



Vol. XLII

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Nick At Night

Dick Blackford

A lot of wee folks like to watch the children's program "Nick At Night." There is another Nick from whom we can all profit. No one knows for sure why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, but we are told twice that he did (John 3:2; 19:39). He, like Joseph of Arimathaea, may have been a secret disciple (John 19:38). There were serious consequences for anyone who confessed Christ. He could be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22). That would spell an end to Nicodemus' career, aside from making him a total social outcast. Whatever his reason for coming by night, we know Nicodemus did not remain "in the dark." His was an enlightening experience straight from the true "Light of the world" (John 1:9; 8:12).

He Came To The Right Source

Of all the religious leaders and philosophers living at that time, Nicodemus had decided Jesus was the one he needed to talk to. Some today are looking for truth in all the wrong places — the psychics, the astrologers (your horoscope), Dear Abby, the electronic evangelists, the cults, pop psychology, etc. When one carefully examines the evidence, he, with the centurion, will proclaim "Truly, this was the son of God" (Matt. 27:54).

**Some today
are looking
for truth in
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places.**

He Came To The Right Conclusion About Jesus

He showed respect by calling him "Rabbi" saying, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). The reason he was convinced of this was because "no one can do these miracles except God be with him" (v. 2). There was never a denial by either friend or foe, that Jesus performed miracles. This was readily admitted. These signs confirmed the word and were what distinguished true teachers from false teachers.

He Heard The Right Message

"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He was puzzled, and asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (v. 4). Such would be an impossibility, which shows Jesus was not speaking of a physical birth. The message is understandable but

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Editorial

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Unscrambling An Egg

Mike Willis



Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
 All the king's horses and all the king's
 men
 Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back to-
 gether again.

This nursery rhyme from our youth had a moral lesson that is particularly apropos to the circumstances our nation presently faces. Our President has confessed his sinful conduct, the independent counsel charges that he was guilty of perjury, obstruction of justice, and other abuses of his political office. But, our President wants to say "I'm sorry" and resume the work which this nation elected him to do.

One might say that our President is trying to put "Jack" back in the box or trying to unscramble eggs. There is just no way possible for one to undo what he has done. A bank robber can't just say, "I'm sorry" and things go back to the way they were before he robbed the bank; a murderer can't say, "I'm sorry" and things go back to the way they were before he murdered; an adulterer cannot just say, "I'm sorry" and things go back to the way they were before his adultery.

Sin has consequences. The approach to sin which implies that our President's "I'm sorry" should mean that he can continue in his office despite his immoral and criminal actions ignores the consequences of sin. The book of Proverbs describes one in the condition of our President:

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand,
 and no man regarded;
 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my re-
 proof:
 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;
 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a
 whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me
 early, but they shall not find me:
 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:
 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.
 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with
 their own devices.

For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity
See "Unscrambling" p. 633

Why I Believe The Bible

Bobby Witherington

We live in a book-filled world. Regardless of whether or not one believes the Bible, he has to concur with its affirmation that “of making many books there is no end” (Eccl. 12:12). However, most books have a relatively small readership, a minimal influence upon people in general, and a short life span. In fact, few can even name the titles of books that were on the “best seller” lists a decade ago, and an even smaller number can identify by name any of their authors.

But there is one book from antiquity which refuses to die, and which man has been unable to destroy. A book which is loved in life and cherished in death. A book which for centuries has blessed the lives of millions and which continues to be the world’s most published and most read publication. In all probability, each person reading this paper has already concluded that this writer is referring to the Bible. In fact, even its detractors know that no other book could legitimately be so described.

However, the Bible has an abundance of enemies and is the object of an all-out attack on several fronts. Of course, this is really nothing new, for it has always been under attack, and such will doubtlessly continue until the end of time.

But this writer should be included among that vast number who regard the Bible to be the infallible, inerrant, inspired revelation of God to man. Believing that one should be “ready always to give an answer to every man” that asks for a reason for his “hope” (1 Pet. 3:15), the following facts are presented with regards to “Why I Believe the Bible.”

It Claims to Be From God

The expression “thus saith the Lord,” “God spake,” “the Lord testified, saying,” etc., are found over 1300 times in the Scriptures. Concerning the prophets in Old Testament times, we are told that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). Worded a bit differently, the affirmation is made that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Moreover, “inspiration” (*theopneustos*) literally means “God breathed,” or “breathed out by God.” In other words, “inspiration” denotes that which came from the mouth of God. And this concept of “inspiration” was implied in the Savior’s quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3; namely this: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

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I recognize that many are “turned off” by an approach in which one cites Bible verses in order to emphasize the inspiration of the Bible. However, in any court of law the defendant is allowed to speak in his own behalf. Moreover, in view of the unique position the Bible occupies in contrast to all other books, and in view of the influence it has had upon millions for centuries, can we be intellectually honest if we refuse to even consider the claims the Bible makes for itself?

Jesus Believed The Old Testament

No person can successfully deny the historicity of Jesus. That Jesus lived among men, performed mighty works, was a great teacher, and died on a cross are too overwhelmingly documented for any honest, informed, intelligent person to even question. Hence, honesty demands that we at least consider what Jesus had to say with reference to the Old Testament Scriptures — Scriptures which have been proven time and again to have been in existence when he sojourned on planet earth.

As proof that Jesus believed the Old Testament we simply list several Old Testament characters to whom he referred, thereby confirming his belief concerning their historical reality. Jesus mentioned such ones as Moses (John 3:14), Solomon (Matt. 6:29), David (Matt. 12:3), Jonah (Matt. 12: 40), Isaiah (Matt. 15:7), Abel (Matt. 23:35), Elijah (Luke 4:25), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 13:28), Lot’s wife (Luke 17:32), etc. Jesus also cited Scripture to resist Satan (Matt. 4:1-11), to rebuke the wrong doing of those who defiled the temple (Matt. 21:12,13; Isa. 56:7), and to set forth the ignorance of his detractors (Matt. 22:29-32). His profound respect for the Old Testament is indicated in Matthew 5:18 wherein he affirmed that “one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

The Historical Accuracy of the Bible

The Bible is the oldest book in print. Parts of it were written close to 3500 years ago, nearly 1,000 years earlier than the oldest secular history extant. It touches on all the known sciences, and records much historical data, as well as geographical information. Even so, it has proven amazingly accurate in all these realms. Over the years critics have tried to discredit the Bible because of its mention of different incidents and people concerning whom no confirming secular data had as yet been discovered. For example, in Genesis 40:11 we read of the butler pressing grapes “into Pharaoh’s cup.” However, Herodotus (a 5th century B.C. historian) said that no grapes were grown in Egypt, so critics automatically assumed Herodotus to be correct, and the Bible false. But archaeologists have since discovered frescoes (paintings) that decorate the tombs of Egyptian antiquity showing the dressing, pruning, cultivating the vine, extracting, and storing the juice. Similar discoveries have confirmed the historicity of the Hittites,

of Sargon an Assyrian king, and other data which had formerly been questioned.

Prophecy and Fulfillment

Mere men do not always accurately predict the weather one day in advance. However, there are literally hundreds of Old Testament prophecies, written centuries in advance of the events foretold, which involved details far beyond the scope of human speculation, but which were fulfilled in minute detail. Yes, we concur with the prophet that the ability to “show the things that are to come hereafter” (Isa. 41:22-27) is something which no mere idol and which no ordinary human being can do. But an omnipotent, omniscient God can do this with the greatest of ease! Take your Bible and read of Noah’s prophecy concerning Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 9), and then read the confirming secular historical documentation. The same may be said about Balaam’s prophecy concerning Israel (Num. 23, 24), the prophecy concerning Israel’s downfall (Deut. 28), or the approximately 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah — all of which were minutely fulfilled.

Its Scientific Factuality

The Bible recorded numerous scientific truths which were undiscovered for hundreds of years afterwards. A few such examples include the suspension of the earth in space and the empty space in the North (Job 26:7), the existence of paths in the sea (Ps. 8), the fact that life is in the blood (Lev. 17:10, 11), that all nations are of “one blood” (Acts 17:26), the need for quarantine and disinfection procedures for treating infectious diseases (Lev. 13, 14), the process of rain involving evaporation into the air and condensation back to the earth (Eccl. 1:7), the rotundity of the earth (Isa. 40:22), etc. The most capable scientists in the world have been unable to cite one contradiction between the numerous incidental scientifically related statements in the Bible and the proven facts of modern science. Of course, we recognize that contradictions exist between the Bible and certain theories which men of science have advocated. But it has long been demonstrated that many supposedly great scientific theories set forth by the scientists of one generation are debunked by scientists of a later generation.

Its Indestructibility

Jesus said, “My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35). Peter declared that “the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Pet. 2:25). We must therefore concur with these statements by Cumming: “The empire of Caesar is gone; the legions of Rome lie moldering in the dust. The avalanches that Napoleon hurled upon Europe have melted away; the pride of the Pharaohs is fallen; the pyramids they raised to be their tombs are sinking every day in the desert sand; Tyre is a rock for bleaching fishermen’s nets; Sidon has scarcely left a wreck behind; but the word of God still lives. All things that threatened to extinguish it have only aided it; and it proves every day how transient

Tolerate, Then Embrace

Larry Ray Hafley

Concerning our moral and spiritual culture, a commentator said, "What this generation *tolerates*, the next generation will *embrace*." Both sacred and secular history have proven the truth of this assessment time and time again.

Everything from dancing to drinking, from abortion to mercy killing, has gone from toleration to acceptance. In the home and in the church, everything from immodesty to immorality has been first allowed and then endorsed. Adulterous marriages, gambling, and other similar sins, have gone from being permitted to being sponsored. Remember when wearing shorts and attending dances were condemned? Now, shorts are worn to services and dances are held in church buildings! Truly, what "this generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace."

One generation tolerated sprinkling for baptism if a person were seriously ill. The next generation accepted sprinkling for baptism. One generation approved a "chief" elder. The next generation appointed them. One generation introduced instruments of music as an "aid" to singing. The next generation demanded them. One generation accepted the "fellowship hall" (which, at first, was just a few tables in the basement for social meals). The next generation built gymnasiums ("Family Life Centers"). One generation apologized for "hard liners" who opposed denominational

religion. The next generation saw their sons and daughters joining those denominations. One generation spoke of the need to reach out in a "non-judgmental" way to our Catholic and Protestant friends. The next generation welcomed Presbyterians into "our fellowship" with a handshake. One generation spoke of congregational singing as "one of our traditions." The next generation defended choruses and choirs. One generation applauded preachers who closed their sermons without an appeal for sinners to be baptized for the remission of sins. The next generation denied the gospel plan of salvation in general and baptism in particular.

What does this say to us? What is our responsibility? "You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord . . . hath commanded you: *ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*" (Deut. 5:32). "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14). "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

The next time we are tempted to deviate from the word of God, let us remember that what we tolerate, our children will embrace!

is the noblest monument that man can build; how enduring the least word that God has spoken. Tradition has dug for it many a grave; intolerance has lighted for it many a fagot; Many a Judas has betrayed it with a kiss; many a Peter has denied it with an oath; many a Demas has forsaken it; but the word of God still endures."

Its Amazing Unity

The Bible was written by around 40 men, over a period of about 1600 years, and contains some 66 books. The writers thereof were from different backgrounds, cultures, and of varying occupations. Yet the Bible contains an orderly development of one great theme (namely the coming Messiah, his work, and the salvation he would make possible). Its writers complement one another, but do not contradict each other. Of course, the reason for this is the fact that it

is the revelation of an omniscient, infinite God to man, and he simply used its writers as instruments to set forth his will, doing so in "words" which the Holy Spirit revealed (1 Cor. 2:10-13).

Conclusion

Yes, friend, God exists! He created man in his own "image" (Gen. 1:27). He chose to communicate his will to man, and the means of that communication is the Bible. It is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). It is complete in every detail (2 Pet. 1:3). It will face us in the judgment (John 12:48). Hence, we urge you to read it to be wise (2 Tim. 3:15), and obey it to be saved.

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Donnie Rader

Young People's Lectureships

It is becoming quite common for churches to plan a young people's lectureship, special week-end, or Saturday study. I have been invited to and participated in some of these programs. Usually these consist of three or four "lectures" by young preachers whose material is geared toward young people and their needs.

I certainly am not opposed to preaching the gospel to the young, old, or middle aged. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with a lectureship, young preachers, or material designed to help teenagers live the Christian life. However, I do have some concerns that I think are legitimate. Please consider them carefully.

Implications

One of the things that concerns me about these "young people's lectureships" is what it may imply about our regular services or gospel meetings. When we have a special series that addresses the needs of the teenagers, that implies that other times that we preach the gospel is not for them. It implies that other messages (on the home, the church, divorce and remarriage, fellowship, instrumental music, the work of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, etc.) are not for them.

We have enough problems with young people showing no real interest in spiritual things without feeding that problem.

The gospel is for all who are accountable (Rom. 7:9). That includes the young and the old since they all are of part of "every creature" (Mark 16:15).

It is interesting that we don't hear of anyone having a "seniors" lectureship for those who are retirement age and beyond. If we did, would that not imply that the regular services or sermons were not really for them?

Oh, I know of no one who plans or participates in these who would claim that this implication is the message they intend. My question is about what seeds are planted in the minds of our young people.

Concerns

Some of these events are quite casual and informal by design. I understand that the motive is to be able to "re-late" to the young folks and make them feel comfortable. I wonder why it has to be casual or informal to benefit the teenagers or college folks. Could we be feeding an attitude that robs God and service to him of the dignity and respect deserved?

Our liberal brethren for years have had "youth ministers." No one opposes young men preaching the gospel. However, the idea of a youth minister is that his work is primarily for the young folks. We could argue the same point here that we have about the lectureships. Could it be that the concepts are similar? If so, how long before we begin to see youth ministers among us?

Similar Concerns in the Past

In November 1942, N.B. Hardeman warned of similar things. Read carefully the following from his sermon "The Mission And Work Of The Church."

It is the duty of the overseers to feed and to develop the members of any church. To do so does not require the organization of something unknown to the Bible. Many brethren have looked upon our young people's meetings with some degree of suspicion. If we are not careful, we may have an organization not at all different from others which we now condemn. Really, brethren, I have failed to find anywhere in the Bible where there is a difference made in teaching or church work between a young fellow and an old fellow. Just where is that passage which intimates that the church should be divided according to years? Brethren Srygley and Tant taught that such distinctions evidenced our drifting away. To say the least of such, there is danger. I submit to you preachers that we should be exceeding careful lest, in our enthusiasm to make a big show, we turn apart from the straight and narrow path and have within our midst something that the Lord does not want (Hardeman's *Tabernacle Sermons*, V:53).

What I Am Not Saying

Don't misunderstand the warning of this article. I am not saying that it is wrong to have classes or special studies for young people. I defend the right of churches to have

Did Jesus Condemn?

Steven F. Deaton

Often, after pointing out someone's error from the Bible, you will hear, "It's not right to condemn others. Judge not that ye be not judged." Notice that the complaint criticizes criticism — you cannot have it both ways! Is there any biblical precedent for condemning error in the religious world?

Jesus said, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides . . . Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:13-33). This sounds like condemnation to me.

In another place, Jesus said to an audience of Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own:

for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Also, "Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you" (John 8:55). The Lord and Savior did not shy away from plainly telling his audience that they were in sin. So, why should we?

When Jesus exposed the error of others, did he love them? Did he have concern for their souls? We submit that it was because Jesus loved men and was concerned for their souls that he exposed their error in no uncertain terms. For, if they continued in their sin, their souls would suffer an eternal damnation. Therefore, to point out where others are wrong and urge them to do what is right, is an expression of genuine love — it is to follow in the steps of the Savior! "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6).

Won't you have faith in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as Christ, and be immersed for the remission of your sins (John 8:24; Acts 3:19; 8:36-38; 2:38).

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classes for various age groups. In such an arrangement the Bible study can be geared to the level of the student (from pre-schoolers to the adult).

The point is that we be careful lest we leave some impression that we don't intend to leave.

Why Not Just Preach To All?

I am as concerned about our young people as any. I know there are topics and warnings they need to hear. However, I wonder what is wrong with just preaching the gospel (the whole counsel of God — Acts 20:27) to everyone? Some things will apply to the old (Tit. 2:2), some to the young (Tit. 2:6), some to the married (1 Cor. 7:3-5), some

to parents (Eph. 6:2-4), some to children (Eph. 6:1), some to elders (Acts 20:28), some to men (1 Tim. 2:8), some to women (1 Tim. 2:11-12), some to aliens (Acts 2:38) and some to the child of God (Acts 8:22). Yet the gospel is to be preached to all.

Balanced preaching can make the young, old, parents, and children feel that the message is for them. Paul told Titus to preach the sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1). Yet, various people would be addressed in the doctrine that he preached (vv. 2-15).

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Richie Thetford

Our Personal Life Is Not a Private Matter

A few weeks ago we listened to our president admit to an inappropriate sexual relationship which he denied on January 26. The leader of our country has now admitted to more than one adulterous relationship and has been caught lying on numerous occasions. Yet he claims that his personal life is a private matter! A private matter that has touched the lives of all the American people and the millions of people in foreign lands.

Because of his “private, personal life” he has embarrassed an entire country, his wife, his daughter, and tarnished his name for evermore. He has become a laughing stock among the various countries and here at home. But even worse, the office of the president of the United States of America has become tainted because of his personal conduct!

It was said of Ronald Reagan that when he went into the oval office that he would put on his suit jacket out of respect for the men that had served in this position before and respect for the office itself. What has happened to the leadership of our country and the things that our country will tolerate today.

Let’s look at some lessons that we can learn from the events of this past week:

A Good Name is Precious

Whether in our public or private life our good name is worth everything. Solomon wrote: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1). “A good name is better than precious ointment” (Eccl. 7:1). In many cases, sin and the pleasures of this world are being chosen over their “good

name” by people of this world, including our leaders. We can lose our money and even our possessions and still be able to keep our good name. Nobody can take our good name from us, that is something we give up voluntarily! Once lost, we cannot regain our good name overnight. It is like respect in that it must be earned — not bought.

Adultery is Not a Private Matter

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and Nathan pointed it out to him, what did David do? Did he lie and say, “I never had sexual relations with that woman, Miss Bathsheba?” Did he get angry at Nathan for his prolonged story telling of the matter? No, he admitted that he had *sinned*. And not just sin against himself or Bathsheba, but he sinned against the Lord! He showed remorse and was repentant.

The sin of adultery is not a personal, private matter. When one commits adultery that means there is another party involved, his spouse. In this country today there are all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS. Therefore, is it a personal, private matter when your spouse gets AIDS or any other disease because you

chose to lose your good name and commit adultery? It is because of these things that the word of God says: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13:4-5).

Adultery and fornication are not personal private matters

because it involves another. Anytime another individual is involved then there will be yet another, then another, then another, then another, etc. Many different individuals have the potential to be effected because of our personal actions!

Lying is Not a Private Matter

In the garden of Eden, the father of lies, Satan (John 8:44), showed that the lie is not a “private matter,” but rather very public. In this case it would affect all future people. “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’”(Gen. 3:2-5).

This lie made Adam and Eve look foolish when they stood before God later. Our president’s lie of January 26 made many of his personal supporters look foolish this past week. He openly lied when he said: “I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinski.” His personal supporters, based upon that lie, stood by him and spoke as if they knew personally that he was telling the absolute truth. Even his wife came to his defense — believing in him. Then when he did tell the truth, admitting to the affair, he lost credibility among his best friends and supporters.

It is for that very reason the word of God says: “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds . . .” (Col. 3:9). “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices

a lie” (Rev. 22:14-15). Lying has never been a private or personal matter. It takes two in the process — one to lie and the other to hear it. Lying affects many people and causes one to lose their good name.

Truth is Respected

Jesus said: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” We all will make mistakes in our life. But what will we do with those mistakes? Will we try to lie, mislead people, or be honest. We will gain respect and keep our good name when we are up front, honest, and truthful with people, while having nothing to hide that would be shameful before God.

Conclusion

We will be judged based upon what we say or do and our obedience to the words of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; John 12:48). The things that we say and do will and do affect the lives of others. It affects others directly or indirectly. If we are to keep our good name, to keep it untarnished, we must always strive to please God in *all* aspects of our life. If we do that, we will be respected and loved among men. But, in order to do that, we must continually do as David and Paul said: “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart” (Ps. 26:2). “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor. 13:5). May God be with us as we strive to do what is right in his sight knowing that our personal life is not a private matter.

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Walking With Those Who Weep

A Guide to Grief Support

by Don and Ron Williams

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The Importance of Bible Study

A recent quote from an acquaintance of mine was, “When I read the Bible I just do not understand what is going on.” He went further by saying, “I have a hard time seeing how the Bible is relevant for my family and me in today’s society.” I believe it would be safe to say that this could be a major reason why many do not read and study (i.e., seek to learn) from it. How have these predominant attitudes come about? Please consider:

Society at large in America during the late 20th century has turned away from the standards found within the inspired pages of God’s Word. Those who publicly acknowledge living by Bible standards are disregarded as “right wing extremists” or “religious fundamentalists.”

Feminists decry the Bible as being written for men by men. Homosexuals and their supporters argue that God is pleased with their immoral behavior. Scientists and “experts” of the day endeavor to explain away miracles of the Bible. Denominational creeds and teachers instruct the masses that the Bible is not understandable. Even in churches of Christ we are witnessing a movement away from the importance of Bible authority and the acceptance of all sorts of creeds. Members of the Lord’s church were once known as “walking and talking Bibles.” Unfortunately this is no longer the case with many. The movement some congregations are facing only contributes to the religious confusion of the day instead of uniting people in the truth.

Despite all of these things, how important is Bible study to you? Certainly there are many trials and temptations that have a tendency to hinder us from study. However, these can be overcome if one wants to overcome bad enough (1 Cor. 10:13). Is being affluent in knowledge of the Scriptures toward the top of your priorities? As Christians we are expected by God to be knowledgeable in the Word of God. For example, Paul told the Ephesian brethren, “do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul told Timothy to “be diligent (study, KJV) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to

be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth.” We should strive just as much as the first century Christians did to find and know God’s will for mankind.

How Can One Understand the Context as He is Reading the Bible?

As mentioned earlier, a common problem of many is that they do not understand “what is going on” while reading Scripture. How may one deal with such a problem? Remember:

1. *The Bible should not be read as a novel or a fictitious short story for mere entertainment.* We live in a world that is entertainment driven. From 24 hour television, concerts, sports events, to “worship services” that are purely and only entertainment, Americans expect to be entertained in almost everything. The Bible is an instruction booklet on how to get our souls to heaven. It should be read and studied in a serious manner.

2. *Study a few verses or a chapter at a time and take notes.* One of the greatest aids in my personal study has been to study in “small chunks.” High school teachers and college professors recommend that this is the most profitable way to study: be it for an accounting exam or part of God’s Word. Write down points you believe are relevant and other items of importance concerning the text. These could aid you in your study at a later time.

3. *Don’t be overwhelmed by the size of the Bible.* Some open the front cover — begin at Genesis — read a chapter or two — and rationalize, there’s too much here — I’ll never know it all. Bible study involves time and a steadfast commitment. The more time that is invested the more knowledge will be gained. Bible study is a life-long process. Unlike secular courses of study, the study of God’s word is unending during this life.

4. *Don’t be fooled by the popular thinking that to understand the Bible one has to go to “Bible school.”* Many of our denominational friends believe and teach that creeds

Even in churches of Christ we are witnessing a movement away from the importance of Bible authority and the acceptance of all sorts of creeds. Members of the Lord's church were once known as "walking and talking Bibles."

must be written to explain the Bible. Those who have attended years of schooling at a seminary (those who will be the "clergy") then must explain it to the "laity." This line of thinking is totally unknown in the Bible. The Bereans in Acts 17:11 had never been to a seminary. They were able to reach an understanding of Scripture. We read "they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Certainly we can see that they benefited from Bible study!

How is the Bible Relevant To Today's World?

Christians have the responsibility to teach those around them of the relevance of God's Word to people living in the late twentieth century. How can we fulfill this responsibility? Those around us need to understand:

1. *The Bible contains information on how to be saved.* What better argument for relevance than this? As long as mankind exists, there will be someone who will need to be saved. God's plan of salvation is found *only* in the Bible! Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." Later, in John 8:32, Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." That truth is found in the Bible (John 17:17).

2. *The Bible will help one become a better Christian.* As stated earlier, the Bible is the set of instructions on getting one's soul to heaven. Christians are to put away the things of the world and follow after the example of Christ. There is not a single page in the Bible that will not help one learn something to improve his life. Notice what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

3. *The Bible will help the Christian bring others to Christ.* As one engages in study of Scripture an awareness

of the danger of a soul becoming lost to the fires of hell becomes of tremendous importance. This consciousness should motivate the Bible student to tell others about the Way. This is an expected duty of all Christians. Notice Peter's words in 1 Peter 3:15, ". . . sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Are you living up to this standard?

4. *The Bible will help one become prepared to stand before God on judgment.* "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this, the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). There will be a day of reckoning for mankind.

All men will stand before God and give an account of their actions on earth (2 Cor. 5:9-10). If one applies the things studied in Scripture to his life he can be prepared for this great day. Titus 2:11-12 says, "The grace of God has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." This is very relevant to today's society and all future societies as well. Let us heed what we read!

The study of God's word is of tremendous importance. It is a shame that those in the majority of the religious world (even some in the Lord's church) fail to understand this. Don't let Satan fool you by drawing you away from its contents. Make it your first priority to know more about the word of God!

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Daniel H. King, Sr.

Life Lessons In Honesty

Would you return a wallet filled with money? The folks at *Readers Digest* wanted to know the answer to this question in 1995, so they set up a test in American cities to see what Americans would do. The results appeared in the December 1995 issue of *Readers Digest*. They “lost” wallets all over America, each with a name, local address and phone number, family pictures — and \$50 in cash. There were 120 of these wallets strewn all over the country, in three major suburban areas, three medium-sized towns, and three small towns. They were left in parking lots, shopping malls, restaurants, gas stations, office buildings, and on sidewalks. Then they stood back to see what would happen. To each person who returned the wallet they offered the \$50 as a reward for their honesty.

The numbers which came out of this “test” are interesting, but at times very discouraging. In Seattle, for example, 9 out of 10 people returned the wallet with the money in it; in St. Louis and Boston 7 out of 10 returned it; but in Atlanta, Las Vegas, Dayton, Ohio, and Houston only half gave it back to its owner. In small towns the return rate was consistently 80% (Meadville, PA; Concord, NH; and Cheyenne, WY).

Most of us would have predicted that, by and large, people today are dishonest and that most of the wallets would not have been returned. In reality this was not so. In fact, the bottom line is that of the 120 wallets that were lost, 80 were returned intact, an overall figure of 67 percent. Most people in America are honest! That is the good news.

There are many stories that are associated with this series of tests, but I found this one in particular to be interesting. In Seattle a little girl with a pink floral dress picked up a wallet off a bench at an amusement park. She ran to her father with it in her hand. Yong Cha saw a chance to teach his daughter a valuable lesson. He handed the wallet back to her and said, “You must take this to the police or someone who can help find the owner.” Little Mary, age nine, nodded gravely as she contemplated returning all that money, but dutifully took her dad’s

hand as they searched for the park office. “Honesty is the most important thing a child can learn,” Cha later told the *Readers Digest* interviewer.

What this parent did in this particular case with his child was more important than all the lessons that could ever be taught her in school. These days, when government bureaucrats are talking about setting up classes in moral education (alongside their miserably failed “sex-education” classes), bemoaning the sad state of affairs in America’s schools and homes, this little story captures the heart of how morality in all its forms is taught to the next generation of Americans. It is taught by the parents. All the government money and all the platitudes from out of a book published by some collegiate genius from Harvard or Yale, cannot overcome a single case of dishonesty or immorality as it is seen by the child in the life of a parent. Such “lessons in real life” are the true teachers of morality and integrity.

I would venture that in most, if not all, those 40 instances where the wallet was not returned and the money pocketed, there are remembrances from long ago of how this grown-up’s parent did something that was dishonest and lacking in integrity before the eyes of that developing child. The parent, by example, taught the child to be dishonest. They may have thought those things were small and unimportant at the time, but they left a lasting impression. Now, do not misunderstand my remarks. I do not mean to suggest that these grown-ups are not responsible for their own dishonesty. At this point in time they are the only ones responsible for their actions. But we must take into consideration as we are raising our children that these lessons in life create impressions that last a lifetime and ultimately determine what sort of adults our children will someday be. They will be responsible for their own actions. But we must be very sure that we appreciate the importance of our present example in determining what direction they will choose when later they decide for themselves.

Let me cite one more example to illustrate this same point. At the sprawling Del Amo mall south of Los Angeles, the author records this incident: “Two boys in their early teens happened upon our wallet. One, in shorts and athletic shirt, gave a whoop as he pulled out the money. Talking

God's Clergy and Laity

Randy Harshbarger

In religious circles, the subject of God's "clergy" and God's "laity" receives much attention. Although the New Testament says nothing about the subject as it is usually thought of, soon after the last apostle died, the bishops of the church in each community began exerting unscriptural power. They assumed power that was not rightfully theirs. These leaders eventually placed themselves above the common member of the church, i.e., the laity, and it was during this period that the laity became dependent upon the clergy for access to God's favor.

Eventually, the apostle Peter was given pre-eminence over the other apostles in an effort to justify the clergy-laity system. It is said that Peter served as an elder in the church at Rome; upon this foundation the Catholic church claims Peter as her first pope. These events occurred just a short time after the first century church was obeying God's command to have "elders in every church" (Tit. 1; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3). Forsaking the divine pattern gave rise to the universal distinction between the clergy and laity. God's plan to have humble servants oversee the spiritual needs of the congregation gave way to man's plan, which provided an unscriptural elevation of certain leaders in the church over other members. This man made distinction

excitedly, the two walked down the mall, eventually meeting a man who seemed to be the father of one of them. They showed him the wallet. All three left. We never got a call." On that day this particular parent taught these two boys a lesson which will remain with them all of their lives. Sad to say, it was neither noble nor fine. Many parents, even some Christian parents, are doing the same thing before their children on a daily basis. Someday they will reap the bitter harvest of such behavior.

What kinds of life lessons are we teaching our children? Paul wrote, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21). Let us be certain that we also provide for honest things in the sight of our children!

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cannot be found in the word of God and is therefore sinful (Acts 15:24; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 John 3:4).

Leaders of the Restoration had much to say about the clergy and laity, expressing much sympathy for the so-called lay member, while the clergy received many anathemas! When men began to break away from denominational concepts, it was natural that the exalted clergy should come under attack. One reason for Thomas Campbell's disassociation from the Seceder Presbyterians was his suspicion of clerical monopoly. A perusal of all seven volumes of *The Christian Baptist* will reveal that Alexander Campbell had much to say on the subject. One writer said about *The Christian Baptist*: "It was small, as a hornet is small, and its sting was as keen. It attacked especially three characteristics of the existing church one of which was 'The authority and status assumed by the clergy'" (from W.E. Garrison, *An American Religious Movement: A Brief History of The Disciples of Christ*).

In the third issue of Campbell's paper, he began a series of articles on the clergy by saying, "No class or order of men that ever appeared on earth have obtained so much influence, or acquired so complete an ascendancy over the human mind, as the clergy" (*The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, No. 3). This domination of the laity, Campbell said, had been in existence for some 1500 years. Historians observe that Campbell seemed to relent somewhat after *The Christian Baptist* years. It seems that Campbell grew to appreciate the need for better educated and trained preachers; yet, his early opposition to clericalism left its mark. Although Campbell may have altered his thinking along these lines in later years, many learned to oppose the clergy as it then existed from his mighty pen.

We, too, must never cease to oppose this presumptuous curse in religion. The New Testament of Jesus Christ teaches that every member of the body is vitally important (1 Cor. 12). Every member of the human body is designed to work in harmony together, and the same thing is true of the spiritual body of Christ. Let us be one together, exalting none, save the Lord Jesus Christ.

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The Shame of Nakedness

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

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

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

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

The Danger of Acquired Callousness

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

Dear Ann Landers,

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

. . . When I entertain at a bachelor party, I explain the rules up front: no touching, no dirty language, no photos or videos, and no making dates for later. I do my number and give them their money's worth and there are no encores.

. . . . Those who think stripping is obscene should go to the beach and check out the latest swim wear. They'll see four inches of fabric held together with a string. I feel no need to apologize for my profession. It takes talent and poise to grin and bare it. — Just a working girl (*The Stars and Stripes*, 10/8/95)

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

2. "*Glory in shame*" (*Phil. 3:19*). An example of this in our day is non-Christians who brag about drunkenness or fornication. Another good example is when a woman decides to dress provocatively to "impress" men (*Prov. 11:22*).

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

Nakedness in Scripture

1. *The meaning of the word in Scripture.* In the New Testament it is defined, "1. naked, stripped, bare. . . 2. without an outer garment. . . 3. poorly dressed. . . 4. uncovered, bare. . . ." (*Arndt and Gingrich*, 167-168). The meaning in the Old Testament is, "Naked . . . but naked is also used for — (a) ragged, badly clad. . . (b) used of one who, having taken off his mantle, goes only clad in his tunic" (*Gesenius*, 653). In Genesis 2:25 the word refers to nudity.

However, in Genesis 3:7-10 it can be seen that one can be naked in spite of the fact that he or she is wearing clothes. The word “apron” in v. 7 means, “girdle, loin covering, belt” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon [BDB]*, 292).

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

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

1. Drawers (*BDB*, 488).
2. Trousers or drawers. This noun occurs. . . five times in Ex and Lev and once in Ezk 44:18. Trousers were ordered by God in the interests of decorum . . . (*Theological Wordbook of the O.T. [TH.W.O.T.]*, I:445).
3. Exodus 28:42, unto the thighs — i.e., to the bottom of the thighs where they adjoin the knee (G. Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, I:293).
4. Priests called to officiate at the high altar . . . above the eyes of the watching multitude wore a cloth covering hips and thighs, made of fine linen like the rest of their garments (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible [ZPE]*, I:652).

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

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

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

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

Keeping Ourselves from Such Shame Today

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

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

Conclusion

Let us all think seriously about the clothing we wear and dress with a sense of shame and modesty. What we wear is part of our walk with God.

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Tom Roberts

Attitudes Toward the Preaching of the Gospel

For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:13-14).

This is a clear and clarion call to gospel preachers everywhere. We are to be watchmen; we are to be urgent in our preaching; we must be ready to convince, rebuke and exhort.

The world has been blessed by faithful preachers ever since it was recorded that Noah was a “*preacher of righteousness*” (2 Pet. 2:5). Faithful to God’s will, Noah preached 120 years to a world that had departed into moral degradation so deep that “*it repented God that he had made man*” (Gen. 6:3, 6). Unsuccessful in converting those whose heart was “only evil continually,” Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives (eight souls) were saved from the world that was destroyed in the Flood (1 Pet. 3:20). By today’s standards, Noah might have been called a failure since his long years of preaching reached no one outside his family. Likewise, his message was one of doom and destruction, demanding repentance or damnation, unpopular in our generation. Yet God, who is the final Judge in such matters, blessed Noah by calling him an “*heir of righteousness*” (Heb. 11:7). From Noah’s life, we learn that faithful preaching is true to God’s word, unconcerned about worldly rejection, and “*unsparing*” of those in sin (2 Pet. 2:5). We must be concerned in our day about attitudes that prevail toward

gospel preaching. Not all of us have Noah’s attitude of faithfulness, but the world desperately needs it.

The thematic of this effort is taken from Ezekiel 33:7-9:

So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Since this message is specifically addressed to Ezekiel, some may question the appropriateness of application to modern preachers. Surely, an objective look at God’s message to Ezekiel will demand the same principle in preaching today. While no man today is inspired (as was Ezekiel), the responsibilities remain the same. We have no hesitation in applying Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus to us today. We are to “preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and turn aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Both Ezekiel and Paul give us direction and authority in our preaching.

This is a clear and clarion call to gospel preachers everywhere. We are to be watchmen; we are to be urgent in our preaching; we must be ready to convince, rebuke and exhort. As Paul said of himself, he “was innocent of the blood of all men, For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). If you are not ready to be a watchman, you are not ready to be a preacher.

Those with a “John Mark” mentality cannot be watchmen; they don’t have the courage to watch and are a burden to those who do (Acts 15:37-38). Such will avoid controversy, seek peace at all costs, and be uncomfortable in the presence of those who are willing to watch and cry out as God demands.

Those with a “Demas” attitude cannot be watchmen; their heart is in the world and they will wind up there after discouraging others (2 Tim. 4:10).

Those with a “Simon” character cannot be watchmen; they are in it for the money and will sell out to the highest bidder (Acts 8:19). Such know instinctively which side of an issue to take for self-gratification, how to flatter others for personal gain, how to turn preaching into a “profession,” how to make preaching a superb job of self-seeking so as to make himself “somewhat,” a “great preacher.”

Those with the “Paul-hater mentality” cannot be watchmen; they hate truth, the ones who preach the truth, and will back-stab those who support

the truth, stirring up envy and strife against those who preach the gospel (Phil. 1:15).

Those with the “Royal” perspective cannot be watchmen; they are the elite, the “some-whats,” the “pillars,” who are above the lowly preacher who cares more for God’s word than style, personage and prestige (Amos 7:13; Gal. 2:6-9). Such are too dignified to call names, identify error, align themselves with distasteful issues; they are appalled at those who do. However, they are not too far above name-calling to call names in secret, telling others to watch those who call names, carping privately against those who speak out as the Bible directs. These speak swelling words in inner sanctums but are “dumb dogs” in open discussion (Isa. 56:10).

Those with an “Older Prophet” attitude cannot be watchmen; they imagine themselves to exist in an exalted state of elder statesmanship which gives them the right to cut the feet out from under the younger generation of “know-nothings” (1 Kings 13:11-18). Such live in a delusion that they are the only ones who have ever fought battles, the only ones to have sacrificed, to have been the standard bearers. Speaking *ex cathedra*, such illustrious ones take the liberty of labeling others as “buzzards, looking for carrion” even while accepting the praise of men for their long-ago battles when they themselves hunted prey. Casting mantles of prophet-hood about their shoulders, some of these elder prophets seek immunity from current sins because of past heroic deeds. Not recognizing the fairness of God, they believe age gives them venerability to such an extent that they are above reproach (Ezek. 18). How the mighty are fallen!

Those with the “Ivory Tower” mentality cannot be watchmen; they live behind walls of academia and editorial policy, dealing in theoretical wisdom while ignorant of the ravages of Satan in the real world (1 Cor. 1:20-2:5).

Such refuse to dirty their hands with the effects of sin, indulging rather in lofty statements which cannot be examined publicly. Ignorant of God’s truth, they do not hesitate to defend those who lead the blind into hell all the while critical of those who warn sinners of their real condition.

Brethren, we are seeing an entire generation of preachers who are not committed to fulfill this charge of God to “Preach the whole counsel.” As in the Old Testament, there were those today who cry, “. . . *Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things . . .*” (Isa 30:10). Toward those who obey God’s mandate and preach the message faithfully, criticisms abound and are hurled by those who love “smooth things” or are too timid to preach “the whole counsel.”

We are hearing:

We must accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Negative preaching turns me off.

Who appointed you a brotherhood watchdog?

Preachers should not name names and identify false teachers.

One cannot be called a false teacher unless it can be proved that he is dishonest.

Those who disagree with me are not trustworthy, so I refuse to discuss issues with them.

I am too busy in a local work to bother with issues beyond local interest.

Papers violate local autonomy and those who write for them are hungry for attention, are trying to make a name for themselves, and they meddle into the affairs of local churches.

Those guys are just trying to make a name for themselves.

Those guys are “guardians of truth,” self-appointed judges, full of the party spirit.

But God demands that we allow

fellowship with some who believe sinful doctrines and who practice sinful activities.

Local autonomy demands that we allow some churches to accept into their fellowship people who are in sin, even though another church might not be willing to do so.

These statements (and many others), so critical of faithful preaching while tolerant of error, are symptomatic of an attitude reflecting distaste for plain Bible preaching. This distaste is real, pervasive and active. Meetings are being canceled, preachers are being isolated, reputations are being smeared, and efforts to discuss these matters are rebuffed, without recourse. The “good ol’ boy” system is alive and working. Quietly, efforts are made by some preachers as they talk to their friends in high places, to cancel meetings and keep preachers from moving into certain churches. What amounts to a “quarantine” reminiscent of the practice of our liberal brethren in the ’50s is conducted by some brethren who will go to any lengths to work their will among the churches. Such actions are insidious, underhanded, and ungodly, but they are nevertheless being practiced on a wide scale. Directing scorn toward faithful preachers, those who are so critical are guilty of the very partyism they decry, guilty of language bereft of love, guilty of the carnal spirit they claim to see in others. “Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same thing” (Rom. 3:1).

Let it be understood that we are not talking about controversy over styles of preaching. I know of no one who insists that stylish dress, erudite language, or pertinent wit is unacceptable in the pulpit. None of this is incompatible with gospel preaching. This is not our problem.

Let it be understood that we are not talking about methods of preaching. There is room in the kingdom of God for the country preacher (as Amos) as well as the sophisticated statesman (as Isaiah). Moses was a Law-giver, Ezekiel was hard-headed, and Hosea talked tenderly of love, but all were faithful to God. Both Elijah (1 Kings 17:1ff) and Obadiah (1 Kings 18:3) served God faithfully, though in different ways. This is not our problem.

Let it be understood that we are not defending brotherhood politics. Sectarian divisions are always sinful and destructive. No one should limit his opportunities to a certain paper, college, or section of the country. It is abhorrent to all faithful people when lines are drawn because of friendships rather than truth, because of which paper(s) are read rather than the substance of its message. It is wrong to dismiss a preacher’s message simply through the prejudicial statement that “he is a Guardian boy.” This was the method of the liberals in the institutional controversy. By the use of “anti,” “legalist,” “orphan hater,” and/or other inflammatory words, minds were poisoned against those

standing for truth. Yet some are using identical pejorative terms today when they scornfully discuss the “New Pharisees,” “the New Catholicism,” and “brotherhood watchdogs.” Decrying “personal attack and abuse,” some have heaped personal attacks and abuse on faithful preaching as “journalistic and pulpit jingoism,” “extremists who have their own cause to promote,” “a pack of snarling curs, suspicious and paranoid, biting, snarling and snapping in all directions.” All of this from those who claim the moral and spiritual high ground of non-sectarianism and brotherly love.

What sectarian sin has been committed by faithful preachers? Is it the firm stand for truth against those who are advocating that sinful, adulterous marriages are supported by Scripture? What party line has been established by faithful preachers? Is it the warnings that have been raised that those who fellowship the advocates of adulterous marriages are violating 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17? What “personal attack and abuse” has taken place by faithful preachers? Is it that those who are false teachers have been identified and their false doctrine has been exposed? If this is sin, we stand in the company of Jesus (Matt. 23), John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-10), of the prophets and apostles who stood up and stood out against evil doers.

Let it be understood that the controversy is not about one preacher or a group of preachers telling other preachers or churches when the line of fellowship against a particular error must be drawn. This is not our problem. It is certainly true that events and circumstances move at different speeds and levels across the country and within congregations. During the institutional apostasy, opposition to liberalism varied from church to church, from preacher to preacher and from section to section. Patience and long suffering wrestled with error and apostasy as the Herald of Truth was introduced, institutional homes demanded funding, and centralized control began through the sponsoring church arrangement. Some preachers took an early stand against these errors, some much later. Some were early supporters who changed to opposers later, some were influenced by the debates that raged across the country. Most congregations were divided and split across the nation and around the world, but not at the same instant of time. All of it depended on time, Bible knowledge, circumstances, events and personalities. Apostasy slowly, but surely, expanded, affecting individuals and congregations until a brotherhood division was a reality.

During those years (generally the ’50s), charges and counter-charges were made against faithful preachers which are similar to those being made today. Preachers who wrote for the *Gospel Guardian*, *Truth Magazine*, *Preceptor* and other papers published by brethren who opposed liberalism in all its forms were castigated by those who published and wrote for the *Gospel Advocate*, *Firm*

Foundation, etc. Charges of “brotherhood controllers,” “church splitters,” “orphan haters,” “Guardian-ites,” and much worse were hurled by those who claimed that Roy Cogdill, Yater Tant, Robert Farish, Hoyt Houchen, *et. al.* were trying to decide issues for the brotherhood and trying to “line up the churches.” However, no man, group of men, paper or college had the power, then or now, to decide for the brotherhood. What the preachers and papers did was to furnish individuals and congregations with Bible study and discussions in an open forum that allowed truth to be heard. The result was a cataclysm that ultimately enveloped the brotherhood, effectively dividing it. History has proven that the division was determined along individual and congregational lines, never monolithic and instantaneous.

Unless free and open discussion is allowed today by which truth will be reinforced and error rejected, division will be inevitable. The compromise toward “unity-in-diversity,” so prevalent in our time, is not monolithic and instantaneous, nor will opposition be. Some will take an early stand against compromise, having lived through similar battles before. Some will take a stand later, only as the issue becomes more clearly defined. Some will have to wait and listen to the discussion, unsure of what is going on. But no one can decide for the brotherhood of individual saints and no one can decide for autonomous churches when they will take a stand for or against unity in diversity. The charge of “lining up the churches,” and “brotherhood watchdog,” is a smoke screen, attempting to stifle open discussion. For sure, the charge must be two-edged. Those in favor of fellowshiping error are taking their efforts to papers and churches around the world that are in sympathy with them. As one preacher has stated that he goes “hither, thither, and yon,” preaching his belief in favor of unity in diversity, others might charge him (and his compatriots) with “lining up the brotherhood.” Is sauce for the goose not also sauce for the gander? Why are the efforts of some pure and altruistic while the efforts of others so suspect of evil? Each preacher (pro or con) will try to reach as many people as opportunities permit. Each will claim the most noble of motives. Each will address “the brotherhood.” It is more than a little hypocritical for some to charge others with “lining up the brotherhood” even while traveling from state to state to label opponents as “brotherhood watchdogs.” The final determination of rightness will depend upon a relationship to truth, not upon the ability to hang derogatory name tags on brethren.

Faithful preachers have a mandate from God as to what they should preach. Those too timid to follow the mandate, too weak to face opposition, have no business carping at those willing to do the work. Isaiah spoke clearly of those who, like “*dumb dogs*,” refused to bark (Isa. 56:10). But, not content to just remain silent, they yap at the heels of those who are speaking out, seeking to hinder them in their work, becoming a stumbling-block in the path of the

men of God. The Lord will reward them according to their own works.

The Mandate From God

There should not be any doubt as to the burden God has given the faithful preacher. Whether inspired or not, the messenger must be true to the message. The responsibility of the preacher is crystal clear. Hear the word of God:

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed (Isa. 8:-10; cf. Matt. 13:13-15).

Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! Behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth; see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant (Jer. 1:6-10).

A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so. . . (Jer. 5:30).

And he said to me, Son of man, go, and get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel; not to many peoples of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me; for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and a stiff heart. Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (Ezek. 3:4-11).

The Disposition of a Christian

Paul (Gal. 3:27) affirmed that one is “baptized into Christ” and has therefore “put on Christ.” Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Christians have a new life, spiritually born again, children of God, saved from sin! *How should one live?*

Disposition is defined as “the predominating bent of one’s mind or spirit” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*). *Bent* means “an inclining, tendency” (Webster). With Christ living within, what should be the *bent of one’s spirit*? What is the *bent* of Christ’s spirit? Since Christ Jesus lives in us, each Christian should exemplify his attitude.

A Christian is Humble

God hates that haughty look (Prov. 6:16-19). Jesus rebuked the pride of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:5-12). Paul cautioned, “. . . through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself*

more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). The lyrics of an old song said “*it’s hard to be humble, when you are perfect in every way.*” The taught *get-ahead* disposition is a strong positive self-assertion. James 4:10, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” What more could one say? Some act as though they are indispensable; as if a thought is not good unless I suggest it! “. . . In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

A Christian is Forgiving

Everyone needs forgiveness, often! All make massive mistakes in thought, intent, and action! Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12); followed by the *caution* Matthew 6:15, “. . . if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Frightening, isn’t it! If I cannot forgive, I cannot be forgiven! Note: Colossians 3:13, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you,

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

What Is The Real Issue About Preaching Today?

It is not possible to misunderstand the heavenly mandate. The simplest schoolboy can understand God’s charge to preach his word.

The problem is simply that some preachers are not willing to do what is so clear. There is a desire to do what God condemns: “preach smooth things.” Many in the church are like those who “love to have it so.” This is a sad and deplorable attitude toward gospel preaching.

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so also do ye” (my emphasis, DW). Christ lives in me! As Christ forgives, *so also* must I forgive. Hebrews 10:17, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” That is how God forgives. Sin is cleansed, remitted, forgotten! Recall Jesus (Luke 17:1-5) teaching us to forgive when an individual has sinned against us and asked forgiveness. Even if one does the same thing *seven* times in one day, and *seven* times asks forgiveness, we are to give it! This is difficult! This is why the disciples said, “Lord, increase our faith.” “You remember that he did the same thing last year on two different occasions. I am willing to forgive, but I am going to watch and see if he can be true this time. I just don’t trust him.” *What hope does one have with a wrong disposition? Fail to forgive, fail to be forgiven!*

A Christian is Peaceable

Matthew 5:9, “Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” Romans 14:19, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” An old joke, but too often true: “One was asked if they ever wake up grumpy. And they reply, no *I let him sleep as long as he desires.*” Is that me, or you? Grumpy, argumentative, disagreeable, frustrating, difficult. A Christian is to be like Jesus Christ; he taught us to be peacemakers. Follow after things that make for peace! One arriving late for a business meeting said, “I do not know what you are discussing, but I am against it!” Another, “There will never be a unanimous decision as long as I am a member here.” Christians often *act* this way! “If he is for it, I am against it!” I just cannot get along with George! *How would Christ desire that one act?*

A Christian is Grateful

Paul commanded, “. . . be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15). The grateful heart finds it easy to say “thank you.” Ten lepers were cleansed, one returned to thank Jesus. Where were the nine (Luke 17:12-19)! Ten sinners were cleansed, how many return to thank him? What about Sunday night and Wednesday night? Oh, one does not *have* to attend all of those services. Grateful? Count your many blessings, see what God has done!

A Christian is Tolerant

Jesus cautioned against “mote finding” (Matt. 7:1-5). All have growth difficulties. Some are looking to *find fault*. One can develop *eyestrain* attempting to find others faults. *The worse fault in the inability to see my own mistakes!* One said, “I can see the mistakes of others better than of myself!” Another said, “I could see my own mistakes . . . if I had any!” Please read 1 John 1:8, 10; Romans 3:10, 23. Some trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and *despised* others (Luke 18:9ff). Lord, look how much wonderful work I do: I attend all the services, I give more than others, I teach a class at the building, I even brought one of my neighbors to services. The other humbly requested,

“*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*” You remember which one God heard! How did Paul suggest handling a Jewish adherent? One without law? A weak individual? Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-22. If we show no tolerance (you complete the thought) . . .

A Christian is Easily Entreated

James 3:17, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and easy to be entreated*, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” Other translations: *open to reason* (RSV); *conciliatory* (Moffit); *easily persuaded* (Alford); *ready to be convinced* (Goodspeed); *easily obeying* (Thayer). My translation would say *not stubborn* or *self-willed!* Elders (Tit. 1:7) must not be self-willed! Listen to one another! Be easy to reach when one is anxious to discuss a matter with us. Do not be a “know it all.”

A Christian is Courageous

It takes much courage to be a Christian. Paul was in prison, about to die. He wrote to Timothy to *encourage* him. Do not permit what is happening to Paul to discourage Christians. You remember! 2 Timothy 4:6-8, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” The foe will ever attempt to find us on a *bad day*. Ephesians 6:13-14, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all*, to stand. Stand therefore. . . .” One cannot stand *for* something without standing *against* something else!

Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” These are characteristics demanded by Christ. Let us become what he demands that we be!

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“Nick At Night” continued from front page

some have misunderstood. Jesus used language which is often applied in the physical realm. But he came to establish a spiritual kingdom and it required a spiritual birth, not a physical one. Nicodemus’ Jewish birthright could not give him membership in it.

Modern Misconceptions

Some have a “misconception” about the new birth. Actually, it is an old misconception, not a modern one for they make the same mistake as Nicodemus. They think “born of water” means the physical birth and have argued this in debate. Can you imagine Jesus saying, “Except one is born physically he can’t enter the kingdom”? To that, a teenager might say “Duh. What could be more obvious?” In fact, it is not water, but amniotic fluid. When that fluid is present it is also born the same as the baby. Both come forth from the womb. The passage plainly says “water,” not amniotic fluid. If water refers to the physical birth then all “dry birth” children would be excluded and cannot enter the kingdom.

Notice also, it is a *man* that is to be born, not an unborn infant. Thus, definitely not a physical birth. Jesus was not telling Nicodemus how to be born physically. It was too late for that. Yet the birth Jesus was talking about was something a *man* could do. He did not say “except a baby be born . . .” He said, “Except a *man* be born again.” Nicodemus had already been born physically, so “again” refers to his spiritual birth. His question was in reference to a man “when he is old” (v. 4). Jesus answered that question in the context in which it was asked. A man can be born of water and the spirit when he is old. Not all can be born of water physically, but all can receive this new birth.

Born of Water and Spirit Is Baptism

Baptism is the only act connected to salvation, which makes use of water. Water is never used in any case of conversion to refer to anything but baptism. “See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:35-39). “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?” (10:48). “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins . . .” (22:16). “. . . wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . .” (2 Pet. 3:20, 21). If Christ’s rising from the grave made him “the first born from the dead” (Col. 1:18), then to arise from the watery grave of baptism is to be born of water and spirit. For what other reason would Inspiration call this raising a “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4)? The man who does this has already been born physically when he came from his mother’s womb but now he has been born again when he is raised to walk in “newness of life.” “If any man is in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). But we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5). Baptism is the point at which one becomes “a new creature” (born again). “We are buried with him in baptism

and risen with him” (Col. 2:12).

Born of the Spirit

It is one birth of water and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit directs every aspect of being born again. He is the divine agent in both actions of the spiritual birth: the begetting and the delivery. He “saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5). These phrases, “washed . . . in the Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:11), the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5) and being “born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:3-5) all refer to baptism. The Spirit instructs us, “For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). The word, which the Spirit revealed, tells us everything we need to know about salvation (Eph. 5:26).

The “Wind” Illustration

“The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not/w when it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (v. 8). Jesus illustrates the Spirit’s unseen nature by the wind. No man knows where wind originates nor what its ultimate destination will be. Yet we know the reality of the wind from the effect it has on certain objects. We see it blow leaves from the trees and can determine its direction. We hear it whistle through the branches. In the same way we know the reality of the working of the Spirit. We can’t see the Spirit but we see the change that takes place in the lives of men and the fruit of the Spirit that is born in their lives as a result of hearing the Spirit’s message. Jesus’ conclusion to Nicodemus was: the process by which a man is regenerated by the Spirit is no more mysterious than other operations of God’s law of reproduction in the natural world. We all agree on the reality of the wind because we see its effects. And we can see the effects of the Spirit in a man’s life and know he has been born again (anew).

Light And Darkness

We don’t know whether Nicodemus’ approaching the Lord at night meant he was a secret disciple. If so, the Lord may have been making a play on that when he told Nicodemus that “men loved the darkness rather than the light” (v. 19). Upon reading what Jesus, “the true Light of the world,” told Nicodemus there is no reason for anyone to remain in the dark.

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“Unscrambling” continued from page 2

of fools shall destroy them.

But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil (Prov. 1:24-33).

The person described in the book of Proverbs ignored the divine commandments, choosing to live in rebellion, instead of in obedience, to the word of God. This man “set at nought” God’s counsel and “would none of my reproof.” At last the consequences of sin fell heavily upon this man’s head. The Lord then laughs at the sinner’s “calamity” and mocks when his “fear” cometh. Fear comes on him like desolation and destruction like a whirlwind, bringing distress and calamity.

In his suffering the sinner calls on God to deliver him from the consequences of his sin. The Lord replied, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Prov. 1:28). The sense of this passage is not that God will not forgive sinners who ask forgiveness as they reap the bitter consequences of sin. Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son whose sin resulted in him being in the pig pen shows God’s willingness to forgive any sinner who will turn to him. That rebellious son said, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:18-19). Yes, the Father forgave him, but the prodigal son’s inheritance was forever squandered and all that was left belonged to the older brother, even in that parable (Luke 15:31).

The sense in which God will not hear the sinner who calls on him is that he will not deliver the sinner from sin’s consequences. In the words of the text in Proverbs, the wise man said, “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Prov. 1:31-32). Our President now must face the just consequences of the sins that he has committed.

Not Just The President

What was written in Proverbs was not written with the President in mind. It was written for all sinners who turn their backs against God to walk in disobedience. The President’s problems just serve as a good opportunity to be reminded of this important biblical principle. There are Bible characters who suffered the consequences of their sin, just as our President is.

1. *Adam’s sin.* When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the Lord was merciful to forgive them. However, the consequences of sin came to the entire human race. The pain of woman’s childbirth was multiplied and her husband would “rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). Man had to earn his living by the sweat of his brow from a cursed earth that

brought forth thorns and thistles. Furthermore, separation from the tree of life brought physical death upon the entire human race (Gen. 3:17-19). How Adam must have cried over the consequences of sin when his own son Abel was the first human to suffer physical death, and that at the hands of his brother.

2. *David’s sin with Bathsheba.* The Lord forgave David of his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Nevertheless, the consequences that came to David because of his sin included the following: (a) The baby born to Bathsheba died (2 Sam. 12:15); (b) God raised up evil against David from among the members of his own house (2 Sam. 12:11, Absalom’s rebellion); (c) David’s wives were sexually defiled in a public manner (2 Sam. 12:11; this occurred when Absalom publicly had relations with David’s wives, 16:22). David lost his moral authority over his children and was in no position to address the sinful conduct of Amnon against Tamar (2 Sam. 13). The sorrows that followed David the rest of his life were the direct consequences of his sin with Bathsheba.

I remember sitting with several preachers discussing the sad consequences lying ahead of a preacher who had just repented of and confessed his adultery. The older, more mature preacher in the group said, “He can’t put Jack back in the box” and he can’t “unscramble eggs.” The point was that sin’s consequences would come to this preacher, even though he had been forgiven. In some cases, preachers who confess their sin and are told that they no longer can preach for the local church charge that members in the church are not willing to forgive them because they will not allow them to continue their work as preacher. Preachers with this attitude only multiply their problems.

I have seen other adulterers who confessed their sin, unrealistically expecting that their mate was biblically obligated to take them back in the marriage and live as though nothing had happened. A penitent adulterer can no more demand that his mate take him back than a penitent preacher can demand that a local church continue to let him preach. Sin has its consequences.

Conclusion

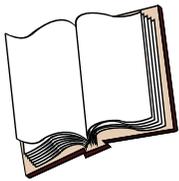
The next time that the Devil’s temptations seem overwhelming, remember what Solomon taught about the consequences of sin. There is no pleasure that sin can give that is worth the pain it causes. As we witness the sad experience of what is happening with reference to our President, let us use it as a reminder that not even genuine repentance can rescue one from the consequences of his own sinful behavior.

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Preachers Needed

Lake Havasu City, Arizona: The church of Christ in Lake Havasu is in need of a full-time preacher. This is a small congregation with a large potential for growth. Lake Havasu City is located on the Colorado river near Interstate 40 and Highway 95. The church has a congregation of 40 and the resort community winter visitors increase the membership. The previous preacher has retired. A family home is provided and support of \$400 per week. Increases will be provided with growth. Other support may be available. Please contact Phillip Woolbright (email: pwoolbri@juno.com), phone at 602-336-9642. You may fax information to 602-336-9643.

Morrison, Florida: The church of Christ in Morrison is looking for a full-time preacher. Morrison is located southwest of Gainesville. They have about 40 in attendance about half of whom are retired people. If interested, contact Mark Carswell at 116 N.W. 7th St., Williston, FL 32696, 352-528-6053.



Quips & Quotes



Survey: Youths Finding Sex, Drugs Too Tempting to Resist

“Atlanta — Almost half of the nation’s students are sexually active — 7% before the age of 13, says new research out today.

“That is just one finding of a national-wide survey of 16,262 students ages 10 to 24 that shows alarming numbers of young people flirt regularly with risky behaviors, including drinking and driving, carrying weapons to school and having unprotected sex.

“‘We’re seeing too many kids at risk,’ says Laura Kann of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ‘Too many kids practice behaviors that put them at risk of morbidity and mortality from homicide, suicide, motor vehicle crashes, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and, of course, HIV/AIDS.’

“... Of the 48% of students who say they’ve had sex, 16% say they’ve had four or more sex partners. Slightly more

Field Reports



Bill Dodd, Walnut Ridge, AR: I have been preaching for the brethren at the Highway 67 North church of Christ in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas for about 14 months now (I com-munited for about 9 months from Marshall and have now been full-time for 5 months). This is the only conservative church in Lawrence County, Arkansas. We are a small, struggling congregation, not self-supporting, and I am appealing to any churches that might be able to help me in raising part of my support as I labor here in the preaching of the gospel. I can give references to any church interested in helping me. My phone number is 870-886-5587.

than half, 56.8%, say that either they or their partner had used a condom during their last encounter.

“... Adolescents account for half of the 40,000 people diagnosed each year with HIV. Three million get sexually transmitted diseases. One million become pregnant.

“Other findings:

- Almost 80% of students reported having tried alcohol, 33% have had five or more drinks in the past month.
- Nearly 50% say they used marijuana during the past month.
- Almost 10% have tried cocaine, including crack, during the previous month.
- Nearly 20% say they have never worn seat belts.
- One-third had ridden in the past month with someone who had been drinking.
- More than 18% had carried a gun, knife or club in the prior month.
- Nearly 10% had attempted suicide in the past year, 2% of whom required medical treatment” (*USA Today* [August 14, 1998], 11A).

President Clinton Supports Gay Pride Month

“Events like the Pride Celebration help us to recognize anew that working in a spirit of community is not a hope but a necessity,” said President Clinton. ‘Striving together, people of different ethnicities, backgrounds, races, beliefs and sexual orientation have contributed to the success of our nation.’ The President’s remarks appeared on Disney’s Gay and Lesbian Day Web site (www.gayday.com). In addition, Disney designated June 6 as Gay and Lesbian Day at Walt Disney World (*Washington Times*)” (*Family Voice* [August 1998], 22).

Illinois Board of Education Apologizes for Sex Survey

"The Illinois Board of Education sent hundreds of 11th graders 'health education' tests. The test included graphic questions about various types of sex. It also asked students how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases — without listing abstinence as an option. Officials apologized and said a special community panel will review future tests. But Rev. Robert Vanden Bosch, director of Concerned Christian Americans, said that an apology cannot reverse the damage. 'Every child . . . who took this test has already been mentally molested by the State Board of Education' he said (*Washington Times*)" (*Family Voice* [August 1998], 22).

Jehovah's Witnesses Owe Taxes

"Following an 18-month audit, the French Tax Authority has imposed a 60 percent tax on religious contributions made by Jehovah's Witnesses, covering a four-year period. The government agency ruled it is not a religion, and therefore owes \$50 million in back taxes. The organization appealed the decision after the government put a lien on its property. In an open letter to French President Jacques Chirac, Jehovah's Witnesses representative L.A. Swingle called the ruling 'a shocking display of religious discrimination' that 'could affect donations to any religion, charity, or not-for-profit organization the tax administration chooses to target in the same manner.' With 220,000 adherents, Jehovah's witnesses are the third-largest religious body in France" (*Christianity Today* [September 7, 1998], 27).

Gamblers Treated by State are Expected to Double

"Indiana expects the number of gambling addicts treated at state expense will double in the coming months.

"Using money from riverboat casino taxes, state mental health officials have budgeted for the treatment of 228 problem gamblers in approved treatment centers over the fiscal year that began July 1.

"That compares with 115 people treated at state expense in the fiscal year that ended June 30, and 31 troubled gamblers the year before, according to the Indiana Division of Mental Health" (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 21, 1998], C1).

Partial-Birth Abortion Results in Live Baby

"A teenage mother recently entered a Phoenix abortion clinic to obtain a partial-birth abortion. The abortionist said he estimated the baby's gestational age as 23.6 weeks, but during the procedure, he discovered the child was actually 37 weeks (near full term). He delivered the baby girl, who weighed more than six pounds. She suffered a skull fracture and lacerations on her face. 'The real issue is not the miscalculation,' said Douglas Johnson of the National Right to Life committee. 'A baby delivered between 23 and 24 weeks — the calculated age — would have a one-in three

chance of survival in a neonatal unit if delivered normally" (*Family Voice* [September 1998], 17).

Recent Studies on the Family

"More faithful than we think — Despite the commonly accepted view that most married adults have been unfaithful to their marriage partners, a prestigious poll from the University of Chicago shows that a high percentage of married adults have never committed adultery: Men — 65%-80% (depending on age); Women — 80%" (*American Family Association Journal* [September 1998], 9).

Cohabitation Fails as a "Trial Marriage"

"For over 30 years the conventional wisdom has been that, if marriage is relevant at all, living together can let two people know whether they are compatible enough for marriage. It is a concept that increasing numbers of people are buying into.

"Since 1970, the Census Bureau reports that the number of households made up of unmarried couples has grown eightfold. By the time a woman reaches the age category of 30-34, 49% say they have lived with a man outside marriage.

"But if more and more people are hoping that cohabitation improves their chances of being happily married later, evidence is rapidly mounting that indicates they will be disappointed. Columnist William R. Mattox, Jr., for example, cited recent research that challenges the wisdom of living together. Results include:

- A woman who is living with a man is more than twice as likely to wind up as a victim of domestic violence (Washington State University researcher Jan Stets).
- Women who are cohabitating suffer from depression at rates more than three times that of married women (National Institute of Mental Health).
- Sexual anxiety is more characteristic of this less permanent living arrangement, rather than sexual freedom, and the absence of an enduring commitment tends to actually hinder sexual satisfaction (UCLA researchers Stuart Perlman and Paul Abrahamson).
- Couples who lived together and then married report less satisfaction in their marriage than other couples (National Institute for Healthcare Research).

Cohabiting couples who then get married have a significantly higher rate of divorce than those who did not live together first (University of Denver researcher Scott Stanley)" (*American Family Association Journal* [September 1998], 9).

