

Magazine

Apostolic Succession

David Dann

The Scriptures teach that Jesus selected twelve men from among his disciples to serve as his special messengers to the world. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13). These men were charged by Christ with a special commission to carry the gospel to the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

The phrase “apostolic succession” refers to a doctrine which holds that men must be appointed to serve as apostles in place of the apostles who have died. Thus, this teaching would have us believe that since the time of Christ, there has been an unbroken line of apostles that has continued on from the original twelve. This doctrine is taught, in some form or another, by the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormons, and various Pentecostal groups. The general idea is that when an apostle dies, another man must be selected to take his place in order for the church to be complete.

The passage of Scripture offered in support of the doctrine of apostolic succession is Acts 1:15-26. After Judas Iscariot committed suicide, the remaining eleven apostles sought a man to replace him. Of the men suggested to take Judas’ place, the passage says, “And they appointed

two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias” (Acts 1:23). After they had prayed over the matter, the outcome is given as follows: “And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26).

The doctrine of apostolic succession is simply another invention of men. We would do well to leave the job of making doctrine to Christ (2 John 9-11).

While Acts 1 does teach that Matthias was chosen to replace Judas among the apostles, it does not teach the doctrine of apostolic succession. In fact, the passage reveals that there are some things about the case of Matthias that make it unique and incapable of ever being duplicated. After Matthias was chosen, we can be certain that no man was ever appointed to succeed another apostle by following the example given in Acts 1, because:

1. Matthias was selected in order to fulfill prophecy. While giving the reason for selecting a man to take the place of Judas, Peter quotes two passages of Scripture from the Old Testament. Peter reveals the scriptural authority for appointing a new apostle by saying, “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his habitation be desolate,’ and ‘let no man dwell therein: and his office let another take’” (Acts 1:20). Therefore, the selection of a man to take the place of Judas was a matter of specific prophecy. In appointing another apostle, the remaining apostles were simply ful-

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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis1@attglobal.net

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John's Announcement of Jesus

Mike Willis

John 1:1-18 serves as an introduction to John's gospel. It is also an introduction to the reader of who Jesus is. Let's consider the affirmations made about Jesus in this introduction.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:1-18).

Jesus is the word. The Scripture says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). The word *logos* has a rich history in both Greek and Jewish literature for the personified word of God. The distinctive feature of John's gospel is the affirmation that this divine "Word" took on human form in a historical person, that is, in Jesus. The idea of *logos* is that of "word," "discourse," "what one has said." Jesus is the word of God in a different sense than "thou shalt not kill" is the word of God. He is the embodiment of the word of God. He explains (*exegeomai*: "explain, rehearse facts; of explaining divine mysteries") God to man. R.C.H. Lenski wrote, "... the Logos is the final and absolute revelation of God embodied in God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and

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The Trouble With Worry

Connie W. Adams

Martha was “worried and bothered” about many things (Luke 10:41, NASB). That well describes the anxious life of many, then and now. Many cannot enjoy a present benefit for fear of what might happen tomorrow. But the trouble with worry is that Jesus condemned it in Matthew 6:24-34. Several times in that setting, Jesus said “Take no thought”(KJV), or “be not anxious” (ASV).

It is not wrong to be prepared for the future. It is not wrong to express concern for our families, the church, our country, and a host of things which involve daily life. But worry unsettles the mind, immobilizes us, and damages our health in the bargain. Some bargain! Would you stop worrying long enough to consider what Jesus said about this?

The Proper Assessment of Worry

1. Worry distorts priorities. Jesus said, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matt. 6:25). Do we have to eat, drink, and be clothed? Of course. But there is more to life than that. While attending to these needs, greater things should not be neglected. Mary chose “that good part which shall not be taken away” when she sat at the feet of Jesus and learned from what he said. Jesus got to the heart of this in Matthew 6:33 when he said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.” Worry hinders us from putting first things first.

2. Worry is unbecoming to children of such a Father as we have. In verse 26, we are reminded of God’s provision for the birds. Then he reasoned from the lesser to the greater. “Are ye not much better than they?” Does God care more for birds than for his children of a much higher order? In verses 28-30 he reminds us of the adornment of the simple lily of the field and said that Solomon, in all his glory, was never arrayed as royally as they. Yet, the birds do not sow or reap, or gather into barns, nor does the lily toil or spin. And here is man, created by the hand of God himself and fashioned into the image of his maker. If our Father lovingly provides for birds and flowers, does he not care for us? Worry does not become the children of such a Father.

3. Worry is futile. “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?” (v. 27). One simple fellow tried to console his son who fretted because he was too short. He said, “Son, how tall you are is all the tall you are.” Wise words. Sometimes it is inconvenient to be tall. You have to remember to duck for low door frames. In the Philippines I have forgotten

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that to my sorrow! Are you short on money? Well then, why don't you just sit down and fret about it and see how much money that generates. But, there are genuine concerns in life. Yes there are. But worry won't improve a single one of them. Someone wrote, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." My first wife cross stitched this while she was battling with cancer which, in time, took her life. It hangs on the wall in our kitchen today. The trouble with worry is that it changes nothing.

4. Worry undermines faith. "O ye of little faith" (v. 30). Through Malachi, God rebuked the lack of faith of his wayward people who had robbed God in their offerings. He said, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10). God's shovel is much bigger than our bucket.

5. Worry runs ahead of God. "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (v. 32). In the wilderness, Israel complained, "What are we going to eat?" God gave them manna from heaven and fed them with quail. They whined, "What are we going to drink out here in this desert?" God gave them water from a rock. He has promised to hear the pleadings of his children. His "eyes are over the righteous" and his ears "are open to their prayers" (1 Pet. 3:12). Do you believe that? Then do the best you can, turn it over to the Lord, and go to sleep.

6. Worry borrows trouble. Jesus said, "For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (v. 34). We cannot live but one day at a time. We cannot cross a bridge until we come to it. Many of the things we worry about never happen. And if they do, worrying about them changes nothing. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove his thorn in the flesh. God's reply was "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9). "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

What To Do With Cares

Jesus spoke of "the cares of this life" which choke out the word of God in our hearts (Luke 8:14). But life does have its troubles, and we cannot simply brush them aside by saying, "Don't worry about them." They are there. They are real. What shall we do with "cares of this life"? 1 Peter 5:6-9 offers the help we need.

1. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God" (v. 6). Whatever you do, don't blame God for your troubles. Don't ask, "Why did God do this to me" or even "Why did God allow this to happen?" He is "the potter" and we are "the clay" (Rom. 9:20-21). The providence of God works in the affairs of men. We may not always see that when it is in motion. Later, we look back to see clearly that hand of God

at work, sometimes bringing great blessings out of tragic circumstances. Think of Joseph and all his hardships. Yet he could say later to his brothers, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). Joseph remained faithful to God under the most trying circumstances. He was not only vindicated through the unfolding circumstances of his life, but became the means of the survival and multiplying of his people into the nation God had promised to make of Abraham's seed.

2. "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you" (v. 7). Take it to the Lord in prayer. Pray for his will to be done. Pray for strength to endure. Pray for wisdom in the choices you have to make. Friends may help, brethren may care, but the greatest source of help in troubles is the infinite wisdom and power of God. "Be not dismayed what'er betide, God will take care of you."

3. "Be sober, be vigilant" for you have an "adversary" (v. 8). It is a sad fact that all too many, in the presence of trouble of whatever kind, abandon the only real help they have and wander away from the Lord. That is the time to run toward God, not away from him. Satan, our adversary, is ready, as a roaring lion, to pounce and devour us. In contrast to the fact that the Lord cares for you, Satan does not. He does not care that you hurt. Instead he will use that to weaken you and place temptations in your way. But he is not an invincible enemy. "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). No temptation is greater than we are able to bear and God will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

4. Others have prevailed and so can you (v. 9). "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Misery may love company, but it helps to learn from the examples of those who have struggled in life and have prevailed. The Bible is full of examples of people who suffered through many troubles. Hebrews 11 is a faith building passage. There we are reminded of the prevailing faith of worthies of old, including some whose names we do not even know. When we are overcome with trouble, it would help to call on strong and older Christians who have remained steadfast through every trial. Ask for their advice and then *listen*. After you have prayed, sought instruction from the word of God, and heard wisdom from the faithful, then "gird up the loins of your mind and be sober" (1 Pet. 1:13). Get your act together, gather your own strength and resolve and start doing what you can to relieve your troubles.

Whatever you do, don't compound your troubles with worry.

(Next time: Trouble With Family Discord)

P.O. Box 91346, Louisville, Kentucky 40291

What Do Visitors See In Me?

Larry Ray Hafley

When we are assembled to worship the Lord, to study the Bible, to remember and show the Lord's death, what do our visitors see in me?

Do they see someone who is totally bored and uninterested in what is going on? If so, what is likely to be the level of their interest? At the very least, my apathetic attitude is likely to have a negative impact on their concept of cause of Christ. Therefore, I must take heed to myself. I must strive to be a good listener. I must pay attention and not allow myself to become distracted.

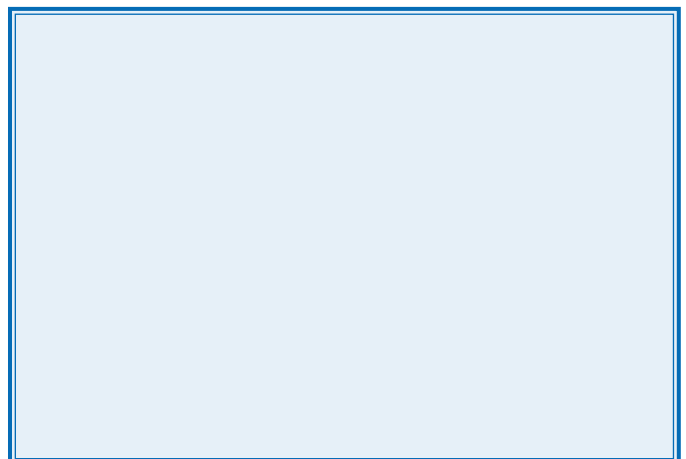
Do they see someone who is sleeping through services? What does it tell a visitor about the seriousness of our assembly if some adults sleep through services? Age (both the very young and the elderly) and medicine may make one susceptible to sleep. So also may those faithful ones who work all night and then, with dogged determination, come on to services and try their best to concentrate on spiritual matters. We can excuse such folks, believing that the Lord does, too. However, do some of our people, especially older children, sleep during worship because they have stayed up too late on Saturday night? Parents, if we make our children go to bed earlier during the week because "it's a school night," why not see that they get their rest on Saturday because it is a "church night"?

Do they see someone laughing, whispering, passing notes, or playing with babies seated nearby? Our little ones, especially our grandchildren, are almost irresistible! At times, they demand our attention and care, even during worship. May God bless young parents, especially our devoted young mothers, who are doing their best to worship while attempting to "subdue" a restless child and train a soul for heaven! Those things we understand. But, do visitors see me focused on everything except God and his word? Do they see me distracting others? Do they see me not paying attention to the gospel, but idly looking around at every other person in the auditorium? If so, what impression does this make on their soul? It cannot be a good one.

Do they see young folks getting up, walking around, going to the drinking fountain and the bathroom? Obviously, we know there are times when one must exit during a service. Aging joints and aching backs force some to get up and move around. Again, the Lord knows and patient brethren understand. However, at an early age, youngsters need to be taught to get a drink and go to the rest room during the break between services. Unless there is a particular health problem, most youngsters can sit for an hour without a drink and without having to get up and go to the bath room. They need to be trained to do so.

Our young mothers do not disturb services when they take their little children out. Indeed, they may do so if they do not! So, we are not discussing little ones who need to be disciplined or who need extra care. We are speaking of those who wander in and out of services because they have not been taught to sit up, pay attention, and act like a young lady or a young man. Are children allowed to get up and get a drink and go to the bathroom during a wedding or a funeral service? No, because we know it is not polite and that it will disturb the ceremony. Then, why not have the same respect for the worship of our Lord and for the study of his word?

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521



Positive Preaching

Bobby L. Graham

So much is included in the Lord's instruction to teachers of the word that it would be difficult to classify teaching acceptable to God as either positive or negative. Would it not be better to make sure that we are being loyal to the divine mandate of dealing with all situations of sin, error, faithfulness, and digression in the way that God charged? Who can deny the need at times to reprove or rebuke?

It has long been said by some brethren that we need more positive preaching, while others are quite negative about positive preaching. A preacher of a former generation was told by a sophisticated sister, using a popular song line of that day, that he ought to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative; his reply was also framed in another lyric, "Sister, don't fence me in!" I have observed that what is positive often changes with what is being preached and who is preaching it! It will probably startle most of us to learn that the word "positive" does not even appear in the Bible in relation to preaching. How can such advice about preaching as that cited above be scriptural when the words used to describe it present concepts foreign to the Scriptures?

Biblical Rather Than Positive/Negative

Some of the disagreement arises from different understandings of what constitutes positive preaching and negative preaching. The Bible does not define either kind of preaching, but it does have much to say about our preaching. Notice the following passages:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come

when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will (2 Tim. 2:23-26).

Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you (Tit. 2:15).

. . . holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not

giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth (Tit. 1:9-14).

So much is included in the Lord's instruction to teachers of the word that it would be difficult to classify teaching acceptable to God as either positive or negative. Would it not be better to make sure that we are being loyal to the divine mandate of dealing with all situations of sin, error, faithfulness, and digression in the way that God charged? Who can deny the need at times to reprove or rebuke? "Negative" preaching, which is positively necessary, can never encourage the good but can be most positive in result when attitudes are positive. Who would try to avoid exhorting, as God directed? Is not the need for longsuffering also indicated in the passages given? "Positive" preaching is also positively necessary but cannot fill every need. When a man teaches what and as the Lord tells him to do, is he not a faithful servant of the Lord?

Prompted by Love, Not Meanness

The Scriptures also indicate the spirit of love as being essential in our teaching. As far as I can determine, the spirit prompting the teaching is just as important with God as the message for the acceptance of the teacher with God, though truth can be learned when motivation is ungodly, affecting the manner of the teaching (Phil. 1:15-18).

but, speaking the truth in love. . . (Eph. 4:15).

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed (1 Tim. 4:6).

Love does not refer to some mushy sentimentalism or the disposition to make everybody feel accepted, even in his sins/error. It means that the teacher has in mind the true need of the hearer and is working to meet it. Love will guide the teacher to temper

his words to reach the heart of the listener, not to incite his opposition. He will understand that soundness is gauged by his faithful adherence to the teaching of the Scriptures, not by how many people he can anger or run off. People often become angry and leave because their attitudes are ungodly; in such cases the teacher is not blamable. Brethren who coddle them and blame the teacher are helpers in their unfaithfulness and sin; those who lovingly remind them of the teaching of God and urge them to react in faith, not in anger, are serving both God and men.

In our writing we also must attend to these matters. When we write, the reader is not present to hear our tone of voice or to see our facial expressions. It is then even more important to certify the motive to be pure and the spirit to be godly, when we deal with people's problems and failings. If people sense our concern, they will be more likely to listen to the message we try to convey. If they first observe our ugly attitudes or mean spirit, they will first reject us and then reject our teaching. Too often some of us have impressed others with our delight in their being wrong and our being able to condemn them.

Name-calling is sometimes a trouble-spot in writing and teaching. Some defend their calling of others by name by reference to John the Baptist, Jesus, or Paul. It is true that they sometimes identified their audience by name and used strong language to reprove or rebuke them, but they did so rarely. The use of names was rare, being the exception, not the rule. Such language seems to have been a last resort, after repeated attempts to urge improvement. When it was used, it was in a situation of lamentation. When Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, John labeled some vipers, or Paul said the Cretans were liars, none was doing so to vent his anger but to seize their attention by such strong language pinpointing their wrong so as to redirect their

hearts into obedience to God. If it be objected that the guidance of the Spirit was involved but is not today, we admit that such is true but deny that the Spirit would approve any ungodly method, motive, or spirit. The Spirit's guidance did mean that the charge was undeniably true, and today's teacher must make sure that he never charges anyone with anything untrue. Matthew 18:15-18 is often abused in such public situations, to which it is not applicable; but checking with the person thought to be teaching/practicing certain things is wise, because it is quite possible that more information will clarify matters and even remove the need to deal publicly with the situation. Harm is done when charges are made before there is certain knowledge of one's guilt. When teachers or writers constantly deal with the wrongs of others, it becomes clear that there is imbalance in their teaching, and sometimes in their spirit. The passages cited earlier direct all to maintain balanced teaching and godly attitudes. Calling of names can occasionally be positive, if it informs and helps other readers to know the source of error so they can avoid it. Constant name-calling will lose its positive effect.

OT & NT Preachers — Positive or Negative?

What about those preachers of the Old and New Testaments? Was Noah positive or negative? What about Micah, Elijah, Amos, and Hosea? How would Barnabas and Paul rate in the modern congregation? How would you esteem Paul's writings appearing in today's religious journal? I am unsure how every person would classify each of these men in each instance of his teaching, and I really care little for it. At times they encouraged what was right and at other times condemned what was wrong. Is not that the course that you would follow? Is not that the course mandated by God? Did not Jesus so conduct himself in teaching? Too many try to avoid all controversy, and too many delight in controversy.

Corporate Churches

Stan Adams

It is sad, but true that many elders and brethren believe that the local church is their own corporation. Many elders rule the flock by the same standards and political manipulating they use in dealings with individuals on the job. This is a serious sin. The Lord tells us that elders are to be shepherds, not CEOs. What might pass for good aggressive leadership on the job is not necessarily pleasing to God, when it comes to watching after the souls of brethren in local churches.

The liberals have been borrowing from the idea of growing a church, like you grow a business from corporate America. As a result, we have the onset of the mega-church concept among brethren, even some who consider themselves conservative. It is sad that the carnality of the Enron mentality of business dealings has permeated elder-

ships in many congregations. The go along to get along idea and the “smooth operational infrastructure” concept has infected the minds of many who should know better. Brethren, these things ought not so to be among right thinking Christians.

Whose fault is it? The ultimate problem is a carnal mindset about what makes a good leader in the church. Many times elders are chosen from among us, due in part to their success in business and their ability to be good PR people. One who is good with people and popular with the young, is often mistaken for good elder material. Study closely the qualifications for elders and you will see the emphasis is on spirituality, not popularity (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). Brethren often get what they deserve when they select men to lead them based on false criteria. Some of the best elders I have ever

It is helpful to hear what the Lord said by Hosea, the prophet, of God’s longsuffering love in the Northern Kingdom: “Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth” (Hos. 6:5). Note that the Lord who loved them had used what they would have considered rather rough action. His hewing and slaying had been done by the spiritual means of the prophetic word. The nature of the Lord’s word is such that it can cut, pierce, and prick. Man’s willingness to undergo this spiritual surgery is the determining factor in its success. They obviously had resisted the surgeon’s scalpel earlier applied, which could have excised their spiritual cancer, and later had to endure the hewing of the Lord’s axe man. Be careful before you criticize the Lord’s actions in this case, or those of godly teachers who are seeking to teach the divine message in a beneficial way. While the preacher must give account for his attitude, he should not be held responsible for the ungodly attitude of the hearer.

One thing that I have learned over many years in teaching and preaching is that there is no way to teach so as to

meet the approval of the world or of worldly minded church members. There is no honest way to teach so as to please people weak in faith. All efforts to do so descend to the level of weak teaching that omits what is needed. While the spirit must always be acceptable, the teaching must eventually focus on the person’s weakness or fault. Neither sin nor error is ever positive, but negative. Any failing to focus divine truth on the listener’s needs is unfaithfulness to Christ. Though the preacher is positive in his teaching, the net effect is negative because of the failure to help one by teaching what is needed. Let none be guilty of altering his teaching to please men, and let none present an ungodly attitude in his teaching. When the preacher has done the Lord’s will in both message and attitude, it matters little how other classify his teaching. To the Lord he, his hearers, and his detractors must give final account.

24978 Bubba Trail, Athens, Alabama 35613
bobbylgraham@juno.com



known, have been those who the business world would scoff at and belittle. Their humility and servant spirit would not be acceptable in the corporate world, and would even be considered a weakness, but this is the only attitude that God will accept in those who tend the flock. It is the only pleasing attitude for any Christian to possess.

Elders who seek to rule the local church as they would a carnal business have a gross misunderstanding of their duties as elders. Being an elder is not always going to be a popular thing. You are charged by God, to watch for the souls of the members of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. The idea of a dominate (CEO) elder who holds the other elders under his rule, is not found in the Scripture. God expects all elders to operate as a unit. No one is greater than the other. Each might possess some skills to a higher degree than others, but this does not mean he is higher in rank than others. Bullying of the brethren and saying or doing anything to keep the “operation” running smoothly, will not be pleasing to God. It may make for a large congregation of corporate snobs, but it will not be pleasing to God. Consider the church at Laodicea. Wasn’t it a church that would have been considered “successful” by all worldly standards? Their own opinion of themselves, was that they were “rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). God considered them sickening and was ready to remove their candlestick, unless they repented. I do not know if they ever repented. It takes humility to repent, and some find it hard to be truly humble and admit their sins. Many want to excuse their lack of service and diligence in the kingdom as “flaws in judgment” and not sins. This is another example of the worldly business mentality that has consumed many Christians.

When will brethren wake up and see what is happening? Only when they begin to return to the Bible for the answers and not to the wells of the world. What works in making a business successful will not necessarily work when it comes to tending the flock.

Jeroboam sought to rule Israel with ideas that were reasonable to the carnal mind, but were sinful when measured by God’s standard. He reasoned that it would be good to change the place of worship for convenience, so the people would not be tempted to go to Jerusalem. He reasoned that it would be good to change the feast days and to institute a new priesthood. He capped this thinking off with the horrible idea, borrowed from Aaron (Exod. 32), that calf-worship was necessary for people to have an object they could see which represented God. We all can read what a mess he made of the Northern kingdom. Also notice that the majority followed after him. He was more popular with the people, but he led Israel to sin and to practice idolatry. The world would applaud him but God considered him wicked (1 Kings 12).

Brethren, let’s not be so anxious to have elders that we appoint men to the job without proper qualifications. Let us not measure those who would lead us by worldly measures.

1 Kings 22 tells of the prophet Micaiah, who was not popular with the king of Israel, Ahab. The reason was, that he never prophesied anything good about him. Jehoshaphat of Judah insisted that a prophet of God be consulted before the battle, so Micaiah was brought in. He eventually prophesied that the battle would be lost, and was belittled, made fun of by Zedekiah and arrested. His prophecy proved to be true, however. Ahab wanted to lead the people in the popular way, not in the way of the Lord. Sadly, this same mindset has infected the minds of many who are elders.

Elders need to lead congregations in appealing to the Scriptures for authority. They need to lead the people in having a non-compromising spirit with worldliness. Those who watch for the souls of the flock, where they are overseers, need to lead the flock in “withdrawing from every brother who walks disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). They need to have an uncompromising attitude toward error and those who teach it. They need to watch for the souls of the congregation. They must not allow poisonous doctrines to infect the flock. They must be ever watchful for “wolves in sheep’s clothing” who would tear apart the work. They must be willing to stand for truth when it is not the most popular thing to do. True leaders in the Lord’s kingdom are those who will stand without counting heads to see how many are on their side. They understand that when one walks with God, he stands upright and must not waver. That kind of strength is not found in a secular motivational book. That kind of courage is found in the reading of the record of the faithful in Hebrews 11 and numerous other passages.

We tell our young people to remember what Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:33: “Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good morals,” it would be good if elders in local works would heed this admonition also.

Brethren, let’s not be so anxious to have elders that we appoint men to the job without proper qualifications. Let us not measure those who would lead us by worldly measures. Let us also not penalize a man because he is a successful businessman, if he has done so honestly and has humility and a servant spirit. If you are an unqualified elder, save the flock agony and step down. Remember the Lord’s church is not a business we rule, it is under his rule.

5020 Forest Creek Dr., Pace, Florida 32571

The First Verse of the Bible

John Henry, Sr.

The most popular book in the world opens with a declaration that God created all things. Listen, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). When we look at the universe and all things that are contained therein, the question rises in our mind, “Who made all these things? Where did they come from?” the first verse of Genesis gives the answer. The answer is a simple declaration that God created “the heavens and the earth.” It assumes the existence of God and begins with an account of creation.

The first verse of the Bible also opens the book of Genesis. The Hebrew name for Genesis means “in the beginning.” Later when the Septuagint (Greek) translation was made, it was named Genesis, which means “source or origin.” Therefore, the name of the book points to the content of the book, the beginning of *all* things. All things had a beginning and this fact is found in Genesis 1:1.

“In The Beginning”

Come with me on a journey. A journey that will take us back to the beginning of all things. Here we will find no world, no universe, no physical life, no time, no physical substance. We journey to a place where eternity has no beginning and no end. What existed then? How did all that we see and know come into being? What does it mean? With these three words our minds are enlightened to the fact, that at some point in the existence of God, all things began because God willed it. These three words are very powerful words for they tell us that all things had a beginning. These three words affirm that the things that you and I can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch had a beginning. These three words lay the foundation on which the whole Bible stands. Think of it this way, the beginning is like a tree. Genesis is the root whose trunk and branches extends through all Scripture.

These three words affirm that the things that you and I can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch had a beginning.

The book of Genesis lays the foundation for all revelation that God will reveal to mankind concerning the scheme of redemption. If one tampers with the foundation of Genesis, he then undermines the whole scheme of human redemption. Therefore, attacks on the creation account are attacks on the very foundation of one’s faith and belief in God. These attacks must be taken seriously and opposed. If a person rejects Genesis 1:1, he is rejecting:

1. Belief in God as the Creator of all things. Derivatives of the word “create” occur 106 times in the Bible (create—54; creation—6; Creator—5; creature—41). God’s authority over man is tied to his being man’s creator (Rev. 4:11).

2. The divine origin of the soul of man. Not only does man have an eternal soul created in the image of an eternal God, but he also possess a free will that can chose to obey or disobey the Creator.

3. The origin and consequences of sin (Rom. 6:23; 1 John 3:4).

4. God’s institution and plan of marriage (Matt. 19:1-12). God’s original plan for a happy marriage is linked with creation (Gen. 2:21-25). God’s plan will not fail, it is man who fails to work God’s plan.

5. The whole scheme of redemption, which is tied to creation (Gen. 1-3).

6. The role of man and woman (1 Tim. 2:13-14). The headship of man is tied to the creation account.

7. The week as a division of ordered time. The time set forth in a week comes from creation.

Old Testament history is our only reliable source of knowledge about creation, the early history of humanity

and God's ancient dealings with mankind. "In the beginning," six thousand years ago or twenty billion years ago? Can you see what science and the theory of evolution are doing to the foundation of God's revelation to man?

Genesis 1:1 denies a number of philosophies and theologies that are currently being taught. Consider what Genesis 1:1 denies:

Atheism. Atheism says there is no God. Yet, Genesis says God exists. Any philosophy that denies God exists is contrary to revelation and wrong.

Agnosticism. This philosophy says I don't know if there is a God.

Polytheism. This is the idea that there are many gods. Yet, the opening verse of Genesis affirms the oneness of God, which is in contrast to the pagan accounts of creation (Greek mythologies).

Materialism. The philosophy of materialism believes that matter is eternal and that there is no operation on matter by an outside force such as God. But the creation account denies the eternity of matter. If materialism were true, then there would be no spiritual world.

Fatalism. Fatalism is the doctrine that all events are predetermined by fate and are, therefore, unalterable. In other words, nothing is planned, it just happens. The Scriptures teach that the world is directed by an Almighty God.

Pantheism. The philosophy of pantheism makes all of creation a part of God. The tree and the animals become divine, as a part of God's being. But Genesis 1:1 separates God from his creation. God exists independently of his creation.

Darwinism. Darwinism teaches that natural selection is true. In other words nature takes care of all those things that are imperfect. If this were true, the human race would be perfect. Yet, people are still born with and develop physical deformities. It was Hitler who believed in Darwinism enough to try to produce a superior race of people.

Idealism. Idealism says that matter is an illusion or idea of the mind. Ever have an illusion hit you? How foolish this philosophy is. Matter is a fact of creation—God created.

"God"

Moses said, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29). There is one God! However, the word "God" as it is used in Genesis 1 is plural in form and suggests the plurality of God or the "Godhead." The word "Godhead" is found in Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20;

Colossians 2:9. "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26). Who does "us" refer too?

There were three beings in existence who are as everlasting as eternity itself. These three beings are united as one in purpose, in righteousness, and in deity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7; Acts 5:3-4; John 1:1-14; 1 Cor. 1:3). The three were present at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17). So we see, that before the world was, the eternal, Almighty, God existed.

God has not left himself without witness. He has revealed information about himself in nature and the Bible. God is a God of design, and all nature bears evidence to his creative hand. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly *seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20). The things, which are made: the *universe*. In it is seen order, design, and intelligence. *The invisible things*: power and divinity (Godhead). *Power*: that which brought into existence the universe and now controls it. *Divinity*: supreme intelligence which directs and continues to direct the power. These are clearly seen or understood through the things that are made. Invisible things cannot be seen, but one may see evidence of them. Every star, every growing plant, every raindrop, every season, every human being proves the "invisible things" or power and intelligence of God. All created things are God's witnesses, to the Godhead, his existence and his power. There is no reason for any nation or person to forget God (Ps. 9:17).



The word “God” is used 2555 times in the Bible. In every instance, except for some 245 times, the word refers to the true and living God. The name “God” is reserved for the one who revealed himself to man as the creator, the perfect ruler of the universe, the Lord, and the preserver of all things. The word “Jehovah” means “the Existing One,” “He who is,” or “the Eternal God.” As time went on, like everything else that was good, man borrowed everything that God’s Holy Name applied to and attributed it to idols or gods. Satan lied to Eve by telling (borrowing from God’s name) her she would “be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). Maybe she thought of all the power she would have as a god. Nor, is God a relic of Egyptian idolatry or any other idolatry for that matter. He is God, as he said to Moses, “I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exod. 3:14). The eternal, existing God sent Moses to Pharaoh, who thought himself to be a god. In Acts 17:23-29, when Paul stood on Mars Hill and found the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,” he then declared that God created the world, the universe, all nations, that God gives life to all and that we are the offspring of God through Adam.

“Created”

Everything was created by God, not by chance or evolution. “Create” means to “shape, form, create, fashion by cutting, always of divine activity” (Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew Lexicon*). Gesenius says, “To cut, to carve out, to form by cutting, to produce, hence to fashion, to create. Used of the creation of heaven and earth” (*Hebrew Lexicon*). “To create out of nothing,” or “creation from nothing.”

Creation is the production of a thing from nothing. In other words there was nothing until God created. What does this mean? At some point, it seems, matter had to be created or brought into being, and that act of God would be the real beginning. It seems as though Moses is telling us that matter was originally the direct product of divine power, and from this event he dates the history of the physical universe. I believe that God created matter in Genesis 1:1 and then in six literal 24-hour-days God shaped, formed, or carved out the universe by his mighty hands (Gen. 1:2-31). Paul said Christ existed before all things and that through “Him were all things created.” (Col. 1:16-17).

“The Heavens”

God created the heavens. The word “heavens” is plural, meaning more than one. Paul “knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2). The first heaven is where the bird’s fly and the clouds roll by. The second heaven is where the planets and stars abide. The third heaven is the abiding place of God—heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:4). The Psalmist said, “The heavens declare the glory

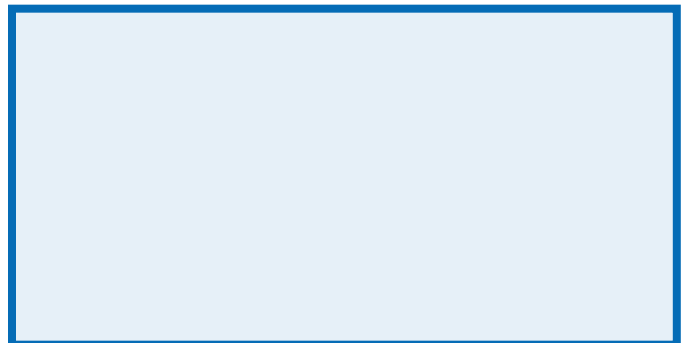
of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (19:1). *The heavens* (plural—maybe one heaven above another): the material universe that appears to the eye—sun, moon, stars. They make known God’s greatness. *The firmament*: the heavens as they appear to be spread out above our heads. The firmament makes known the work of God’s hands. When we look at the beauty of the heavens, we see the awesome power of an almighty God who created the universe and all things that are therein.

“And the Earth”

God created the earth where his creatures live. In the beginning the earth was beautiful and unpolluted. There were no thorns or thistles; there was no pain or sorrow; there was no anxiety or fear. I believe that in this perfect paradise the animals lived with Adam and Eve. Here, Adam and Eve could eat of the tree of life and live forever. The best thing about this is that they had companionship with God himself (Gen. 3:8). Because of sin came shame, guilt, fear, pain, sorrow, suffering, problems, thorns, death, separation from the Tree of Life, and worst of all, separation from the companionship of God. Man at this point gave up the opportunity for complete happiness on this earth. Solomon talking about man said, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl 12:7). The earth is where man will reside for a moment in time and then vanishes away (Jas. 4:14). Hebrews 11:13 teaches us that we are just “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” The Bible speaks of “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13). This is what we should strive for since this earth will one day be burned up because of sin (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

Let us put our faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures and accept whatever it teaches (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Do you believe in the eternal power of Genesis 1:1? Do you believe that God created all things? The Bible says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3). Do you want to be reconciled to God? (Rom. 5:8-10). If so, you must take advantage of the cleansing blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-6; 1 John 1:7).

310 S. St. Rd 335, Pekin, Indiana 47165



Intimacy With God

Such is Possible Only Through Christ

Randy Blackaby

Intimacy implies a close or very personal relationship with another person. Those with whom we are intimate feel free to come close, and to share the most personal matters.

We typically have very few people in our lifetimes with whom we are intimate. Our spouses and a few close friends may enter this exceptional circle.

But have you ever considered that God himself has, through his Son, invited us to such intimacy with him.

In Hebrews 10:19-25 we read: “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.”

Under the Law of Moses, the average Jew couldn't approach God at all—directly. He had to have a mediator, the priest. But even the priests approached God with trepidation. The tabernacle and later the temple were designed to reinforce the idea that God and man were not close, even though God was present with his people.

God's “presence” was maintained in the inner sanctum or “most holy place” of the tabernacle and temple. Into this closest proximity with God only the high priest could enter, and that but once a year.

Israel was expressly commanded not to “draw near” to God at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:12-25). But through Christ each Christian is exhorted to “draw near.”

Whereas the ancient high priest was the only one who could enter the “holiest” place, every Christian is now able to enter God's presence. Do you wish to speak with God? You need no priest or special minister to approach God for you. You can boldly approach God yourself.

What has changed since the days of the Law of Moses? The thing that demanded God keep himself separate from man has been removed. Sin keeps men from intimacy with God. Isaiah 59:2 declares, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Jesus death, when understood through faith to be the ultimate sacrifice for sin, gives us remission of sins, washes away our sin, cleanses our consciences and makes us acceptable to God.

The mosaical priests went through various cleansings, using both blood of animals and water to make themselves *ceremonially* clean. But the blood of Jesus, applied at the cross and received in baptism, leaves us *actually* cleansed.

Jesus is high priest over the “house of God.” But consider the implications of Ephesians 2:19. “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the *household of God.*”

The hospitality of our homes is one expression of intimacy or the seeking of greater intimacy. Imagine! God has invited us into his home. And, further, he is willing to call us his children and “sons” and even “heirs.”

So, we've established God's desire for intimacy with us. It remains for us to draw near to him. How do we do that?

Hebrews 13:15 tells us, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit

Social Drinking

Frank Himmel

The Bible unmistakably condemns drunkenness (Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Society may call it alcoholism and think of it as a disease; nevertheless, it is sin. But what about “social drinking,” small quantity consumption of alcoholic beverages—a beer, a margarita at happy hour, a glass of wine with dinner, a champagne toast? Does God’s word approve of our participation?

Principles

Several Bible principles argue against even the casual use of beverage alcohol.

First, we are warned that *sin is deceitful*. “But encourage one another day after day . . . lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). What is more misleading than alcohol? It may promise joy or prestige, but it delivers something else. “Do not look on

the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper” (Prov. 23:31-32). “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1, NKJV).

Romans 12:9 admonishes us, “Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.” To abhor is to detest, to stay as far away from a thing as possible. Now at some point in drinking one crosses the line from sobriety to drunkenness. Where is that point? Experts say it varies, depending on one’s weight, metabolism, drinking experience, etc. Given the near impossibility of telling exactly when you cross over, and given the principle of *abhorring evil*, why would one go at all in the direction of drunkenness? Besides, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says abstain from every *form* of evil. If drunkenness is evil, why would this not be a least a form?

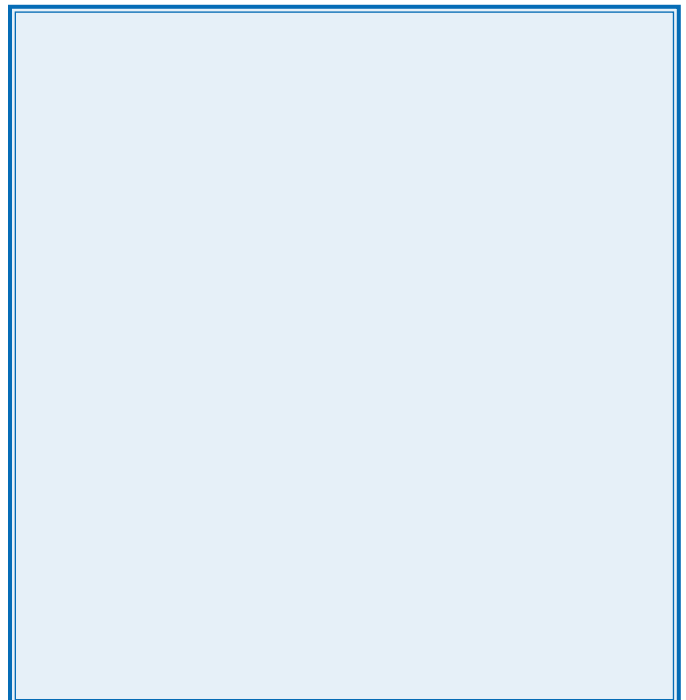
of our lips, giving thanks in His name.” Prayer is our means of talking to God. Other aspects of our worship also draw us toward greater communion with God. And, as we adopt God’s thoughts and ways and make them our own, we become more like him—thus closer and more intimate.

With such intimacy now possible through Christ, the writer of Hebrews urges:

- § “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope. . .”
- § “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works”
- § “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. . .”

Since we can have such an intimate relationship with God himself, why would we even think of doing anything that might cut off or diminish that intimacy? Such is a big part of the message of the latter chapters of Hebrews.

2445 Cypress Point, Apt. K, Fairborn, Ohio 45324



Then there is the principle of *control*. Christ is the master of our bodies: He bought them. Anything else that controls us is wrong (1 Cor. 16:12). Alcohol is quite addictive. How do you know before it is too late whether it will be so to you? Of course, being in control to alcohol is only part of the issue; being in complete control *under* its influence is another concern.

Christians are lights in the world. “. . . prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). What do you think? Will drinking a little here and there increase your influence for Christ? Will you be more effective in convincing your neighbor to give up drunkenness if you talk to him with beer on your breath?

A Pertinent Passage

“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). Notice three distinct terms Peter employs: (1) drunkenness; (2) carousals or revelries, the out-of-control conduct associated with drunkenness; (3) drinking parties. This word refers to the act of drinking, then a drinking occasion; “not of necessity excessive, but giving opportunity to excess” (Trench). Peter thus condemns three things: the excess state, the conduct associated with it, and the activity which leads up to it—drinking.

Objections

Those wishing to defend social drinking commonly raise two objections.

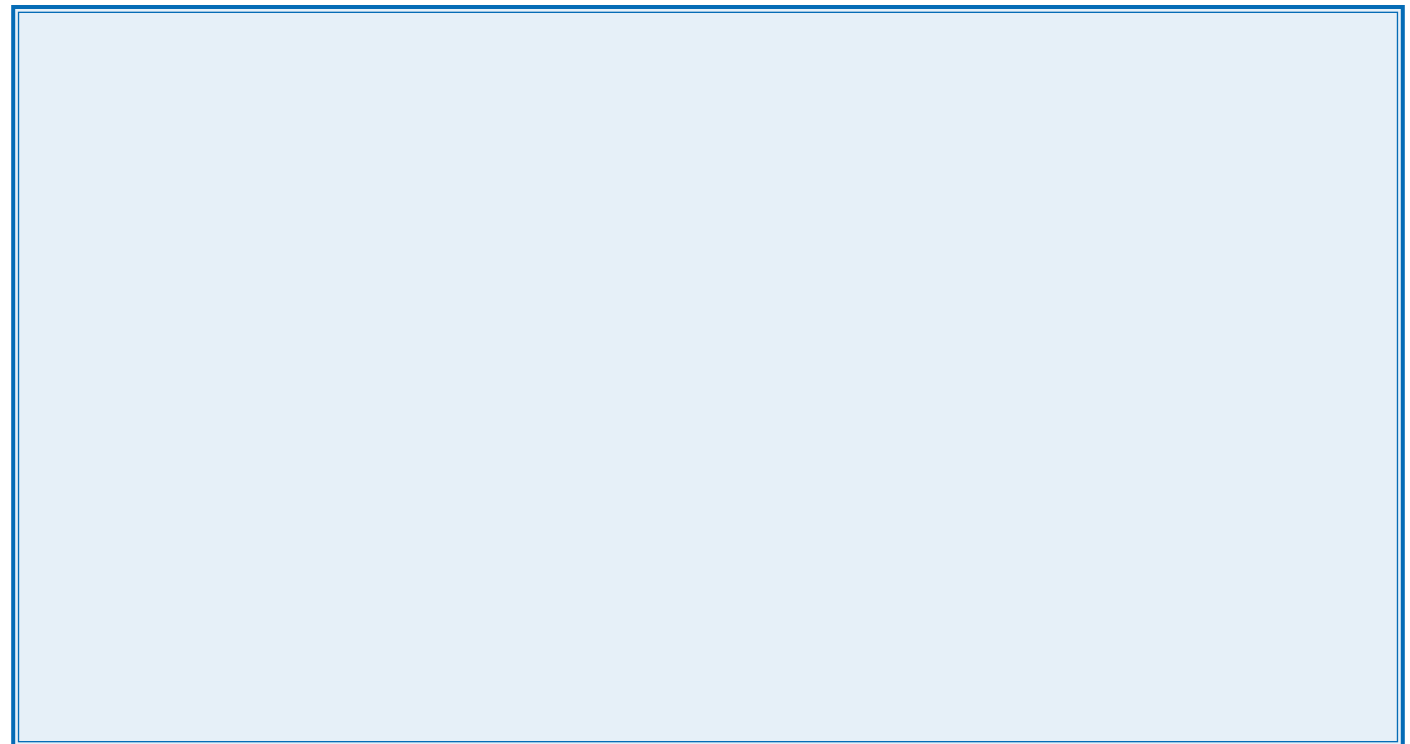
Did not Paul tell Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach’s sake (1 Tim. 5:23)? Yes, but that changes nothing. Alcohol for medicinal purposes is not the issue. Please note that the verse is parenthetical in context. Timothy’s practice was obviously total abstinence, else the instruction would have been unnecessary.

Did not Jesus drink and even make wine (John 2:1-12)? Yes, but would Jesus have done anything to contradict these principles he advocated? The truth is “wine” was part of the common diet in Palestine. Just one New Testament word covers everything from grape juice to intoxicants. Context determines what kind of beverage is under consideration. “Wine” was commonly mixed with water (instead of intensified with alcohol), hence addiction and drunkenness could easily be avoided if one wished.

Conclusion

The Bible gives far more space to the danger of wine than its benefits. Peter said the time past is enough wasted in such activities. Christians must be of sound judgment and sober spirit.

From the Manslick Road Speaker, February 2004



Sinful Anger

Bobby Witherington

“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:18, 19).

Inasmuch as out of the heart “spring the issues of life,” and “out of the heart proceed” the sins Jesus enumerated, it is apparent that the condition of the heart determines the conduct of the person. Hence, the words of that “sweet singer of Israel” who petitioned, saying, “create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10), must reflect the earnest desire of every person who is serious about going to heaven.

When we discuss “sinful anger” we are discussing a condition of the heart. “Heart” is used in two ways in the Bible. “Heart,” from *kardia*, “denotes (a) the seat of physical life, Acts 14:17; James 5:5, and (b) the seat of moral and spiritual life” (*Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, by W.E. Vine). In this latter sense, “heart” includes the mind, the will, and the emotions. Thus we read of the “thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12), the understanding of the heart (Matt. 13:14), the “imagination” of the heart (Luke 1:51), the “lust” of the heart (Matt. 5:28), etc. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Matt. 22:37), so it is evident that the Bible “heart” includes the emotions. Inasmuch as our “heart” is capable of condemning us (1 John 3:20), then it is also evident that the Bible “heart” includes the conscience. Indeed, in view of these facts we must conclude that it is no small thing for one to seek the Lord “with the *whole* heart!” (cf. Ps. 119:2).

This article deals with “sinful anger,” clearly a condition of the heart. According to Weust in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, “there are three words for ‘anger’ in the Greek New Testament. *Thumos* speaks of a turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings, passion, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding, which

is forbidden in Ephesians 4:31. *Parorgismos*, translated ‘wrath’ in 4:26, is also forbidden. It refers to anger that is accompanied by irritation, exasperation, embitterment. *Orge* is anger which is an abiding and settled habit of the mind that is aroused under certain conditions.”

The expression “sinful anger” implies that anger can exist without sin being committed. Indeed, such is the case, for in Ephesians 4:26 Paul admonished the saints at Ephesus, saying, “Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath.” That anger can exist without sin being committed is necessarily inferred by the fact that Jesus experienced “anger” (Mark 3:5), even though the Bible plainly says he “committed no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22). There are over twenty Old Testament Scriptures which specifically mention “the anger of the Lord” (Num. 11:10; 25:3; etc.); yea, even “the fierce anger of the Lord” (Jer. 25:37, 38; 30:24; etc.). Inasmuch as God is infinitely “holy” (1 Pet. 1:15, 16), inasmuch as Jesus “committed no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22), and inasmuch as both the Father and the Son experienced (and manifested) anger, then we affirm that anger *per se* is not necessarily sinful. In fact, we further affirm that the individual who never experiences any righteous indignation—regardless of how erroneous the doctrine or how depraved the conduct—is one who does not really “love righteousness!” (cf. Heb. 1:9).

However, anger is a dangerous emotion because it is often prompted by evil motives and results in evil thoughts, words, and actions. When, we ask, is anger “sinful”?

Anger is Sinful When . . .

1. It is borne of resentment. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices unto God. Inasmuch as Abel offered “by faith” (Heb. 11:4), the kind of faith which comes through hearing the word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17), God therefore “respected Abel and his offering,” whereas “He did not respect Cain and his offering” (Gen. 4:4, 5). Instead of repenting of his sin for not having followed the law of God with respect to the worship of God, Cain became “very

angry,” and he “rose up against Abel his brother and killed him” (Gen. 4:5, 8). King Herod, learning that he had been “deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under” (Matt. 2:16). This was obviously “sinful anger”!

2. It is unjustified. Upon being told to wash in the river Jordan seven times in order to be cleansed of leprosy, Naaman “became furious” and “turned and went away in a rage” (2 Kings 5:11, 12). Later, after reflecting upon the wise advise of his servants, Naaman got over his mad spell and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan and was cleansed. But it should be evident that he had no just cause to be angry—especially in view of the fact that he had just been advised in how to be healed of a dreaded disease! However, think of the multitudes who have become angry at preachers who, in love, told them what to do to be saved! And think of countless others whose emotions are constantly seething, and are ready to “boil over” at the most minor provocation!

3. It is caused by envy. The elder son, upon hearing that his father had prepared the fattened calf for his returned, penitent, prodigal brother, became “angry and would not go in,” and then, like a spoiled brat, said to his father, “you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends” (Luke 15:28, 29). Is it any wonder that the Bible says that “where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there” (Jas. 3:16)?

4. It is racially motivated. God sent Jonah to preach repentance to the Ninevites. Jonah initially fled in the opposite direction, but God sent a “mighty tempest” and “a great fish” which swallowed Jonah, and this got his attention! So Jonah “prayed to the Lord from the fish’s belly” (2:1). God heard his prayer and “spoke to the fish, and it

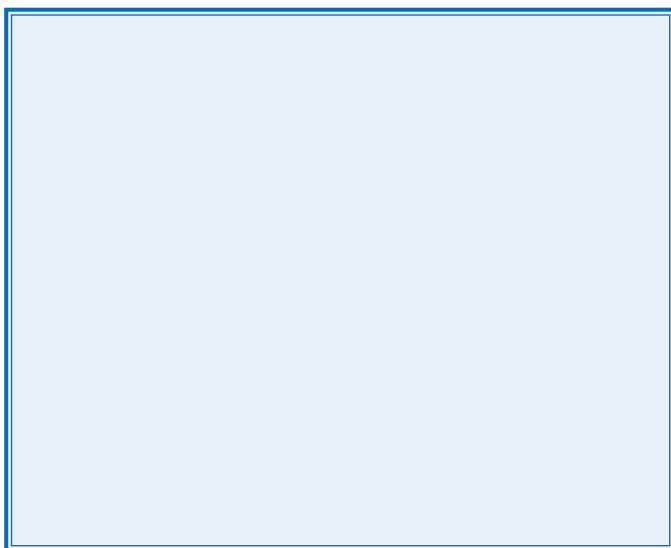
vomited Jonah onto dry land” (2:10). Jonah then went forth and preached to the Ninevites “the message” God gave him, Jonah (3:2) and the people of Nineveh repented, and God therefore spared the city. But this “displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry” (4:1). In this case a preacher became angry because he had been the means of saving a whole city! However, let us remember that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and the Assyrians had been bitter enemies of the Jews. Quite frankly, Jonah would rather see the people of Nineveh dead than spared! Jonah, no doubt, would have rejoiced had he saved that many *Jews*, but the people of Nineveh were of the wrong *race*!

5. It is caused by wounded pride. Haman, angered because Mordecai refused to “bow or pay him homage,” began to plan the annihilation of all the Jews, and he also ordered that “gallows be made, fifty cubits high,” and that “Mordecai be hanged on it” (Esth. 3:5-15; 5:14). Wasn’t that going a bit overboard simply because he did not receive the adulation he wanted from a fellow human being? The Jewish leaders became “angry with” Jesus because he had “made a man completely well on the Sabbath” (John 7:23). They should have rejoiced to learn that a lame man was made whole, but they knew that their influence upon the people would diminish in proportion to the increase of Jesus’ influence upon the people. They were proud, self-righteous, and pompous, and their pride contributed to their anger and their subsequently going about trying to kill the very one who came to make their salvation possible!

6. It springs from a desire to get revenge. With regards to Herodias, his brother’s wife, whom Herod had legally, but unscripturally, married, John said, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Matt. 14:4). Later, when the opportunity presented itself, Herodias demanded, saying, “give me John the Baptist’s head on a platter” (Matt. 14:8). But what was the motive behind the angry demand of Herodias? It was revenge; however, in this case revenge was sinful it was *not* “sweet”!

7. It leads to other sins. Please note Ephesians 4:31: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.” In this verse we see the “evil companions” of anger. Anger often leads to bitterness, which is a spiritual cancer by which “many become defiled” (Heb. 12:15). “Clamor” the “outcry of passion, the outward manifestation of anger in vociferation or brawling” (Weust) is a bedfellow to anger. “Evil speaking,” “slandering and injurious speech” (*Ibid.*) is an associate of anger. “Wrath,” “a violent outbreak of anger” (*Ibid.*) is often evident when a person becomes angry.

8. When it refuses to go away! It is noteworthy that in Ephesians 4:26 the Holy Spirit said, “Do not let the sun go down on your wrath,” and in the very next verse he cau-



Irreverence

Tom M. Roberts

Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground (Exod. 3:5).

One of the first things Moses had to learn about the God who revealed himself in such an unorthodox fashion as a burning bush was that he demanded reverence. Moses, in God's presence, was on holy ground.

Throughout the Bible, Jehovah is presented as the great "I AM" (Exod. 3:14), the creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). As such, he is worthy of our soul's adoration, our life's devotion, and reverence from our hearts. The Psalmist praised him: "O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth" (8:1). Likewise, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (19:1). David realized that it was a special privilege to worship God and said: "Ascribe unto Jehovah, O ye sons of the mighty, ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength. Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name; worship Jehovah in holy array" (29:1). "I will bless Jehovah

at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (34:1). "Holy and reverend is his name" (111:9). So impressive is the divine presence that John, the apostle, when faced with the glory of the Lord, "fell at his feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17). With these passages before us (and many more could be cited), we must conclude that man should stand in awe before the majesty of almighty God. Considering that we are the creature and he is the Creator, we must bow before him, acknowledging that he is worthy of reverence. "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him" (Ps. 33:8). We must agree with the wise man, Solomon: "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

Showing Reverence Toward God

Mankind never achieves a higher level of development than when he acknowledges God as his Creator and follows his instruction. It is imperative that we learn to show a proper respect for deity and to humble ourselves before him. Reverence is defined as "a feeling of deep respect,

tioned against giving "place to the devil." There is an old Latin proverb which says, "he who goes to bed angry had the devil for a bed fellow." Suffice it to say, it is a biblical truth that "anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9).

Conclusion

Read the newspapers, listen to the radio, watch the news on TV, or take a drive on a busy freeway at rush hour, and you will surely become convinced that we live in an angry society. As Christians, we are often adversely affected by our culture. If we follow the crowd and imbibe prevailing attitudes, we can unconsciously develop quick tempers, sharp tongues, and lasting memories of injustices actually suffered or imagined. However, it behooves us to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19). Instead, we ought to channel our energies toward developing such

character qualities as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control" (Gal. 5:22, 23). Cato said, "An angry man opens his mouth and shuts his eyes." Someone else said, "Your temper is the only thing that doesn't get better with use." Will Rogers said that "people who fly into a rage always make a bad landing." The Bible says "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (Jas. 1:20). As Christians, we march "to the beat of a different drummer," so let us be governed by the eternal principles of the Bible and not be swayed by the passions of the moment. Try as we may, we cannot unsay what we have said, we cannot undo what we have done. The Bible provides the best "anger management" instructions on earth. Let us follow the Bible!

506 Triple Crown Ct., Seffner, Florida 33584

mixed with wonder, awe, and love” (*World Book Dictionary*). Irreverence, on the other hand is a “lack of reverence or due respect; a disrespectful act or remark” (*American Heritage Dictionary*). We show reverence:

By acknowledging Jehovah as the one, true, living God. In the Ten Commandments, Israel was taught: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). Later, Moses warned, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4). In the discussion with one of scribes, Jesus was asked, “Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment’” (Mark 12:28-29). Understanding and emulating this first commandment will shape and form our entire approach to God’s service. Proceeding from the heart, this deep love for God will affect all our approach to the Lord.

While acknowledging that references to the Old Testament are not binding on God’s people today, we must also confess a marked difference in the manner of dress by which people under the Law approached God’s service, and many today. The careful attention given to the priests who served the Lord is extensively discussed in Exodus 39. “And they made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons, and the mitre of fine linen, and the goodly head-tires of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twined linen, and the girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer; as Jehovah commanded Moses” (vv. 27-29). Please notice that this was according to the command of the Lord, but their apparel gave a strong indication of their high respect toward the God they served. It is worthy of discussion: if priests under the Old Testament should be appropriately dressed to come into God’s presence, why shouldn’t priests (every Christian, 1 Pet. 2:9) under Christ be appropriately attired?

By acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God. There is no conflict between the fact that Jehovah is one and the fact that Jesus is a part of the Godhead. Pagans invented a panoply of gods that opposed one another, fought, committed adultery, lied, cheated, and were generally worse than the people who invented them. On the other hand, Scripture reveals a Godhead having three personalities that are “one” in purpose and action. If one can understand how a man and a woman can become “one” flesh (while maintaining their individual identities), it is not difficult to understand the oneness of the Godhead. Likewise, all mankind is “one” (Acts 17:26), yet each is personally different from all others. Thus, Jesus has all the qualities

that compose deity and is to be revered as God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). “I and the Father are one” (10:30). Jesus is more than a good man and a great teacher. He is more than a prophet. Though clothed in a fleshly body while on earth, Jesus never ceased being the Word and maintained his deity before, during, and after his sojourn on earth. When the Hebrew writer said, “A body thou hast prepared for me” (10:5), “me” is understood to be the Word who existed eternally in heaven, but who briefly took on a “body” as a sacrifice for sin. Those who teach that Jesus “gave up his immortality” by taking upon himself the “form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7) blaspheme the deity of Christ. Deity, by its nature, cannot be removed and yet remain. Jesus must be revered as God, even as Jehovah, the Father.

By acknowledging God’s word to be sacred. Once we accept the deity of God, it is but a short step to accept his word as holy. The Bible makes the claim for itself that it is the product of the Holy Spirit (a third part of the Godhead). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Again and again, the Bible says, “Thus saith Jehovah” (Isa. 44:24; 45:18; 49:5; Jer. 1:4; 2:1; 3:11; *et al*). “For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55:10-11). We show reverence to God when we reverence his word.

By our attitude toward the church of Christ. Jesus promised to “build his church,” (Matt. 16:18) and did so (Acts 2:1-47), purchasing it with his blood (Acts 20:28). The church is “sanctified” and recognizes Christ as “head of the church...and Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:22-26). It is proper to reverence the church as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) and not treat it as a denomination among denominations. Though we might take the church for granted and see it in the framework of the people who compose it (often faulty), we must recognize the ideal church as the bride of Christ and be holy and pure. We show our reverence for the church and for Christ by our faithfulness, purity of life, and steadfastness in service. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25) is one way to show respect for the Lord, as does sacrificial giving, joyous singing, reverential prayers, observing the Lord’s supper and constant study of God’s word.

Irreverence

It is quite evident that not all hold God and spiritual

things in reverence. In fact, the majority of mankind has forsaken God and gone astray in many ways. We show irreverence by:

Failing to acknowledge the existence of God. Somewhere near the time of Abraham, when men invented idols and turned from God, we are told that “although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” (Rom. 1:21-24). Paul attested to the ignorance of such idol worship (Acts 17:22-31) as did Isaiah (44:6-17). Graven images deny the existence of Jehovah and lead their adherents into superstition and immorality. Few actions can show disrespect toward the Godhead more than trying to contain divinity in graven images.

In today’s society, even among those who are not worshipers of idols, the only use that is made of God’s name is in a profane and unholy manner. It is not uncommon to hear people take the name of God in vain by cursing (Exod. 20:7) or to use euphemisms that are thinly disguised sacrileges. Saying “Oh, my God,” has become almost as common as any other expression of shock or joy when confronted with an unusual experience. It is not meant as a religious expression of faith, but simply as a by-word. “Oh, my God, I’ve dented the car.” “Oh, my God, that is a beautiful dress.” Members of the church are often heard to use such expressions as they fail to hold God’s name in reverence. Unless we deliberately regard him as holy, we will reflect the unholy attitude of a world that has forgotten God except as an expletive.

Failure to hold the church in reverence. Under pressure to compete with denominations for members and attendance, some churches have fallen prey to methods of denominationalism to grow. *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren has appealed to many as the “community church” movement has developed. The casual attitude encouraged by such writers has led people to “dress down” and “come as they are” to worship services. “Warren, dressed in a casual shirt, khakis and loafers, told his seminar audience, ‘Get comfortable. This is as dressed up as I get in this church. My idea of winter is I put on socks, and obviously I don’t think it’s winter yet’” (Dennis Costella, *The Church Growth Movement, An Analysis of Rick Warren’s “Purpose Driven” Church Growth Strategy*, fundamental-biblechurch.org/Foundation/fbcSDLbk.htm). Consequently, congregations have seen casual dress replace “Sunday best” with T-shirts and jeans instead of our best clothes. It is not unusual for young ladies to wear the mini-skirts

or bare midriff attire so popular in today’s rock and roll atmosphere. Those who wait on the Lord’s table often wear a T-shirt with some business logo or slang expression that belies the holiness of the occasion of remembering the death and resurrection of Christ. Few would go to a funeral (especially if serving as a pallbearer) dressed in the attire often seen in worship services. What does all this suggest? Simply, that a worship service with Christ in the midst is nothing more to some than a trip to the mall or a casual picnic. Compare this with the statement of David, “worship Jehovah in holy array,” and we see a vast contrast between reverence and irreverence.

Young people need to learn early in life that a worship service is not the place for courting. Many preachers could testify to the fact that a boy and a girl have used the back pew for an occasion to hug, kiss, and caress out of sight of their parents. Instead of singing, praying, or listening to gospel sermons, teen-agers have often passed notes, whispered to one another, made plans for later events or otherwise ignored the reason for the assembly. But adults have been observed in irreverent behavior as well. A preacher was informed that one of the deacons was playing games on his cell phone during the sermon. Babies might need some kind of help due to a short attention span, but surely not deacons who “hold the mystery of the faith in a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9). Did I mention that the deacon’s wife also had her own cell phone and played games as well?

The Lord’s supper is a deeply spiritual occasion, as Christians recall the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Corinthians could not properly observe the Feast due to their carnal attitude. By changing the Lord’s supper into a social occasion to satisfy physical hunger, Paul warned: “When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord’s supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). Modern efforts to connect the Lord’s supper with a social meal will likewise show irreverence toward the event and destroy its spiritual significance.

Failure to respect authority. While it is normal for the younger generation to test the limits of their environments as they grow and develop as adults, this should not be at the sacrifice of respect for authority. The rules for family life and society have generally been tested and tried over many generations. Rules are in place for reasons of love, safety, concern for others, and orderliness. When these rules are broken, society itself often breaks down, as we have seen with increased teen pregnancy, a rise in homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, teen-age deaths in cars, high divorce rates, and full prisons. But God’s laws cannot be broken with impunity: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). It is an act of irreverence toward God and rebellion toward society to

Self-Control

Daniel Reugg

In the lives of professional athletes, words like “discipline” and “self-control” are so familiar and second-nature to these physically superior specimens that it’s like eating Frosted Self Control Flakes for breakfast and Little Discipline Snack Cakes after dinner. Constant brutal hours of physical training and exercise coupled with tireless fine tuning and sharpening of athletic skills and reflexes help them to raise the standard for competitive play and achievement. In fact, the apostle Paul was so impressed by the athletes of his day who possessed these qualities of self-improvement on a physical level, that he encouraged all disciples to take notice and develop the same principles in their spiritual training. “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body

deliberately disobey the rules that are established for our own welfare.

The Choice Is Yours

Whether or not one keeps a clean heart with reverence toward God and man or develops an irreverent and flippant attitude toward life is clearly up to each one. While many rebels offer promises of “freedom” as they entice others toward sin, they are really the ones in bondage: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Pet. 2:19). Choose wisely which road you travel: each has a certain destination and your choices determine your eternal destiny.

15801 Spring Crest Circle, Tampa, Florida 33624
tmr@juno.com

and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

What is so ironic and sad, however, is that while many athletes excel in mastering discipline and self-control with their physical strength and conditioning, they oftentimes fail miserably in exercising the same principles in areas of moral integrity. During a professional basketball game, a player was struck by a beverage tossed onto his chest as he lay sprawled across the announcer’s table. The NBA star raced into the stands, throwing punches at fans, resulting in one of the worst player/fan brawls in the history of the sport. Another highly talented and skilled NBA star failed miserably to exercise the same discipline and self-control which made him the incredible player he is today when the married basketball player met a young girl on a trip away from home and committed adultery. Ironically, the same NBA star eventually allowed pride from his success and achievement in the sport to expand his ego so much it brought strain upon his relationships with teammates and coaches, dragging the championship eating dynasty crashing down. These are all areas of vital importance in the lives of Christians that will either prevent or permit entrance into the eternal heavenly home of our Creator, depending on our level of disciplined restraint of these passionate emotions: explosive uncontrolled anger, sexual lust and enticement, and proud arrogance.

A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger (Prov. 19:11).

What was it that kept the Savior from exploding in rage in response to the inhumane harsh treatment he received from his enemies? Why not spit back when they sprayed their hate-filled saliva all over his face? You mean to tell me he didn’t show any hint of anger or talk back with sarcastic biting words when they humiliated and made fun of him? “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and

like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth” (Isa. 53:7). But Jesus was the Son of God, so certainly he was able to withstand certain trials that we would never be able to stand up to, wasn’t he? “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Apparently, that’s not the case! Jesus, in his human form while on the earth, was able to have emotions stirred up in the very same way that ours are, but had self-control and discipline. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), and now the Holy Spirit is capable of molding us into that image of Christ through the written word of God (Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 3:18). “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). When we read and study God’s word, we can understand the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4) and equip ourselves with the same self-control, discipline, and any other characteristic Jesus possessed which kept him from sin (Phil. 2:5). “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). It is the ability to restrain and discipline ourselves which will enable us to hold back from responding with explosive anger and biting hateful words when we have been hurt or upset by someone. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city,” (Prov. 16:32).

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly (Prov. 14:17).

I don’t think I will ever forget just how ridiculous that professional basketball player looked when he raced into the stands in a rage to beat the stuffing’s out of a man for throwing a cup at him. Those who are unable to control themselves from exploding in some maniacal fit of rage are usually those who have no wisdom or understanding, and normally not looked at with the highest degree of respect from others. I can’t possibly imagine a pile of names any taller than Papa Smurf of coaches and players in any big hurry to have this ball player on their team. “Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself” (Prov. 22:24-25). It’s one thing to be justifiably upset by the rude and insensitive actions of another. But keeping that anger under disciplined control will normally not lead to other sins like physically assaulting someone. “An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression” (Prov. 29:22). The ability to discipline yourself and have the self-control to stay cool when someone upsets you will not only demonstrate obvious wisdom and keep you from further sins, but will also prevent you from paying for the damages to repair the hole you punched in the wall, fines, jail time, or being fired from your job. “A man of great anger will bear the penalty, for if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again” (Prov. 19:19).

... his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused (Gen. 39:7-8).

Another vital area of the Christian life which requires brutally disciplined self-control is with regards to sexual temptation. Perhaps no other account in the scriptures of one who dealt with sexual temptation is more inspiring and admirable than the account of how Joseph dealt with the sexual advances of Potiphar’s wife. “As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her” (Gen. 39:10). Of course, what motivated this inspiring self-control that Joseph was able to have was his deep love and commitment to honoring the Lord. “How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). If we are as committed to honoring the Almighty with the same level of deep love and obedience, we will be able to develop a similar unwavering discipline and self-restraint to keep us innocent from sexual sins. “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

I have made a covenant with my eyes (Job. 31:1).

The key to having self-control when it comes to sexual temptation, is disciplining the eyes. It is pretty obvious that viewing certain parts of the body of the opposite sex will arouse very strong desires. David, a man after God’s own heart, simply saw a beautiful, exposed woman bathing herself and ended up giving in to the sexual desire it produced and committed adultery. While we have been instructed to keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the temptation and sin of this world, we still have to live in it (John 17:15). While we may be doing our very best to obey God’s standard of modesty, the couple waiting in front of you in line at Wal-Mart may not. We quickly have to make a decision as to whether we are going to let our eyes wander and look upon, and if we are not careful or disciplined, they can quickly find their way to setting up camp upon the view of flesh which should by all means be covered. Job made a wise decision to train and discipline his eyes in such a way that they would not allow him to develop lustful feelings.

... everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

Obviously, much more discipline than simply watching where our eyes go is required to keep ourselves sexually pure. The Scriptures clearly point that there is nothing wrong with appreciating the physical beauty or attractive appearance of another, as men like David and Daniel were described as “good looking” and Bathsheba as “beautiful in appearance.” However, without discipline or self-control, appreciating the physical attractive appearance of another can very easily turn to thoughts of lust. Jesus said we

have crossed the line when, because of lack of self-control and restraint of our thoughts, our gaze upon another has turned from acknowledging their attractive appearance to entertaining sexually pleasurable thoughts about them. Unfortunately, those who have refused to exercise any type of restraint or self-control with viewing members of the opposite sex many times fall prey to sexual addictive behaviors such as the viewing of pornographic material, and continual engagement in fornication and adultery. Solomon warns us to take the proper form of prevention to ensure we stay on the faithful course of self-restraint and purity: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23).

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate (Prov. 8:13).

When the disciples were assembled together with Jesus in the upper room before the Lord instituted his memorial supper, the Twelve were full of arrogance and boasting as a dispute broke out concerning which one of them was the greatest. As the argument unfolds, John gives us insight into what was going on in the mind of Jesus. What immediately follows his thoughts, is so humbling it breaks your heart. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself" (John 13:3-4). Jesus, thinking of his divinity, his Lordship, his rightful place at the right hand of the throne of God, immediately wraps a towel around his waist and washes the feet of a bunch of unworthy nothings. How quickly we allow trivial achievements and success in our worthless lives to somehow convince us that we are something great. Jesus refused to allow his superior kingship and divinity to ever allow himself from thinking he was too good and pure to wash the feet of sinners or to heal lepers. Paul says, if we apply the proper amount of self-control and discipline in our lives, we can achieve the same level of humility. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). Let us always be diligent to discipline ourselves and have the self-control to keep from thinking too highly of ourselves. Let us continue to have the disciplined mind set of unworthy servants. "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done'" (Luke 17:10).

epaphras11@yahoo.com



"Apostolic" continued from front page

filling a particular prophecy which had reference to what was to be done about the one who betrayed the Lord. Of all the apostles, it was only prophesied that Judas would have a successor. The Scriptures did not prophesy that anyone should take the place of the other apostles when they died.

2. The office of Judas was not left vacant by death.

The doctrine of apostolic succession is predicated upon the idea that a man should always be appointed to take the place of an apostle who dies. However, such a practice is foreign to the New Testament. Judas was not replaced because he died. He was replaced because of his apostasy. During the selection of Matthias, the remaining apostles "prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place'" (Acts 1:24-25). The apostles clearly state that Judas fell from his office "by transgression" and not by death. Therefore, the idea of replacing an apostle because he has died is completely devoid of any foundation in Scripture.

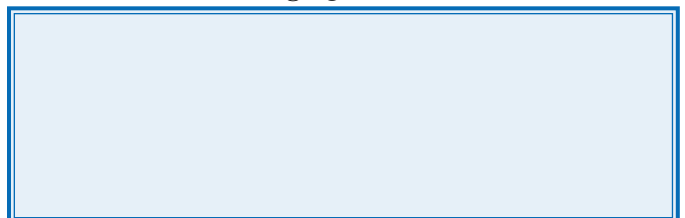
3. The successor had to have been with Christ during his earthly ministry.

Peter made this point clear to the other apostles when he said, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22). The apostles were not authorized to select just any man to replace Judas. The Scripture plainly teaches that in order for a man to qualify to serve as an apostle he must have been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry ("baptism of John") to the end of his ministry ("that same day he was taken up"). Obviously, the doctrine of apostolic succession is flawed due to the fact that no man today, nor any man since the original apostles, was with Jesus for the duration of his earthly ministry.

Conclusion

The doctrine of apostolic succession is simply another invention of men. We would do well to leave the job of making doctrine to Christ (2 John 9-11).

3400 The Credit Woodlands, Unit # 48, Mississauga, Ontario L5C 3A4, Canada, ddann@rogers.com



“**John 1**” continued from page 2

promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization” (*The Interpretation of John 30*).

Jesus is eternal. John says that this Word existed “in the beginning.” There is an obvious play on the words of Genesis 1:1 in this verse. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” But, in the beginning Jesus was present. Later, John states that Jesus is greater than John the Baptist because he existed before John (1:15). Indeed, he was in the bosom of the Father from the beginning (1:18). Whereas one may speak of the birth of Jesus, he must understand that the incarnation was not the beginning of the Word’s existence.

Jesus is deity. The text says that the Word was God and was with God. Both affirmations are necessary. The first affirms the deity of Jesus. He was not some lesser god as the Greek pantheon asserts of its gods. He has every attribute of deity. The second affirmation is that Jesus was “with God.” He is not the Father, but he was with the Father in the beginning. The first half of the statement denies what the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach about Jesus (namely, that he was a created being); the second half of the statement denies what the Jesus’ only Pentecostals teach about Jesus (namely that one deity manifested himself as Father, then as the Son, and finally as the Holy Spirit). Jesus was both divine and distinct from the person of the Father.

Jesus is creator. John says that the Word was responsible for creating all things. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10). The same statement is made in Hebrews 1:2; 11:3; Colossians 1:16. Not only does this verse affirm creation in contrast to evolution, it also affirms Jesus’ role in the creation. He accomplished the Father’s will to create all things.

Jesus is the Giver of Life. “In him was life” (John 1:4). As the Creator, he created natural life, but that is not the kind of life under discussion in verse 4. The life under discussion is the life which is the light of men (1:4). Consequently, he is the giver of spiritual life. Whereas sin brings death, Jesus’ brings life to those who are dead in sin.

Jesus is the Giver of Light. Sin is frequently pictured as darkness. In contrast to darkness, Jesus is the giver of light. He is the “light of the world.” “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46).

The Word Became Flesh. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation is expressed in verse 14. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In becoming flesh, the Word did not cease to be what he has always been throughout eternity. He is deity, possessing all of the attributes of deity such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. When the Word became flesh, he did not cease to be who he was. His omniscience (knowing all things) continued. As deity who had witnessed every earth event from the day of creation, Jesus knew all things. He did not lose his mind when he became a man. No wonder the disciples confessed, “thou knowest all things” (John 16:30; 21:17). As deity who had power to create the heavens as earth, he had power on earth to command the winds and the waves and they obeyed him (Matt. 8:27).

The incarnation is described by the words “dwelt among us.” The word *skeno* is derived from the noun *skenos*, “a tabernacle, a tent.” The verb means “to fix one’s tabernacle, have one’s tabernacle, abide (live) in a tabernacle (tent)” (Thayer 578). A tabernacle or tent is different from a temple or a house because of the temporary nature of the dwelling. The Word who existed from all eternity dwelt in his earthly body for only a short time.

During this time, Jesus became flesh, that is, he had an earthly body. In view of the development of the doctrines of Gnosticism which denied that God could be attached to anything material, this statement was a polemical statement, a controversial statement, in the first century. Some Gnostics believed that the divine spirit entered Jesus at his baptism and departed from him before his crucifixion. The Docetics believed that Jesus only “appeared” (*dokeo*) to have a body. But John says, the Word became flesh. He was a man, flesh and blood. He became tired and needed rest, he bled when his hands and feet were nailed, he experienced agony in the crucifixion just as did the criminals beside him.

Jesus is the only begotten of the Father. The word *monogenes* literally means “single of its kind, only.” The phrase is used in Hebrews 11:17 to describe Isaac as Abraham’s only begotten son, although Abraham had Ishmael through Hagar. The description of Jesus as God’s only begotten Son is to distinguish him from those who are sons of God through faith (John 1:13; Gal. 3:26-27). Jesus is uniquely the Son of God—the Son of God in the sense that no other one is. He is of nature or essentially Son of God.

Jesus is the giver of grace. He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). The phrase

“grace for grace” (*charin anti chariots*) means “grace in the place of grace, grace succeeding grace perpetually, i.e. the richest abundance of grace” (Thayer 49). The statement does not deny that God manifested grace to Israel in the past; rather, it affirms that whatever grace was available in the past is replaced with greater grace in the present.

Conclusion

These statements in John’s gospel are more richly developed in the text of the gospel. This is a brief synopsis of who Jesus is. Jesus is the bedrock of the Christian faith. He is unlike any other before or after him. Truly he is the Son of God.

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mwillis1@att.global.net

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What People Say About the Trip

Tom Roberts: Making a trip to Israel is usually a “once in a life time” event, but I hope to go more than once. If possible, my wife and I plan to go in November of 2005. Of course, the ones with whom one goes is really important. Traveling with other Christians adds a dimension that should not be ignored. Mike had prepared song sheets and we sang everywhere we went on the bus. There was a lot of laughter and banter that made the time fly by. Of course, standing where Jesus and the apostles stood is very impressive. While the land is no longer a “holy land,” holy things were done there and walking in those places made Bible study come alive. The very names of the places excite a Bible student: Capernaum, Chorazin, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea, Bethlehem, Nazareth and, of course, Jerusalem. One of the events that really remains in my memory is sitting in the Garden Tomb and reading of the crucifixion and resurrection. Despite the debates as to the actual place of burial, we were not far from it.

Yvonne Staley: Was the trip worth it? We would unhesitatingly say “YES.” We were uneasy about making the trip at first — dreading the long flight and also going to Israel where there was a lot of unrest, etc., but we were surprised at how smoothly everything occurred. . . . The experience was something we’ll always cherish. Being able to actually visit the land of the Bible was great. Traveling in the company of other Christians made it even more special. . . . The Sea of Galilee is still there, cities such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jericho, Beersheba, Caesarea and many, many more still exist. Maybe not the same ones as the biblical cities, but exist in the same general area. Jacob’s Well is authentic. All the ruins verify that, yes, the Bible is true. We have no doubt that some of the places where we walked were the same places that our Lord had walked. We are so thankful to God that we could make such a trip. Of all the trips we have made with you, this one has to be the most special and we thank you so much for it. Crossing the Sea of Galilee and going through the Old City of Jerusalem was an experience that we will never, never forget.

Safety: Since I have been to Israel on several occasions, I

have wanted to go back since the conflict broke out several years ago. I have watched the news to see when it is safe to return. Over the past year, violence has decreased and tourism is returning to Israel. What convinced me that it was safe to lead a tour to Israel was Indiana University’s offering their students a course in archaeology in June, in which I hope to participate. Their program had been put on hold for several years. I became convinced that, if Indiana University thinks it is safe to send their students there, the situation must be safe enough for tourism.

Second Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

July 11-14-2005

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	What About Islam and the Qu'ran? Kyle Pope	Is the Biblical Text Reliable? John Smith	Are There Lost Books of The Bible? Mark Mayberry
9:00 - 9:50	The Glorious Church Rody Gumpad	Evidences: Prophecy: Kevin Maxey	Evidences: Unity of the Bible Steve Wallace
10:00 - 10:50	Addictive Behaviors Pornography: Steve Wolfgang	Addictive Behaviors Substances of Abuse: Art Adams	Addictive Behaviors Gambling: Joe Price
11:00 - 11:50	Creation: Dan King	Genesis 3: Paul Blake	Genesis 6-8, The Flood: Tom O'Neal
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
10:00 - 10:50	Dealing With Someone Addicted to Pornography: Bette Wolfgang	Teaching Children to Respect Authority: Sherilyn Mayberry	Creating Peace At Home Violet McDaniel
Auditorium			
2:00 - 4:00	Open Forum	No Forum	Elders & Work of the Church
Singing 7:00 - 7:30			
What Does the Bible Claim For Itself? Donnie V. Rader	Is the Bible Adequate to the Modern World? Walton Weaver	Oh How Love I Thy Law: Johnie Edwards <i>(After Wednesday evening Bible Study)</i>	First Century Morals for the Twenty-first Century: Andy Alexander



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