

Magazine

An Evening with Joel Osteen

John Samuel Gurtler

I've only been familiar with Joel Osteen for less than a month now. A brother opened me up to his program one Sunday morning and for the first time I heard him speak via television from his Houston locale. "Wow," I thought. "This fellow is actually saying some good stuff." I mean, his message came straight from *the Message*. Later that afternoon, another brother brought up points from Joel's message which he'd also heard that morning. So, I wasn't the only one who was convinced by the media-friendly evangelist. However, his upbeat and bubbly attitude gave no place for chastisement anywhere in his teaching.

A few weeks later I was invited by a denominational friend to hear Joel speak in Atlanta. I thought, "Sure. He may not teach the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, but he's a really good motivational speaker." So I traveled for over two hours to hear him speak. Before entering the venue in Atlanta, I made sure that I would only treat the occasion as nothing more than hearing a positive, motivational speech. But that was rather difficult for me to do considering the fact that almost everybody else there had treated it like a service in praise to God. For others, it appeared as if they had come to worship Joel.

For the rest of the evening, red flags and sirens went off in my mind. Almost everything done there was contrary to the will of God if indeed it was a "worship service" in

a "church" setting. I left my Bible at home knowing that Joel would only use a Scripture or two. I regretted it. The following account is just the tip of the iceberg. Read with discernment and sincerity.



The first thing that prodded my brain was the apparel worn by particular individuals. How can a brother expect to be edified when he's distracted by immodest dress? 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 makes the charge: "... women adorn themselves in modest apparel . . . which is proper for women professing godliness." Yes, lust comes from within but it should not be provoked, especially by godly women. C'mon, ladies!

While I was fighting sexual temptation, another lust of the flesh aroused me: food. Even though the place was made into a "house of worship" just for the evening, local vendors did not hesitate to make a buck that night either. Again, red flags went up in my head along with 1 Corinthians 11:22. I felt like saying, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you," or something like that. I'm glad that the beer vendors weren't peddling their products because alcohol and immodest dress are *not* a good mix.

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In All Things, Love

Mike Willis

The well-known maxim made popular in the restoration movement says, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.” In this article, I would like to consider the truth expressed by “in all things, love.”

The situation of having two patterns for fellowship revealed in the Bible leaves mankind with the problem of determining which of the two patterns apply in a given situation. Those things that are “essential” require that the pattern of 2 John 9-11 be applied; the things that are non-essentials (matters of indifference) require that Romans 14:1-15:7 be applied. Men are left with the problem of determining into which category any given item may fall. The differences which have affected the fellowship of the saints have largely come about as a result of disagreement over whether a given item falls into one category or the other.

One may be moved by this circumstance to blame God for the divisions among us. Indeed, some have taken the stance that the restoration principle is, by its inherent nature, divisive, although no better plan for religious authority or unity has been devised. Those alternatives which appear to give temporary relief from division generally lead to wholesale compromise; those solutions devised by men to prevent total relativity lead to radicalism. We are left with God’s plan and should look to God to understand the reasons he might leave us as he has. Here are some suggestions for your consideration about why God has left mankind to determine whether an item falls into the category of “essential” or “non-essentials”:

It creates a dependence upon the word of God. The situation of having to determine whether or not a given practice falls into the category of essential or non-essential drives mankind back to the word of God to search to see whether or not a given practice is authorized and whether it is mandated or optional. Though every generation wishes to avoid the clashes associated with controversies, there is no such escape. Each generation of Christians must approach the word of God afresh to determine whether or not the given practices of his generation are authorized of God. Those who bury their heads in the sand to avoid dealing with contemporary issues do not avoid the issue; they only leave their local congregations vulnerable to apostasy.

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Troubled Over Divorce

Connie W. Adams

Divorce is no longer just a bizarre part of the Hollywood scene where actors and actresses divorce and remarry at will, nor of the world at large, as denominational churches have softened their teaching on the subject, now the tragedy has come crashing down around members of the Lord's body. There is scarcely a family which has not been touched by this with either husband or wife, son or daughter, father or mother, grandparents and grandchildren. What was once an unheard of problem for congregations has become a stark reality. Elders often work behind the scenes to help hold marriages together. In cases of members guilty of sin, painful discipline must be carried out, sometimes at the risk of disruption in the church as families and friends choose up sides. This menace has infected the families of elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, gospel preachers and others. The toll in human suffering is beyond my ability adequately to describe. God's attitude toward it is plainly stated in Malachi 2:14-17. He "hates" it and it "wearies" the Lord.

A SUMMARY

The purpose of this article is not to deal with all the arguments which have been raised on this subject but to dwell on the tragic cost. The following passages present pertinent teaching which all need to take to heart: Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18 and Romans 7:2-3. From these passages, we can conclude the following:

- God creates the bond and only he can release it.
- It is sin for man to sever what God has bound and has not released.
- There is only one cause for divorce and remarriage—fornication.
- For one to put away a mate without scriptural cause is to contribute to the sin committed when that put away mate marries again.
- There are some who forfeit the right to marry and who must be "eunuchs for the kingdom's sake."
- God's marriage law is universal. It applies to "Whosoever."

According to these passages there are only three classes of people who have a right to marry: (1) Those never married; (2) those whose companions are dead; (3) those who have put away a companion for the cause of fornication.

THE TRAGIC COST OF DIVORCE

1. Financially. A simple, uncontested divorce may cost from \$500 on up, depending on the area. If there are problems over property settlements, it will cost more. If there are battles over child custody, it may run as high as

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\$50,000 and more. Judges will often order psychological evaluations of the principals and the children. The more children, the greater the cost will be. Attorneys usually charge by the hour. Sometimes they play mind games with each other, stall, delay, and drag it out. Sometimes judges will encourage this in the hope that the couple might yet be reconciled. There are court costs to be paid.

On the issue of child support, both parents are responsible to support the children in the style of life “to which they are accustomed.” Theoretically, this is a 50/50 duty, but in reality it is based on the principal wage earner. This can take as much as half the wages at a time when you are having to resettle in another residence (costing more), or remaining in the old one with greatly reduced income. This is one reason that divorce figures so prominently in the real estate market.

One of the shocking troubles over divorce is the greatly reduced standard of living. Add to that the emotional stress and roller coaster of emotions which divorce produces and the troubles mount. Women are often left with property to maintain without the tools, know-how, time or money to handle it. Men are left with duties which were shared with a wife.

The cost of shuttling children back and forth (sometimes across the country) is an added financial drain. If you think a divorce will ease all your troubles, think again, and save your money! You will need it!

2. Physically and Emotionally. Health often suffers in the wake of family break-downs. Routines are interrupted, eating habits are drastically changed. There will be loss of sleep making it harder to function with an increased load of responsibilities. You will be frustrated, annoyed, and sometimes agonized. The emotional costs are staggering. There will be a loss of self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, failure, guilt and worry, not to mention anger, resentment, and bitterness. Sounds like fun, right?

3. Spiritually. Here I speak of Christians involved in this tragedy. Throughout the crisis leading to divorce, spirituality can take a beating. This all-consuming agony can cause us to forget our responsibilities to God (and even our need for him), to the mate we promised to love and honor “til death do us part,” to children involved, and even to self. Spiritual waning is common. Those who divorce a mate without scriptural cause (fornication), are subject to corrective discipline unless repentance is forthcoming. This can also add to tension in a congregation. Those divorced are vulnerable to temptations which give rise to rationalizing to justify what we may want to do, even when we have no right to do it. “It seems so right” or “I don’t believe God wants me to be unhappy.” Loneliness added to rationalization is a deadly combination which often leads to unholy relationships.

4. The Cost to Children. At first, they are confused. “What is happening here?” they wonder. They see their world falling apart and are powerless to change it. Sometimes they feel guilty and blame themselves needlessly. It is easy to become bitter toward both parents and even life itself. Each parent is tempted to try and convince the child that his/her side is right and the other parent is to blame. Often, the children draw into a shell and learn to compartmentalize their existence. They tell each parent what they want to hear. One fifteen-year old girl who is in a joint custody situation where she divides equal time with parents (both of whom have married again) told us that she feels “like a ping pong ball” batted back and forth between two worlds, each of which is different as to moral values. School teachers sometimes have siblings in class which have different last names. I taught a class of junior high students once and described a family as a father, mother, and children and said some things about ideal family life. One young man looked puzzled. After class he told me that he could not relate to any of that since his parents were divorced when he was a baby and he had never known a life which resembled anything like I had described.

5. The Cost to Parents and Grandparents. These also suffer greatly when a child or grandchild is involved in divorce. Often, at a time in life when they need to slow down and do not have the stamina they once had, they are forced into rearing their children’s children. Their love for the children causes them to do whatever they can to help, but it is a physical and emotional drain. Younger people often reject the advice of their parents when they are choosing a mate and insist that they have a right to live their own lives, even if it means throwing caution to the wind. Parents are told to mind their own business. Now, all at once it becomes the business of the parents to try and untangle the mess and salvage something for innocent children. Divorce also costs grandparents valuable time with their grandchildren who have to be shuttled back and forth at holiday times and during summer breaks. The result is that many children grow up and do not even know their own grandparents.

When grandparents divorce and remarry, children don’t understand why grandpa is married but not to grandma and why grandma is married, but not to grandpa. What a mess!

6. The Cost to Congregations. The spiritual carnage is inestimable. Talent is lost, or buried, the tendency among family members and friends to choose sides, the incidence of gossip, the deplorable example set for others—these, and more, are a heavy price for churches to bear. Elders, preachers, and others spend valuable time which might be used to reach the lost. Evangelism is impacted as those entangled in divorce proceedings have reduced financial power, reducing their ability to give and support the work of preaching the gospel.

Remember Your Creator. . .

Solomon

Steven F. Deaton



Solomon admonished young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Eccl. 12:1). He pointed out that you will not always be young. All things being equal, you will age and begin to experience the breakdown of your body (Eccl. 12:2-5). Eventually, you will die, with your body returning to dust and your spirit to God (Eccl. 12:6, 7). After this, you will face God in judgment (Eccl. 12:13, 14). Therefore, you need to establish good, godly habits now—while you are young—habits that will carry you into your old age. If you do this, your life ahead will be much more satisfactory.

Solomon knew what he was talking about. He was a wise young man in so many ways, but he strayed from the Lord. He sought happiness and meaning in worldly things, including wine, wisdom, works, and wealth (Eccl. 2:1-10). In the end, he said, “all was vanity and grasping for the wind” (Eccl. 2:11). Have you ever tried to grab the wind? It is impossible. Therefore, we understand the wise man to say you cannot find true pleasure and satisfaction in the world. You must turn to God.

The admonition Solomon gives to remember your Creator in your youth is a priceless jewel. He wasted many years seeking meaning and purpose in the world. You do not have to do that; just heed his words. Give yourself wholly to the Lord now and enjoy the riches and rewards he has to offer (Eph. 1:7, 18; 3:8). There is peace and confidence in doing God’s will, not vanity and grasping for the wind (Phil. 4:6, 7).

In future articles we will look at young people in the Bible who remembered their Creator in the days of their youth—those who did not. The realities of their lives radically differ. The godly are forever heroes, while the others are stains on the divine record. Both sets serve as powerful examples and ought to encourage you to remember your Creator.

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7. The Cost to Souls. Some are innocent victims in divorce who need the support and encouragement of their brethren in Christ. They should not be penalized for what they could not control. But in every divorce, there is sin somewhere. Those guilty need to repent or else they will perish. Those in adulterous marriages will be lost. Very often the children of broken homes grow up to become parts of dysfunctional families and end up creating the same situations they professed to hate.

PREVENTING DIVORCE

We have to teach our children (and everyone else) what the Bible says about this and warn them of the tragic price to be paid in divorce. Parents must resolve to stay together and work out their problems. Adjustments have to be made in every marriage. Those not yet married must be taught to make wise choices and that starts with dating. It helps to put your children in the company of faithful people. They will choose from their circle of friends. Put them in good company. Make your home a spiritual oasis. Respect God’s order for the family and forget about political correctness. The wisdom of God is considered foolish by the world. Read the Bible together as a family and pray together,

daily. Put the cause of Christ first in your life. Make family decisions based on truth and not convenience and pressure from worldly standards. Truly be “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).

Should you become a victim of divorce, please draw closer to God—not drift farther away from him. Put your trust in him because he cares for you. Stay close to the Lord’s people. You will need them. Be aware of the temptations Satan is sure to put before you and be ready to tell him to “get lost.” The cost of divorce is high for everyone concerned. I hope this article will serve to cause those who read it to think long and hard about the price to be paid and to somehow slow down this destruction of marriages, the lives of children and the rippling effects upon others. A good friend, who is an attorney, said to me once, “In cases of divorce, the only winners are the lawyers.” Think about it.

(Next time — Troubled Over Unfaithful Family Members)

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When the Levees Break

Mark Mayberry

INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina caused unparalleled disaster and untold human misery when it came ashore on August 29, 2005. Extensive damage occurred in the coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Conditions were made infinitely worse in the city of New Orleans when the storm surge caused several breaches in the levees protecting New Orleans.

Webster says the word “levee” (derived from the French *levée*, which means “the act of raising,” from *lever*: “to raise”) refers to (1) an embankment for preventing flooding; (2) a continuous dike or ridge (as of earth) for confining the irrigation areas of land to be flooded.”

A CNN report, filed on Wednesday, August 31, 2005, stated, “A day after being pummeled by Hurricane Katrina, the Crescent City had no power, little drinking water, dwindling food supplies and water rising in the streets. Water levels continued to rise downtown after sections of two levees collapsed, leaving 80 percent of the city under water as deep as 20 feet in places.”

Flooding may cause great physical damage, economic devastation, and human misery. Spiritual calamities are often described in similar terms. Man’s anger is likened to a flood: “Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?” (Prov. 27:4). The Lord’s protective hand is extended to the faithful: “Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him” (Ps. 32:6-7). However, God’s punitive judgments are oft portrayed as an overwhelming flood that sweep away the ungodly (Isa. 28:1-2, 14-19; Dan. 9:26-27; Amos 8:7-10; Nah. 1:1-8).

WHEN THE LEVEES BREAK, ONE OBSERVES THE BEST OF HUMAN NATURE

In times of calamity, the righteous exhibit a spirit of

patient endurance (Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10; Jas. 5:10-11). In times of calamity, the righteous demonstrate faith and fidelity (Dan. 1:1-21). In times of calamity, the righteous engage in active benevolence (Luke 10:25-37; 1 John 3:17-18).

WHEN THE LEVEES BREAK, ONE OBSERVES THE WORST OF HUMAN NATURE

During times of distress, the wicked engage in theft and robbery (Prov. 1:10-19; Hos. 6:4-10; 7:1-2). During times of distress, the wicked partake in wanton violence (Gen. 6:5-14; Judg. 19:22-26). During times of distress, the wicked are given to incessant complaining (Exod. 15:22-24; 16:1-3; 17:1-4; Num. 14:25-29).



CONCLUSION

On Friday, September 2, 2005, *Opinion Journal.com* published an article by Tunku Varadarajan, entitled “A Descent Into Indecency,” which reflected upon the moral

calamity which inundated the metropolis of New Orleans. Observing the catastrophe wrought by Hurricane Katrina, Americans felt irrepressible compassion for innocent victims of the storm. However, such benevolent feelings were matched by irrepressible consternation as we witnessed the collapse of orderly society: theft, looting, rape, murder, etc. The author concluded by saying, “There has been a descent so clear into indecency that one must address it as pressingly as the breakdown of the city’s levees. It is as if the moral and civic ‘levees,’ too, were overwhelmed by the torrent. Once the waters have receded, New Orleans will face a task that will test our national mettle. A part of that task will be to ask why so many stooped so low as the waters rose so high.”

Despite his judgment upon the Anti-Diluvian world, God has promised to never again destroy the world by water (Gen. 9:8-17). Nevertheless, a judgment of fire

Proper Clothing

Charles Willis

I received a jury summons in the mail last week from Montgomery County, Texas. As I read through the summons there was one statement that caught my eye which I must comment on. Here is the quote:

JURORS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Proper clothing required: All persons entering the courtroom/jury assembly room should be dressed in clothing reasonably befitting the dignity and solemnity of the court proceedings (i.e. shorts, tank tops or t-shirts are not allowed).

The world understands there is a proper and improper way to dress, dependent upon the proceedings. A courtroom and even a jury assembly room is a solemn and serious occasion. We accord a judge much honor and respect in the courtroom, and our dress should be appropriate for the judge, as well as those who are involved in the trial. It is therefore appropriate for a juror (as a participant) to dress properly. I, for one, was glad to see such a statement on the summons.

In recent years our nation's attitudes and dress codes have become very relaxed. Shorts are not yet allowed in most business offices, but we're not far from that. Gone are the days when men in the corporate office were expected to wear a suit and tie to work every day. The relaxing of the dress code in the world has effected our thinking in the church as well. People purchase a wardrobe for work and that's the clothes they have to wear for religious assemblies

as well. So we see people coming to church with shorts on, some wearing t-shirts, some in flip-flops or other modes of casual attire. Would we wear it to the courtroom? Would we be in trouble with the law for violating the summons statement written above?

Obviously my point is that the worship assembly is a much more solemn and dignified "proceeding" than what takes place in a courtroom. The honor accorded a human judge cannot compare to the honor we have for Jehovah as our judge. If we can understand the appropriateness of dressing "properly" for a court proceeding we should also be able to see the need to dress "properly" for a worship assembly.

We still carry a phrase in our culture of putting on your "Sunday best." I believe (in our relaxed attire culture) we need to be concerned that our "Sunday best" may not be proper or reasonably befitting the assembly. I'm not trying to tell people what to wear, but to cause us to stop and consider if we are pleasing God by the way we dress. Certainly immodest dress is not appropriate at anytime for a Christian, but especially at the worship assembly. How many people would complain if God had printed in Scripture a dress code for assembly that was similar to the summons statement above? It is not there, but our attitude toward God should want to accord him honor by our attire. This is right and proper.

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awaits the ungodly (2 Pet. 3:3-13). "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" Are you ready for the judgment day?

Sources

NASB95 = NASB95 = Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture

quotations come from *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Varadarajan = Tunku Varadarajan, "A Descent Into Indecency," *www.opinionjournal.com*, (Dow Jones & Company, 2005), Friday, September 2, 2005. <<http://www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110007198>>

Webster = *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th Edition*, (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, c1993, 1996).

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Lessons in Times of Disaster

Marc W. Gibson

God's physical blessings are enjoyed by the righteous and wicked alike, just as Jesus said, "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). If we understand that this universal bestowal of physical, or natural, blessings indicates no explicit approval by God of evil men, it would logically follow that various physical or natural disasters would not necessarily indicate explicit disapproval by God of evil men.

King Jehoshaphat of Judah was facing a potentially disastrous situation. The people of Moab, along with the people of Ammon and Mount Seir were preparing for battle against him (2 Chron. 20:1-2, 10-11). This was a serious situation, and Jehoshaphat did the right thing when he "set himself to seek the Lord" (v. 3). Jehoshaphat stood before the new court in the house of the Lord and lifted up his voice to the Lord, recalling the Lord's power that brought the nation of Israel into the land of promise. It was there that they had built a sanctuary for the Lord and said, "If disaster comes upon us, such as the sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this temple and in your presence (for your name is in this temple), and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save" (v. 9). It was this confidence in the face of disaster that sustained God's people in olden times.

WHAT IS A "DISASTER"?

A *disaster* is defined as "a sudden calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, or destruction; a sudden or great misfortune or failure" (Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). Disasters have plagued man throughout human history, and have taken many forms. Some are *natural* disasters: floods, fires, plagues, disease, famine, earthquakes, hurricanes (typhoons), tsunamis, and volcanoes. Some are *man-made* disasters: wars, genocides, terrorism, arson, theft, and

murder. And this does not take into account disasters that befall families through divorce or abuse, or personal disasters that come through loss of economic or physical well-being. Virtually all of us will encounter disasters of some kind and degree in our lives.

How can the citizens of these United States forget how they felt as the disaster from the terrorist attacks of 9/11 unfolded a few years ago? Just recently we have witnessed the unbelievable disaster and devastation brought by Hurricane Katrina on the lives and property of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. How should the Christian react to such times of disaster? What lessons can we learn as we struggle to understand these troubling events?

DISASTERS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible records numerous disasters. Heading the list would have to be the worldwide flood (Gen. 7). Also, there were locust plagues (Joel 1:2-4), earthquakes (Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5), famine (Gen. 41:53-57; Acts 11:27-30), foreign invasion and destruction (2 Chron. 36:17-20; Amos 1:13-15), and shipwreck (Acts 27:9-10, 21).

It is clear that, in times past, God used nature and mankind to produce various disasters for the purpose of warning and punishing peoples and nations. The Flood is one obvious example (Gen. 6:5-6, 17). The ten

plagues brought on Egypt were an example of God punishing the pride and arrogance of Pharaoh and his people (Exod. 7-12). Also, drought (1 Kings 17:1) and foreign invasion (1 Sam. 15:3; Jer. 18:11) were effected by God to punish sinners (cf. 1 Sam. 15:18; Dan. 9:11-14). The prophet Amos lists a series of disasters that God used to admonish unfaithful Israel to repent (4:6-11—famine, drought, pestilence, plague, fire).

DOES GOD HAVE A ROLE IN DISASTERS TODAY?

Seeing what happened in olden times, the question has been raised, “Is God using modern-day disasters to punish people?” It has been observed that certain places filled with immorality and false religions have endured disasters. But the fact remains that we cannot know definitively because God’s mind and purpose is unrevealed on this point. No one can say for sure that any natural or man-made disaster is being used by God for a particular purpose. This may frustrate many people who would like to know, but Job was also frustrated when he did not understand the true nature of the disasters that befell him (cf. Job 9). There are some things in life that remain beyond the understanding of finite men. We are left to trust God in the things he has revealed to us (cf. Deut. 29:29). This is a source of comfort enjoyed by followers of God that eludes those of this world.

There are some principles revealed in Scripture that can help guide our thinking in these matters. God’s physical blessings are enjoyed by the righteous and wicked alike, just as Jesus said, “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). If we understand that this universal bestowal of physical, or natural, blessings indicates no explicit *approval* by God of evil men, it would logically follow that various physical or natural disasters would not necessarily indicate explicit *disapproval* by God of evil men. Again the example of

Job is instructive. Job’s friends were of the opinion that bad things happen to bad people, so Job must have been a bad person (Job 4:7-8; 11:6). Of course, this was not the case (1:1, 8). Bad things can happen to good people, and good things can happen to bad people. Disasters that may befall us do not necessarily reflect on our spiritual condition before God.

Also, the teaching of Jesus is quite clear that bad things do not happen to someone just because he is a bad person.

There were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were *worse sinners* than all other Galileans, *because they suffered such things*? I tell you, *no*; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were *worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem*? I tell you, *no*; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5, emp. mine, mwg).

Please notice that Jesus spoke of two separate disasters, one man-made and the other a tragic incident of a fallen tower that took several lives (sad case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time). Yet, neither case was to be interpreted as happening because those killed were worse sinners than other people. We simply must be careful about using the language of “miracle” or “punishment” to explain either one’s good fortune or terrible loss. There are usually too many examples of good people enduring terrible loss and bad people escaping harm to speculate on the purposes of God in times of disaster.

As Solomon observed long ago, “time and chance” happen to us all in an unpredictable world:

I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but *time and chance happen to them all*. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, *when it falls suddenly upon them* (Eccl. 9:11-12, emp. mine, mwg).

We simply do not know from day to day what problems may befall us. Life on this earth is too short and unpredictable to take anything for granted. That is why it is so important to be in the right place when something disastrous happens—and that place is in the spiritual fellowship of our loving and caring Savior.

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM TIMES OF DISASTER

Though we many not be able to perceive a particular purpose in a disaster, there are still lessons to be learned by those who look to God and his word for direction. Times of disaster tend to focus the mind on things of greater importance. Take, for example, the Philippian jailor. First, there was a “great earthquake” that shook the foundations of his prison, bringing what he thought was a second disaster of the prisoners escaping through the opened doors. As he prepared to kill himself, the apostle Paul, one of those prisoners, told him to do himself no harm for they were all there. The jailor’s mind was intensely focused at that moment on the condition of his soul, as he begged Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:25-30). This time of disaster was a soul-altering event for this man and his household, a destiny-changing moment as he heard the word of God preached and was baptized (vv. 31-34). Fear was turned into rejoicing through the truth and grace of God.

Unfortunately, not everyone will react this way. Some will harden their

hearts in selfish pity and pride, cursing God and rejecting his wisdom. We can only pray that times of disaster will awaken evil men to their error and hopelessness without God. Some will indeed reassess their lives and eternal destiny as they open their hearts to hear the truth and obey it. What lessons should the faithful Christian learn from times of disaster?

1. Disaster can strike at anytime or place and can start in the smallest ways (the proverbial “finger in the dike”). We must remain alert and watchful at all times, physically and spiritually (Eph. 5:15-17). The Christian will appreciate the brevity of life much more than those who have hope only in this world (Jas. 4:13-15).

2. All that we possess may be gone in a moment. Earthly things are uncertain, and the faithful Christian will not put his trust in such things, but use them to the glory of God (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

3. Life is more precious than property. If a great disaster is predicted to come, the Christian will seek safety, and not foolishly risk his life for the sake of earthly things that can be replaced. The Hebrew Christians did not worry when their goods were plundered because they had better possessions waiting in heaven (Heb. 10:34). God teaches us to properly order our priorities so that we will not fall into the snares and dangers of life (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9).

4. Only our relationship with God is everlasting. We can be separated from earthly things and relationships,

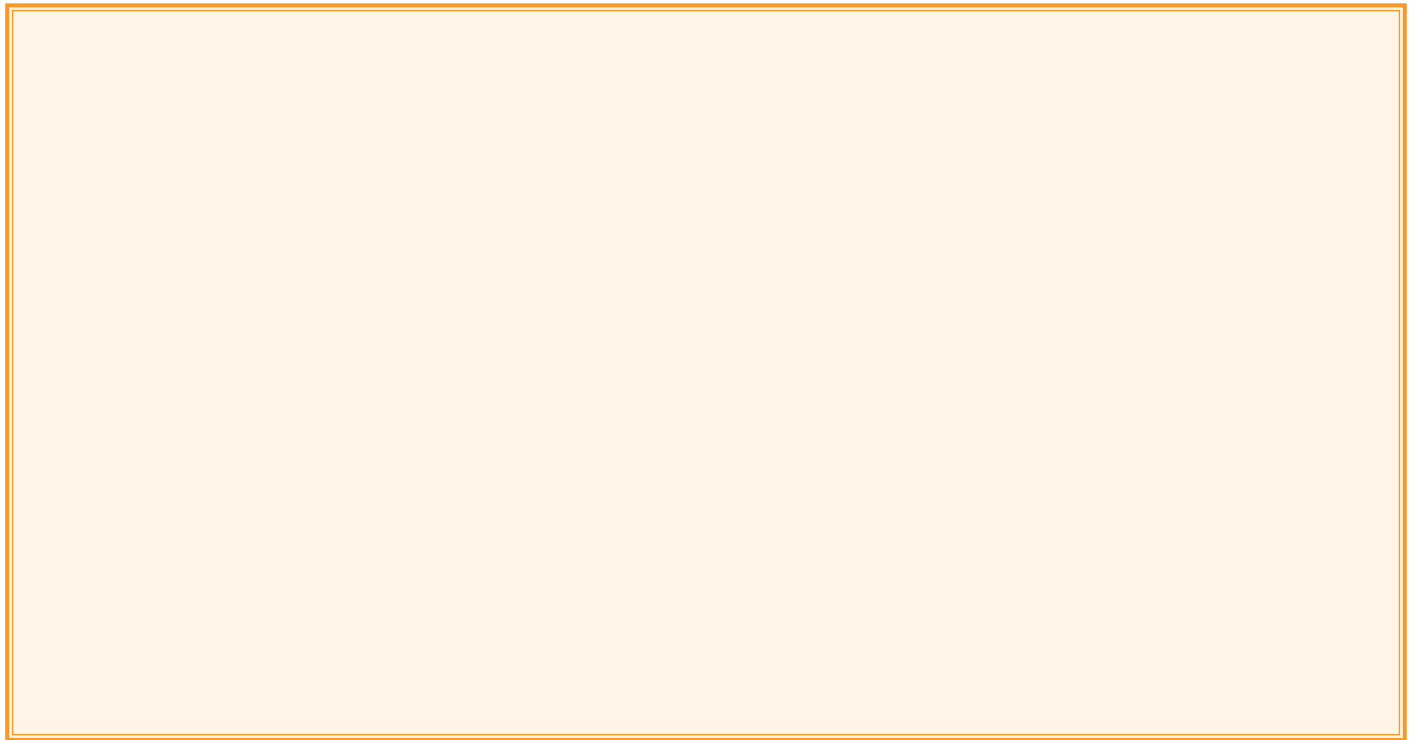
but nothing on this earth can separate us from the “love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:37-39). In life or in death, we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

5. Our attitude must be one that will accept the trials of life as we faithfully lean on God to care for our souls. Paul overcame despair and depression by learning to be content (sufficient, adequate, trusting) in any given situation, good or bad (Phil. 4:11-13). Paul had plenty of disastrous moments in his life (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-28), yet he learned how to suffer with integrity and faith. It is easy to be content in good times, but we must be determined to learn how to suffer with patience in times of disaster, avoiding the temptation to sin with our mouth or commit acts unbecoming of a child of God.

CONCLUSION

Whatever may happen on this earth, eternal salvation is always available by grace through faith. Let us hear and obey the will of the Father so that we may face the trials of life and death with trust and hope in our God who has preserved an eternal inheritance for us in heaven. In that heavenly home we will endure no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:4). I know this will be true, for no earthly disaster will ever touch it!

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Is There a Need For Authority?

Matt Nevins

Authority is a term used to express the idea of having the right to practice something. The question: “What gives us the right?” is a question that can be asked in any area of life. In the realm of religion, this question ought to be asked far more frequently. Some may not see the need or the importance of having the right or authority. Everyone needs to understand the gravity of the matter. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 Paul gives us the picture of Christ taking “vengeance” in “flaming fire” to those who do not obey his gospel. For this cause we need to test the things we do to verify that all is done with the Lord’s authority (Col. 3:17). Without having his authority, we can have no hope to be dressed in white robes in eternity.

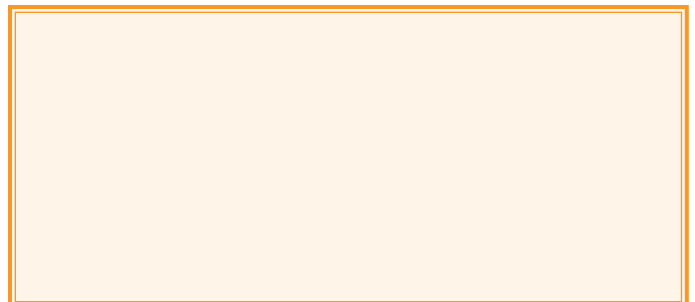
The Hebrew writer begins the book with making it clear that God has spoken, as he has in various ways and at different times in the past, through Jesus these last days (Heb. 1:1-4). As the appointed heir or the anointed, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18). With the authority that has been given to Jesus (Eph. 1:22-23), he has delivered to us his gospel that will one day judge the world (Rom. 2:16). Those who do not obey the gospel of Christ will face the wrath of God. The consequences of our actions demand the need for having authority, or the right, to live the life we live.

Knowing that all will be judged by the gospel of Christ, the source of authority is therefore the gospel. To determine what we are authorized to do, an exegetical attitude has to be used. God says what he means, and means what he says. Amos didn’t beat around the bush with smooth words or human wisdom when speaking what the Lord had spoken. Amos simply spoke the word of God and said, “Thus says the Lord” (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, etc.). If the source of authority is the word of God, then it is vain and useless to be going to human creeds and traditions for authority. When we cease to ask what God has spoken, we will no longer be following him, rather we become children tossed about by any/every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). To prevent this sad state, authority must be established and demanded.

Authority is established when we are able to show where we have direct commands, approved apostolic examples, and/or necessary inferences. When we can show the book, chapter, and verse for these items, authority is established. Without this proof, we have no authority to practice the action under question. An example of individuals who were punished because of not having authority can be found in Numbers 3:4. Nadab and Abihu offered a strange fire. The fire was strange because it was not the fire authorized in God’s word. Nadab and Abihu were killed for using unauthorized fire. They were wrong for practicing what was unauthorized, and we are wrong today if we do the same.

When considering questions on salvation, the use of instrumental music in worship, supporting orphan homes and colleges, the use of a missionary society, and other questions in connection with our service to the Lord, the answer is the same in every case—what has God authorized? This elementary principle of establishing authority has been thrown out the window in pursuit of being the largest and most popular group among those in the world. If anyone should preach a gospel contrary to the gospel of Christ, that person is to be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). Establishing authority is needed and is a serious matter. Those who refuse to demand or establish authority are clearly not of God, we know this from their fruit (Matt. 7:15-20, 2 John 9). Let us consider our ways and determine what has given the authority, or right, to practice our actions and beliefs. Is it authorized of God or man?

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The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

Jeremy Sweets

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus sought to seek and save the lost, he demanded a life of discipleship. A disciple literally means “a learner” and stands in contrast to “a teacher.” Thus, a disciple is “one who engages in learning through instruction from another,” a pupil, or an apprentice (BDAG 609). For Jesus, being a disciple extended beyond the normal definition. It meant more than passive learning, an initial commitment, or simply believing that Jesus spoke truth. Being a disciple of Jesus demanded continual adherence. It demanded accepting and implementing the teaching. It necessitated that one abide in his word (John 8:31-32).

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them . . . (v. 25).

On one particular occasion, Jesus addressed the subject of discipleship to large multitudes, who were following after him. As was common during this time, those that desired to be disciples followed after the teacher and learned from his teaching. As the masses began to build, Jesus turned to them and laid a platform for discipleship. Following after Jesus meant that more than their presence was needed. They had to consider the cost as well. Jesus taught this message by providing two points of application, two parables, and two final conclusive statements. Jesus began by saying, “If anyone comes to Me, . . .” He unmistakably addressed those who were standing around him, but his words echo for all who would follow after him.

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple (v. 26).

Relationship is at the heart of being a disciple, and Jesus first addressed this subject. Familial ties in this life are normal. Everyone naturally cares for and cherishes his own family. When one becomes a disciple, however, he must put Christ above all others. Our hearts cannot be divided between God and our family (Matt. 6:24). Jesus

illustrated this point in his own life by placing emphasis on his spiritual family rather than on his physical family (Mark 3:31-35). Christ called on disciples to “hate” those closest to them. They must love their families less than Christ. Jesus first named parents in the list. As children grow up, they are instructed in the matters of life by their parents. A child’s rearing must be forsaken if it stands in contrast to the words of Jesus. As children grow up and leave their parents, they cling to a spouse and bear children. These relationships are the closest in life but they cannot supersede devotion to Christ. Finally, self denial is enjoined upon disciples. The way of man leads to destruction, and cannot be trusted as a safe guide (Prov. 12:14; 14:12; Jer. 10:23). A disciple must be willing to give up worldliness and the pleasures of sin. Even hopes and dreams that are innocent pursuits must yield to the pursuit of discipleship. If one is not willing to make this commitment, then he cannot be a disciple of Jesus.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (v. 27).

In addition to putting Christ above family members, a disciple must be willing to take up his own cross and follow after Jesus. The cross was a symbol of pain and suffering in the Roman world. Crucifixion was more than a death sentence. It meant that a criminal would spend his last hours in pure torture. A disciple, therefore, must be

one that is willing to endure persecution and even death for the cause of Christ. Persecution will be inevitable for a child of God (2 Tim. 3:4). It can only be avoided by compromising devotion to Christ. The assaults of persecution must be handled by sanctifying Christ and providing a defense for his cause (1 Pet. 3:13-18). If one is not willing to make this commitment, then he cannot be a disciple of Jesus.

For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? (v. 28).

Jesus, the Master Teacher, illustrated his teaching by providing parables or stories of everyday occurrences with spiritual lessons. The first parable that Jesus gave was the parable of the building of a tower. Before taking on a large project, a builder must first consider the costs associated with building. He must ensure that he has enough money to buy tools, material, and labor. He must be committed to completion. An overzealous and under prepared builder may build a great foundation, but it will be useless by itself. If the builder doesn't have enough to complete the project, then he should not start. After all, the goal is to complete the tower, not merely start it. A partially finished tower would result in ridicule and public humiliation.

Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (v. 31)

The second parable that Jesus told was the parable of the king going to war. Just like the builder, the king must give forethought to his decision. He must ensure that he has the necessary number of men, weapons, tactics, and leadership to win. A hasty decision to go into battle may create initial excitement and win immediate favor among supporters, but it will end in ruin. The lives of thousands may be lost and the kingdom could fall into subjection. By calculating the cost and using foresight, a disastrous defeat can be avoided by sending a delegation to seek terms of peace.

Both parables illustrate a similar point that can be seen in discipleship. The chance to follow after Jesus and be in heaven one day should create excitement. This decision cannot be made lightly, however. It must be accompanied by forethought and a commitment to finish the task. It is not enough to begin a life of discipleship; it must be completed. If one only considers the benefit without considering the cost, he will become disillusioned when difficult times arise. Persecution and the allurements of the world will cause many to fall away who have not considered the cost (Matt. 13:20-21). A firm commitment and an understanding of the price that must be paid will enable a disciple to overcome difficulties. A proper perspective is essential (2 Cor. 5:7). Focusing on Jesus and the surpassing riches of the glory

that awaits will enable a disciple to endure through the assaults of Satan (Rom. 8:18; Heb. 12:1-3).

So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions (v. 33).

By way of conclusion, Jesus called upon his disciples to give up their possessions. The word translated "give up" means to "say farewell, take leave (of)" or "renounce" (BDAG 123). Many consider success to be an abundance of things, a simple accumulation of wealth. Life does not consist of our possessions (Luke 12:15). The disciple of Christ must alter his view of this worldly mindset (1 John 2:15). Possessions cannot be treated as personal property, the prize of an individual. Instead, one must remember that God has given all blessings (Jas. 1:17), and those that are stewards of God's blessings must use them in his service. Christians should give freely and help those who are in need (Acts 20:35; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; Eph. 4:28). Money and possessions are tools of service, not trophies to be cherished (1 Tim. 6:9-10). If one is not willing to make this commitment, then he cannot be a disciple of Jesus.

Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out (vv. 34-35).

Jesus concluded his remarks with an illustration of salt. Salt is good, but it is only useful as long as it functions like salt. In a similar fashion, being a disciple is good, but it is only useful as long as a disciple functions like a disciple. If a disciple quits being a disciple, then he is as useless as tasteless salt. Just as useless salt will be thrown out, a disciple who has quit will be thrown into outer darkness (2 Pet. 2:20-22). A disciple must consider the cost and be willing to endure to the end. If one is not willing to make this commitment, then he cannot be a disciple of Jesus.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear (v. 35).

No mention is made of the reaction of the crowd. Every individual in the crowd had to consider the message for himself. Everyone that follows after Jesus must hear his words. They have to be imbibed and taken into the heart. As true students, disciples must adhere to the teaching of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ. The decision to become a disciple is a serious commitment. A person must reflect on his heart and his desire to serve the Master. No man or woman should become a disciple without considering the cost. Being a disciple is a life-long commitment and endurance is essential. Only after a person recognizes the cost and determines to pay the price should he become a disciple.

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Faith Comes By Hearing

Terry Sanders

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

I think we understand that a majority of folks are willing to affirm that they have some kind of faith based on some kind of internal decision. Very few would be willing to say something different. What constitutes that faith and how it comes about greatly varies. In order to have the kind of faith that pleases God one must follow what God has revealed as matters of faith. That revelation can *only* be found in his word—the Bible. Thus, we are told “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

Paul’s words in Romans 10:17 actually constitute a conclusion to some previous remarks. He has mentioned “the word of faith which we *preach*” (Rom. 10:8). He also said that one is to *believe* in your heart” (Rom. 10:10). Obviously, then, one is to *believe* what is *preached*. When this is done the product will be faith. That faith will move one to “call upon Him” (Rom. 10:12). To call upon the Lord is to surrender oneself to his will in a conscious decision to obey his word. And then—“whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Paul points out that one cannot call on him without believing and that believing is not possible unless one has heard the gospel being preached (Rom. 10:14). So, men were sent forth with what is sometimes called the foolishness of preaching (Rom. 10:14-15; cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Some may not believe (Rom. 10:16), but *some do*. When they do believe it is because they have *first* heard the word of God!

Faith, we are told, is the “substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1). We have hope in things which are promised, things we are to one day receive. This is what Paul is writing about in Romans 8:24, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” Here Paul is referring to deliverance in eternity. This is something we *hear* about in the word, *believe* it in our heart, and *hope* for it to be ours

in the end. Faith and hope are inseparable, one needs the other to exist or it will be incomplete by itself.

We are also told that faith is the “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). What does this mean? It means a belief in something we may not have physically experienced. It may be believing in approved testimony from credible sources. For example, I have never been to Africa. It is beyond my physical experience. However, I can read the record of the explorers of this continent. I can watch documentaries on television. I can find Africa in an atlas of the world. I can look it up in the encyclopedia. With all this evidence from credible sources I can believe Africa exists even though it is beyond my personal experience. Likewise, I can believe that Jesus lived and died and rose again because of the testimony of credible eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:3-8). I can believe that on Pentecost there were about three thousand who became Christians by repenting and being baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38, 41). I can believe this even though it is beyond my personal experience.

A common accusation delivered toward those who claim to have faith is that folks are expected to believe in what is referred to as a “leap in the dark.” Indeed a number of people are guilty of having that kind of faith. However, faith as our text plainly shows, is to come through hearing the word of God. Once again this is based on the testimony of credible witnesses. The things found in the New Testament are written with the express purpose of producing faith in those who hear it (John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:13). Faith, according to the New Testament, is not a “leap in the dark.” We need to challenge those who claim faith is a “leap in the dark” to prove their assertion. God does not expect us to have faith in anything not revealed in his word.

Another error that often occurs among religious minded people is where faith ends and opinion begins. There is nothing inherently wrong with opinions. Opinions are fine unless they supplant faith. A person may have the opinion that Jesus was six feet, two inches in height with blue eyes. Fine, but that is not a matter of faith because it is not found

“I Am the Lord, I Do Not Change”

Wayne S. Walker

And: You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail (Heb. 1:10-12).

The inspired writer affirms that one characteristic of the physical heavens and earth, in contrast to the eternal nature of God, is that they change. In truth, it has been said that the only thing in this life which really does not change is the fact that all things change.

Recently, after living in the same home for nearly fifteen years and working with the same congregation during all that time, this writer and his family decided to make a change in which we shall move to a different location where I will be laboring with another church. Such a move involves several changes—selling a house and finding a new one, living and learning to navigate in a new city, locat-

ing new doctors and dentists and so forth. And sometimes these changes can be a little intimidating because there are so many unknowns involved. Will we be able to find housing that is both suitable and affordable? Will we like our new surroundings? Will the medical personnel whom we choose be as satisfactory as those to whom we have grown accustomed? Even so, the changes must come, and since we cannot stop them we must learn to cope with them. Anna Letetia Waring wrote: “In heavenly love abiding, No change my heart shall fear; And safe is such confiding, For nothing changes here.”

Change in our lives, whether by choice or necessity, whether wanted or unwelcomed, often has the tendency to make us stop and think about where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going. Therefore, it is good for us to consider the implications of such changes. Some changes are simply a part of life. After we are born into this world, we begin to grow, and growth necessitates change.

in the New Testament. Unfortunately, some are prone to say something like this, “I cannot find it in the Bible, so I will just believe it by faith.” Think about that statement in light of Romans 10:17. How can anyone believe something by faith after admitting it cannot be found in Bible? You cannot say that and be consistent with New Testament teaching. However, it may be permissible to believe what you cannot find *by opinion* if that opinion is harmless. There is a real need to be careful lest we find ourselves making a mistake in this fashion as so many often do. so many make opinions *equal to* faith. They are not equal. The former originates with man and the latter is revealed by God. Anytime it is suggested that opinions of men are equal to the word of God, a quick examination ought to be made of Matthew 15:1-9. There one can easily see the result of substituting the word of man for the word of God.

The courts in our country will accept the written testimony of credible witnesses. There is overwhelming evi-

dence in the New Testament to prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God even in a court of law should such a thing ever be necessary. If courts could be convinced, why can't one person—perhaps you—be convinced also?

The New Testament letters cover written history and discuss how churches either did or should go about their work and worship. There are plenty of instructions as to how Christians ought to live each day. All of these are to provide us with information about walking by faith.

Yes, faith is truly a process. It is rooted and established in the word of God. Like all processes it has a finished product. This is explained in 1 Peter 1:9, “receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls.”

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We progress from infancy to the toddler years, to childhood, to puberty, to adolescence, to young adulthood, to middle age, and finally to the time when “the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Eccl. 12:1). We find jobs and sometimes have to change jobs. We buy homes and sometimes have to change homes, as Abraham did (Gen. 12:1-4). We have children, and they change as they grow. And during this time while changes take place in us and our lives, they also take place in others too. Those whom we have loved in the past grow old and pass on. Friends move away or we move away from them. The passing of time always brings change.

Some changes are by their very nature good. Peter said, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of heart or mind, brought about by godly sorrow for past sin, that results in a change of life. And being converted means being changed from one who is lost in sin and condemned before God to one who is redeemed by the blood of Christ and thus justified in God’s sight. And once we have been converted, we must, “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). As in the physical realm, so in the spiritual, growth demands change. These are changes that God wants us to make. And, of course, we look forward to that time when “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:52).

Some changes, however, are of necessity bad. There are those who have “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image make like corruptible man” and “the truth of God for the lie” (Rom. 1:23-25). Some individuals

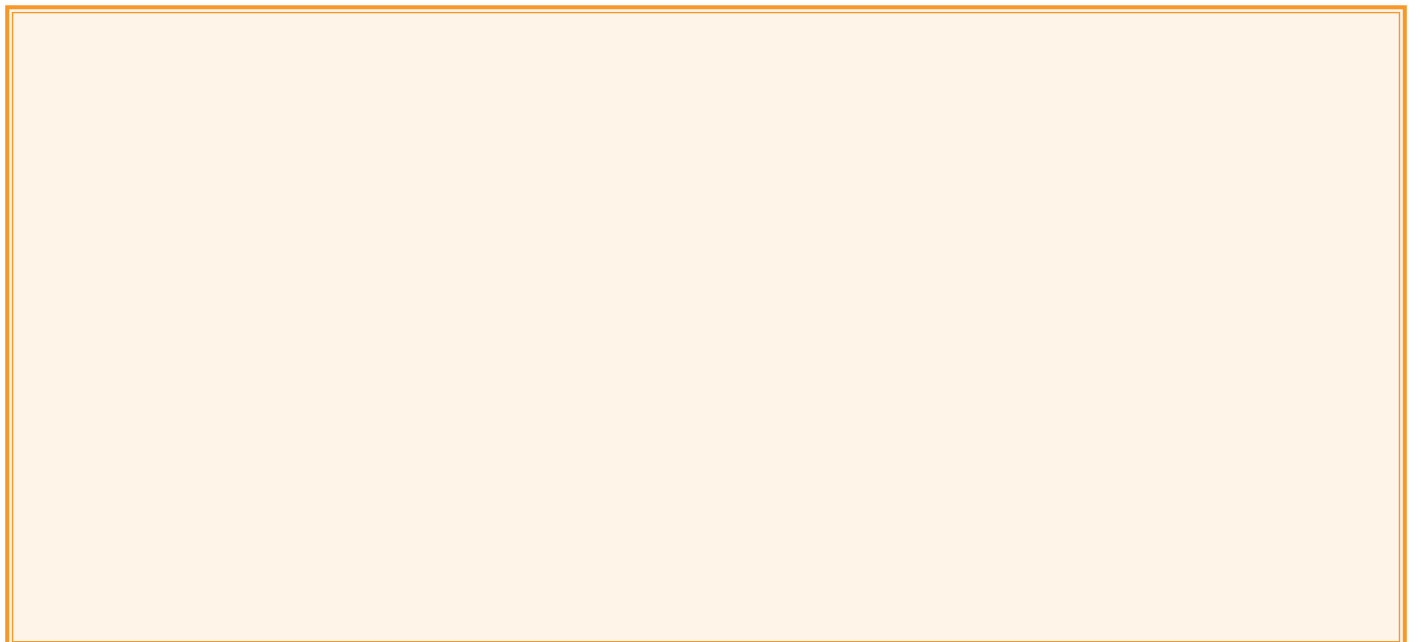
who were once faithful Christians have changed into those who have forsaken the Lord, often because they love this present world (2 Tim. 3:10). Some churches which once stood firmly for the truth have changed into apostate bodies for one reason or another (e.g., Rev. 3:1-3). These kinds of changes make us sad. Still, we realize that while we can and must preach and teach, warn and work, admonish and encourage, we simply cannot control what others do. They have to be responsible for the changes that they make. Yet through all these changes, whether good or bad, whether desirable or undesirable, there is someone who can help us weather them without wavering. “For I am the Lord, I do not change” (Mal. 3:6).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Implicit trust in our heavenly Father and the hope that he gives to us through his Son Jesus Christ are forces that will enable us to have stability as we live in a world of change. Henry Frances Lyte was dying of tuberculosis and planning to change his residence from his long-time beloved home in Brixham, England, to the warmer climate of Italy for his health, when he finished the hymn with these familiar words:

Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

If you will pardon a cinematic reference, in “Lion King” Rafiki told Simba, “Change is good.” That is often true. But it is also hard sometimes. Yet, as Rafiki again said, we can either run from it or learn from it. May we put our lives in God’s hands and choose to take the latter course.

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Reasons Why the Catholic Doctrine of Transubstantiation is False!

Glendol McClure

The Roman Catholic false doctrine of Transubstantiation is best defined by their own publications. On page 273 of the *Baltimore Catechism* we find these words:

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament and a sacrifice. In the Holy Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, the Lord Christ is contained, offered and receive. (a) The whole Christ is really, truly and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. We use the words “really, truly, and substantially” to describe Christ’s presence in the Holy Eucharist in order to distinguish Our Lord’s teaching from that of mere men who falsely teach that the Holy Eucharist is only a sign or figure of Christ, or that He is present only by His power.

In a recent discussion with an erring brother who now believes, supports, and defends this false doctrine, he wrote in part:

I reread what the Lord wrote in the Bible, and began to see that if the Scriptures are all truth, and if we are not transgress or go beyond the Scriptures, my opinion must be wrong. How? Christ says that the bread and juice are his body and blood. He doesn’t say it’s a representation of his body and blood. To confirm this I asked a Greek *scholar*. *The language, it turns out, distinguishes between representational phrases and phrases speaking of an actuality. It turns out that the Greek does not support the argument that Christ was speaking metaphorically. In fact, it supports the opposite opinion. This truth made me rethink a lot of the principles on which the Church of Christ rests its doctrine.*

It is interesting to note that Bible scholars, such as Albert E. Barnes, William Hendrickson, Matthew Henry, J.W. McGarvey, and Phillip Y. Pendleton deny what this erring brother’s unidentified “scholar” claims. On page 658 of the *Four Fold Gospel*, by J.W. McGarvey and Phillip Y. Pendleton, we find:

The Catholics and some few others take our Lord’s words literally when he says, “this is my body.” On this they

found the doctrine of Transubstantiation, i.e. that the bread and the wine become literal body and blood when blessed by the priest. There are many weighty arguments against such a doctrine, but the main one for it is found in these words of our Lord. But Jesus could not have meant them literally, for his body was untouched and his blood unshed on this occasion when he spoke them. Moreover, in the twenty-fifth verse of Mark chapter 14 . . . Jesus calls the wine “the fruit of the vine,” when according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, it had been turned into blood and hence not wine at all.

On pages 738-741 of *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, by E.W. Bullinger, in commenting on Matthew 26:26, he writes:

So in the very words that follow “this is (i.e. represents or signifies) my body,” we have an undoubted Metaphor. “He took the cup . . . saying . . . this is my blood.” Here, thus, we have a pair of metaphors.

Let us now examine the Roman Catholic dogma of Transubstantiation in light of the Scriptures. In so doing, we will see that this doctrine is utterly false for the following reasons:

First, this doctrine destroys the nature of the institution as set forth by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29! The Lord’s supper is a memorial—a “sign” of something signified. The false doctrine of Transubstantiation robs this memorial and the “sign.” Jesus had not yet been crucified when he instituted this memorial. Claiming that the bread becomes the literal body of the Lord and the fruit of the vine becomes the literal blood, “takes away the memorial and the sign and puts the object commemorated, or the thing signified, in its place” (Foy E. Wallace, *Bulwarks of the Faith* 186).

Did Jesus take his own flesh and blood and give it to the apostles? Since he was present with his disciples, this is not plausible. His very presence makes this improbable and

impossible. So, the elements of the memorial supper (the bread and fruit of the vine) are the same now as then.

Second, the false doctrine of Transubstantiation is contrary to Bible language! Remember, the supporters of this doctrine often argue—“He [Christ] doesn’t say it’s a representation of his body and blood.” So, we will now apply this faulty “reasoning” to other statements of Christ found in the Scriptures and see how they weigh:

1. When Jesus said, “I am the bread” (John 6:41), was he literal bread? Remember, “He doesn’t say he is a representation of bread,” according to supporters of this doctrine.

2. When Jesus said, “I am the vine” (John 15:5), was he a literal vine? “He doesn’t say he is a representation of a vine.” Therefore, if Christ was a literal vine, then his disciples had to be literal branches because he said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.”

3. When Jesus said, “I am the door” (John 10:7, 9), was he a literal door? “He doesn’t say he is a representation of a door.”

4. When Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11-12), was he a literal shepherd? “He doesn’t say he is a representation of a shepherd.” We might also ask, were the “sheep,” the “shepherd,” and the “wolf,” mentioned in these verses, literal or figurative?

5. When Jesus taught in Matthew 5:13-14 that, “Ye are the light of the world,” were the disciples literal lights? If so, I wonder what kind—candles, lamps, torches, etc.? Remember, “He doesn’t say they were a representation of a light.”

6. When Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” did he mean they were table salt, rock salt, kosher salt, or block salt? Which? Let them tell us! Remember, “He doesn’t say they were a representation of salt.”

By using their own “reasoning,” it is easy to show the foolishness and fallacy of such quibbles. In these passages just cited, Jesus uses figures of speech (metaphors) in his teachings, just as he did in his institution of the memorial supper.

Third, the false doctrine of Transubstantiation is contrary to science! If, after a Catholic priest blessed the bread and the fruit of the vine and a qualified scientist analyzed the same, what would be the outcome? Would the bread and fruit of the vine be the literal human flesh and blood of Jesus? Or, would the test show it was bread and the fruit of the vine? Catholic theologians will talk about the “Real Presence,” but, the Lord himself and the apostle Paul com-

manded brethren to partake of the bread and fruit of the vine “in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).

When Jesus took the cup and said to his disciples, “drink ye all of it,” was he referring to the literal cup or the contents of the cup (“the fruit of the vine”)? Remember, “He doesn’t say the cup is a representation of the fruit of the vine.” So, according to Catholic reasoning, Jesus meant for them to drink the literal cup! Now wouldn’t that be hard to swallow, *literally*?

In order to prove this doctrine false, it is not necessary to cite scholars, although I did. But, I did so to show that bringing up what some unidentified “scholar” says, carries no weight. All we have to do is go to the Scriptures to see the true meaning. Notice in Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18 that Jesus spoke of the “cup” as being the “fruit of the vine” or what the cup contained. In Matthew 26:29, Jesus said, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” This shows that what he commanded his disciples to drink was *not* his literal blood, but the “fruit of the vine.” When Paul wrote the Corinthians concerning their abuse of the Lord’s supper, he said they were to “eat this bread, and drink this cup” (1 Cor. 11:26, cf. vv. 27, 28). According to Catholic false doctrine, Paul should have commanded them to “eat of His flesh and drink of His blood.”

Fourth, the Catholic false doctrine of Transubstantiation violates the Scriptures by withholding the cup! In 1415, the Council of Constance decreed that only the bread should be administered to the people and that the priest should drink the wine for the people. This practice is contrary to divine Scripture. Dear reader, read again 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 and the gospel accounts. Paul commanded, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” No where is it implied that anyone was to *feed* the bread to them or *drink* the fruit of the vine for them! When Jesus instituted this supper, in memory of himself, he commanded them *all* to partake of it, saying, “drink ye all of it” (Matt. 26:26). Mark says that Jesus “gave it to them: and they all drank of it” (Mark 14:22-23). Compare the Bible order in partaking of the Lord’s supper as revealed in the Scriptures, with the abominable Catholic tradition—a priest takes a small cracker or wafer and puts it on the tongue of the recipient(s) (an unsanitary practice), then, drinks the fruit of the vine for those present. Is this a partaking of the memorial supper or being fed only the *bread* of the “supper”? The Bible teaches that disciples of the first century met on the “first day of the week” to “break bread,” implying *all* partook of both elements of the memorial supper (Acts 20:7; 2:42; Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16). This unscriptural Catholic tradition is a disgrace of the divine memorial that Christ instituted!

Paying Respect to the Dead

Joe R. Price

The Bible says a number of interesting and relevant things about paying respect to the dead. Of course, such respect is directly related to the life that the person had lived. For instance, when King Asa died after his forty-one year reign over Judah, he was buried with great pomp and recognition (2 Chron. 16:14). By contrast, there was no sorrow or respect attributed to King Jehoram upon his death and burial (2 Chron. 21:19-20).

The burial of a corpse was itself a mark of respect, since unburied bodies were viewed as disgraceful (Jer. 16:4). When the dead bodies of Saul and his sons were hanged on the wall of Beth Shean, valiant men retrieved and buried them, and then, out of respect and remorse, fasted seven days (1 Sam. 31).

The respectful burial and remembrance of the dead is traced to ancient times. When Sarah (Abraham's wife) died,

he mourned for her and purchased a burial site, where he and subsequent generations were also buried (Gen. 23; 25:9-10; 49:29-33). When Jacob died his body was embalmed (after the custom of the Egyptians) and his death was mourned a total of seventy days (Gen. 50:1-3). A great funeral procession took his body from Egypt to the tomb of his fathers (Gen. 50:4-14). All of this indicates genuine respect and regard for Jacob. The embalmed remains of Joseph were respectfully kept for hundreds of years and then dramatically carried from Egypt during Israel's exodus and wilderness wandering into the land of promise, and there finally laid to rest (Gen. 50:24-26; Exod. 13:19; Josh. 24:32; Heb. 11:22). These are just some of the recorded examples of burial and respect for the dead in the Old Testament (Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8).

The New Testament also records the showing of respect for the dead. Jesus mentioned the practice of maintain-

Fifth, the Catholic false doctrine of Transubstantiation was not declared a Roman Catholic Article of Faith until A.D. 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council! This is almost 1200 years *after* the establishment of the Lord's church. I wonder why all of the "infallible" popes (who claim to speak *ex cathedra*) during the time period before A.D. 1200 didn't declare Transubstantiation an Article of Faith if they believed and practiced this doctrine?

Sixth, the Catholic false doctrine of Transubstantiation violates the commands of divine Scripture found in Acts 15:6-30! The Gentile disciples were commanded to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20, 29). So, according to this false doctrine, they have Jesus commanding what his inspired apostles forbade, pitting Scripture against Scripture.

Finally, this false doctrine is of the "another gospel" category. Of the Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote, "I mar-

vel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9). No where in the Scriptures do we find the words, "Transubstantiation," the "Holy Eucharist," or "Real Presence." Therefore, the false doctrine of Transubstantiation is not of Heaven, but of men (Matt. 21:23-27)! When this doctrine is tried and tested by the Scriptures, it fails the test! Teachers of this false doctrine, "hath not God" and are "accursed" (2 John 9; Gal. 6:9)! And, "he that biddeth him (them) God speed is partaker of his (their) evil deeds" (2 John 10-11).

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ing the tombs of the dead, as well as decorating them in memory of the deceased (Matt. 23:27-32). Although Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees (who adorned the graves of the prophets and the monuments of the righteous while rejecting the very word of God those prophets spoke), he did not criticize the customs themselves. To show respect for the dead with monuments, headstones, flowers, and other such grave site adornments are customs that are not condemned in the word of God.

After the death of Lazarus, his sisters are seen mourning his passing while others comforted them (John 11:28-31). When Jesus observed Mary's grief, he groaned in his spirit and wept (John 11:32-35). The women who found Christ's tomb empty had gone there to pay their respect for the dead by intending to complete the process by which the body was made ready for interment (Luke 23:53-24:1). Widows are seen near the dead body of Dorcas as they showed her handiwork to Peter and remembered her good life of faith (Acts 9:36-39).

And of course, Christians pay respect to Jesus every week as they remember his sacrificial death on the cross for human redemption (1 Cor. 11:23-29). There is no greater memorial than the Lord's supper, which Christians eat until he comes again.

It is a good and right to pay our respect to the dead. The Bible says:

Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart (Eccl. 7:2).

A number of lessons can be learned whenever we "go to the house of mourning" and pay our respect to the dead. We will close by noting some of these lessons.

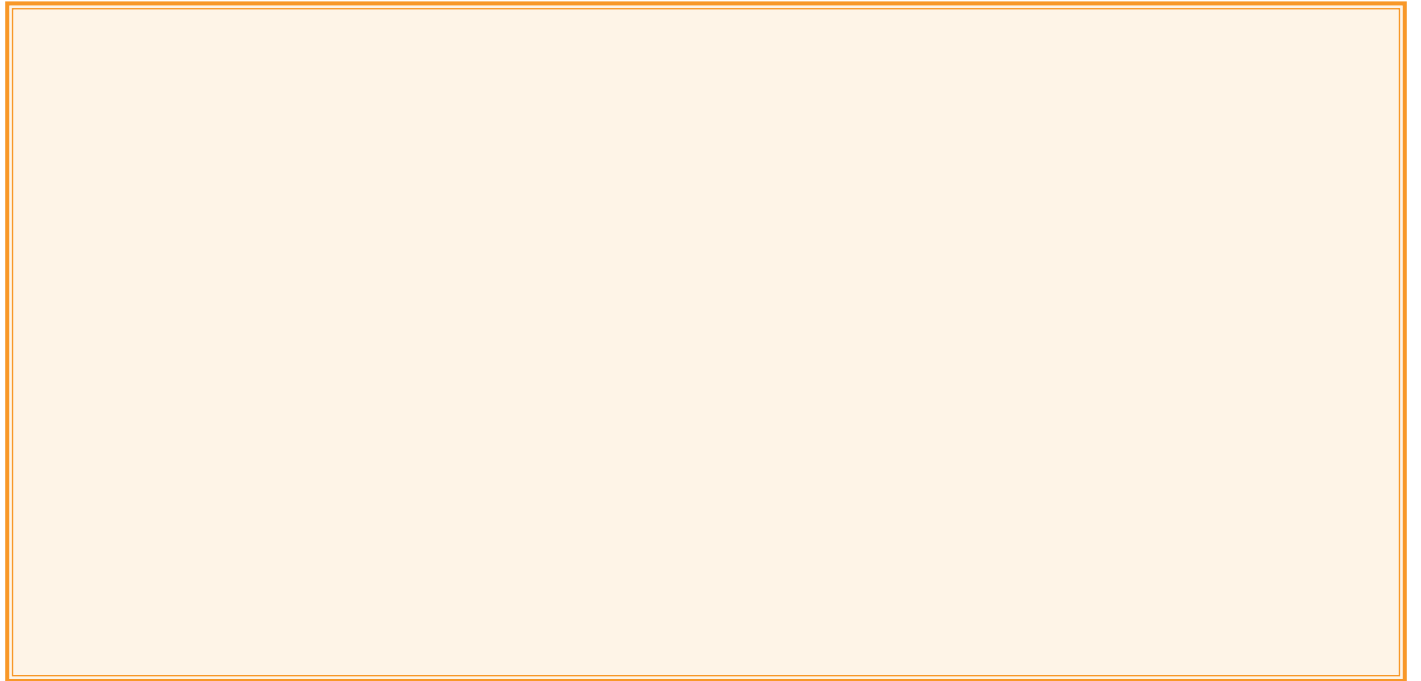
1. It is a time to remember that we will also die. None of us is strong enough to overcome death; none is swift enough to evade this intruder (Eccl. 8:8). It is "appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

2. It is a time to be thankful for those who have departed. We are thankful for the love of departed parents, the sacrifice of patriots and the faith of God's people who have now gone to their reward. Though they are dead, men and women of faith continue to speak, and we should listen to their messages (Heb. 11:4).

3. It is a time to resolve to have a righteous influence on others while we live. We pay respect to the dead because their life has touched ours. We are better because they lived. As we reflect on and remember the lives of those who are now dead, we are moved to in turn touch the lives of others in good ways (Matt. 5:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

4. Now is the time to get right with God. Life is brief and uncertain, but death is sure (Jas. 4:13-17). So, now is the time to obey God and prepare to meet him (Amos 4:12; 2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 10:34-35; 17:30-31). Pay respect to the dead; and get ready to die.

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“Osteen” continued from front page

We found our seats. The show was scheduled to begin at 7:30. We had made it there with plenty of time to spare. Well, things didn't actually kick off until about eight or so. Even then, there were folks arriving late. Yeah, yeah. I know, I know. Atlanta is a big place and it is often difficult to be on time anywhere near that town. But if these people had come to worship God, you'd think that they would give a little more effort to be at the place of worship on time. After all, aren't we not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” as stated in Hebrews 10:25?

The show finally started and things just got worse. Cindy Cruse Ratcliff, the leader of Joel's sideshow band, sang and pranced around stage as she encouraged everybody else to join in. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! Hold it, hold it, hold it! If this woman was actually serving God and encouraging others to do so that night, and if indeed it was in a church setting, why was *she* leading the service? I'm pretty sure that when Paul wrote, “Let your women keep silent in the churches,” and “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 he meant, “Let your women keep silent in the churches,” and, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.”

Cindy was not the only woman exercising authority over men that night. Dodie and Victoria Osteen, Joel's mother and wife, proclaimed words from the Word and led prayers during the show. Joel even professed that both he and his wife were “pastors” in God's church. Now we all know that pastors, elders, bishops, overseers, shepherds, and presbyters are men, right? That is unless one uses a different translation in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 of the masculine gender in describing the qualifications of elders. Have I been in the dark all these years? No, the Bible is not sexist either. It is the Bible inspired by God himself according to 2 Timothy 3:16.

Later in the show, Joel's sister, Lisa Comes, encouraged everybody to make a donation to their cause. According to Lisa, all of the money collected that evening would be used in assisting victims of hurricane Katrina. I appreciate generosity and I'd like to think that I have a Samaritan-like attitude. Those hurricane survivors need all the help they can get. However, had there been no disaster victims, I wondered what would become of the donations collected that night. I reckon they would go to the Joel Osteen Foundation for the Misuse of the Gospel. How sad. Besides, there's no authority for making a contribution in such a setting. This was on Thursday night, mind you, not the first day of the week. 1 Corinthians 16:2 reads, “On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper. . . .”

After about an hour of enduring such blasphemy, Joel finally delivered his speech of the evening. I was sure that

he would say something actually beneficial for a change. Earlier in the show, he told everybody that they would not leave the same as they arrived. I think that was the only piece of truth that proceeded past his warm yet wily smile or else I would not be inspired to write this. Thanks Joel. The message was positive. Actually, it was too positive. As I wrote earlier, Joel Osteen is not known for his rebuking words, but for his feel good, laid back religion. If America wants “feel good religion,” Joel is their man. Nobody likes to be told that he is wrong. Nobody likes to be told that he is a sinner. Am I right? Joel caters to the type of folks we read of in 2 Timothy 4:3: “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.” Good job, America. Yes, Joel is very friendly and upbeat. But where's the love? If we love our brethren, are we not to “rebuke and chasten” them as we read in Revelation 5:19? Is not the word of God profitable for reproof and correction? Did Paul mean something else when he told Timothy to “rebuke” in 2 Timothy 4:2? I hope not.

At the end of the speech, Joel encouraged us to pray with him in order for God to wash us of our sins and welcome us into his church. What? What about baptism, Joel? He did make a reference to being “buried in Christ” or something. Unless everybody there had been “buried with Him through baptism into death” according to Romans 6:4, they could not be saved. Look, faith is only part of it. I wonder what Joel thinks of James 2:14-26. “Faith without works is dead.” Likewise a battery without an alternator is dead. Pretty simple logic, huh?

Well, Joel was right. I left there with a different state of mind than I had when I arrived. The events that took place there were actually beneficial to me. John was wise when he wrote 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Also consider 2 Corinthians 13:5, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” And 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “Test all things; hold fast what is good.”

Satan uses many devices in drawing folks away from God. The activities I witnessed that night were all orchestrated by the devil. What is sad is that the people in the Philips Arena believed that they were pleasing God. Satan led them to believe this. The truth, the *whole* truth, needs to be taught. Folks like the Osteens are pulling the wool over the eyes of America. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 29:30). Be smart. “. . . Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

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“Unity” continued from page 2

It creates a spirit of humility. It is humbling to meditate on the circumstance of searching for Bible authority for our practices, and then determining whether a practice is required or optional, in an effort to understand the impact his conclusions have on fellowship with his brothers. Recognizing his own limitations, he acts with deliberation and counsel. Solomon wrote, “in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14; 24:6). Much damage has come to the body of Christ because factional men over-react to a situation and draw lines of fellowship when none needed to be drawn. Congregational division occurs and tensions are created that take decades to heal. On some occasions, those who have acted with conscientious counsel have been condemned as rash zealots who shoot first and ask questions later by those who did not have enough love to inquire whether or not their charges were so. Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). We can do better than this.

It creates a feeling of human fallibility. Since man must make the determination of whether a given item falls into the category of “essential” or “non-essential,” men must recognize their own fallibility and determine to search for themselves to see whether or not the things which are taught are so (Acts 17:11), thus driving one back to his dependence upon the word of God. He cannot trust in reputable brethren, as if they were infallible. He must rely on God’s infallible revelation.

THE DEMANDS OF LOVE: A REVIEW OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Paul addressed the troubled church at Corinth and commanded them to do all things through love. The demands of love are revealed in a series of verbs in vv. 4-7. He writes:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Let’s consider how this text applies to how brethren get along with one another. The word *charity* has a significantly different meaning in modern English to what it meant in the first century. Today it is used of an act of benevolence, an expression of love. However, the word *agape* is used especially “of that love of Christians towards Christians which is enjoined and prompted by their religion, whether the love be viewed as in the soul or as expressed” (Thayer 4). This love is manifest by what it does.

Love is longsuffering. The verb *makrothumeo* means “to be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others;

to be mild and slow in avenging; to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish” (Thayer 387). The compound verb is made up of *makros* (long) and *thumeo*, “to provoke to anger.” Literally, love takes a long time before being provoked to anger. That does not appear to be present when someone is willing to ignore an entire career of a man’s work as a gospel preacher, jump on some ambiguous sentence that he wrote, and use that to destroy his reputation. Have you never written or said something ambiguous that needed clarification?

Love is kind. The word *chresteouomai* means “to show one’s self mild, to be kind, use kindness” (Thayer 671). When I read the tone of some articles being printed today, I see a lack of kindness, if not just plain viciousness. The malice and hatred behind such material bleeds through its pages.

Love does not envy. *Zeloo* means “absol. to be heated or to boil [A.V. to be moved] with envy, hatred, anger” (Thayer 271). One cannot read the heart of another, except as it manifests itself in actions. Sometimes it appears that a brother may be jealous of the earned reputation, successes, or ability of his brother, as the reason for attacking him.

Love vaunts not itself. The word means “to boast one’s self.” A *perperos* is one who is vain-glorious, a braggart. A person who is loving is not arrogant and full of himself.

Love is not puffed up. The word *phusioo* means “(fr. *phusa* a pair of bellows), to inflate, blow up, blow out, to cause to swell up; trop., to puff up, make proud; pass. to be puffed up, to bear one’s self loftily, be proud” (Thayer 660). Both this and the previous term emphasize the arrogance and conceit that reflects too high an opinion of one’s self. People manifesting this character trait look down in contempt at their brethren, with an elitist attitude toward underlings. Do you know any brethren who think they are better than others?

Love does not behave itself unseemly. The word *aschemoneo* means “to act unbecomingly.” The NKJV translates the word “does not behave rudely.” Sometimes rudeness is shown toward brethren in disrespectful speech and unbecoming displays of emotions.

Love does not seek her own. The idea is that such a person is pursuing his own selfish interests in contrast to what is best for the group. Paul wrote elsewhere, “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look

not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:1-4).

Love is not easily provoked. The word *paroxuno* means “to irritate, provoke, rouse to anger” (Thayer 490). The idea is that the person does not become angry quickly. James wrote, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (1:19).

Love thinks no evil. The word *logizomai* is a term used in accounting. Some believe the significance of the term is that loves does not keep a running account of wrongs which it has suffered. Those things which are forgiven are past and should not be thrown up again at the next offence.

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. This speaks about that disposition which delights in hearing something bad about or happening to one’s enemy. This disposition is sick.

Love bears all things. The word *stego* literally means “to cover”; it is used in this context to mean “by covering to keep off something which threatens, to bear up against, hold out against, and so to endure, bear, forbear” (Thayer 586). Since brethren do sin against other Christians, we must learn to endure mistreatment without developing a bitterness of spirit or spirit of revenge.

Love believes all things. This is not teaching Christians to be ridiculously gullible. Rather, it is teaching us to believe the best about one’s fellow man rather than putting the worst possible construction on his every word and action. Paul warns against “evil surmisings” in 1 Timothy 6:3. “Believes all things” and “evil surmising” are opposite to each other.

Love hopes all things. The attitude is that of the man who hears something bad about another, but hopes that it is not true.

Love endures all things. The word *hupomeno* means “to persevere.” Regardless of what abuse or unfortunate circumstances we may experience, we must maintain our love and loyalty to Christ and our brethren.

THE APPLICATION

Brotherly love is essential. Especially is this true in light of our common quest for the truth. Since one has to engage in dialogue and debate to arrive at the truth, mutual respect and brotherly love should characterize the exchanges. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case.

We can disagree without being hateful and mean spirited. We can listen patiently to one another, defend the right of others to say what they want to say, carefully listen to what they say, and reply to their views in a spirit of kindness. If

someone cannot do this, perhaps he needs to step aside from the discussion and leave place for those who can.

In my nearly forty years of preaching, I have not seen the present spirit before. Some of our brethren have learned from the political arena how to conduct “politics of personal destruction.” I cite an example. A brother who holds a personal judgment about some issue (in this case regarding an application area of divorce and remarriage, which some label today “mental divorce”) was asked what he believed about the subject being discussed by some among us. This gentleman told me just a week or so before this conversation that he had never preached a sermon on the subject and refused to participate in marrying any divorced person for conscience’s sake. He had never divided a church over the matter or otherwise stirred up a problem. Admittedly he had expressed one or two sentences in a long article on another subject which gave indication that he believed differently from the one who asked him the question. The brother who asked the questions followed it up with a series of personal e-mails and then proceeded to “expose” the good brother as a false teacher because he happens to believe differently from him about what he labels “mental divorce.” Understand that both sides agree that Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:9 demands that one man be joined to one woman for life, that there is but one cause for divorce (fornication) which allows the innocent party to remarry, and that the only ones who have the right to marriage are those who have never been married before, those whose mate has died, and those who divorced their mate because of fornication. But because this brother held as a matter of personal judgment a different position than the other brother, he was exposed as a false teacher. The same Christian gentleman has had several meetings canceled as a result of the attention given to him and been berated on some occasions when he refused to engage in extended conversations about the issue at the meeting house after services. Can’t we treat each other better than this?

It appears to me that, before one can properly be labeled a “false teacher,” he must be guilty of teaching on the subject—propagating his views with the purpose of converting others to his position. Have some among us gotten to the point that they have developed a brotherhood of “thought police”—those who believe it is their job to expose anyone who so much has a thought different from their own? Can we hold some different beliefs as personal opinions without being guilty of sin? Not any two of those who participated to expose the brother mentioned above believe exactly alike! Will these brethren now turn on each other.

I am not protesting honorable discussion. I believe that honorable discussion is essential for the preservation of our stand in the truth. What I am protesting is that language which degrades, berates, denigrates, and besmirches the character of another brother on the sole ground that he

disagrees with me about something. I am also protesting that tendency to make personal opinions equal with the law of God, to preach those opinions as law, and to make them conditions for salvation and tests of fellowship.

We may disagree with one another and that disagreement might lead us in such different directions that we can no longer work together. My prayer is that this is not the case! However, should it be the case, let it be after spending many hours talking with one another, praying together, weeping together, and otherwise manifesting that we separate in spite of genuine love one for another, not because of a lack of brotherly love. May all who know us understand that we act from conscience and love.

CONCLUSION

Yes, there are times when one must stand for the truth! Yes, it is necessary that divisions must come (1 Cor. 11:19). But there also are issues about which we are commanded to maintain our fellowship and keep our personal judgments to ourselves (Rom. 14:1-15:7). We are commanded not to preach our personal opinions for the sake of preserving fellowship with our brethren for whom Christ died. And, whatever the nature of the issues we discuss, let all things be done with love.

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Preachers Needed

Minooka, Illinois: Brethren: Having completed a gospel meeting with the brethren meeting at Minooka, Illinois, the following information is worthy of your consideration and prayer. Their opportunities are indeed as a field white unto harvest! Minooka is located in the fastest growing county in the United States. Located some twenty miles west of Joliet, Illinois (approximately fifty miles south of Chicago, just off Interstate 80), Minooka had some 5200 houses comprising their rural setting. Today, more than 25,000 additional houses fill the once fertile farm grounds. They project an additional 25-30,000 houses in the next three to four years and each one has a family! Each person has a soul—imagine the potential within this area! While we rightly understand and care about the work in foreign lands, this work is as least as great and in our own country.

The brethren formed this congregation some three years ago and consistently do as they can to encourage the people of this area to attend and study with them. Each month they receive from the Chamber of Commerce a listing of the new residents (often more than 100 a month) and they personally invite each one to attend. This is a tremendous undertaking for twenty some members, the majority having to work their jobs to support their families. They are at peace and very

studious of God's word. They simply need the assistance of someone willing to devote his entire time to this work with them! *Please understand they do not want a man as a slave*—merely someone to help them accomplish this wonderful work to the honor and glory of God! The group in Minooka consists of three retired couples, two couples in their 40s with children (3 teen age girls and 1 younger girl), one couple in their 40s with no children, one couple in their 50s, one single man in his 40s. All of the men except one will lead singing, all lead prayer, all wait on the table, all give invitations, two preach on a regular basis, four teach Bible study classes. All of the women take part also in cleaning of the building, preparing the Lord's supper, two are Bible class teachers, all participate in reaching out to others, sending cards, and calls and visits. All of the members are committed to *working for the Lord*. There is simply far more work to be done than they are able to do. They will appreciate communication from any interested gospel preacher. As for their financial abilities, and other agreements, you should speak with them. The contact person is Mark Gibson, 620 Rathburn, Coal City, IL 60416, 815-634-8350

Uhrichsville, Ohio: The church there is looking for a preacher. You will need some support or retirement pay. There are about twenty-four meeting on Sunday morning. It is a community of about 9000. If interested, call Carl Rummell at 740-498-6677 or Warren Rummell at 330-339-3032.

Mooreville, Indiana: The church in Mooreville is looking for a faithful gospel preacher. They are a congregation of about 90. Full support is available. They are in a growing community of 10,000, 15 miles southwest of Indianapolis. If interested, contact Richard Hunter, 317-535-7616, rhunter0522@earthlink.net or Raymond Harris, 317-838-5634, rpejharris@aol.com.

Field Reports

Caneyville, Kentucky: The Caneyville church has added to its building and installed a new baptistry. They have their used baptistry for sale: 500 gallons with window steps on the right end. Model #203W. For more information, call Lonnie Swift, 270-879-6152.

Bowling Green, Kentucky: The Southside church in Bowling Green welcomes their new evangelist, Doug Roush. They are excited about their new work and new preacher. They would like to invite all who are traveling on I-65 to stop and worship with them. They are just one block off Interstate 65 at exit 26 (Cemetery Road exit) on the corner of Cemetery Road and Lovers Lane. Their services on Sunday are 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday.

Hickory, North Carolina: The Foothills church of Christ in Hildebran has nine 10-foot padded pews they would like to give to anyone who needs them. They also have six rows of stadium seats with five seats per row, 30 seats in all. These are free to anyone who needs them. They will get them to wherever they are needed. If interested, contact Mike Morgan at mmmorgan22@earthlink.net.

Tallmadge, Ohio: I am glad to report that after several years without elders, the Tallmadge church of Christ is once again working under an eldership. On September 11 Dock Hagler and Jim Vaughn were appointed as shepherds for our congregation. We will be completing eight years at Tallmadge in December. If you are visiting in the Akron, Ohio area, we invite you to stop by and worship with us. The address is 745 Southeast Ave. Submitted by Keith Storment, Preacher, Tallmadge Church of Christ.

St. Peters, Missouri: The church in St. Peters has recently moved to a new meeting place. After 28 years at 108 Birdie Hills Road, they are now located at 7430 Mexico Road. This is about a mile east of the old location. The name of the congregation is now Mexico Road church of Christ. Submitted by Ross Berry.

Madison, Wisconsin: “Jerri and I are excited to announce that Lord willing, we are starting a new work here in the Madison, Wisconsin area. As many of you know, we have been worshiping with the Capital church of Christ in Stoughton for the past four years. On Sunday, August 28, we announced to the brethren there our decision to start a new work September 11. Initially we will be meeting in our home, but hope to have a permanent place to worship in Madison (or a closer suburb) within short order.

Our purpose in writing is two fold. First, we ask all our dear brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for us and ask God to bless us and this work. Second, we would like you to consider assisting us any of the following ways:

- Visit us when you can! Your presence will build us up as we worship God together.
- For our brothers, please consider visiting and teaching a class or presenting a lesson on a Sunday. We'd love to have you stay with us!
- If your congregation is blessed with two preachers, please ask the elders of your local body to consider sending one of the men to us for a Sunday or weekend meeting.
- If you or anyone you know would consider moving to the Madison area to help build this work, please consider it or mention it to someone you know. Madison is a beautiful part of the country and there's much work that can be done here.
- Our goal is to find someone to labor with us as a preacher. If you know someone who would be interested, please forward our name to them or theirs to us.
- To find someone to labor full time (or part time) would require outside support. If you or your local congregation would be willing to help support a faithful brother in this

work, please let us know so we can keep it in mind as we begin our search.

Thank you in advance for your prayers and for your consideration.” Submitted by Dan Kittleson, 1710 Buckingham Rd., Stoughton, WI 53589 (phone: 608.877.9180; e-mail: djskittleson@sbcglobal.net).

Quips & Quotes

Pledge is Schools Ruled Unconstitutional

“San Francisco — A federal judge declared Wednesday that the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is unconstitutional, a decision that could put the divisive issue on track for another round of Supreme Court arguments.

“The case was brought by the same atheist whose previous battle against the words ‘under God’ was rejected last year by the Supreme Court on procedural grounds.

“U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton ruled that the pledge’s reference to one nation ‘under God’ violates school children’s right to be ‘free from a coercive requirement to affirm God’” (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 15, 2005], A1).

Gay Marriage Amendment is Rejected

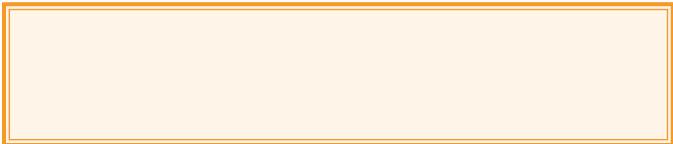
“Boston — The Massachusetts Legislature rejected a proposed change to the state constitution Wednesday aimed at banning gay marriage, a striking reversal that preserves the state’s status as the only place in the nation where same-sex couples can wed.

“A year after Massachusetts politicians appeared destined to undo a court order that has allowed thousands of same-sex couples to marry since May 17, 2004, the Legislature voted 157-39 against the proposed constitutional Amendment” (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 15, 2005], A4).

Judge Strikes Down Michigan’s Abortion Law

“Lansing, Mich. — A federal judge has declared unconstitutional a Michigan law that supporters said would ban a late-term abortion procedure.

“In a ruling dated Monday, U.S. District Court Judge Denise Page Hood in Detroit ruled the Legal Birth Definition Act places an ‘undue burden’ on women’s right to choose. Hood said the law is confusing and vague, and its exceptions for the health or life of a mother are meaningless and unconstitutional” (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 15, 2005], A8).



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