



Some Things You Cannot Afford To Be Without

Russell H. Dunaway, Jr.

When I left home a number of years ago, I quickly learned that there were some things that I could afford to do without. When I married, I discovered that there were even more things that I could not afford, things I had to do without. And then my wife and I had two sons, and we really learned about sacrifice and doing without some things for a while. The Bible teaches that there are many things that we can easily do without. Yet, it also teaches that there are some things that no one can afford to be without. Notice some of those things that you just simply cannot afford to be without.

First, you cannot afford to be without knowledge. Solomon said that for “the soul to be without knowledge, it is not good” (Prov. 19:2). The Lord rebuked Israel for their lack of knowledge, stating, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou

hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6). There are several things you must have some knowledge of if you are going to please God. If you are going to please God, you must have some knowledge about sin. You need to know what sin is (1 John 3:4; 5:17; Jas. 4:17; Rom. 14:23). You need to know that sin leads to shame and death (Rom. 6:21, 23). Sin will lead you to do things you later will be ashamed of. It will lead you to do things you will later regret. God is willing to forgive you of every sin you commit, but that does not remove

the shame or physical consequences of sin. You need to know that the pleasure of sin is short lived (Heb. 11:24). Sooner or later, no one is troubled like the one who allows sin to have its way in his or her life. Sin brings more trouble in our lives than it is worth. Even worse than the shame it brings, is the fact that sin brings separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2). And if you die in that condition, it brings eternal separation from God (2 see “Be Without” on p. 89

magazine

Vol. XLVIII

No. 3

February 5, 2004

Vol. XLVIII February 5, 2004 No. 3

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— Subscription Rates —
\$24.00 Per Year
Single Copies — \$2.00 each
Foreign Subscriptions — \$25.00
— Bulk Rates —
\$1.75 per subscription per month

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

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

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

Russell Dunaway Added to Staff

Mike Willis

We are happy to announce the addition of Russell Dunaway to the staff of *Truth Magazine*. I have known Russell since a little before 1981 when he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio to work with the Blue Ash congregation and have appreciated his work all through the years. He is a great addition to our staff of writers.



Russell was born on December 30, 1958 to Russell and Nancy Dunaway. He was raised in Stanford, Kentucky under the influence of such gospel preachers as Russell H. Dunaway, Sr., Kelly Ellis, Charles Brown, Hugh Thomas, John Craig, Austin Mobley, Art Ogden, Harold Carter, Royce Chandler, Steve Wolfgang, and others. On July 17, 1971, he was baptized into Christ by Kelly Ellis.

Russell preached his first sermon in 1972 at fourteen years old. Soon he was involved in appointment preaching. During this time he worked with the Waynesburg and Goochtown, Kentucky churches. During 1980-81 Russell attended the training program conducted by the Danville, Kentucky church.

In September 1981 Russell moved to work with the Blue Ash congregation. The work had some troubles in the past of getting along with each other, so I was somewhat fearful of how Russell might fare there. It has been a perfect fit. He has continued to work at Blue Ash since 1981.

Russell married Patricia Travis on February 12, 1982. To this marriage, two children were born: Chris (20) and Tim (18).

Russell attended Eastern Kentucky University from 1976-1980 but, he said, "I was not the best student on campus." He returned to school on a part-time basis at the University of Cincinnati in 1997. He received the BA degree in History in June 2002, graduating with high honors. He received every award offered by the History Department for undergraduate students of American History. While earning his BA he also held on average nine gospel meetings each year. Russell had a massive heart attack in July of 2002 but began working on his MA in History in September 2002 and is now only fourteen credits away from completing his MA. He has been accepted into

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Who Is Greatest in the Kingdom?

Connie W. Adams

The “me first” concept is not new. Throughout the history of man the pursuit of preeminence has surfaced repeatedly. It festered among the apostles. As they walked by the way, they disputed as to who should be greatest in the kingdom (Mark 9:33-37). Even the mother of James and John requested that her sons should sit, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in the kingdom (Matt. 20:20-22). She did not want much!

On one occasion they came right out and asked, “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus set a child in the midst of them and said, “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:1-6). The concept of a spiritual kingdom seemed hard to grasp. Their minds ran to the external trappings of power structures such as developed in the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. The Roman Empire had its chain of authority with certain posts regarded as greater than others.

The humility of a little child, innocent as to power and privilege, served as the appropriate rebuke to such ambition. The child was dependent on parents for sustenance and protection. He was open, trusting, and forgiving. Unless they could develop the spirit of humility manifested by the little child, they could not even enter the kingdom, much less hope to be an “official” in it.

GREATNESS MEASURED BY SERVICE

“But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:25-27). Nothing more vividly impressed this lesson on their hearts than the time when he girded himself with a towel and got down and washed their feet. Then he said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Jesus did not ask of them what he was unwilling to do.

The *apostles* had a ministry to perform. Paul said that Christ “hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). They delivered the “word of reconciliation” and in so doing fulfilled their service as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

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Elders have a ministry, a service to render. Paul told the Thessalonians “to esteem them highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5:13). To Timothy he wrote, “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). And what a work it is! They watch for souls, guard the flock, stop the mouths of gainsayers, and tend the flock of God as they that shall give account unto the chief Shepherd.

Deacons have a ministry to perform. The word “deacon” itself denotes a minister, a servant. These attend to special responsibilities on behalf of the church and in such a way as to be identified before saint and sinner as servants of the church. They are to “use the office well” (1 Tim. 3:13).

Preachers of the gospel have a ministry. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 4:6). Timothy was told to “do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5).

All Christians have a ministry. We do not all have the same function, though we are all members one of another. Peter said, “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:11). In the verse before that he said, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Paul said there must be an “effectual working in the measure of every part” to make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16). The ministry of every part is vital to the health and growth of the whole body.

PLENTY OF WORK FOR ALL

In light of the foregoing passages, not to mention many others to the same point, it should be evident that there is enough service to keep us all busy for a lifetime. It is a common fallacy that all spiritual work must be assigned in a congregational structure. There are times when we pool our time, talent, and money to function as a unit. Yet, the success of that depends on personal response to opportunity. But brother, don’t wait for the elders to give you a class to teach, or ask you to fill the pulpit. Find someone to teach and then teach him. Occasions arise almost daily for all of us to “wait on our ministry.” In painting the judgment scene, Jesus said he will say to those on the left hand “Depart” for they had not ministered unto him (Matt. 25:41-46). In feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, providing for the stranger, clothing the naked, attending the sick and imprisoned, we are attending to our ministry. Do we have to call a business meeting of the congregation or wait for elders to call upon us before we can do these things? Are they not the daily opportunities of life?

The fulfillment of such ministry must be done because it is right and not to gain attention or qualify for awards.

That was the gist of the Lord’s rebuke of those who pray standing in the street or give alms to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1-6). To serve in order to gain attention and recognition and to make curtain calls before an applauding world is to pervert our ministry. God sees, knows, and cares. Is that not motivation enough?

NO MATTER WHO GETS THE CREDIT

Someone once said it is amazing how much good can be done when we don’t care who gets the credit. Rivalry promoted by jealousy is an ugly thing. That is the meaning of “emulations” listed by Paul as a “work of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21. Has another brother accomplished something we either could not or did not? Then let us all rejoice in it. We need to stop looking at certain kinds of service as higher rungs on the ladder of success while other service is more menial and therefore less desirable. David expressed what should be the sentiment of every child of God when he said, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Ps. 84:10). Can you preach? Then do it. Can you be an elder? Then see to your work. Can you be a deacon? Then serve with diligence. Have you a box of ointment? Then break it and perfume your area. Can you sew garments for the poor? Then be a Dorcas. Can you speak words of encouragement? Then be a Barnabas. Can you tell someone you have found the truth? Then be a Phillip and find your Nathanael. Can you write teaching articles in a journal, or newspaper, or bulletin, or a book? Then do that.

Can you defend the truth in debate? Then prepare well and do it. Can you help make the premises where brethren meet attractive and presentable and welcoming? Can you open the doors in plenty of time before meetings begin? Can you greet people with a cheerful countenance? Then remember what David said. It is far more honorable to be a doorkeeper for the Lord than to have the most prestigious place among the wicked.

Let us all find our place of service and perform it. Forget about being generals, presidents, board directors, editors, or supervisors. The Lord went out to hire “laborers” in his vineyard. Who is greatest in the kingdom? Greatness will be measured by him who sits on the throne. But it will be measured by service. “To the work, to the work, there is labor for all.”

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Renew Promptly

“Be Not Anxious . . .”

Jim McDonald

In Matthew 6:25-34 the word “anxious” appears six times. “Be not anxious for your life” (6:25); “which . . . by being

anxious can add one cubit to the measure of his life” (v. 27). “Why are ye anxious about raiment?”(v. 28). “Be not anxious” (v. 31); “Be not anxious for the morrow for the morrow will be anxious for itself” (v. 34).

The word “anxious” is from a word that indicates doubt or double mindedness and Jesus’ warning about anxiety follows his declaration that “No man can serve two masters . . . ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:20). “Mammon” was a Chaldean word to express material riches. He thus figuratively makes the word “mammon” stand for “god.” Paul wrote, “Put to death . . . covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). When Jesus said, “Be not anxious for your life” (eating, drinking, and clothing) he asks, “Is not the life more than the food and the body the raiment?” “Mammon” can buy food but God gives the life; “mammon” can buy clothes but God gave the body. If he gave the life, he can give food for the life; if he gave the body, he can give clothing for the body.

While we “fret and fume” about food and clothing, Jesus reminds us of the birds. They neither sow nor reap, yet God cares for them. In Luke 12:6 Jesus asks, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pence? And not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God.” Are birds as valuable as man? If God feeds and clothes the birds and knows the end of their days, will he not show as great concern for man whom he created in his image? Surely he will!

Jesus used another illustration to show the folly of anxiety. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matt. 6:28). National Israel reached its zenith in Solomon. His wealth, wisdom, and power were known throughout the ancient world. Yet the lilies of the field were greater in their glory than his! And lilies are of such short duration. They bloom but a little while, then they are gone. They die, dry, and are burned. That is the end of them! But man

has something immortal in him. Surely, since he also is in God’s hands, will not God care for him?!

What can anxiety do? “Which of you by being anxious, can add one cubit to the measure of his life?” (Matt. 6:27). Anxiety may shorten our life but it won’t lengthen it! Or if the question is, “Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to the measure of his height?” (as the KJV has in this place), we all know the answer to this! However, as much as a young man would wish to be to be 6’5” so he could catch the “rebounds” from the “hoop,” anxiety will not make him grow a single inch!

So Jesus cautions: “Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (6:34). My mother used to tell me, “Don’t borrow trouble.” She knew me well! Every day has its own care and its own set of problems; don’t add to them by fretting over tomorrow’s uncertainties. We have a heavenly Father who both knows our needs and cares for us. He will bear our burdens, if we will let him. How we all need to believe Jesus’ words: “But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

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Epistles of John

Roy H. Lanier, Jr.

A helpful commentary on John’s Epistles.

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The Resurrection Miracles of Jesus

The New Testament records three instances where Jesus brought a dead person back to life: (1) the widow's only son in Luke 7:11-17, (2) the daughter of Jairus in Luke 8:40-42, 49-56 (and parallel passages in both Matthew and Mark), and (3) Lazarus in John 11:17-44. There may have been other such miracles worked by Jesus, but these are all that God saw fit to record for us in Scripture. John only recorded a small number of those miracles he knew about (John 20:30-31), and we are confident that the same is true of the other gospel writers. There are some things that are alike and some things that are different in these three resurrection miracles. We will begin with a few brief comments on some of the differences in the three cases recorded, and then we will make a few observations on the things that are alike. The reader may choose to follow along on the chart (next page) provided as we proceed.

SOME DIFFERENCES TO BE NOTED

Location. The first resurrection miracle worked by Jesus was preformed in the small city of Nain. This town was only a few miles southeast of Nazareth in Galilee. It was a day's journey from Capernaum, the city Jesus adopted after his rejection in Nazareth. Capernaum was probably the place where Jesus performed the second resurrection miracle (that of Jairus' daughter). This city is identified as "his own city" in Matthew 9:1, and it was after he had returned from the other side (east) of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8:40) that he worked this miracle. The third resurrection miracle (that of Lazarus) was performed in Bethany, a small town two miles east of Jerusalem (John 11:1, 18).

The Persons and Occasion of Death. In the first resurrection miracle Jesus raised the *only son* of a *widow*, and he was being carried to the place of burial. In the second instance he raised the *only daughter* of a *married man* who was a *ruler* of a synagogue. In this latter case Jesus found her yet in the bed in which she had died only a short while before he arrived. In the third case Lazarus was a dear friend of Jesus himself, one whom Jesus dearly loved. Although the persons and the circumstances were

different, they all had one thing in common: they all three had "died." There was no question about it. They were all *dead*. All present must have agreed to this one fact. Jesus would have known had it been otherwise, and so would others who were present.

Age and Duration of Death. A second thing that is different about these miracles is the age at which the three subjects died and the period of time they had been dead when Jesus brought them back to life. Jairus' daughter was a young girl, only twelve years of age, and had probably been dead only a few minutes when Jesus arrived at her home. The widow's son is described by Jesus as a "young man" when he restored life to him, and he probably had not been dead more than a few hours, assuming that they were following the normal custom of burying the dead as soon as the necessary preparations could be made. Lazarus however was a full-grown man (age unknown) and had been dead for four days.

SOME LIKENESSES IN THE STORIES

Jesus' Manner of Raising Them Up and the Response of the Dead. In each case Jesus gave a direct command to the dead. In the first two instances he said, "Arise." The first corpse was in an "open coffin" (NKJV), and the second was lying in bed. So "arise" would be the natural command. Lazarus was in a tomb, so he cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." How can the dead hear? you may ask. The case of Jairus' daughter supplies the answer to how the dead could hear and respond to Jesus' command. The record says, "then her spirit returned and she arose immediately." Ray Summers makes an interesting observation on this statement: "That part of her which animated the body returned to renew that animation. There is unquestionable evidence that people in that day believed that a person's spirit lingered about for three days after death hoping to get back into the body, but on the fourth day when the natural processes of death had definitely taken over the body, the spirit would go away. That was Martha's meaning when, concerning Lazarus, she said, 'Lord . . . he has been dead

Passages (NKJV)	A Widow's Son Luke 7:11-17	Daughter of Jairus Luke 8:41, 42, 49-56 Mark 5:22-24, 35-43 Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26	Lazarus John 11:17-44
Location	Nain (v. 11), a small town a short distance southeast of Nazareth — at the city gate (v. 12)	“When Jesus returned” (Luke 8:40) — from east side of Sea of Galilee, probably to Capernaum (“his own city,” Matt. 9:1)	Bethany (v. 1), about two miles east of Jerusalem (v. 18) — at the tomb (v. 38)
The One Who Was Raised and the Occasion	“Only son of his mother” (v. 12) — funeral procession, being carried out for burial (v. 12) — “dead” (v. 12), “he who was dead” (v. 15)	His only daughter, “for he had an only daughter” (v. 42) — at first she “was dying” (v. 42), then he was told, “your daughter is dead” (v. 49)	First, Jesus was told, “he whom you love is sick” (v. 3; cf. v. 6) — He delayed to allow him time to die (v. 6) — “Our friend . . . sleeps” (v. 11) refers to his death (v. 13) — he “died” (vv. 21, 32)
Age, and Dead How Long?	“Young man” (v. 14) — probably dead for only a few hours	“About twelve years of age” (v. 42) — probably had been dead for only a few minutes — “not dead but sleeping,” Jesus said (v. 52)	Grown man of unknown age — had been dead “four days” (vv. 17, 39)
How Raised?	“Young man, I say to you, arise” (v. 14)	“Little girl, arise” (v. 54)	Prayer (vv. 42-43) — then said, “Lazarus, come forth” (v. 43) — “loose him and let him go” (v. 44)
Response	“So he who was dead sat up and began to speak” (v. 15)	“Then her spirit returned and she arose immediately” (v. 55)	“Came out bound head and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with cloth” (v. 44)
Effect on Those Present	“Fear came upon all,” “glorified God,” “a great prophet . . . God has visited His people” (v. 16)	“And her parents were astonished” (v. 56)	“Many of the Jews . . . believed in him” (v. 45; cf. 12: 11) — even unbelievers believed the miracle (vv. 56-53)
Was a Request Made For Resurrection	No, Jesus saw the mother, had compassion on her (v. 13)	No, only that she might be healed before she died (v. 41)	No, but both Mary and Martha thought Jesus could have prevented his death (vv. 21, 32) — The Jews agreed (v. 37)
How Jesus Was Affected	“He had compassion on her” (v. 13)	Nothing mentioned	“He groaned in spirit and was troubled” (v. 33) — “Jesus wept” (v. 35) — “again groaning in Himself” (v. 38)
Who Was Present?	Many disciples and a large crowd (vv. 11-12)	Peter, James and John, and the parents (v. 51)	“Many of the Jews” (v. 45; cf. vv. 19, 33) — Martha and Mary (vv. 32, 39)
Was the Miracle Proclaimed?	Yes — “report went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region” (v. 17)	“He charged them to tell no one what had happened” (v. 56)	Probably, though not stated — Jewish leaders began to plot against Jesus (vv. 46f): “Then, from that day on they plotted to put Him to death” (v. 53) — Lazarus also (12:10)
Life After Death Statements	None	“She will be made well” (v. 50), referring to Him bringing her back to life — “She is not dead but sleeping” (v. 52), anticipating bringing her back to life	“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up” (cf. 11) — “Jesus spoke of his death” (v. 13), explaining Jesus’ statement, “Lazarus sleeps”

four days' (John 11:39). Her concern was not so much with the unpleasant situation of opening the cave after those processes had started as it was with the fact that it was too late to help Lazarus. She, too, learned that when Jesus is present, it is never too late" (*Jesus, the Universal Savior: Commentary on Luke* 103). It was not the dead body of the subjects that heard and responded to his command, but the spirit that had departed in death.

Response of Those Who Witnessed the Miracles.

In each case the response was "fear" (godly reverence), "glorifying God," "astonishment," and "belief," or some combination of these. In the case of Lazarus even those Jews who rejected Jesus believed the miracle.

Jesus Statements Concerning Life After Death. When Jesus made statements concerning what he would do for these people, he was always consistent in the language he used. This is illustrated in his use of the word "sleep" as he used it to describe death. In speaking of the daughter of Jairus he said he would make her "well," clearly referring to bringing her back to life. He does the same thing when he says, "She is not dead but sleeping." The Jews misunderstood this statement and scoffed at Jesus for it. They knew the child was dead, but so did Jesus. He used the term "sleep" as a metaphor to describe the quiet which death brings to the turmoil of life. He used this term also in the case of Lazarus (John 11:11) and promised he would wake him up.

LESSONS FROM THESE MIRACLES

1. Sickness and adversity are common to all. Lazarus illustrates this point. He was a God-fearing man, a disciple of Jesus. He still became sick and died. This point is also illustrated in other people in New Testament times.

2. Death is no respecter of persons. It can come at any age. All gospel preachers who have preached a number of years have helped bury good people of all ages — infants, children, teenagers, young adults, middle age people, and old people. Some who were old enough to become Christians had not obeyed the gospel. They were waiting for a "more convenient time," but death caught them unprepared.

3. The blessings of Jesus are offered only on his terms. He could have hurried on over to Bethany and saved Lazarus from death. But he didn't. He had something better in mind. He waited two extra days for Lazarus to die (John 11:6) so he would be able to "glorify God" and himself in Lazarus' resurrection from the dead (John 11:4). What would be done would be on his terms, not on the terms of Mary and Martha or anyone else. This is also true on what we must do to be saved, how we are to worship God, how the church is to be organized, how we are to be faithful to him, etc.

4. No resurrections from the dead are taking place today. No one has the power to do what Jesus did in raising the dead. Many challenges have been made for those who claim to have the same power that Jesus and the apostles had to work such miracles to use that power to speak to the spirits of dead men and bring their dead corpses back to life, but none has been able to do it. This is the challenge of all challenges to those who claim such powers, and none can meet it.

5. The fact of a future resurrection is comforting and reasonable. It is comforting to know that the same Jesus who raised the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus will someday raise all the dead. Some will be raised to a resurrection of life, and some to a resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29). It was by raising Lazarus that he proved his claim, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). These resurrection miracles demonstrated his power over death. Death is the last enemy that is to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26), and it will be destroyed by all being raised from the dead at Jesus' coming.

6. We will never go wrong in doing a good thing out of compassion. Jesus raised the widow's son because he "had compassion on her" (Luke 7:13). Whether it was because he was her "only son," or it was that she had been derived of her livelihood in the loss of her son, or possibly even both, doesn't matter. Jesus restored her son to her because he had compassion on her. He often did a good work out of compassion (see Matt. 14:14 as an example). The weeping and mourning over the death of Jairus' daughter was no doubt out of sympathy for her parents (Luke 8:52), and that "Jesus wept" at the death of his friend Lazarus is evidence of the same thing on his part. Christians must learn to have compassion for the hurts of others, and out of such compassion they should go about "doing good" just as Jesus did (Acts 10:38).

7. No "after death experiences" are reported in these examples of resurrection performed by our Lord. Not one thing is said about what any of these people did after they had been restored to life. What a contrast this is to those who claim today that they have experienced death and then were restored to life again. Some of the stories are ridiculous, especially the claim that they saw themselves floating around against the ceiling outside their own body! Exactly what part of themselves do you suppose they were seeing floating outside and above the body? Their spirit that had left their body? Then what was yet in the body that was watching their spirit float outside their body? The body was dead if the spirit had left their body (James 2:26; Eccl. 12:7). We don't really have any "after death experiences" taking place today, because there are no people today who are being restored to life after they have died.

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The Draught of Fish

(Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-14)

With regards to “the Draught of Fish,” there were two such instances — one near the beginning of our Lord’s earthly ministry (Luke 5:1-11), and the other (John 21:1-14) occurring before the Lord’s ascension to heaven. Both instances involved the miraculous intervention of our Lord, and both served to illustrate the Lord’s ability to supply the needs of his followers. And, yes, there are several parallels to be drawn from the two occurrences. In this article we shall summarize what took place on each occurrence, mention some of the parallels, and set forth a few of the lessons to be gleaned.

LUKE 5:1-11 SUMMARIZED

Jesus “stood by the Lake of Genessaret” (v. 1), which was the same as the Sea of Galilee. There were “two boats standing by the lake” (v. 2), and the multitude “pressed about to hear the word of God” (v. 1). Taking advantage of the occasion, Jesus got into one of the boats — the one which belonged to Simon — and “sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat” (v. 3). It was customary for teachers to sit down while they taught (cf. Luke 4:20; Matt. 5:1), and this particular setting provided a natural amphitheater whereby Jesus could be heard as he “taught the multitudes from the boat” (v. 3).

We do not know just how long Jesus spoke, but when he stopped speaking he said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (v. 4). Simon reminded the Lord that “we have toiled all night and caught nothing” (Luke 5:5). Please remember that night time on the Sea of Galilee was a more opportune time for catching fish and it was now day time. Moreover, Simon Peter was a fisherman by trade; he had made his living at this work (Matt. 4:14; Mark 1:16). He knew how to catch fish, and he knew what was the best time for catching fish. Jesus,

on the other hand, was referred to as “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55), and as “the carpenter” (Mark 6:3). But other than reminding Jesus of their fruitless toil the night before, Peter did not take issue with Jesus’ instruction to “launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” In fact, to Peter’s credit, he said, “nevertheless at Your word, I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5).

It pays to follow the “word” of the Lord! Upon taking Jesus at his “word” and letting “down the net,” they caught a great number of fish — so many that “they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink” (Luke 5:6, 7).

It is interesting to note the reaction of Peter. Seeing what had transpired, Peter “fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’” (v. 8). It wasn’t that Peter resented the Lord’s presence. To the contrary, the miraculous nature of what had occurred and the presence of this one who had superhuman knowledge even of where the fish were, made Peter more keenly conscious of his own sinfulness. It was similar to the experience of Isaiah who, upon seeing the vision reflecting the infinite holiness of God, was moved to say, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

But Peter was not the only one affected by what took place. In fact, “all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken” (Luke 5:9). Indeed, astonishment was always one of the effects of the miraculous works of Jesus — works which proved to

honest minds that Jesus was a “teacher come from God” (John 3:2) — works which bore “witness” to the fact that “the Father” had sent him (John 5:36).

Jesus then said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men” (Luke 5:10). Upon hearing these words, Peter and his partners (James and John) brought the boat to land, then “forsook all and followed” Jesus (Luke 5:10, 11).

JOHN 21:1-14 SUMMARIZED

In these verses we move forward to events following our Lord’s resurrection. By now, Jesus had been raised from the dead and had already appeared on two separate occasions to his disciples (John 20:19, 26). This was during the forty-day time period following his resurrection when Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:2, 3).

Jesus again “showed Himself” to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1), which was the same as the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1). Seven disciples were present on this occasion — Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples not mentioned by name (John 21:2). Please remember that these men were in the region of Galilee because Jesus, before his death, had said to his disciples, “after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee” (Matt. 26:32; cf. 28:10).

Peter was not one to stand around doing nothing. Hence, he said, “I am going fishing,” and the others said “we are going with you.” It was at “night,” the best time to catch fish, but “they caught nothing” (John 21:3). On the following morning “Jesus stood on the shore,” but the disciples did not recognize him (John 21:4). Jesus told them to “cast the net on the right side of the boat;” they followed his instructions and were unable to draw the net “in because of the multitude of fish” (John 21:6).

It was then that the “disciple whom Jesus loved” said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” Peter “put on his outer garment . . . , and plunged into the sea,” evidently making his way to Jesus. Meanwhile, the other disciples came in the little boat “dragging the net with fish.” As they came to the land, they saw “a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread” which Jesus had provided. Jesus said to them, “bring some of the fish which you have caught,” so Peter went and “dragged the net to land.” The net contained one hundred fifty-three “large” fish (John 21:11), which was quite a catch, especially in view of the fact that the night before — generally a better time for fishing — they had “caught nothing” (John 21:3)!

Jesus said to these disciples, “come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples asked him “who are you,” for they knew “it was the Lord” (John 21:12). Jesus then

“took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish” (John 21:13).

PARALLELS BETWEEN THESE EVENTS

Both events occurred on the Sea of Galilee. In each instance the disciples had gone fishing at night and caught nothing. In each situation the Lord commanded them to make another effort. On both occasions, without hesitation, they followed the Lord’s instructions and experienced amazing success. Peter’s reaction, on each occasion, was immediate. Each occasion reflected supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus, and served to illustrate the fact that he was a “teacher come from God,” yea, that he was the long-awaited Messiah!

PRACTICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

1. Jesus was the Master Teacher! “The multitudes pressed about him to hear the word of God” (Luke 5:1). There were reasons for this. Jesus loved the people to whom he spoke (cf. Mark 10:21). He had perfect knowledge of his subject; in fact, “no man ever spoke like” Jesus (John 7:46). Moreover, Jesus was without sin (1 Pet. 2:21); he always spoke the truth, and was completely impartial.

2. God’s people should “launch out into the deep” (Luke 5:4). It is not enough to simply be concerned about friends, and close personal contacts. “The field is the world” (Matt. 13:38), and we must “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

3. The importance of the word of the Lord. Replying to Jesus’ instructions, Peter said, “We have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5). To an experienced fisherman, who knew the Sea of Galilee like the back of his hand, the instructions of Jesus seemed implausible. But he did what he did because Jesus told him to do it! Peter did not see the logic behind the instructions, but he knew who told him to let down his “nets for a catch.” God’s word is still “living and powerful” (Heb. 4:12); it is “able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21), and it will face us in the judgment (John 12:48). Inasmuch as God’s “ways” and “thoughts” are higher than our ways than thoughts “as the heavens are above the earth” (Isa. 55:8, 9), then who are we to argue with the Lord?

4. True disciples strive to “catch men.” Peter had fished for a living, but Jesus said, “From now on you will catch men” (Luke 5:10). A.T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, observed that “catch” is from *zogron* (Gk.) and stated that “the old verb *Zogreo* means to catch alive, not to kill. So then Peter is to be a catcher of men, not of fish, and to catch them alive and for life, not dead and for death” (II:71). Fish are caught to be killed and eaten. Men are caught with the gospel, so that they might be made alive in Jesus Christ and live in hope of eternal life (Rom. 6:3, 4; Eph. 2:1; Tit. 1:2). Inasmuch as the soul is

worth more than the whole world (Matt. 16:26) and never ceases to exist (Matt. 25:46), then no work is so important as that of catching (saving) men!

5. The Lord blesses those who do his will. On both occasions, when the disciples followed the Lord's instructions to let down the net, they enjoyed great success. Later, on the day of Pentecost, when they really let down the gospel net, some 3,000 souls "gladly received the word" and "were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The Lord still gives "the increase" when we busy ourselves planting and watering (1 Cor. 3:6).

6. Jesus provides for his followers. When the disciples approached land they "saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread" (John 21:9). From whence did Jesus obtain this food? Did he obtain it miraculously? At any rate, he had it on hand for his disciples. If we put him first, he will provide for our necessities (Matt. 6:31-33), and we can be assured that he will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He told his disciples to "come and dine" (John 21:12), and he invites people today to "come" to him (Matt. 11:28), and assures those who do that they ultimately can "eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of he Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

7. The evidentiary value of Jesus' miracles. The apostles were "witnesses of all things which He did both in

the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem" (Acts 10:39). They had seen with their eyes, their ears had heard, and their hands had "handled . . . the Word of life" (John 1:1), and they concluded of a certainty that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). "By the resurrection from the dead," Jesus was declared to be "the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1:4). Indeed, after Jesus was raised, for a period of forty days, he "presented Himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3), and his disciples were totally convinced! They were present. They saw. They heard. They knew the facts. They believed!

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is as real today as he was when he sat in Peter's boat teaching the people, and he is as concerned about lost souls as he was when he told Peter that he would "catch men." His deity and divinity, through the miraculous element in his life, was abundantly confirmed. To this good day, he is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Indeed, let us, like Jesus be about our "Father's business" (Luke 2:49), by launching out into the deep, and letting down the gospel net in a diligent, consistent effort to "catch men."

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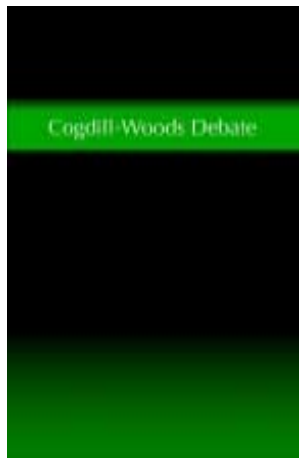
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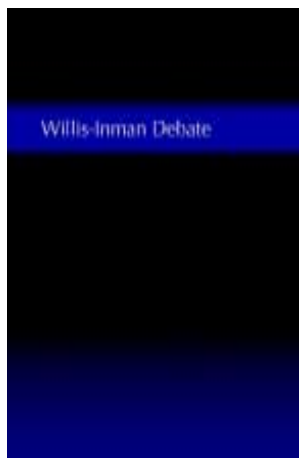
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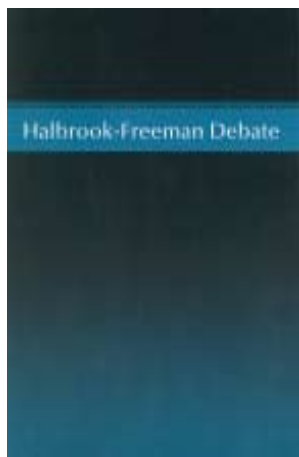
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Capital Punishment

Capital punishment is a subject that has been hotly 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. 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. Furthermore, 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 and 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 murderer 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.” (What a difference between King David’s action upon leaving office, and that of governor Rockefeller of Arkansas, who commuted to a lesser sentence all death row prisoners, upon his leaving office.)

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 rules 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 is 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 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, 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, nor 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 possible 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 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 or 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 rehabilitated, 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

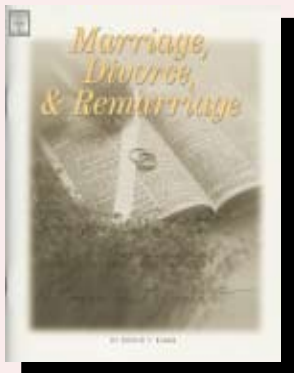
wherein ye are: for blood defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Num. 35:31-33). “Deliver him (the person who has been tried and found guilty of murder) into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine 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.

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Marriage: God's Gift to Man and Woman

IN THE BEGINNING

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1; NKJV). On the sixth day he made land animals and mankind. “So God created man in his own image . . . ; male and female created he them” (v. 27). Man and woman are created uniquely in the image of God with intelligence, moral choice, emotion, and the capacity for fellowship with their Creator and with each other.

After God created man, he said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Gen. 2:18). Adam surveyed the animals and found no suitable companion. God then created woman from Adam’s rib, and he loved her as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (v. 23). The Master Craftsman designed woman as his crowning work, suited intellectually, emotionally, and physically for a unique relationship with man. No animal, not even another man, is her equal in this role.

God said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). This union between man and woman is God’s gift to both of them for the time and the purpose of life on earth. They equally share the spiritual image of God. The male and female natures perfectly complement for total, balanced companionship by God’s design.

GIFT OF CHILDREN

Within the unique relationship of marriage between man and woman, God ordained the birth and nurturing of children. This experience deepens the fellowship of marriage, enriches the character of the parents, and perpetuates the human family. “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Ps. 127). The intimate relationship of father, mother, and child blesses all three. Often in life “two are better than one. . . . For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. . . . Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? . . . and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4:9-12).

FRIENDS IN LOVE

The Song of Solomon celebrates steadfast love between

man and woman as it grows from inception in courtship to fulfillment in marriage. Love is not forced but must grow: “Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases” (2:7). Solomon’s bride says to her beloved, “Set me as seal upon your heart,” and then extols the value of true married love, “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised” (8:6-7). True married love cannot be destroyed by life’s tragedies. It is cultivated not bought.

All the experiences of friendship deepen in marriage because of the unique natures and roles of male and female. That is why God said of this gift, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtaineth favor from the Lord” (Prov. 18:22). Because humans are made in God’s image, we are capable of friendship and fellowship with each other. When such relationships are cultivated properly, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (v. 24). We learn from each other: “He who walks with wise men will be wise,” and, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (13:20; 27:17). The closest friendship is marriage.

PERMANENT

God ordained marriage as a lifelong union. In the time of Malachi, God charged the men of Israel with covering his altar with the tears of their wives whom they had abandoned for other women. God charged that men who do this are treacherous, unscrupulous men who violate vows made before God. God said that “He hates divorce” and that it is an act of violence (2:13-16).

Jesus was asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” He explained that what God did and said “at the beginning” established God’s law of marriage: God created one man and one woman whom he joined in marriage for life (Matt. 19:3-6). Jesus continued, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (v. 9). A man who divorces his wife and takes

another woman is not joined by God to the second mate but simply goes to the bed of “adultery.” A man who divorces his wife jeopardizes her future because the next man who marries her “commits adultery.” The only exception is that a person may divorce a mate guilty of “sexual immorality,” and God will join this innocent mate to a new mate in holy marriage.

“Sexual immorality” is translated from the Greek term *porneia*: fornication or unlawful sexual intercourse in general (Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Moulton & Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*; Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). The term fornication was commonly used of “harlotry,” “adultery,” “incest,” “sodomy,” and even “unlawful marriages,” until it came to be used of all such “sexual intercourse” in gen. without more precise definition” (Kittel, Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VI:584, 587). In Matthew 19:9 *porneia* “refers to extra-marital intercourse . . . , which in practice is adultery” (VI:592).

In short, God’s gift of marriage was given to a man and a woman never before married, or one whose mate died, or one who divorced a mate for fornication (Matt. 19:3-9; Rom. 7:2-3). The Bible sanctions neither homosexual relationships nor people divorcing to get new mates. The same Bible which denounces homosexual practices as “against nature” proclaims God’s hatred of divorce (Rom. 1:26-27; Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:3-9). Marriage is not an experiment in self-indulgence and serial polygamy but a lifelong union

based on unselfish love.

HOLY, HONORABLE

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Happy, secure marriages result from our looking to God, to God’s Son, and to God’s word for guidance (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-21).

God gave man and woman the gift of marriage — not bestiality, not fornication outside marriage, not adultery in violation of marriage vows, not homosexual acts, not incest, not pedophilia, not pornography, not divorce on demand. The law of the land cannot overrule the law of God against sodomy, nor against divorce and remarriage for every cause. Our courts have long made havoc of God’s gift and law of marriage because the people demand it. It is time for repentance before we destroy our nation and our souls.

Jesus Christ died as the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 3:16). We must repent of sinful deeds and relationships by faith in him and submit to him by being baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). [Printed in (Louisville, KY) *Courier-Journal*, Nov. 22, 2003, B-3]

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John The Baptist

(A Character Study)

Our text is Matthew 11:7-15. These verses cover more than just the character of John the Baptist; but, for the most

part this article shall limit itself to the character of this great man. A little background to this dissertation may be helpful.

Jesus had just sent out the twelve on their limited commission (10:1-11:1). John was in prison (14:3-4), there because of his rebuke to Herod. It was the Baptist that declared of Jesus “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 1:29; 3:30). Now, from his prison cell, John sends two of his disciples to Jesus with a question (Matt. 11:2-3). Jesus replies to them and they leave. As they leave, Jesus begins to speak to the multitudes concerning John. Many, if not all, in his audience had gone out to see John when he was preaching in the wilderness.

Most probably they had something to say, or questions to ask, concerning John — though the record does not say. Jesus, in effect says to them, “You wish to know who John was? Well, I’ll tell you who is was!” Now, we are ready to see what commendations of John Jesus offers.

Verse 7 gives us our first clue, “A reed shaken with the wind?” The reed was a tall, slender, jointed grass, which was prevalent in wet areas. It would sometimes grow to a height of twenty feet; and, it maintains a fresh, green appearance when all other vegetation had dried up (ISBE). Such a plant would be obvious to the observer and could be seen wavering back and forth with the wind. Jesus is affirming that John was not like this reed. On the contrary, John was a firm, resolute man. He was not wavering in his principles. Whether in the presence of popular applause or of Herod’s rage, John remained the same. He was not one to be pushed *this way* or *that way* with the pressures of the time. His convictions were not for sale; neither would he compromise them. The same consistent message was preached before Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes. He would not shift with the times nor circumstances, and no one had to wonder where John stood on the issues at hand. When John stood before Herod, looked him squarely in the face and said, “It is not lawful for thee to have her” he

signed his own death warrant, but he would not sacrifice his convictions on the altar of appeasement. The adulterous situation into which Herod had gotten himself was intolerable to the Baptist. I highly recommend this trait for today, especially to gospel preachers.

The next commendation which Jesus offers is that John was a self-denying man. Verse 8 shows that he was not attired in soft clothing; his clothing was of camel hair and leather; while his food was locusts and wild honey. Outwardness often reflects inwardness. This hardy man of the “wilderness” was no soft touch. Neither persecution nor prison would alter his course. His course was set at the Jordan River where he first called attention to the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29). Apparently the last thing he did before his death involved another effort to exalt the Christ (Matt. 11:2-3). All to whom John preached were brought to understand how they had to change to walk in this Light from heaven. He would be as he preached; he would act in harmony with what he had to say. Nothing precluded his mission; he never took his eyes off his assigned task. Whatever sacrifices he had to make to get the job done, he made without hesitation. Again, I highly recommend this trait for today; and, again, especially for gospel preachers.

Third, Jesus said that John was not only a prophet, but more than a prophet (v. 9), more than the familiar Old Testament prophets. John, himself, had declared that he was not “that prophet” — the Messiah (John 1:19-25). Now, we have that Messiah declaring that John was “more than a prophet.” The Old Testament prophets had seen Christ’s day only at a distance (1 Pet. 1:10-12); John not only sees his day, but sees the sun rise in it. They only prophesied of his coming; John personally pointed him out (John 1:29). Verse 14 shows John to be the one prophesied (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). Jesus said, he is “my messenger,” sent before me to prepare my way (v. 10). John had said this of himself (John 1:23), and thus was it foretold (Isa. 40:3).

“That,” said Jesus, “is what John is to me!” But, Jesus is not through.

The “Salvation Army” IS A Denomination

Larry Ray Hafley

I would not want the Lord’s church to be defined by a newspaper reporter. However, the article below, apparently with the Salvation Army’s blessing, appears to tell the truth about the nature and character of the Salvation Army.

Every Sunday, Patricia McConniel’s family worships in a . . . chapel with a plain wooden cross on the wall. There are traditional hymns, a Gospel reading and a sermon. . . .

If all this is familiar to the 15-year-old, so is the reaction when she tells friends that her family’s religion is the Salvation Army. ‘You go to church at the thrift store?’ Patricia says in mock horror, mimicking the response she’s heard more than once. Sometimes I say, ‘yes,’ . . . Then I say, ‘Only kidding,’ and tell them that it’s a real church.

. . . few people realize that the Salvation Army is an evangelical Protestant denomination of more than a million members in 107 countries, with its own creed, ordained clergy, seminaries and spiritual mission: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs. . . .

‘I . . . think people think we mushroom out of the ground at Christmas time with a kettle and a bell. . . .’ said Lt. Col. Tom Jones, the denomination’s spokesman at its national

headquarters in Alexandria, Va. . . .

Founded in 1865 in London by Methodists William and Catherine Booth, the Salvation Army has a simple theology of eleven doctrines. It does not have sacraments or communion and is nonliturgical, meaning there are no prescribed rules for its worship services” (Caryle Murphy, *The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal*, 12/25/00, A10).

Sadly, some of our brethren are not far removed from the secular theology of the Salvation Army. They emphasize the “felt (physical) needs” of man and want to put the church into the so-called “good works” of the social gospel. They probably are jealous of the Salvation Army’s lack of “prescribed rules for its worship services.” Some seem bent on bringing every human fad and tradition (humming, hand-clapping, swaying their bodies in rhythmic motions with hands upraised, while women lead singing with a young man seated on the floor strumming a guitar) into the church of God. Like the Salvation Army, some have abandoned the Lord’s supper and the pattern of Acts 20:7.

But, let me not get started on the errors of liberalism! My purpose has been to show that the Salvation Army is simply

Fourth, Jesus announces that John is the greatest of any born of woman (v. 11). Now, where did that pronouncement put those to whom Jesus was speaking? Where did it put their leaders? The angel had said, “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord” and Christ here declares it to be so. Not just “great” but the “greatest.”

In verse 13 we see the Old Testament age beginning to die with John and in verse 14 we see the unfolding blossom of a new order. All that the Old Testament prophets had to say about a coming Messiah found fulfilment in John’s “This is he!” God had promised as far back as Genesis 3:15; John has the honor of presenting the fulfilment to the world (John 1:29).

Now, listen carefully to verse 15, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Let us not be as described by Jesus in

Matthew 13:15, “Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed.” As John turns the center stage over to Christ (John 3:30), he further bolsters his own great character; and so should it be with us!

One final thought, with a question: Traits of John’s great character are also very obvious in the lives of both Jesus and Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. Now, the question — “Why is it that when one tries to be like that today, he is accused of being unkind, harsh, lacking love, crude, pushy, bad attitude, or he is just plain foolish in his judgment? Yes, sir, I would like to know the answer to that question! Are we to conclude that to follow the example of John, Jesus, or Paul today, that we are doing wrong?”

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another denominational church with a well known, widely accepted begging apparatus attached to itself. Christians have no more business contributing to it than they do to the Methodist Church or any other man-made denomination. A human denomination is a divine abomination (1 Kings 12:25-33; Heb. 8:5). All such plants, “which (our) heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,” for “except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1; Matt. 15:13).

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“Be Without” continued from front page

Thess. 1:7-9). Furthermore, you need to know the truth (John 8:32; 17:17; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

It is not enough, however, to simply know the truth. Once you know the truth you then must obey it. Finally, you need to know God. Jesus prayed, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Sadly, there are so many people in the world today who know much about God, but who have never come to truly know God. Those who know God are those who keep his commandments (1 John 2:3-5).

Second, you cannot afford to be without faith. The Hebrew writer stated that faith is absolutely essential to pleasing God; that “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). He also defined faith as being “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). The faith you must have to please God is not some blind confidence. It is reasonable, based on the evidence presented in God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Jesus said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). You cannot afford to be without faith.

Third, you cannot afford to be without the shed blood of Jesus. The Hebrew writer tells us that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). The greatest need of man is to have his sins remitted. We can have our sins remitted, but only through the shed blood of Jesus (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28). Jesus’ blood was shed that we might have our sins remitted, but that does not take place until we are baptized in obedience to the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:38). You cannot afford to be without the shed blood of Jesus.

Fourth, you cannot afford to be without works. James tells us that saving faith expresses itself in actions; that a faith without works is a dead faith (Jas. 2:14-24). All the faith in the world is useless if it is not accompanied by

works of obedience. The Scriptures were given to furnish us unto “every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Christians are to be “zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14). To be righteous we must do righteousness (1 John 3:7). Those who are accepted of God are those who fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:34-35). Doing righteousness, working righteousness, simply means doing what God commands in his word (Ps. 119:172). You cannot afford to be without the good works that God has “afore ordained that ye should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Fifth, you cannot afford to be without love. Paul observed that everything you do is meaningless to God if it is not motivated by love (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Like faith, love expresses itself by actions. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). John wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). He further admonished, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Love must demonstrate itself in actions. Paul observed, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but *faith* which *worketh by love*” (Gal. 5:6). Again, he wrote that “you have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). You simply cannot afford to be without love if you want to please God. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Sixth, you cannot afford to be without holiness if you want to please God. The inspired writer admonished, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). God commanded that we be holy, using himself as our standard (1 Pet. 1:13-16). Holiness is the result of a conscientious choosing of good over evil. If you wish to see the Lord, you cannot afford to be without holiness.

You can afford to be without many things in life, but if you wish to make heaven your destiny for eternity, you simply cannot afford to be without knowledge, faith, the shed blood of Jesus, works, love, and holiness.

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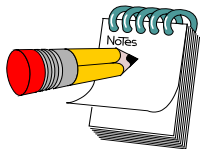
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“Dunaway” continued from page 2

the Doctoral Program at UC, but will not officially begin his Ph.D. until the fall of 2004.

In the early 1980s when Russell moved to Cincinnati as a young man, the unity-in-diversity movement was in full discussion. The “continuous cleansing” argument was being made by some around Cincinnati to justify an on-going fellowship with those who were teaching and/or practicing such things as institutionalism, fellowship halls, sponsoring churches, instrumental music in worship, premillennialism, etc. When a young preacher in the area tried to persuade him that some of these things were so, Russell answered

Quips & Quotes



Announcement of a Public Debate

“A Pentecostal preacher for the Gospel Assembly named Rick Goff of Louisville, Kentucky challenged for a debate at the home of one of the brothers in Louisville a couple of weeks ago. The brother called and asked if I would meet him in public debate on the subject of eternal punishment. Sometime later I agreed to do so, though I acknowledged that there are men far more qualified than I who could do a much better job.

“Rick has signed to affirm: The Scriptures teach that hell is annihilation, not a place of eternal punishment. Therefore, there is no hell. I will deny the proposition. The debate is scheduled to begin on Saturday, February 28, 2004 at 1 p.m. Each disputant will have one 25-minute speech, one 15-minute speech, one 10-minute speech, then there will be a question and answer period with questions being received by both men from the audience. For more information, look on the Internet under the truth-magazine.com web site. Click on ‘news,’ then under ‘debates’ and read more about it.

“May God be glorified, may truth prevail, and may people abandon error and leave denominationalism post haste! Please pray for my efforts.” Submitted by Ron Daly.

Homophobophobia Watch

“When Cheryl Clark converted to Christianity, she left her lesbian lover, Eley McLeod. But McLeod argues that she should have joint custody of Clark’s adopted 8-year-old daughter, since they spent so many years together. Denver County Circuit Judge John Coughlin agreed — but went even further. While Clark has the girl, Coughlin ruled, she must ‘make sure that there is nothing in the religious upbringing or teaching that the minor child is exposed to that can be considered homophobic.’

his arguments. When older preachers went to the defense of the one spreading “continuous cleansing,” Russell took them on as well. I read most of the correspondence and was quite impressed with how well Russell answered the arguments, showed respect for those with whom his disagreed, and staunchly defended the truth. He is an able defender of the truth of the gospel.

We look forward to publishing his articles in *Truth Magazine* on a regular basis.

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McLeod, who had objected in court to Focus on the Family and Promise Keepers pamphlets on display in the foyer of Clark’s church, was not ordered to avoid any anti-Christian teachings. The Colorado Court of Appeals has agreed to hear the case” (Christianity Today [January 2004], 19).

Many Back Ban on Gay Marriage, Poll Finds

“The New York Times — A New York Times/CBS News poll has found widespread support for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to ban gay marriage. It also found unease about same-sex relations in general.

“Support for a constitutional amendment extends across a wide swath of the public and includes a majority of people traditionally viewed as supportive of gay rights, including Democrats, women and people who live on the East Coast.

“Attitudes on the subject seem to be inextricably linked to the way people view marriage. For a majority of Americans — 53 percent — marriage is largely a religious matter. Seventy-one percent of those people oppose gay marriage. Similarly, 33 percent of Americans say marriage is largely a legal matter, and a majority of those people — 55 percent — say they support gay marriage (The Indianapolis Star [December 21, 2003], A5.

Florida Prison Has Religious Emphasis

“Lawtey, Fla. — Gov. Jeb Bush dedicated what is being called the nation’s first faith-based prison Wednesday, telling its nearly 800 inmates that religion can help keep them from landing in jail again.

“Besides regular prayer sessions, the Lawtey Correctional Institution will offer religious studies, choir practice, religious counseling and other spiritual activities seven days a week. Participation is voluntary, and inmates are free to transfer out. “Bush lauded the inmates from 26 faiths for committing themselves to a higher authority” (The Indianapolis Star [December 25, 2003], A12.

Gay Couple’s Divorce in Iowa Could Put

Marriage Law to Test

“Des Moines, Iowa — An Iowa judge’s divorce decree for two women has sparked a legal challenge that could help decide whether some states can bar same-sex unions while others permit them.

“Gay rights activists say the divorce between Kimberly J. Brown, 31, and Jennifer S. Perez, 26, does not open the door to recognition of same-sex relationships, but a conservative group said Friday it will ask the Iowa Supreme Court to overturn the decree.

“We believe the judge exceeded his authority,” said Chuck Hurley, president of the Iowa Family Policy Center, a family advocacy group.

“Hurley and other conservatives fear the judge’s decree could be a step toward legitimizing same-sex unions, which are not permitted under Iowa law.

“Brown and Perez, both of Sioux City, entered into a civil union in Vermont in March 2002. Their divorce was granted Nov. 14.

“Judge Jeffrey Neary, a district judge for Woodbury County, signed the decree without a hearing and has said he did not initially realize he was granting a divorce to two women. Neary has said he had the opportunity to change his mind but decided again it because a constitutional clause requires states to recognize laws of other states” (The Indianapolis Star [December 13, 2003], A6.

Falling From Grace

Aaron Erhardt

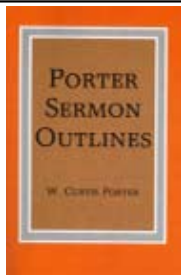
The Bible says that we are saved by grace “through faith” (Eph. 2:8). Yet from Paul’s first letter to Timothy we see that a child of God can have his faith shipwrecked (1:19), depart from the faith (4:1), deny the faith (5:8), cast off his faith (5:12), and err concerning the faith (6:21). If he does those things, will he still be saved?

Other New Testament passages state that a child of God can be cast away (1 Cor. 9:27), believe in vain (1 Cor. 15:2), be moved away from the hope (Col. 1:23), be spoiled through vain deceit (Col. 2:8), turn aside after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15), fall into condemnation (Jas. 5:12), and deny the Lord (2 Pet. 2:1). If he does those things, will he still be saved?

The Hebrews were called “holy brethren” and “partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1). Yet they could still depart from the living God (3:12), be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (3:13), come short of the promise (4:1), fall after the example of unbelief (4:11), fall away (6:6), count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing (10:29), cast away their confidence (10:35), fail of the grace of God (12:15), refuse him that speaks from heaven (12:25), and be carried about with strange doctrines (13:9). If they did those things, would they still be saved?

The Scriptures clearly teach that a child of God can fall from grace. Yet another false doctrine of man “cast down” by the truth (2 Cor. 10:5).

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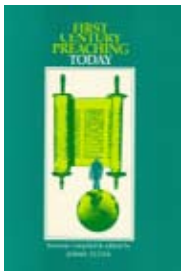
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