



Hoosier Millionaire . . . Winner?

Kenneth D. Sils

From *The Indianapolis Star*, dated January 24, 2004, a news story that received a lot of attention says,

A man who announced plans to buy a car with \$57,000 in winnings from a televised lottery game show was run over by a pickup truck and killed a few hours later while he walked to the grocery store that had sold him the winning ticket. Carl D. Atwood, 73, was knocked to the ground and suffered a head injury in the accident late Thursday near his home in Elwood, about forty miles northeast of Indianapolis, police said. He died later at the Indianapolis hospital.

The moment I saw the headline, “Hoosier Millionaire Winner Killed In Accident Hours After Show,” my mind remembered a parable that our Lord taught in the book of Luke. While Jesus was commanding his followers with some serious admonitions to have the courage to stand for him, even in the midst of Jewish persecution, a man in the crowd interrupted Jesus with an order for him to command his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Jesus’ response was given in Luke 12:16-21,

The ground of a certain rich man



yielded plentifully. And he thought to himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I

will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many good laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then, whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is

not rich towards God.

Jesus is correct saying, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Both of these men were on top of the world . . . but, only for a moment and then everything was taken away. We have no promise that all the “stuff” we enjoy today will be available tomorrow. We have no assurance that all the success and worldly honor that we accumulate

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Non-Offensive Preaching

Mike Willis

In recent years, non-offensive preaching has become the norm for some churches. By non-offensive preaching, I mean that kind of preaching which does not specifically condemn by name the denominations and their doctrines. Usually this is motivated by the fear that we will offend our visitors and they will not come back to our services. The next step in non-offensive preaching is not to specifically condemn certain sins of which members of the church are guilty lest these members be offended and quit attending.



Gospel preaching in the New Testament did not try to avoid making judgments, as is the case in the academic study of religion and in most denominational preaching of our generation (think back to the book *I'm OK, You're OK*). About the only judgment that some are making is the judgment that anyone who preaches in such a way as to make moral and spiritual judgments is absolutely and unequivocally wrong, sinful, and mean-spirited.

Bible Examples

Contrast this attitude toward preaching with that of the great prophets of God.

John the Baptist was sent from God to prepare people for the coming kingdom of the Messiah. As the Pharisees and Sadducees (the two largest Jewish "denominations") from Jerusalem and Judea came to him, he preached the following message:

O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matt. 3:7-11).

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“Lord, Is It I?”

Connie W. Adams

“And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to ask unto him, Lord, is it I?” (Matt. 26:19-22). Events were rapidly unfolding. The dreaded hour of which Jesus had told them hovered over them like an ominous cloud. What would be the end of these things? How could Jesus even think that one of them would betray him into the hands of enemies? The question they raised, one by one, was as if each one were asking, “Lord, please say I am not the one to do such a terrible thing.” Verse 25 shows that when Judas said, “Master, is it I?” then Jesus said to him “Thou hast said.” This indicates that each of them asked him privately, or out of the hearing of others. Soon after that, Judas left them with the others not knowing what he intended to do.

None of us was present that night. None of us made the evil bargain with the Jewish rulers. None of us pocketed the money. None of us led the temple guards to the garden to arrest Jesus. None of us placed the betrayal kiss on his cheek. And yet, it is possible that any one of us could have done it. Was Judas the last man in history to sell his soul for money? The Hebrew writer described some who “fall away” and who refuse to be renewed again “unto repentance” and said they “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6). The same writer described the willful sinner “who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29).

To this may be added the warning of Paul: “Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). Peter warned “beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17). Peter said, “Judas by transgression fell” (Acts 1:25). What about us?

There are practical implications of the question, “Lord, is it I?” It is not, “Lord, is it George, or Bill, or Susan, or Ellen?” Let every one examine self to see if he is faithful (2 Cor. 13:5).

The Church is Not Growing as it Should

“Lord, is it I?” Am I the reason the church is not growing as it should? “Well, we need more elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers.” Are *you* willing to qualify and serve? Are *you* willing to be the helpful companion to one who wants to serve? How many men have been hindered from such work

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because of wives who are not in subjection and children who are rebels? “Yes, but we are not baptizing as many as we should.” The Lord said the taught are to be baptized (Matt. 28:18-19). How many have *you* taught? To how many have you ever handed a gospel tract? How many have you ever invited to a Bible study in your home? How many have you invited even to a gospel meeting? “Well, the community does not know this church exists.” Is the church not made up of people? Do these people have no influence? Do they not work somewhere? Do not some go to school in the community? Are not Christians engaged in businesses in the community? Is all of that light under a basket? “Lord, is it I?”

The People Are Not Friendly

“Lord, is it I?” Am I the one who turns and looks the other way to keep from speaking to someone? Am I the one who quickly slips into a tight-knit circle of family and friends and ignores the rest? Am I the one who races for the door when it is over?

We Are Not Evangelizing the World

That may be true. “Lord, is it I?” Can *you* go? Will you go? If not, can you encourage and support someone who will go? Elders, are *you* doing what you can to encourage young people to give their lives to gospel work? Does the teaching program give emphasis to such needs? Have you put the congregation in the banking business with huge accounts accumulated with no plans for their use? And parents, what if your son wanted to go to Indonesia, Nigeria, or Brazil to preach the gospel, *and take your grandchildren*? And what if your daughter should marry such a nut? Would you dare to even plant the thought yourself? The world is *not* being evangelized as it should be. While we have worshipped at the shrine of materialism, doors of opportunity close in some nations. There are still doors open in nations where there are millions of people. Will

we wait until those doors close? “Lord, is it I?”

We Are Losing Our Young People

Thank God, we are not losing all of them. But many are being lost. We have slept in the same house, eaten at the same table, traveled in the same car, and grown apart morally and doctrinally. How did this happen? While we have men busy making a living, seeking entertainment, climbing the ladder of success, “finding ourselves,” our children have been listening to humanism at school and to music which encourages lust, rebellion, paganism, suicide, and murder. They have been absorbing the decadent standards of the television and movie industries. Meanwhile, we have been too busy to read the Bible together, or pray together, or to keep in touch with what is going on at school. We offer them thirty minutes of “quality time” every third Wednesday and can’t understand why they won’t talk to us on schedule! We get them to ballgames, band practice, or camp in the summer, but see no reason to help them cultivate friendships with young people of “like precious faith.” Those who are lost to the Lord were not lost all of a sudden. It was gradual — day by day. What a shame that it could happen without parents even suspecting what was taking place. “Lord, is it I?”

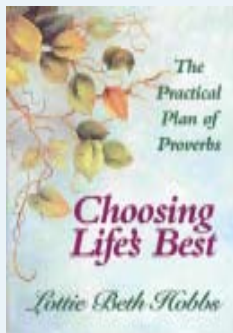
It was our Lord who said, “Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It was he who said the taught should “commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” It was our Lord who said fathers should bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Do we betray him when we ignore these things? Our Lord said, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46). “Lord, is it I?”

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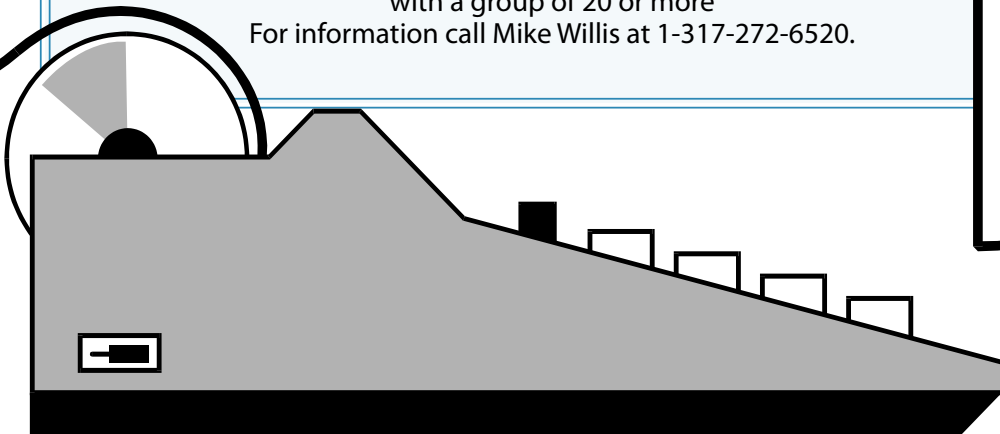
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Why I Should Be Concerned About the Way I Dress

Heath Rogers

The people of God have always tended to take on the characteristics of the people around them, often to their own peril. One of the most obvious ways that God's people are doing this today is by adopting the world's standard of dress. Immodesty is one of the many battle grounds in which local churches are fighting the distinction between being "in the world" and "of the world."

Immodest dress has been a problem, to some extent, in every local church with which I have been associated. The problem is sometimes caused by ignorance — young members and new converts innocently following the fashions of the day. Sometimes the problem is the result of a rebellious attitude — "I'll dress how I want to and I don't care what anyone else says." Either way, the end result is the same: immodesty is a problem and local churches are left to struggle with it. Some churches have given up the fight against immodest dress, but souls are not won by surrendering to evil and error. We need repeated study and teaching on modesty and how it relates to the way we dress.

I have not always agreed with the things which I now believe, teach, and practice concerning immodest dress. At first I didn't think it was a big deal. I knew that God looked upon the heart, and I believed that was all that mattered (1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Pet. 3:4). Then I began to justify my appearance by comparing it to those in the world around me. As long as I wasn't as immodest as others, I felt I was doing good enough. However, as time went on, I began to think about the following points in this article. As I considered them, I began to realize that it does matter how I dress. I hope you will give them fair consideration as well.

Why should I be concerned about the way I dress?

I Should Be Ashamed To Be Naked

The Bible consistently associates shame with nakedness. This is found in both the Old and New Testaments (Mic. 1:11; Nah. 3:5; Rev. 3:18, 16:15).

In the beginning, man and woman were completely

naked. "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25; all quotations taken from NKJV). There was no shame because there was no knowledge of good and evil. After they sinned, their eyes were opened, they knew that they were naked and sewed fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves (Gen. 3:7). What happened next teaches a lesson that many brethren have yet to learn: *We don't have to be completely nude to be biblically naked.*

"Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'" (Gen. 3:9-11). Adam was *covered* with fig leaves, yet he said he was *naked* and hid himself in *shame*. Notice, God did not tell him he was not naked. He agreed with Adam's conclusion.

Adam wasn't *clothed* until verse 21: "Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." Why was man still *naked* in the covering he made for himself, but *clothed* in the covering God made for him? The garment God made was more adequate, not because of the material it was made out of, but because of the parts of the body that it covered. Man was not clothed until his nakedness was covered. Are we going to be so bold in our dress as to reveal what God has covered? Some brethren are.

Some people like to play the "where is it" game when it comes to modesty. Where is the line? How short is too short? How low is too low? How tight is too tight? I played this game too, until I realized that it was avoiding the real issue. "*Nakedness*" has to do with *exposing parts of the body*, not in *measuring the fabric of the clothing*. As we have already pointed out, we can have clothes on and still be naked in a biblical sense.

While some brethren are looking for that "line" between modest and immodest, they overlook the fact that the Bible

has been very specific in telling us what is to be covered. There are certain parts of the body which, if left uncovered and exposed, constitute nakedness.

The Thigh. “Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, take off the skirt, *uncover the thigh*, pass through the rivers. *Your nakedness shall be uncovered*, yes, your shame will be seen” (Isa. 47:2-3). To reveal the flesh of the thigh is to be naked, and should cause shame. Any clothing which reveals the flesh or form of the thigh is immodest. This would include (but is certainly not limited to) shorts, spandex jogging shorts, swimsuits, mini skirts, skirts with long slits, cheerleading uniforms, and many athletic uniforms.

The Buttocks. “So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, *naked* and barefoot, *with their buttocks uncovered*, to the shame of Egypt” (Isa. 20:4). To expose the buttocks is to be naked, and should cause shame. Any clothing which reveals the flesh or form of the buttocks is immodest. This would include short shorts, men’s and women’s swimsuits, pants hanging off waist, hip-huggers, etc.

The Breasts. “I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your *breasts* were formed, your hair grew, but you were *naked* and bare” (Ezek. 16:7). To expose the breast is to be naked, and should cause shame. Any clothing which reveals the breast (in part or in whole), or is specifically made to showcase or augment the form of the breast is immodest. This would include low cut tops, loose fitting sleeveless tops, tube tops, tight sweaters, push-up bras, etc. This would also apply to men going without a shirt, wearing a muscle shirt, or leaving their shirt unbuttoned.

The Bible is very clear in specifying parts of the body which need to be covered. To wear clothing which reveals, exposes, or draws attention to these parts of the body is to dress immodestly. Proximity to a large body of water, or to a swimming facility, doesn’t make a swimsuit modest. Calling sports (cross-country, wrestling, basketball, gymnastics, etc.) or cheerleading outfits a *uniform* does not make them modest. If these popular garments expose the thigh, buttocks, or breasts (men’s chest), the one wearing them is naked in a biblical sense, and ought to be ashamed.

I Don’t Want To Advertise Something About Myself That Isn’t True

Our clothing sends a message. The Bible talks about a Christian woman professing godliness in her dress and conduct (1 Tim. 2:9-10). It also talks about the “attire of a harlot” (Prov. 7:10).

It is interesting to note what some in the world have to say about today’s popular fashions. They willingly admit

what some Christians try to deny. The legs, breast, buttocks, and midriff of a woman will attract the attention of men. The muscular build of a man (shoulders, arms, chest, and buttocks) will attract the attention of women. Clothing designers know this, and many of today’s fashions are made to empower men and women with the ability to attract this attention to themselves.

Most reasonable people will admit that this attention is actually lust. Clothing which reveals parts of the body meant to be covered will incite lust in members of the opposite sex. The clothing is going to do what it is designed to do — even if the person wearing it is a Christian. It sends a message that Christians shouldn’t be sending. It invites sexual attention. It leads people on.

I Don’t Want To Cause Another To Stumble

“Then He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones’” (Luke 17:1-2). The Lord condemned those who would be stumbling blocks. He shows, with graphic language, that it would be better for one to die a brutal death of drowning *before* offending another than to face him in judgment *after* doing so.

We have already pointed out that some clothing is designed to produce lust. What is wrong with lust? Why can’t we “Look But Don’t Touch”? What’s wrong with giving others something to look at?

The Bible does not portray lust as an innocent thing to be enjoyed, but as a dangerous thing to be avoided. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). Lusts are those things which will cause us to lose our souls in Hell. “Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22). We are to flee lusts, not invite them.

Whatever naturally provokes and excites these sinful lusts must be opposed and avoided — including the wearing of revealing clothing. The sight of bare flesh provokes lust. Young people have more power in this area than many of them realize. They need to be aware, not only of the signals they are sending with immodest clothing, but of the affect it has on others. To dress or behave in such a way as to cause one to lust is to be a stumbling block.

To encourage another to dress immodestly is to cause that person to stumble as well. Parents who approve, justify, and provide opportunities for their children to dress immodestly are making a “provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). By allowing their children to dress immodestly, they have become a stumbling block for other parents who are

trying to instill a sense of modesty and shamefacedness in their own children. Christian parents have a hard enough time battling against the evil influence of the world. However, the sad fact is that when it comes to modesty, they often have to battle against the evil influence of their own brethren in addition to the world.

I Need to be Careful to Preserve a Good Conscience

The conscience is what holds everything in check. It is our warning system which tells us when we are about to do something wrong. The Bible warns that after we have violated our conscience enough, it can become hardened and no longer work (1 Tim. 4:2). Once that restraint is gone there is nothing left to keep us from going further into sin, and nothing left through which God can appeal unto us to repent.

Some obviously look upon immodest dress as a little thing. Why are some brethren wanting to make such a big deal out of it? Because we know that big things come from little things. The Bible teaches that sin becomes progressively worse, not better: “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). If I can convince myself that nothing is wrong with dressing immodestly, it will not be hard to convince myself that nothing is wrong with mixed swimming, dancing, drinking, bad language, petting, and fornication.

Parents who teach their teenagers that it is all right to dress immodestly have taught them that it is all right to violate God’s word. Such parents should not be surprised to later discover that their teenager is drinking, smoking, using drugs, cursing, and/or having sex. We have all

witnessed the heartbreak of parents seeing their teenagers come forward and confess these terrible sins. Perhaps, in some cases, the seeds of rebellion and disobedience were sown by the parents themselves in allowing their teenagers to dress immodestly.

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Eccl. 12:1). It is best to form our convictions and habits early in life. If we do so properly, our consciences will serve us well and we will be a good influence upon others. However, if we fail to grasp the importance of dressing modestly and concealing our nakedness, we leave ourselves open to rebellion against any and all of God’s commandments.

Conclusion

Approaching immodest dress from this point of view is not meant to leave the impression that the matter is open to personal interpretation. Nakedness is clearly defined for us in the Bible. God’s word specifies what parts of the body are to be covered, and common sense tells us why they need to be covered. Christians who still insist on dressing immodestly are violating both.

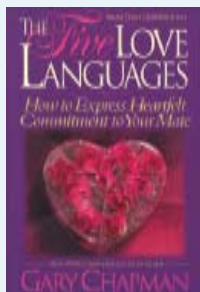
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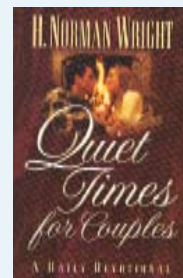
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“Beware of False Prophets”

Jim McDonald

In Matthew 7:13f Jesus

spoke of two ways men might follow which have eternal consequences: a broad and narrow gate. He cautioned disciples that they enter the narrow gate for, as he warned, the broad gate opens wide to hell.

Why would men enter a way which would lead to their destruction since they could see where that road led? Obviously, many do enter the broad way: they just do not believe it leads where it does. The god of this world blinds their mind that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine upon them (2 Cor. 4:4). Others also enter the broad way but they are deluded. It was against such delusion that Jesus warned:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:15-16).

Certain things from these words of Jesus warrant questions and comments. (1) There are false prophets, (2) Who is a false prophet and how is he to be recognized? (3) The danger men face from false prophets, and (4) What is the ultimate end of false prophets and those who follow them?

There are false prophets. Jesus said so. Peter also said so. “But there arose false prophets among the people as among yourselves also there shall be false teachers” (2 Pet. 2:1). Jesus commended the Ephesians for they tried men who claimed to be apostles but were false; he condemned the church at Thyatira because she suffered the (false) prophetess Jezebel (Rev. 2:2, 20). More references could be added to these.

A false prophet (teacher) is one who teaches a false doctrine. However, that is not to say that because one has a different understanding of what a verse may say he is necessarily a “false teacher.” Were that so every congregation would be filled with false teachers. There are many stages of growth for one who grows from being a babe to a full grown man. Many erroneous ideas must be shed along that journey. On the other hand, let none suppose that a man is not a false teacher unless he is insincere, malicious, or

wicked in life. Many will be lost who thought they were doing the Lord's will (Matt. 7:21f).

Jesus warns there would be false teachers and this leads us to the conclusion that we can recognize such men. John wrote: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). How are we to know who “false teachers” are? In the Matthew text Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” That fruit may be the effect their teaching has upon their hearers. The Jews “compassed sea and land to make one proselyte and when he had done so, he made him twofold more a son of hell than he was himself” (Matt. 23:15). Whenever the applied teaching of a man results in his disciple a dissolute life or disrupts true peace among Christ's disciples, that fruit proves the teacher to be false. Moses gave the long standing test: when a prediction is made which fails, that man is a false teacher (Deut. 18:21-22).

The danger of false teachers is obvious. As wolves ravage the flock; so spiritual wolves (in sheep's clothing) ravage the spiritual flock. To “ravage” is to bring serious injury or destroy completely. There were false teachers among the Galatians and many followed their doctrine. Of them Paul said, “I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision” (Gal. 5:12). Paul hoped that these Judazing teachers would lay open the full and complete yoke of the law to these Galatians. Perhaps then their eyes would be opened to the pernicious teaching of these men and to their own personal danger when they listened to them.

The end result of false teachers is obvious “bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). The fate of their disciples is no less certain. “If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into the pit” (Matt. 15:14).

Beware of false prophets.

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Capital Punishment

Grover Stevens

Capital punishment is a subject that has been hotly

If the death penalty is immoral, as some argue, then God is immoral, because he practices it! Some acknowledge that God himself does indeed practice capital punishment, but they think that God has reserved for himself alone the right to punish with death.

discussed for many years, and increasingly so in recent years. Capital punishment is the death penalty for certain crimes, such as first-degree murder, treason, rape, and kidnaping. Several years ago, the United States Supreme court ruled that the death penalty is “unconstitutional.” Since then, there has been a steady increase in *all* crime, but more especially in capital crimes, such as murder, rape, and kidnaping.

In all of the discussion, we have heard sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, politicians, and various crusaders, voice their opinions, but few, indeed, have inquired into, or concerned themselves with what God has said about it. Christians, in general, are confused and divided over what to believe, or say, on this issue. I hope you will be profited, and God will be glorified by this study.

God Demands Capital Punishment

I hasten to add that God demands the death penalty — capital punishment for capital crimes. I invite you to get your Bible and study what God has to say on this important subject. God has not only approved of the death penalty, particularly in the case of murder, but has required it in no uncertain terms in every age of Bible history — Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. The Scriptures are clear and consistent on this subject, as I shall show.

God’s Law of Capital Punishment

God’s law of capital punishment is

stated clearly and concisely in Genesis 9:6. In God’s own words the law reads: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For in the image of God made he man.” According to this, as long as man is in the image of God, then this law of God is in effect and valid, as I shall show.

From Creation to Moses

This law is implied in the case of Cain’s murder of Abel in the very beginning of the human race. Cain’s comments, and God’s reply, show the gravity of this sin and imply that the penalty for it is death (Gen. 4:9-15). Just why God did not execute the death penalty in this case we do not know, the Bible does not say. There are, however, several possible reasons which may be considered.

In the first place, God knows every man’s heart, and he may have known that Cain did not intend to kill his brother, but that it was accidental. Then, too, God may have wanted to show his mercy to mankind first, then later require adequate penalties for transgressors. And, it might have been that God wanted to demonstrate first, that a government of all mercy would not promote the happiness and welfare of man. It is worthy of note that soon afterwards the earth was “filled with violence.” And God was then constrained to punish mankind with the flood, which was capital punishment in a dramatic and impressive way.

Also, the poem of Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24 is a clear indication of the death penalty for murder. Fur-

thermore, the destruction of the world by the flood in the days of Noah is a case where God, himself, executed the death penalty because of man's crimes. Also, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the end of the world, and the second death in hell are other instances of God practicing capital punishment.

If the death penalty is immoral, as some argue, then God is immoral, because he practices it! Some acknowledge that God himself does indeed practice capital punishment, but they think that God has reserved for himself alone the right to punish with death. But this is shown to be a false concept by the law of God for capital punishment.

This Law is in language so clear that no one can misunderstand it. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. 9:6). This penalty was to be executed "by man." And God ordained the next of kin to execute the penalty (Gen. 9:5).

The reason God gave for this penalty was, "For in the image of God He made man." Thus, God preserves the dignity and sanctity of human life by demanding the supreme penalty — death — for those who disregard this dignity and sanctity of human life by committing murder. Some have gotten this all backwards. One legislator said that the repeal of capital punishment is "a victory for the dignity of man, for those who believe in the sanctity of life." Such people believe in the sanctity of life of the murderer, who does not believe in it, *but they do not believe in the sanctity of life of the innocent!*

Note further that this law is universal in its application. It applies to *all* mankind, in *all* nations, and *all* races, and at *all* times — *as long as man is in the image of God!*

Under the Law of Moses

The Ten Commandments — "Thou Shalt Not Kill." God continued his sanction of capital punishment under the law of Moses. In the Ten Commandments, God said, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13). Some have tried to use this commandment to *forbid* capital punishment. Such arguments just have to be either the grossest of ignorance or the worst of hypocrisy. First, there is a difference in murder and capital punishment. And second, a law is only as strong as the penalty imposed on its violation. All killing is not murder; some may be accidental. The New American Standard version translates this commandment, "You shall not murder." Young's concordance lists ten Hebrew words and six Greek words for the English word "kill" as used in the King James version of the Bible. The Hebrew word *ratsach* means "to murder," and this is the word used in the Ten Commandments. In Matthew 5:21 when Jesus quoted this commandment, he used the Greek word which means "murder." Furthermore, the sophistry of such an argument is exposed by reading in the next chapter God's penalties for violating his commandments. In Exodus 21:12, God tells us that the murderer was to be punished by death. Any law, if it is to be respected and obeyed, *must* have an appropriate penalty for its violation. If there is no penalty, or an inadequate penalty, the law becomes anemic and meaningless. God enforced his law against murder by imposing the penalty of death on the violator. Immediately following the giving of the Ten Commandments, there follows a series of penalties, among which is the death penalty for murder. God said, "He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death" (Exod. 21:12).

Accidental Killing

Accidental killing is not murder. God made provision to spare the life of one who has killed "unawares" or unintentionally, by providing "cities of refuge" (see Num. 35). But the murderer *was* given *no* refuge. From verses 16-21, the phrase "the mur-

derer shall surely be put to death" is repeated five times, and verse 21 says, "the *revenger* of blood shall *slay the murderer*, when he meets him." A trial was to be held and the murderer was to be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person was to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. The wisdom of this safeguard has been observed by legislators ever since.

No Ransom For the Life of the Murderer

Furthermore, God decreed that *no ransom* was to be taken for the life of the murderer, but that he *must* be put to death. God said, "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of the murderer, which is guilty of death: but *he shall surely be put to death . . . so ye shall not pollute* the land wherein ye are: for blood defileth the land: and the land *cannot be cleansed of the blood* that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Num. 35:31-33). From this, we learn that God knew that to allow a murderer to live is to "pollute the land." This explains God's words to Cain when he said, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." And it explains why many years later David required his son, Solomon, to execute a murderer that, so far, had gone unpunished (1 Kings 2). Notice especially in verse 31, "That thou mayest take away the innocent blood which Joab shed, from me and from the house of my father."

Thine Eye Shall Not Pity Him

Let's look at one more passage before going to the New Testament. Turn to Deuteronomy 19:11-13. Here we read that God commands to "deliver him (the murderer) into the hand of the avenger of blood, *that he may die*. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee." The society that takes pity on the murderer under the guise of love, humanitarianism, or wisdom, is thinking that *their* love and wisdom is *better than God's*, and

they will reap the evils of their disobedience. They seem to have no pity for the innocent victim, or his family and loved ones, or the future victims of the murderer, whether they be guards in prison, or the citizens on the streets after his almost certain release. God said, “They shall *surely* be put to death . . . that it may go well with thee.”

A Just Recompense of Reward

Before we go to the New Testament to see what Christ and the Holy Spirit said about capital punishment in the gospel dispensation, let me call your attention to the fact that the New Testament says that “every transgression and disobedience” in the Old Testament “received a *just* recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2). So the New Testament says that the *death penalty* under the Old Testament was a “just” or “deserved” punishment.

From Christ to the End of the World

And now, let’s see what Christ’s attitude was toward capital punishment. Has God changed his will on capital punishment in the New Testament? What is Christ’s law concerning the death penalty in the Christian dispensation in which he has all authority in heaven and on earth? The Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant which God made with man, and which is to last to the end of time. What does this new covenant teach on this subject?

Separation of Church and State

In the first place, we should understand that the Lord Jesus established a clear distinction between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar — between the religious realm and the civil realm — or, in modern terminology, between church and state.

The kingdom of God in the Old Testament (before Christ) was a “theocracy” — that is, the religious and civil courts were combined. That, is *union* of “church” and state. But, when Jesus Christ established his kingdom, he made it clear that it was separate and apart from the civil — the kingdom of Caesar. That is *separation* of “church” and state. Jesus said, “My kingdom is *not* of this world.” Caesar’s kingdom *was* of this world. One becomes a citizen of the civil kingdom by civil law, and one becomes a citizen in God’s kingdom by spiritual law — by the new birth — a spiritual birth. One is civil and secular, and the other is religious and spiritual.

Render Unto Caesar the Things That Are Caesar’s

In Matthew 22:21 Jesus commanded, “Render unto

Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things which are God’s.” Thus, some things belong to Caesar’s kingdom and some to God’s. But, how can we render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s unless we know what God expects us to render unto Caesar? We will learn this as we proceed.

Power From Above to Crucify

In John 18:10-11, Pilate said to Jesus, “Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? And Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, *except it were given thee from above*: therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Notice first, that Pilate claimed to have the authority, or “power” to crucify, or put to death. Then Jesus said that Pilate would have no authority unless “it were given thee from above.” Therefore, this conversation shows that Pilate, *as a government official*, had authority from God to crucify or execute capital punishment.

But you say, does not Jesus say that Pilate sinned in crucifying him, when he said that others have the greater sin? And I answer that is true, but Pilate’s sin was *not* because he did not have authority from God to punish evil doers by death, but because he *misused* that authority to execute an innocent man. Pilate had confessed earlier, in verse 4, “I find no fault in him.” The proper use of his authority was, therefore, to protect Jesus, but instead, he sentenced him to be crucified. It should be plain, therefore, that Pilate had authority from above to crucify the *guilty*, but no government has the authority from above to crucify the innocent. It is significant that Jesus submitted to this government, even though it was corrupt. It is really the *man* who was corrupt — the officer, and not the office — the person or individual who occupies the office and not the government. A corrupt person may misuse the authority of his office. Jesus submitted to the authority of government, even though the people in charge of the government were corrupt. Just so, we should render unto civil government due respect and submission, because its authority is from above — and that includes the authority to crucify. It is obvious, therefore, that Jesus taught that civil government had the authority from above to execute capital punishment!

Civil Government Is Ordained of God

This is further borne out by the apostle Paul in Romans 13:1-7: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher power. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are

ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have the praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute to Caesar also: For they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honor to whom honor."

In this passage of Scripture, God tells us that *all* power, or authority, is from God and that there is *no* power *except* from God, and that God ordained — that is, decreed or established, civil government — the powers that be." Let me emphasize that point: Civil government is ordained of God! It is not, therefore, of Satan! The notion of some that civil government belongs to the devil, is as false as it can be. These verses from the word of God very clearly command "every soul" to render subjection, or obedience, taxes, custom, fear or respect, and honor to civil government. God does not command us to be in subjection to the devil, but he here commands us to be in subjection to civil government. The conclusion, therefore, is simple: Civil government is *not* of the devil, but, as the word of God declares, but *is* of God! And, God commands every soul to be subject to it!

The Jews, back in the time of Christ, generally held the position that submission to heathen government was wrong. They thought that because God had chosen them for his subjects, and as their king had dictated to them a system of law, and had at first governed them in person, then later by rulers of his own choosing, that therefore, it was disobedience to God to submit to heathen rulers and their laws. This is why they thought that it was "unlawful" to pay taxes to Caesar. In other words, the zealots among the Jews accepted God alone as their king, and they opposed submission to and support of *all* kings who were not of their religion and who did not govern them by the laws that God gave through Moses. This attitude caused them to withhold from the heathen magistrates that honor and obedience to which they were entitled, by their office, from all who lived under their government. This disposition of contempt for civil government was carried over into the church by some of the Jewish converts, and this gave occasion for the gospel to be evil spoken of.

So Paul corrects this erroneous view in his letter to the Christians at Rome by laying down the duties which subjects owe the magistrates, and testifying to them that the

disciples of Christ were not exempted from obedience to the wholesome laws, even of heathen governments under which they lived; nor from contributing to the support of the government by which they were protected, even though that government was administered by idolaters. He said this was the God-given duty of "every soul," whether they were Christians or not. In short: The Jews thought that their government was the *only* one that was "of God." Paul, to the contrary, said, "There is no power but of God" or *all* power is from God, including Caesar's, the one under which they lived. Remember, Jesus said Pilate's authority was "from above," and he submitted himself to it, even though he regarded Pilate, a person, as a conniving "fox."

Minister of God to Execute Wrath

So we see from Romans 13, that civil government is "ordained of God" (v. 1) and that it is the "minister of God to *execute* wrath and revenge upon him that doeth evil" (v. 4). Furthermore, God commands "every soul" to be in subjection to it: and says, "Whosoever resisteth the power" is in reality resisting God, and that all such "shall receive damnation" from God, besides, and in addition to, the wrath, or punishment, of the government.

When people properly understand this, it will not be difficult for them to see God's law regarding capital punishment.

He Beareth Not the Sword in Vain

Now, notice, that God's word says, "He beareth not the sword in vain." The sword was the instrument of capital punishment. In Acts 12:2 we see that James was "put to death with the sword." Civil government, therefore, is God's minister to "bear the sword," that is, to execute capital punishment; but, if capital punishment is forbidden, then it would be bearing the sword "in vain," or "for nothing," as the New International Version puts it. So, God's word teaches that civil government is ordained of God to actually execute the death penalty.

God's Minister For Vengeance

Verse 4 further asserts that civil government is the "minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Thus, civil government is a revenger; but a revenger for whom? And it executes "wrath" on the evil doer; but *whose* wrath?

In Romans 12:19 God says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord." So, here the Christian is told *not* to avenge himself, for "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Then, in chapter 13, Paul proceeds to tell *how* the Lord takes this vengeance — through his minister, the civil government.

So the Christian, as an individual, is told, "Avenge not

yourselves, but give place unto wrath.” Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:39, “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” And, in verse 44, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Thus, Christ tells us that our personal, individual responsibility is *not* to retaliate or take revenge, but rather to pray for and do good to the evil doer, and to “give place” unto wrath.

On the other hand, civil government is “God’s minister . . . to execute wrath” upon the evildoer who robs or assaults me, or others. The words “avenge,” “vengeance,” and “revenger” in these passages are all the same root word. God forbids me, as an individual, to “avenge” myself, for, he said “vengeance belongs to *him*” — to God — “I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). Then, in Romans 13, God proceeds to tell us that *he* takes that vengeance through the agency of his minister, the civil government. God said the civil government was his minister, “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” It follows, therefore, that the “wrath” that God commands me, as an individual, to “give place” to, is the same “wrath” that his minister, the civil government “executes” upon him that doeth evil.

Example of Paul

These principles of the duty of the individual Christian, and of the government, are clearly demonstrated in Acts 21. The apostle Paul, as an individual Christian, did not retaliate when he was being beaten to death by the mob. Civil government (Roman soldiers) intervened and protected him from the evil doers (Acts 21:31-32). Instead of retaliation, Paul sought to do them good by trying to teach them the truth about Christ. But in the next chapter, Paul appealed to the civil government for protection on the basis of his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25-29). And in the next chapter, Paul sought and received from the civil government an armed guard who would have killed the assassins if they had tried to carry out their evil designs (Acts 23:23-24).

Friends, the lesson is clear: I, personally cannot take the life of the murderer who has murdered one of my loved ones. *But*, the civil government is the “minister of God, a revenger” who is commanded of God to do so! “He beareth not the sword in vain.”

Punish Evildoer For the Lord

This same principle is taught in 1 Peter 2:13-15: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as them that are sent by him *for the punishment of evil doers*, and for the praise of them that do well.”

Crimes Worthy of Death

Paul further confirms capital punishment in Acts 25:11

when he said to Governor Festus, “For if I be an offender, or have committed anything *worthy of death*, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man deliver me unto them. I appeal to Caesar.” Here Paul clearly recognizes that there are some crimes that are “worthy of death,” and that the offender ought to die! He said, “I refuse not to die.” On the other hand, he affirms the right of self-defense for those who are *not* guilty. “No man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.” Can language be plainer?

The Weapons of Our Warfare Are Not Carnal

But someone asks, “How do you reconcile this with Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 10:4 where he says, ‘For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal’”? The answer is simple. Paul was a citizen of both the political kingdom of Caesar and also the spiritual kingdom of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul was speaking as a citizen (and an apostle) of Christ’s spiritual kingdom, and in Acts 25:11 he was speaking as a citizen in the political kingdom of Caesar. In 2 Corinthians 10:4 Paul was emphasizing the fact that the warfare, and its weapons, of Christ’s spiritual kingdom were spiritual, and not carnal. The kingdom of Christ is *never* to be defended, maintained, or advanced by carnal warfare, or carnal weapons, but only by preaching the gospel of Christ and persuading men to accept him as the Lord and King of their lives. Force has absolutely no place in Christ’s kingdom, because citizenship there is spiritual and wholly voluntary. Force would vitiate to the core every act of worship or service to Christ. Forced worship is not worship! There is no virtue in doing what we are compelled to do. But, the fact that carnal methods are not to be used to obtain submission in the spiritual realm does not make their use null and void by civil governments in a material realm.

Conclusion

All of this being true, we conclude that in every age of human history, God has ruled that murder is a crime worthy of death, and that the murderer must pay for his crime. God said, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” And again, “Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of the murderer, which is guilty of death . . . so ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” And again, “The powers that be are ordained of God . . . he is the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon the evil doer . . . he beareth not the sword in vain.”

The lesson is clear. God has ordained the death penalty for some crimes and especially murder. And, God has ordained the civil government as the human agency to execute this penalty. And God said that the land or nation that allowed a murderer to live would be polluted. And, *that* is the situation in these United States of America today!

Objections Considered

Now let us briefly consider some of the objections that are voiced against the death penalty. However, in doing so, we must keep in mind the fact that *no* objection, regardless of merit, can set aside the plain teaching of God's word.

We Can't Save the Soul of the Murderer if He is Dead

No, and neither can we save the soul of the person or persons he has killed, and will kill. But so far as the murderer is concerned, his approaching death will probably provide the best time to discuss his soul's salvation with him.

The fact of his being a sinner and his need of a Savior and the urgency of his conversion are forcibly brought to bear upon his heart. Whereas, on the other hand, if he expects to live an indefinite length of time, this expectation often breeds apathy and procrastination regarding his eternal salvation.

The Death Penalty Does Not Prevent Murders

Wrong; it most certainly does to some degree. Law enforcement officers report that in interrogation, criminals will often admit that they did not commit murder in the act of committing a crime because they "didn't want to burn." So, in these cases, it did! Furthermore, the preventive element in capital punishment is weakened or eliminated by other factors, such as lengthy trials and appeals which make punishment long removed from the crime. Some death-row criminals have died of natural causes because the death penalty was so long in being executed. No one dreads a penalty that may *never* be enforced! God's word warns of this very thing. In Ecclesiastes 8:11, God says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Capital Punishment Is Premeditated Killing

Such an argument is merely a play on words, and is an appeal to sentiment, and is pure subterfuge. Certainly pre-legislated punishment is premeditated and determined beforehand. And that is as it should be. But, that is not the same as premeditated murder. God commanded, "Thou shalt not kill (murder)" in the sixth commandment and then gave the penalty for violator, "He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death." So, God pre-legislated, and therefore, premeditated the death penalty for the murderer. And then God warned Israel not to pity the murderer, but that he should surely be put to death. Was God, or is God, ever unjust?

What Righteous Man Could Every Execute Another Human Being?

I reply that no person is required to be the executioner, but each of us must support the law that will provide for the executioner to do what God says must be done. And I

also answer by asking, "Could not a righteous man obey what a righteous God commanded to be done?" In 1 Samuel 15:33 we read where Samuel, one of the best men that ever lived on this earth, and a preacher and a priest of God, slew a wicked man whom God had ordered slain. "And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord and Gilgal."

The Death Penalty Cannot Restore the Lost Life of the Victim

This is true, but neither can life imprisonment, nor any other kind of punishment. Shall we, therefore, abolish all punishment?

The Spirit of Christianity Is Opposed to Capital Punishment

And I reply that depends on what is meant by the "spirit of Christianity?" It is true that the very tone and tenor of the kingdom of Christ is opposed to the use of carnal methods to either defend, maintain, or advance *that* kingdom, but God has ordained such carnal methods in the material and political realm; and the fact is that the *true* spirit of Christianity is one of respect for God and *all* of his word. God's word teaches me that my personal response to the evildoer should be one of non-vengeance. But, it appoints the civil government as the "Minister of God" to execute the proper punishment on the evildoer, and that includes the death penalty, as I have shown.

Too Many Crimes Have Been Legislated as Capital Crimes

That was possibly true in times past, but the abuse of a principle does not invalidate the principle itself. We should seek the proper use of the principle and not the abolition of the principle altogether. Murder, today, constitutes ninety

The Christ, The Cross, And The Church

by Larry Ray Hafley

This study focuses on the issues that are current among brethren with reference to salvation and the church. It contains an excellent refutation of Calvinism as well as chapters dealing with the Identifying Marks of the NT Church, The Bodiless Spirit of Error, and What Is Wrong With The Church of Christ. This book will be treasured by those who "contend earnestly for the faith."



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percent of the capital crimes, while rape, treason, and kidnapping dominate the other ten percent.

Life Imprisonment is a Worse Penalty Than Death

Even the Devil knows better than that: he argues, “Skin for skin! Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life” (Job 2:4). Virtually all criminals would rather face a life term than the death sentence. One of the fables of Aesop tells of a poor man who was groaning under the weight of the load which he was carrying. Weary and exhausted, he threw his load from his shoulders, sat down by the wayside, and loudly called for Death to come and relieve him from his misery. Instantly the greedy tyrant stood before him, and, with an uplifted dart, inquired, “What wouldest thou have with me?” “Good death,” exclaimed the poor man, in terrified amazement, “I want thee to help me get this bundle of sticks upon my back!” The fable needs no interpreter. And finally, I reply, that *if* life imprisonment were really a worse penalty than death, it would not be lawful to utilize it.

The Death Penalty is Cruel and Unusual Punishment

This is more sophistry. It is not cruel or God would not have instituted it, or perpetuated it. It is not nearly as cruel as murder and no more unusual. And it is not uncommon. It has been practiced from time immemorial by both God and man. Most nations, thirty-nine of fifty states, and many ancient codes and laws considered it the just punishment for murder.

Capital Punishment Discriminates Against Minorities and the Poor

If so, then the system — not the punishment — is faulty. The officials who so misuse their God-given powers will answer to God for such disobedience. Every white, or rich, or prominent murderer should pay with his life just as all others. If we have not attained “justice for all,” we still ought not throw out the punishments and begin practicing “leniency for all and justice for none.”

Capital Punishment and the War Issue Are the Same

No, they are not. Capital punishment is only for evildoers and that only after a trial. War punishes the innocent and without a trial. It is true that the issue of one government punishing another government involves itself in a war issue, but capital punishment for a person who has been tried and found guilty of murder is not the same as war.

Conclusion

Amid all the objections and discussions, one fact is clear: Murderers are dangerous to society, whether in prison or out. Check with any police department, and see how many “repeaters” there are among murderers. Twenty years may elapse between a first and second murder. Oftentimes, when all the experts feel certain that a given murderer is reha-

bilitated, they grant him a parole, he then goes out to kill again! Murders are also common in prisons. Friends, God knows best, and allowing a murderer to live, even in prison, exposes to danger both the guards and the other prisoners; and also, all society in case of his parole or escape.

God is infinitely wiser than man — than all men together. His way protects the innocent from known murderers. His way is a warning to the young to respect and protect human life at all times. His way provides for the guilty to “pay his debt” in the only way that God every sanctioned, or that man has ever felt adequate!

In closing, let me urge you to speak up for God in every facet of life where he has spoken. Use your influence to support capital punishment in the United States of America. We have been a great nation and God has blessed us. But, if we reject God’s purposes for civil government, and default on God’s stated punishments, we ourselves will have to face the consequences of disobedience. God’s law for capital punishment stands! “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). “He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death” (Exod. 21:12). “Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction (ransom) for the life of the murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death . . . so ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Num. 35:31-33). “Deliver him (the person who has been tried and found guilty of murder) into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee” (Deut. 19:11-13). “The powers that be (civil government) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath (punishment) upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:1-7). Friends, this is the word of God. It is pure folly to ignore it.

I can only add my own earnest prayer that the ever-darkening and threatening cloud of anarchy and destruction that hangs so heavily over our beloved country might yet be dissipated by widespread repentance throughout our country; and that by a careful and just consideration of the dignity of man, and the value of human life, and the interest which the state has in the safety of all its citizens, and the solemn requisitions of Divine law, exacting, in all cases the life of the murderer, that those who have the responsibility of forming, directing, and governing our society may clearly realize that the death penalty for murder is both reasonable, just, and merciful.

For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious

Gossip, Contention, and Strife

man to kindle strife (Prov.

26:20, 21).

A gossip is to strife, quarrels, and contention as wood is to fire. Both gossip and wood are fuels. By sealing our ears and sewing our lips shut we can smother the burning fires of gossip.

The unity of a church may be destroyed by gossip. Because of gossip, love in a marriage may be replaced by suspicion and jealousy. It can divide a nation and separate brothers and best friends. Doubt and distrust reign and rule when gossip takes its political campaign from lying lips to listening ears.

Not all gossip is a lie. Some of it may be the truth. The context and intent of its telling may make it injurious and sinful. Before a thing is told, one should consider the benefit and impact of it. Will the telling of it do good? Will it be helpful or harmful? Because I know it, does it need to be made known to others? “Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding, But *in the bosom of fools it is made known*” (Prov. 14:33). “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But *the mouth of fools spouts folly*” (Prov. 15:2). “A fool’s vexation is known at once, But *a prudent man conceals dishonor*” (Prov. 12:16).

“The weapons of our warfare,” said Paul, “are not carnal”; that is, they are not of this world (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Spiritual weapons are not material darts and daggers. They are not sinful instruments of the hand, pen, or tongue. Gossip is not of the Spirit, but of the flesh. It is earthly, sensual, satanic. Godly men do not use gossip to advance the gospel nor to prosecute error. It is the weapon of choice among spiteful, envious men who seek to undermine the influence of others while feigning love for truth and righteousness.

Gossip establishes nothing of virtue and honor. It builds nothing to be admired and cherished. It provides no nourishment and sustenance for the soul. Gossip does not increase understanding and enlightenment. It does not support and strengthen the weak. It enhances neither courage nor determination.

Do not assist gossip. Listening to gossip arms and en-

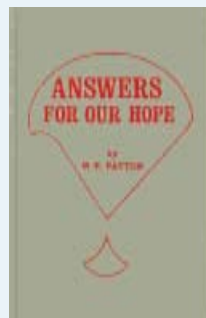
ables it. Repeating it makes one an accessory to sin and spreads the poison. Turn a deaf ear to gossip lest it stain your mind and arouse distrust and resentment toward another. Gossip is presented as a dainty morsel, as dessert to the ear. However, it is trash which seeks to make your heart its garbage can.

Gossip is addictive, both to the hearing and the telling faculties of man. Like strong drink and gambling, one can become “hooked” on it, unable to shake its devilish allure. “(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)” It is the entertainment of the idle and the cheer of the fool. Avoid it. Pass it by.

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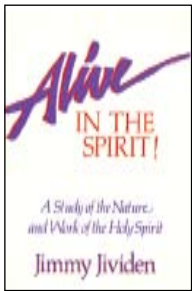


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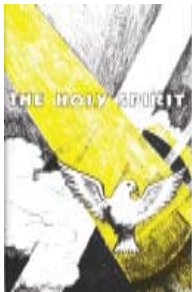
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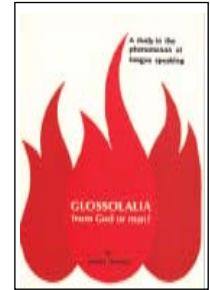
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Repentance: What Is It?

Steve Monts

I am sure we have all known of people who were zealous to turn their life around and obey the plan of salvation, but then they quickly fell away. They understood the commands to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized, or at least they thought they did. What I have often noticed is that repentance is the command they didn't understand. They didn't fully understand everything that goes into leading a repentant life.

Hebrews 6:1 tells us that repentance is a first principle so therefore it must be understood before other aspects of Christianity. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* had this to say about repentance: "The term *metamelomai* (the Greek term we translate repent, SJM), literally signifies to have a *feeling of care, concern or regret*. It implies a conscious, moral separation, and a personal decision to forsake sin and to enter into fellowship with God. It is employed extensively with reference to man's *turning away from sin to righteousness*. There are three aspects included in repentance: godly sorrow, turning away from sin, and turning towards God. All three elements make up the necessary command to repent. Let us look to the Bible and see how it displays all three elements.

The sorrow involved in repentance must be a deep sorrow. For if you are not truly sorry you will not change. "For *godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation*, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor 7:10-11). Paul clearly showed that their godly sorrow would be the first step of their repentance which led to salvation and a transformed life. The emotion has got to be there, for you can say you are sorry and not really be sorry. In 2 Samuel 12 David was so sorry for his sin with Bathsheba that he wrote a Psalm describing his broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51). The repentance leading to salvation requires godly sorrow.

Repentance is not just emotion it involves action. The

sinner must turn away from his sin. "Let the wicked *forsake his way*" (Isa. 5:7). A great example of repentance happened when many "magicians" heard and believed in Christ, and then they burned all their magic books (Acts 19:18-19). What a way to turn from sin! If we could all just burn the things that we formally practiced that were sinful! That would certainly be a way in which we would not be tempted with them anymore. O, let the wicked forsake his way!

But if all repentance involved were sorrow for sin and forsaking sin, what a miserable life it would be. We need the third element of repentance; we need to turn towards God. Judas only had the first two elements. He was certainly sorry for his sin, he turned from his sin by casting the money away from him, and, if he had to do it all over again, I firmly believe he would choose not to betray Christ. Judas' error was instead of turning to God, he turned to despair and committed suicide. Without the third element in repentance we would all lose hope!

We must turn to God. The Gentiles were told "that they should repent, *turn to God* and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20). The Thessalonians had "*turned to God* from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). That is how we turn to God; we serve his ways! His ways are in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And if we do not turn then it is just a matter of time until we fall away. Jesus taught a parable of a man who had rid himself of his sinful ways, but put nothing in its place. His sin returned and he became worse than he was before (Matt. 12:43-45). One must put God's ways in his life.

In the book of Luke, the 15th chapter, we see all three elements of repentance come together. We are told of a son who wasted his livelihood in wasteful living. The son became poor and wretched to the point that he wished he could eat what the swine ate. The Bible says, "he came to himself" and remembered how it used to be with his father. He was so sorry for his sins that he was willing to be made one of his father's servants, feeling unworthy to be his son. He forsook his ways and came to his father. He repented as the Bible teaches. The father, while seeing him in the distance, ran out to meet him. The father didn't

Jesus on Materialism

Harry Osborne

While Jesus was in the days of his flesh upon earth, he talked with two men on separate occasions about the peril of riches. The cases show the pull of materialism from two very distinct directions. Though the events took place almost two thousand years ago, the truths presented are as relevant today as they were then. Greed was manifested then much as it is manifested today. Yes, the specific things which greedy people hoard today may differ in appearance from the things amassed in Bible times, but the nature of the process has not changed at all. Materialistic people are consumed with storing up the things of this world as the focus and priority of their lives. Let us all examine our lives to rid this evil from invading and overthrowing our souls.

The First Case — The “Wannabe” Rich

The first man experienced the pull of materialism as one who was trying to acquire wealth. He was not yet rich, but was seeking to gain wealth through an inheritance. He came to Jesus saying, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the in-

wait there until he came all the way but ran out to meet him. That is the great love of our God. When we, with a contrite and penitent heart, turn from our sin and turn to God, he then reaches out to you to forgive you willingly and with great joy. “For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:24). “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

Repentance: what is it? It is the godly sorrow, the turning from sin, and turning to God; this is what saves you and pleases God. If you have not why don't you today, “repent . . . and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38)?

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heritance with me.” To this Jesus replied, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14).

Jesus knew this man's problem. The man had his priorities in the wrong place — on the material things rather than the eternal things. Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). He went on to relate the following parable:

The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry’” (Luke 12:16-19).

God, however, looked at these things in a different way. Jesus declared God's view in these words: “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20-21).

Christ wants us to understand where the true treasure may be found. It is not to be found upon this earth, but in the eternal realm. The true treasure cannot be locked up in a bank or sheltered in an investment, but is found in service to God.

The Second Case — The Already Rich

The second man experienced the pull of materialism as one who was already rich and desired to maintain that wealth. He even had some interest in spiritual things. He came to Jesus asking, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18). His problem was not a total lack of desire for heavenly things, but misplaced priorities.

Jesus, understanding the man's problem, instructed him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and

distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22).

The Bible then records, “But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God’” (Luke 18:23-25).

Why is it so difficult for the wealthy to enter God’s kingdom? Because it demands that they place the things of God as their first priority rather than themselves or their material possessions. The apostle Paul gave the following charge in this regard:

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

In this age of affluence, all of us need to examine ourselves to see how materialism is pulling on us. It is easy for each of us to deny being wealthy because we define “wealth” as having beyond our own level of abundance. However, in terms of the vast majority of this world, we are all wealthy and would be so viewed by most people on Earth. How would we react to the Lord’s command if it was given to us today? Would our love for material things cause us to sorrowfully reject the call of Christ? Is it possible that we may have already rejected Christ and his cause by making his call secondary to our love of the things of this world (cf. 1 John 2:15-17)? Just as Jesus knew the heart of the rich, young ruler, Jesus knows our hearts today. If our hearts are filled with materialism, covetousness or greed, we cannot be acceptable to God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5-6).

Conclusion

Over the years of preaching, I have seen both types of people given to materialism. Two in particular come to mind.

One was a young man who proudly told me that his main ambition in life was to be rich. He followed the path of God’s warning:

But they that are *minded to be rich* fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown

men in destruction and perdition (1 Tim. 6:9).

He is no longer faithful to the Lord. Sinful lusts and worldly folly have taken their toll on him through the years. He now lives a bitter life thinking all have conspired against him to cause his trials, not realizing his plight is only life in the snare set by his own greed. Had he years ago heeded the words of Jesus, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses,” how much better his life would now be.

The other man conformed to the pattern of the rich ruler. He expressed a desire for spiritual things until a moment of truth exposed his greater desire for possessions. In his quest for this world’s goods, one acquisition led to another and another and another. Like a child with a lap full of marbles, he grabbed for that possessed by others with one hand while he guarded his own, sure that everyone else had the same designs on his goods that he had on theirs. While consumed by avarice, his family and friends rolled away like so many spilled marbles. What a tragic waste! One looking at the man today can almost hear the echo of the words of Jesus: “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24-25).

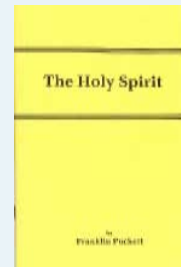
Let us be thankful for that which we have, but let us make sure that our true treasure is measured in spiritual terms. This will be accomplished only as we honestly and objectively examine ourselves by the standard of our Lord’s teaching.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Franklin Puckett

Outline of three lectures. An excellent short study on the subject. Good for tract racks.



Premillennialism: Does It Matter?

Frank Himmel

Premillennialism is the doctrine that Jesus will one day return and reign on earth for a thousand years. (*Pre-*, before, and *millennium*, a thousand years, indicates we are living prior to that era.) While specifics vary greatly from one theorist to another, the idea is generally as follows.

The Theory

When Christ came 2000 years ago, he intended to set up an earthly kingdom and reign over the Jews, but they rejected him. He therefore announced the church as a substitute, stop-gap measure until he could return and set up his kingdom. Jesus died, arose, and ascended back to heaven. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost and the church was established.

At some future time, usually thought to be not long from now, Christ will return for his saints. The righteous dead will be raised and those who are still living will be “raptured,” caught up to be with Christ in heaven. They will remain with him there for seven years while the earth undergoes a period of great tribulation. (Some theories have the rapture in the middle or even at the end of the tribulation.) Large numbers of Jews will return to Palestine. The anti-christ, a powerful, ungodly ruler, will take over the world. Despite unprecedented persecution of Christians, many will be converted during this period.

At the end of the tribulation, all nations will gather against Israel at Armageddon. Christ and his saints will return, and Christians who were martyred during the tribulation will be raised. The anti-christ will be defeated and Christ’s kingdom established on earth. The nations will then be judged. Christ will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem for a thousand years, his saints ruling with him.

At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be loosed, summoning Gog and Magog to join him. But again he will be defeated. At that time, the wicked will be raised, the final judgment will occur, and souls will be assigned their eternal place in heaven or hell.

This theory was once held by only a handful of religious groups, but now has become mainstream in denominationalism. It was popularized by Hal Lindsey’s books, beginning with *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and is currently advocated in the *Left Behind* series of books and movies.

Does It Matter?

In several articles we will address various flaws in the theory, some “millennial miscues.” Why talk about this subject? Does it really matter? Some say that, even if the theory is wrong, it makes little difference since it is merely a discussion of what will happen when Christ comes. But error has ramifications, and in this case they are hardly insignificant. Consider what is at stake.

The integrity of the Scriptures. The test of a prophet, whether he is speaking for God, is whether what he foretells comes to pass (Deut. 18:22). If he fails, we should pay no attention to anything he says. If Old Testament predictions of the reign of Christ were not fulfilled when the prophets said they would be, we must reject those prophets and everything they wrote — the Bible.

Availability of forgiveness of sins. The Bible affirms that forgiveness is in Christ’s kingdom (Col. 1:13-14). Those purchased with Jesus’ blood are the kingdom (Rev. 3:9-10). Indeed, Jesus’ kingship and his priesthood, through which he makes atonement for us, are inseparable (Zech. 6:12-13). If Jesus’ kingdom is not yet here, we do not yet have forgiveness of sins.

Requirements for salvation. Increasing numbers are saying that Jews are saved without coming to Christ. Again, this is due in no small part to premillennial misconceptions about their place in God’s plan. Yet Jesus plainly told Jews, “. . . unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

Political policy. To a significant extent, the foreign policy of the United States with reference to the Middle East is predicated on the belief that Israel still holds a

There Is Hope, Even When Learning “Hard” Lessons

Lewis Willis

There were very few flaws in David, the honored king of Israel. Unfortunately, most of us remember his failings more than his successes in serving God. Someone has said, “Sin is sin!” Thus, it is unwise to try to characterize one sin as greater than another.

However, when the great king succumbed to his lust and committed adultery with Bathsheba, severe consequences began to rain down upon him. His own son, Absalom, raised insurrection against him and very nearly succeeded in overthrowing his government. In Absalom’s attempts to gain power, he enlisted the aid of Ahithophel, one of David’s closest counselors, whom the king called “mine own familiar friend” (Ps. 41:9). The loyalty of many in Israel was turned from David to Absalom (2 Sam. 15:13).

In this moment of crisis, David wrote Psalm 41. In that psalm, David noted the lessons he had learned and expressed his trust and confidence in God. At the outset, however, he acknowledged his sin: “. . . I have sinned against thee” (Ps. 41:4). (You will find it profitable to pause and read Psalm 41.)

David’s Troubles

David was the victim of *evil being spoken against him*. He said, “Mine enemies speak evil of me” (Ps. 41:5). His enemies were determined to undermine his rule, and they

unique place in God’s plan, that we must be their ally on that basis. Should the political and military decisions of the world’s most powerful country be based on an erroneous religious theory?

These are but a few considerations. Open your Bibles and minds, and study along with us.

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were willing to say about him whatever would advance their cause and purpose. That same evil, despicable behavior is often evident today from those who are foes of God and truth.

In David’s case, he noted *the evil which was thought* by his enemies. They were thinking: “When shall he die, and his name perish?” (v. 5). They thought they would surely overthrow David, perhaps bringing about his death. What a perfect solution that would have been in their plot.

David’s enemies raised an *evil campaign of whispering* against him. He said, “All that hate me whisper together against me” (v. 7). Often slander, whispered in cowardice, can be as devastating and deadly as the sword. Even today, or dare I say “especially” today, a slanderous whispering campaign is effective and destructive. David said they tried this strategy against him.

At every turn, David’s foes were determined to bringing him down. His adulterous sin brought this plot upon him. David said his enemies *plotted against him*. He wrote: “. . . against me do they devise my hurt” (v. 7). Absalom and his co-conspirators were seeking any opening, vulnerability, or weakness which they could exploit to bring David down.

When Ahithophel, David’s counselor, joined the insurgency, David lamented: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (v. 9). David’s foes *would work any evil* against him in pursuit of their objective. His enemies were no different than enemies of truth and righteousness today. Modern foes will think, say, or do anything that they think might be harmful to the Lord and his cause.

These were David’s problems; they were real. So, where could he turn, and what consolation could he expect to receive?

David’s Hopes

Perhaps it was the source from which David sought relief from his troubles that distinguishes him from other sinners. *David went to the Lord!* Yes, he had sinned against God, but now he turns back to him in confidence and trust that God was his only source of deliverance. He knew the Lord. David said: "But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them" (v. 10). If God would be merciful in forgiveness, David knew God could save him from his distress.

Everyone who struggles with the wiles of the Devil would do well to remember where relief can be found. Christians share David's confidence. I'm reminded of the words of two songs of the church: an old one says, "He is able to deliver thee" and a song that is new to many of us which says, "I know the Lord will make a way for me!" Like David, our hope must be in the Lord!

David knew that *God would show favor to him*. Read his words of assurance and hope: "By this I know that thou favourest me" (v. 11). In spite of his sins of the past, David had turned to serve God again, and he knew God would bestow favor and blessing upon him. Christians live with that same blessed hope!

David could rely upon the faithfulness of God. God will always do what he says he will do. David said, "... because mine enemy doth not triumph over me" (v. 11), God's promise was true. Many today who struggle with sin long for that same confident trust. God "is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Pet. 3:9). He has commanded us to be faithful, and he will give us "a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). If we will only be faithful to God, as he is to us, help in this life and wonderful blessings await us.

David's hope rested in *the power of God*. He wrote: "thou upholdest me" (v. 12). There are no limits to God's power to deliver and save. Absalom and his friends would never overcome the power of God, nor will any of our foes today. We can, with David, trust in God's power to save us.

Finally, David realized he lived *in the presence of God*. He said God set him "... before thy face for ever" (v. 12). No matter what form the enemy takes before us, we can say with David, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Ps. 56:11). An old song assures us we are safe in the presence of the Lord; we are "Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Even though he was distressed and troubled by his enemies, God was with the King! He concludes this psalm with these words: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen." Indeed, Amen!

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"Millionaire" continued from front page

today can be enjoyed tomorrow. We can't even say with confidence that tomorrow will come at all. James said in James 4:14, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." A vapor, whether it be like steam coming from a tea kettle or an early morning fog; both appear so grand and prominent; yet, they only last for a moment, then they're gone. Don't count on tomorrow for tomorrow may never come.

Don't be foolish! Today is the day to prepare to meet God. Peter told those who believed that Jesus was the Christ in Acts 2:38, "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." And for those of us who are members of the Lord's church, let's apply ourselves to Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 6:17, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up in themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Brethren, leave those lottery tickets alone and start striving for holy living! Jesus knows our hearts and said in Luke 12:34, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If you strive to please Jesus first, he will supply your needs. If you lust for worldly wealth and fame, one fateful day, you too may recognize those haunting words, "You fool! This night your soul maybe required of you!" Don't be a fool! Give Jesus your heart and your soul in obedient faith and service! You'll be so glad that you did!

2273 Old Leaksville Rd., Ridgeway, Virginia 24148

"Preaching" continued from page 2

Luke's account reveals that John did not preach a "come as you are" "stay as you are" religion. Rather, he preached the changes that had to be made:

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be

content with your wages (Luke 3:10-14).

The Lord Jesus was equally explicit in his preaching. To the woman at the well, he forced her to talk about her marital situation saying, “Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly” (John 4:16-18). After exposing her as an adulterous, he then condemned her religion:

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews (John 4:19-22).

Peter accused the Jews on Pentecost of murdering the Son of God (Acts 2:23) and repeated the accusation in other lessons (Acts 4:26-27; 5:30). He rebuked Simon the sorcerer, who tried to buy the ability to impart spiritual gifts, saying to him, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:20-23).

Paul also was judgmental in his preaching. Speaking to Elymas, Paul said, “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:10-11). To the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia who rejected gospel preaching, Paul said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:46-47). To the people at Athens who worshiped at the beautiful Parthenon, Paul said,

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with

men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:22-25).

Non-judgmental preaching undermines the ability of the gospel to do its work. Paul describes the public worship of the church in 1 Corinthians 14 and describes the situation when a visitor drops in for worship. He says, “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth” (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Plain gospel preaching identifies those things in one’s life which are sinful and calls on the one committing those sins to repent. It is not “plain vanilla” preaching that says “sin is wrong.” It is preaching that specifies what sin is and calls on men to cease the practice of those sins. Such is what happened at Corinth when the gospel was preached there. Paul said,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Sinful conduct was exposed and those guilty were called upon to repent of their sins and obey the gospel in order to be saved by the shed blood of Christ.

Which Sins

Those who want non-judgmental preaching always want to limit those sins to which it is applied. Some want to forbid the preacher from preaching against immodest dress; others want to limit him from preaching about dancing, gambling, and social drinking. Preaching on these things is sometimes judged to be inappropriate from the pulpit (it may run off visitors). Another group of elders may decide that mentioning the names of the denominations drives away visitors. To some elders mentioning the names of denominations is “old-fashioned, out-of-date preaching” that is not fitted for the times. This is the modern application of “non-judgmental” preaching in many areas of the country.

The question is where does it stop? How far are you ready to apply this?

Non-offensive preaching has degenerated to a new low in San Francisco. Read the following excerpts from “Churches Grapple With Same-Gender Marriage Debate” by Erik Tryggstad from *The Christian Chronicle* 61:4 (April 2004), p. 1:

To Kinwood DeVore, the marriages of gay couples in San Francisco — in violation of California law — are acts of secession. “Can San Francisco claim sovereignty?” asked DeVore, minister for San Francisco’s Metro church. The civic-minded congregation sponsors a recovery program for drug addicts and former prison inmates. DeVore and his church’s members are not known for their silence.

Long before Mayor Gavin Newsom allowed same-gender marriages, before the Massachusetts court ruled that a ban on such marriages is unconstitutional, members of Metro were speaking out.

As cities and states on both coasts move toward recognition of same-gender unions, churches in communities where public officials are performing gay marriages are faced with a dilemma. Silence could be construed as consent, but vocal opposition could create friction with the communities they’re trying to reach.

“I think our brotherhood is going to expect us to speak out and be very vocal about it,” said Silbano Garcia, minister for San Francisco’s Golden Gate church.

But Garcia’s church, in recent months, has made great strides in reaching out to its community, growing into a racially diverse congregation of about 60 members. Garcia said that he doesn’t want his church to be seen as a body that is condemning people. “We are really hurt that

our city is tarnished, once again, by something like this,” Garcia said.

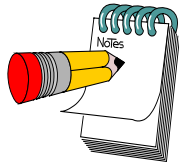
Metro church members have marched in opposition to the Gay Rights parade, an annual event that draws thousands of homosexuals and supporters. “It’s 100 (people) against 500,000 to 700,000,” DeVore said. Parade organizers have provided security for the church members in the past.

“We wouldn’t say ‘Gays are going to hell,’ but we would say that the wages of sin are death,” DeVore said of the group’s signs.

Some brethren who shake their heads in unbelief at what is going on in this San Francisco church are guilty of the same kind of preaching — on different subjects however — in their local churches. The kind of preacher and preaching that is needed is that which identifies sinful conduct in such explicit terms that one cannot doubt what sin is and calls upon men to repent. Do you get that kind of preaching in your pulpit? If not, perhaps there is a need for a change in the pulpit.

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Quips & Quotes



Harvard University OKs Student Sex Magazine

“Boston — Harvard University has approved a student magazine about sex that will feature art, sex advice and fiction — as well as photographs of undressed Harvard undergraduates.

“A 14-person committee, made up of faculty, staff and students, approved ‘H Bomb’ magazine Tuesday with a 12-0 vote, with two abstentions. The vote lets the magazine’s publishers apply for funding but does not guarantee money; when it would be published is uncertain” (The Indianapolis Star [February 12, 2004], A15).

Attendance Declines in Boston Archdiocese

“The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston said Mass attendance for a typical week has dropped 15 percent since the clergy sexual abuse crisis hit two years ago.

“For the first time, the archdiocesan newspaper published attendance figures and the number of key sacraments performed for most of Boston’s 357 parishes (39 did not participate). The report said average weekly Mass attendance in October was

304,000, out of a baptized membership of 2,084,000” (The Indianapolis Star [February 14, 2004], F3).

Episcopal Parish Splits over Gay Bishop

“Only 60 people attended the three services at historic St. John’s Episcopal Church in Versailles, Ky., on a recent Sunday, while some 180 departing members held the first formal service of their new conservative congregation, St. Andrew’s.

“The split occurred when Bishop Stacy Sauls and diocesan leaders ousted the parish’s governing board and took control of the building and bank accounts worth \$1.87 million” (The Indianapolis Star [February 12, 2004], A15).

Ruling Clears Way For Gay Marriages

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

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

First Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

The Renewing of Your Mind

July 12-15, 2004

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

(Holiday Inn University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center,
1021 Wilkinson Trace [Exit 22])

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

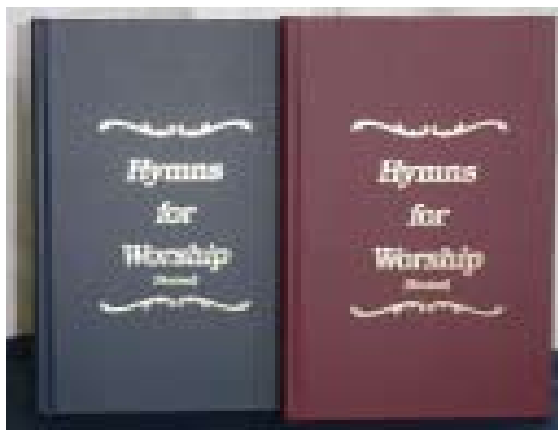
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	Scientific Fore-knowledge and the Bible (Larry Dickens)	House Churches (Harry Osborne)	Testifying in the Worship Assembly (Bobby Graham)
9:00 - 9:50	Renewed View of Morals (Dan King)	Renewed View of the Church (Larry Hafley)	Renewed View of Jesus (John Isaac Edwards)
10:00 - 10:50	Renewed View of Sexual Morals (Lewis Willis)	Renewed View of Unity (Russell Dunaway)	Renewed View of Biblical Interpretation (Marc Gibson)
11:00 - 11:50	Renewed View of Marriage (Brett Hogland)	Renewed Commitment to Balanced Preaching (Ron Halbrook)	Renewed View of Worship (Jason Longstreth)
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
1:30 - 2:20	Material available for Children's Classes (Vernita Goodall)	A Biblical View of Femininity (Anne Stevens)	Issues for a Preacher/Elder's Wife (Bobby Adams)
Auditorium			
1:30 - 2:20	Evangelism in Canada (Brian Sullivan)	Evangelism in India (John Humphries)	Evangelism in Nigeria (Karl Diestelkamp)
2:30 - 4:00	Open Forum: No Assigned Topic	Open Forum: Role of Government in Divorce/Remarriage (Mental Divorce): Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Donnie Rader, Greg Gwin	Open Forum: Sunday Evening Communion (Al Diestelkamp, Dick Blackford)
Singing: 7:00 - 7:30 Led by R.J. Stevens			
"The Renewing of Your Mind" (Rom. 12:1-2) (Mike Willis)	Renewed View of Parental Discipline (Weldon Warnock)	Renewed Commitment to Evangelism (Connie W. Adams). This service will begin at 8:45 p.m.	Recommitment to Biblical Authority (Bill Cavender)

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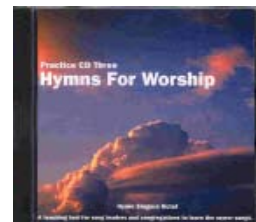


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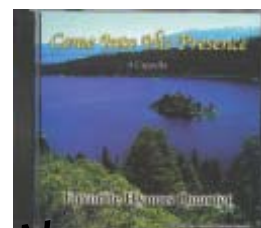
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