peter? When you feel forsaken, lonely, and sad, remember Gethsemane.

A Place of Agonizing Prayer

He “fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’” (Matt. 26:39-44). Mark records that he cried out “Abba Father . . . all things are possible unto thee, let this cup pass from me” (14:36). “Abba” is an Aramaic term for father that denotes the closest and tenderest of relationships. Jesus was crying out to the Father, much like I have cried for my daddy in times of troubles. Luke says, “And being in agony he prayed the more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). The Hebrew writer said, “He . . . offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” (Heb. 5:7). When you cry out in deep despair and think no one is listening, remember Gethsemane.

A Place of Entire Resignation

Jesus prayed, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). My will, not thine, opened the floodgate of sin in the first garden, and turned man out of paradise. The second Adam’s “not my will, but thine” opened a flood of righteousness upon the world. “For as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). In the garden and in the wilderness, while being tempted of Satan, he was as firm and solid as a mountain.

Gethsemane is a trial to my people, but I will be done.

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“Spiritual Maturity” continued from front page

continue to increase. There is nothing that takes the place of loving and caring brethren who genuinely look forward to seeing and being with each other at every opportunity. May we all grow in our love for one another!

4. Unto Perfection: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1). The word “perfection” means “completeness.” Once we have learned the truth of God’s word and have been obedient to the gospel, we should then progress onward to maturity, not returning to the basic elements again. We need to learn to be teachers (Heb 5:12-14), and the only way to do this is through the word, having a desire for God’s word in order to grow to completeness. Peter writes, “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). When we are “perfect” or “complete,” then we will never stumble (2 Pet. 1:10). In order to progress to this point we must strive to put all the characteristics mentioned by Peter to use in our life. We must add “virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

5. Grace and Knowledge: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). When we learn and understand the great gift that God gave us in his Son, then we should be motivated to grow in the knowledge of our Lord. The more we know, the better we can defend the gospel and spread the gospel! Jesus wants us to know him, as he said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and *learn from Me*, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28-29). We need to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord.

In conclusion, our spiritual maturity will be realized when we put away childish things from our life (1 Cor. 13:11) and begin to cultivate an understanding of the word (1 Cor. 14:20). If we will follow the example of Jesus (Eph. 4:13, 15; Phil. 3:15), and partake of the deeper truths of the gospel (Heb. 5:14), then we will be able to overcome any temptation that is cast our way (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 2:14). When this happens, then it will be obvious that we are pressing toward maturity in our Christian life. It may then be said of us: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other” (2 Thess. 1:3).

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“Anger” continued from page 2

Sinful Expressions of Anger

While anger itself is not sinful, how it is expressed may be sinful. The Lord warns about the sinful expressions of anger when he says, “Be ye angry and sin not.”

1. The danger of being quick-tempered. Solomon wrote,

He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated (Prov. 14:17).

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly (Prov. 14:29).

A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife (Prov. 15:18).

A man who is quick-tempered tends to do foolish things. When I was attending college, one of the students who was in our suite of rooms returned from taking a test which he failed. In his anger, he hit the door of his suite as hard as he could; since the door was hollow core, he ran his fist through the door. Of course, his display of anger did not change his grade; instead, it created another set of problems for him. Men with quick temper do foolish things such as taking out their anger on someone other than the one at whom it should be aimed. We express this point by saying, “He got mad at the cat and kicked the dog.” How many times has a husband vented on his wife when he was mad at his boss?

One should be careful to note that having strong, passionate responses to mistreatment is not sinful. Some people, by nature, are more passionate than others. Those who are more passive may think that they are spiritually superior to those who are more passionate, when in reality this is but the difference in personality between the two. The passive person has a different set of temptations than does the more passionate, but he too is tempted by his anger. The passive person may tend to hold things within, become bitter, pout, or seek revenge whereas the more passionate person may tend to explode in his anger. Both personalities have to face the temptations that anger presents, although the set of temptations for each one is different.

2. Uncontrolled anger. Again Solomon wrote, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). One who does not “rule his spirit” is guilty of uncontrolled anger. Horace said, “Anger is a short madness.” A certain basketball coach has a reputation for uncontrolled anger. It is well earned by his throwing a chair across the basketball court, slamming a phone at a score keeper’s table, and such like misconduct which resulted in his being fired by the school for which he coached. Though he is a high profile case, many homes are troubled by husbands and wives

who have no better control over their anger than this coach has. Uncontrolled anger expresses itself in fits of abusive speech, cursing, hitting the person at whom one is angry, throwing things, and such like things.

Recognizing that there is a host of temptations that present themselves when one is angry, James warned, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (1:19-20). A man who is angry is vulnerable to the Devil's attacks. Solomon wrote, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28). A city without walls is defenseless; so is a man who has no control over his spirit when he is angry!

3. Vengeful anger. Anger is sometimes of the explosive nature, as mentioned above, but other times it is of the vengeful nature. Paul warned about this kind of anger when he wrote, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27). In Romans 12:18-21 he wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Vengeful anger does not explode; rather it

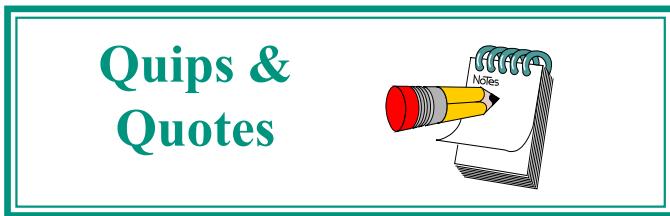
plots and plans to get even. This is the kind of anger that Absalom showed toward his half-brother Amnon who raped his sister Tamar. Absalom held his anger inside for more than two years before he took vengeance on his brother by killing him (see 2 Sam. 13, esp. v. 23).

Pouting is another expression of sinful anger. A couple will get into a tiff over something relatively unimportant. One gets his feelings hurt, storms out of the room, goes into the bedroom, and locks the door so that he can pout about his anger. His pouting may continue for several days before sufficient atonement is made to pacify his feelings. Such manipulation of one's marriage partner as a means of controlling a situation to get one's way is immature and sinful.

Conclusion

One of the indications that one is growing spiritually is how well he handles his anger. Men who have learned to discipline themselves to handle their anger have had to learn self-control, patience, longsuffering, forbearance, and other virtues. May God help each of us to win this crucial battle lest the Devil use this as a means of destroying his soul.

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Canada, America Differ on Religion

"Montreal — The French Canadian writer Yann Martel has acknowledged that he rearranged chapters in the Canadian edition of his new novel, *Life of Pi*, because he feared that Canadians would be offended by its religious content.

"America is a very religious, almost puritanical country," he told *Publishers Weekly* last year. "In Canada, secularism is triumphant, and to talk noncynically, nonironically about religion is strange."

"Martel's comments have been much quoted of late as a sign that in at least one vital respect, Canadian and American societies are moving in opposite directions despite their common language and geographical proximity.

"In a recent survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in Washington, only 30 percent of Canadians said religion was very important to them, compared with 59 percent of Americans. Twenty-one percent of Canadians said they attended religious services regularly in another survey taken in 2000 — about half the rate for Americans (although still a bit higher than the rate for most of Western Europe).

"The statistics would be far more skewed if it were not for the growing number of devout Muslim, Sikh and Hindu immigrants to Canada. In Martel's city of Montreal . . . church attendance is plummeting so fast that at least 18 churches in the past three years have been boarded up and abandoned. . . . Meanwhile, rural churches are closing across the western prairies.

"... In stark contrast with American presidents, Canadian prime ministers rarely, if ever, speak in religious terms. . . . It would be almost unthinkable for a prime minister to say 'God Bless Canada'" (*The Indianapolis Star* [March 30, 2003], A26).

Abusive Behavior — Spouses, Patients, Etc.

William C. Sexton

The other night I heard a report about men being abusive to their wives or girlfriends. Ninety-two percent of the abusers are men, only eight percent are women. I guess that is not too surprising. Then Monday on ABC Radio News, I heard a report about abuse that takes place in nursing homes. Later I heard of other accounts of abuse. Such physical acts of behavior deserve our (we Christians) attention. We must see the wrong in it, and *never* be involved ourselves. We need to seek to assist others, that none experience such. However, we might move to a *higher level* of abuse! We ought to see the spiritual abuse that is experienced by many, and few if any recognize it as such, failing to see the *great* harm done by such.

The reasons (excuses) for such may be:

1. Power play. This was the most reported cause of men toward woman: mate or girlfriends. I've heard of some very bizarre cases, and often it is by a "boyfriend" of someone who has been married, divorced, and now living with a man who is *not* her husband. How disgraceful a relationship, in the first place, but it should not be too surprising: If people will not respect each other enough to marry, but want to enjoy the sexual privileges without accepting the obligations, then what can one really expect?

One condition that has gained my attention is the boyfriend (perhaps the live-in man) abuses the children of the mother. How sad that a woman who has children will allow a man to live with her, and she trust him with her children. Of course for a person — man or woman — who will practice such sin openly, there is no standard by which to expect either to be interested in decency and living right. That may sound harsh to some people, but beloved if you will be honest with yourself, reason will show you. On the other hand if you will observe the behavior of people, you can see that *if* one is unwilling to live by a standard of decency and honesty, what might he be willing to do for immediate gratification and or gain? So, people who are willing to flout the social standards, having accepted that "life style," I suggest it should not be too surprising to find abuse of the women and or the children involved.

2. In nursing homes. People getting paid to be care takers may have a lack of respect for their patients; some may lose their "cool" as the patient is not being cooperative, etc. In the first place, many of the people working in such places may *not* be there because they like people and really want to be helpful. Rather, they may be there to get a pay check, and thus they have the ability to abuse, and such vents hostility as well and manages the undesirable situation until time to go home. I grant not every one is psychologically and mentally equipped to do that kind of work.

Of course surely such behavior is despicable, deplorable, and should not occur. If, and when such does, corrective action should be taken with that person (anyone who has such lack of love, respect, and appreciation) for human beings. Yet, conditions prevail often that do not result in corrective actions being taken.

Having been around people in nursing homes (in that we go once a month and hold a service in a home in Ft Smith), I see that people there are not all that cooperative. Also, I find it is hard to get people to go and sing, teach, and visit people there. I mean it is difficult to get Christians to participate in such. Lois and I have done it for nearly 30 years, and find it is hard to get many Christian to go along.

3. Abuse on a higher level. However, I believe is perhaps more prevalent than the first two mentioned. Parents who do not take the time to teach their children right from wrong and demonstrate before them behavior that is less than honorable are *abusive*. When people are interested in getting their children involved in recreational behavior, but fail to take them to Bible classes, they're abusing! Hear Paul, the inspired man of God (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Obligation and opportunity are missed. They demonstrate to them that worldly things are to be preferred over spiritual! When people deceive others relative to their soul and move them to drain their pockets of the money to support projects that are not spiritually related and perhaps to line ~~the pockets of deceivers, they are guilty of abuse!~~

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