

MAGAZINE TRUTH

A Father's Day Tribute

Larry Ray Hafley

When I read the letter below, I cried, for it reminded me of my own dear Dad and the loving legacy he and Mom left to me and my brothers. The letter was written by Karen (Hoyle) Kibodeaux, a young, godly wife and mother, the daughter of Kenneth and Sammie Hoyle. It was written for Father's Day, 1996. It is framed and sits proudly as a timeless tribute to our late, beloved brother and fellow-laborer in the kingdom, Kenneth.

Kenneth was blessed in that he was able to read such a warm and wonderful tribute while he yet lived. If you, dear reader, are privileged to have your Father yet alive, please find the words, before it is too late, to tell him how much you love and appreciate him. Believe me, you will never regret it. Later, when tears of sacred memory flow unbidden, they will be rivulet reminders of sweet joy, not rivers of rueful regret.



And, now, the letter:
Daddy,

You have been so wonderful to me. There are no words to describe how good you have been to me. I couldn't have asked for a better Dad on this earth. You have done your best to teach, to guide and to help me in any-way possible.

I pat Daniel and Lindsey sometimes and when I do, I think of the way you *always* patted me. So gently and with such love. No child or children were loved as much as we were. Dad, you were always there (and still are) if we needed anything.

Thank you for the discipline you gave me. I know I needed more! Thank you for your stand for the truth and for your love for God. I will always remember that. Thank you for treating Mother in such a sweet way. You always treated her like a Queen. The most important lady in your life. I will always remember this, too.

Thank you for being my friend — Thank you for taking us places. Thank you for letting us have little kittens and loving them like Mary and I did — these things may be trivial to others — but to me they were important, and I will always remember them as long as I have a good mind — which I hope is a long time!

Thank you also for “doctoring” us when we got hurt. You were *always* so tender. I remember you blowing our little scratches — they were such easy blows — they didn't hurt. I try to do the same with Lindsey and Dan, but I don't do as good a job as you did.

I love you, Dad, more than you know, and I always will. I respect you beyond words. The Lord blessed us with the most wonderful parents.

Happy Father's Day
Love always, Karen

*“And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free”
(John 8:32).*

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Are You A Jacob or Israel?

Mike Willis

The patriarch Jacob is better known to us by the name Jacob than he is by the name Israel, even though God changed his name to Israel just as he had done for Abram before him (Gen. 17:5). In a climactic incident in Jacob's life, the patriarch wrestled with an angel and was given a blessing, the blessing of having his name changed from Jacob to Israel. The incident was not another incident in a string of incidents in his life, but was the climax to a significant change in his faith attested by the change in his name.



The Name Jacob

The name Jacob was obviously given to the child at his birth because of the circumstances that occurred at his birth. The text relates:

And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. (Gen. 25:20-26).

The English translations cannot depict the wordplay that occurs in the Hebrew. The text says, "And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel (ḲḲqḲb); and his name was called Jacob (yaḲḲqḲb) (25:26). Because Jacob had hold of Esau's *heel* at his birth, he was called "Jacob."

The verb derived from the noun ḲḲqḲb (heel) is ḲḲqḲb which means "follow at the heel, fig. assail insidiously, circumvent, overreach" (BDB 784). The verb is used to describe Jacob's conduct and to associate that conduct with his name in Genesis 27:36. In the context of Esau complaining about Jacob stealing the birthright blessing, he said, "And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob (yaḲḲqḲb)? For he hath supplanted (yaḲḲ q bḲn») me these two times:

see "Jacob or Israel" on p. 344

Unmasking “Peaceful Islam”

John A. Smith

Since September 11 it is almost impossible to go one day without some reference in the news about how Islam is a peaceful religion and Moslems respecting all religions want all men to live together in harmony. Quite frankly, I am tired of these misrepresentations! If Islam is such a peaceful religion respecting the beliefs of others, then why do nearly all Moslem dominated countries suppress or persecute non-Moslems?

Many modern Moslems take a liberal, non-literal approach to the Koran, their holy book. Like many who claim association with Christianity, most Moslems today pick and choose what they like from their holy book. They easily overlook what is not convenient, popular, or palatable. However, an honest look at the whole of the Koran will lead one to the unavoidable conclusion that Islam is a frightening, fierce, and oppressive religion.

Islam and “Holy Wars”

The Koran (the book all faithful Muslims must follow) calls for physical warfare in certain situations. Regarding the teaching of the Koran, some scholars contend that the Islamic Jihad (Holy War, the right to kill, torture, and terrorize any perceived enemies of Islamic faith) is simply and only a spiritual conflict fought by the individual Muslim. However, even Mohammad, the founder of Islam, toward the end of his life turned bitter and advocated bloody warfare.

Allow me to present for your candid consideration some statements directly from the Koran (it is difficult to provide an easily readable translation of the Koran. Translating the Koran into “foreign” languages is frowned upon making the reading of it a bit difficult). Notice also those against whom the war(s) is to be directed, why, the promises to the faithful Muslims, and the outcome of non-Muslims in the described circumstances:

Verily God will defend (from ill) those who believe: verily, God loveth not any that is a traitor to faith, or shows ingratitude. 39 To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged-and verily, God is Most powerful for their aid- 40 (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right-(for no cause) except that they say, “Our Lord is God.” Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. God will certainly aid those who aid His (cause); for verily God is Full of
continued on next page

Strength, Exalted in Might, (Able to enforce His Will) (Surah 22:38-40).

Let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter, to him who fighteth in the cause of God, whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall We give him a reward of great (value). And why should ye not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children whose cry is: "Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Thee one who will protect; and raise for us from Thee one who will help!" Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil: so fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were told to hold back their hands (from fight) but establish regular prayers and spend in regular charity? When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as, or even more than, they should have feared God: they say: "Our Lord! why hast Thou ordered us to fight? Wouldst Thou not grant us respite to our (natural) term, near (enough)?" Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least! (Surah 4:74-77).

Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it had been God's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the way of God, He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He guide them and improve their condition. And admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them. O ye who believe! if ye will aid (the cause of) God, He will

aid you, and plant your feet firmly. But those who reject (God), for them is destruction, and (God) will render their deeds astray (from their mark) (Surah 47:4-8).

Fighting is obligatory for you, much as you dislike it. But you may hate a thing although it is good for you, and love a thing although it is bad for you. God knows, but you do not. . . Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors. Slay them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; if they attack you put them to the sword. Thus shall the unbelievers be rewarded: but if they mend their ways, know that God is forgiving and merciful (Surah 2:190-ff).

Those that make war against God and His apostle and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the country. They shall be held up to shame in this world and sternly punished in the hereafter: except those that repent before you reduce them. For you must know that God is forgiving and merciful (Surah 5:31-34).

In stark contrast what does God reveal to man in the New Testament?

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt. 5:43-45).

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm (John 18:36).

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, wrote Paul, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds (2 Cor. 10:4).

Today we are hearing many Muslims who claim a different brand of "Islam" from what is taught in the Koran and was acted out by Mohammed. Perhaps they should think about disassociating themselves altogether from Mohammed and the Koran. Otherwise, they will carry the burden of association.

Jesus and his followers do not live by the sword or the gun or by any violence. It is a peaceful kingdom, and the greatest battle is the battle within each human heart and soul.

From Lafayette Heights Observer, December 16, 2001

Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (5)

Bill Cavender

The thirteen years from 1947 through 1960 were truly crucial years in churches of Christ. The style and substance of preaching radically changed. A general attitude and disposition of brethren, one toward another, changed. The emphasis on “what is the work” of churches of Christ and “what is the organization” of the churches to do this work became the primary topics of discussions, both oral and in writing, among the brethren. These were years of changes away from old concepts of *how* to preach the gospel, *what* to preach, and *who* are we in churches of Christ as related to the religious and secular world about us.

When I was first exposed to gospel preaching, 1945-47, by very able gospel preachers, men such as Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Morton Utley, George W. Dickson, Harold V. Trimble, James R. Cope, Frank Van Dyke, and a host of others, even though I was young in years (19-21), I recognized the differences between their preaching and the Methodist, denominational preaching I had been subjected to all my prior life. I had never heard a Methodist preacher (and I attended services regularly in the Bemis, Tennessee Methodist Church from childhood) call any religious doctrines, names or churches into question. Their preaching was always “positive” and rather entertaining, with an abundance of good moral stories and experiences. Some were excellent speakers and handsome-appearing men but they did not teach people many Bible truths. To the contrary, I marveled that these preachers in churches of Christ spoke with authority, quoted Scriptures, explained the Bible, and it all made good sense. I learned to seriously read and study the Bible. These preachers would urge listeners to “search the Scriptures” and “tell me if I am wrong,” for “I don’t want to teach any error.” This, to me, indicated sincerity and honesty of motive and purpose. Few preachers, anymore,

so challenge their listeners. Most preachers, nowadays, do not want to be questioned and/or contradicted. Many preachers are insulted if a listener fails to accept what they say, especially if the listener would dare to audibly question the preacher. To be “more noble” like those of Berea, to “search(ed) the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:10-12), has become an antique art among the brethren. Had all the brethren, each and every one of them, been diligent students of and believers in the Testament of Jesus in those years of 1947-1960, had faith in the word of God rather than the wisdom of men, and had continued to do so, we would not have had the problems that we did. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6). This is a prevailing truth of God in every generation, amongst all of God’s children. Those who reject God, who do not know his will, who do not respect his authority and his rule over them through Jesus Christ, are doomed to departures from the faith and ultimately final apostasy. Apostasy comes slowly, but it comes! Time will tell! Reaping what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8) is an unalterable divine principle, not only in moral conduct, but in all areas of God’s will to mankind. (We will see an illustration of this divine principle in a subsequent article.)

Bible chapter and verse preaching, quoting the Scriptures, using blackboard chalk charts and diagrams, hanging the old bed sheet(s) and oilcloth Bible charts on the wall, and the preacher in the pulpit with his pointer or yardstick in one hand and his New Testament in the other, was the order of the day. When you attended a service of a church of

Christ then, either on Lord's day or during a gospel meeting, you could expect to "hear God's word preached plainly, without fear or favor of men, with error being exposed and sin condemned. Preachers were not intimidated by brethren, and by people in general, as they are nowadays. They were more intent upon pleasing God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Back then preachers were not as job-security, pay-package, long-term-annuities, large congregations, million-dollar(s) buildings, oriented as they are now. There is no doubt in my mind that brethren then were much better Bible students, loved Bible preaching more, had stronger convictions, were more God-fearing and righteous-living people, and would "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), more readily than as compared to now. But all of that gradually and swiftly changed as the spirit of innovation, programs and promoters, pressures to conform and to "go along to get along" began to be imbibed, practiced, and defended as being scriptural, in harmony with God's expressed will in the Testament. Error became truth in the mind of the majority, and truth became error, taught and practiced by the minority, as viewed by the majority, who controlled the colleges, the papers, the human institutions, with most of the monied and well-known, influential brethren and churches "in that camp."

When I returned home from my military service in the U.S. Navy to Bemis, Tennessee, the first week of August 1946, I began worshipping regularly with the church. I attended a meeting that October (I remember it so well; it was the first time I laid eyes on Marinel Raines, who became my sweetheart for life and my wife), my first gospel meeting in Tennessee. Brother S.O. Lenski (a fictitious name, but a true story) was the preacher for the meeting. He had been with the church in Bemis for several meetings and was highly respected and praised by the brethren. I could see why! He hung his chart(s) on the wall at every service, got his pointer, quoted the Scriptures copiously, preached the truth plainly and sincerely, and a number of people were baptized. It had been this way in all his meetings at Bemis. I was impressed with brother Lenski. About three years later, when I was the local preacher at Ashland City, Tennessee, I persuaded the elders to invite S.O. Lenski for a meeting. They agreed, upon my recommendation. He was to stay with Marinel and me. We looked for him on Saturday afternoon from his home in another state. He did not arrive. He arrived on Sunday morning about 8:45 A.M. (Bible study was at 10:00 A.M.), telling us that he had arrived in town in the middle of the night, went to the sheriff's

office inquiring where we lived and they didn't know (they did know; I knew the sheriff; and we had a telephone!), so he drove into Nashville, twenty miles away, to spend the night, there being no motel in Ashland City (we never did learn where he spent that night). He unloaded his clothes, refreshed himself, didn't come to Bible classes, came for worship, and preached excellent lessons that Sunday. He stayed with us, he smoked cigarettes outside the house, and dyed his hair, as his hair was brown that should have been gray, and the brown dye stain in the bathroom lavatory was not easily scrubbed off and removed. That Sunday night, the first day of an eight days' meeting, he received a phone call after the evening service. He told Marinel and me that an emergency had occurred at home, there had been a death, and he had to return home, about 225 miles away, to conduct a funeral. He

loaded *all* his belongings back into his car and left early the next morning. We got Paul Matthews in Nashville, former preacher at Ashland City, to preach Monday evening and each evening until brother Lenski returned. Lenski returned on Wednesday morning, finished the meeting, preaching his typical, excellent, Bible-filled sermons. Thirteen people obeyed the gospel during the meeting. On Tuesday afternoon of that meeting brother Matthews told me that Lenski left and went home because he was in court in his hometown, in a divorce action, a husband divorcing his wife because of preacher Lenski. I decided not to tell the elders but to let the meeting "run its course," as this was the advice brother Matthews gave me. He had "heard this" and could not vouch for its accuracy. Paul knew of these matters even before Lenski came for the meeting, as the "brotherhood grapevine" had carried the news, but I "was not in on the know" at that time. Paul did not "want to interfere in a church's business!" I could have checked the accuracy of this report, had I known this information ahead of time, and Lenski would not have come for the meeting. The report was true! He lied to us. There was no funeral. There was a trial. Thus a talented, very capable preacher, ruined himself. "How are the mighty fallen!" (2 Sam. 1:19, 25, 27). Many preachers, elders, and other children of God have ruined their lives and influence permanently, and have caused untold and immeasurable sorrows and heartaches to the churches and to their families, by adultery and fornication. "A bird with a broken pinion never flies as high again." Our Lord's commandment is that we "flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:13-20). Remember king David (2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12)!

There were some truly talented preachers in those days. I had sat at the feet of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. in the meeting

in San Francisco in 1945 and was with him for a week, as I was living in the George W. Dickson home and brother Foy was their guest for the week. I heard him several more times in gospel meetings in Memphis, in Paris, Texas (eight days out of a ten days' meeting), and in Spring Hill, Louisiana. I heard him preach the same sermon four times, two hours at a time, on "Naaman, The Leper." I've tried to preach that sermon also, but I can't preach for two hours on the subject and I can't even begin to imitate the style and power of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. In 2001, brother Terry J. Gardner of Indianapolis, Indiana, presented a gift to me, an elegantly printed and bound hardback book: "Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Soldier of The Cross." This book, published in 1999, was compiled and written by brother Noble Patterson of Fort Worth, Texas, and by brother Gardner. Eight hundred copies were printed. No plans are presently made for other printings. Brother Gardner gave me the last copy he possessed. On April 12, 1995, during a meeting with the Ninth and Bliss church in Dumas, Texas, several brethren and I drove to Hereford, Texas, to the West Park Cemetery, where brother and sister Wallace's bodies are buried. Their tombstones read: "Soldier Of The Cross" Foy E. Wallace, Jr. September 30, 1896 - December 18, 1979. "Faithful Companion" Virgie Brightwell — January 2, 1898 - January 2, 1987 — Married November 29, 1914." One of the sorrows of my life was to observe and realize the change in brother Wallace, from his teaching and convictions in earlier years, to the last years of his life when he went about saying, "I'm not loose enough for the liberals, and crazy enough for the cranks," meaning, by "cranks," the brethren whom he so greatly taught and influenced in his earlier years in *The Bible Banner*, *The Gospel Guardian*, and *Torch*, people like me, generally referred to as "antis!" Brother John W. Hedge and I (Marinel and I lived in Longview, Texas, 1960-1965) went to New London, Texas, one summer afternoon in 1963 to visit with brother J. Early Arceneaux, a great preacher and debater, then an older man in his eighties. Brother Arceneaux and Foy E. Wallace, Jr. were close friends for many years. He commented, "Foy knows better. He is not preaching now what he used to preach. His pride has brought about his fall." Of truly great, talented, knowledgeable preachers that I have been privileged in my lifetime to hear, the most outstanding were Foy E. Wallace, Jr., N.B. Hardeman, G.C. Brewer, W. Curtis Porter, and Roy E. Cogdill, with Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in my judgment, being "the prince of preachers."

I heard C.C. Burns, Avis Wiggins, Gus Nichols, C. Ellis McGaughey, Bryan Vinson, Sr., James W. Adams, Harris J. Dark, Marshall Keeble, John T. Lewis, Guy N. Woods, James A. Allen, C.M. Pullias, Roy H. Lanier, Sr., Batsell Barrett Baxter, Irvan Lee, Maurice Howell, Robert C. Jones, Horace W. Busby, H.A. Dixon, Earl West (*The Search For The Ancient Order* author), Granville Tyler, Leonard Tyler, Rufus R. Clifford, Sr., Joe Malone, G.K. Wallace, Willard Collins, C.D. Plum, Homer Hailey, James R. Cope,

Franklin T. Puckett, teachers on the faculty of Lipscomb, and many, many others whom I do not recall right at this moment of writing. One of the most humble, unassuming, gracious preachers in the Nashville area was brother H.M. Phillips. He preached for the Lischey Avenue church. We often invited him to come and speak to "The Young Preachers' Club" at Lipscomb. He did much to instill in my mind the work and attitude of a preacher. I had heard a number of men, as Foy E. Wallace, Jr., W. Curtis Porter, G.C. Brewer, N.B. Hardeman, Guy N. Woods, Hugo McCord (I heard him one time at Freed-Hardeman College preach a sermon entirely of Scriptures, with no comments whatsoever), etc., who could quote passage after passage of Scripture, never looking at their Bibles. But H.M. Phillips could quote more Scripture(s) than any brother in Christ that I have ever heard. He urged us, "young preachers," to memorize Scriptures, not "for show" nor inflated egos, trying to impress someone, but for effective and authoritative preaching. Not many preachers memorize Scriptures anymore. To do so requires much time and serious mental effort. It somewhat irritates me to see and hear preachers *read* a few verses here and there in a sermon. Powerful preaching has declined and comparatively few preachers are preaching Bible-filled, Christ-centered, error-exposing, truth-magnifying sermons anymore. Many preachers now, in their plush church-house offices, don't have time for serious study and memorization of Scriptures. Their "busy" schedules are so filled up with "playing with their computers," "gadding about," golfing, watching the television, and ingratiating themselves with "leading brethren," so as to keep their jobs, that they don't have time for memory work in the Bible. Brethren have come to want and demand soft, compromising, insipid, watered-down preaching, which really says much of nothing. Many desire short, snappy sermons, so busy brethren can beat "the sectarians" to the cafeterias and restaurants for Sunday dinner or get to the golf course so they can get in the full eighteen holes of "cow pasture pool" that afternoon. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" (Amos 6:1).

(To be continued)

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Raise The People or Lower The Standard

Donnie V. Rader

In an effort to leave no one behind, our society has a tendency to change the standards to include more people rather than demand that people meet the standards. For example, in some schools when a good number of the students don't make the grade, the administration lowers the standard to enable more to pass. One student teacher (teaching high school history) told me about a lesson plan wherein he planned to discuss a bill that passed the House, but failed in the Senate. The regular teacher discouraged that saying that the students wouldn't know the difference in the two houses of Congress. Instead of educating the students (raising the people) you change the lesson (lower the standard).

Well, this happens quite often in spiritual things too. If someone doesn't fit the standard, we are ready to alter the standard. If a loved one died without being baptized, some are ready to say that perhaps they might be saved without it. When such is the case, the standard, which says that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), has been changed. Rather than saying that all must meet the standard to be right, the standard has been lowered to accommodate those that didn't comply.

There are always those who are looking for ways to change God's law. Try as we may we cannot change or alter God's law. The word of the Lord endures forever (1 Pet. 1:25). In both the Old and New Testaments, the people of God were forbidden to add to or subtract from what was written of God (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

The standard could not be lowered for King Herod or Herodias when John told them that it was not lawful for them to be married (Mark 6:14-28). Had he done so,

perhaps John's head would never been cut off. Instead of lowering the standard, John sought to raise them to the standard. When the rich man wanted to send Lazarus back to his five brothers and warn them, he was not allowed (Luke 16). He thought if one rose from the dead were to appeal to them, they would repent. He was seeking to reach them some other way than God's plan. However, Abraham said that they had the law to read (Moses and the prophets) and suggested that was all they needed (v. 29). The standard or method would not be changed.

Let's illustrate the point with the standard that says one must believe on Christ to be saved (John 8:24; Mark 16:16, etc.). Let's suppose that we have a friend or family member that is either an orthodox Jew, Jehovah's Witness or a Moslem — all of which do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Would it help at all if we found someone who said that faith in Christ is not essential? Would we be doing them any favors to suggest that they could be saved without leaving Islam, the Jewish religion or the Witnesses?

The same principle is true on moral questions of the day. Finding some preacher who says he sees nothing wrong with wearing shorts, going to the prom, social drinking, or divorce for any cause doesn't do any favors for those who practice such.

The only alternative we have is to raise people to meet the standard, for lowering the standard will not help. In fact, in actuality it can't be done.
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“Worldlier Everyday!”

Truman Smith

Several years ago a little girl, six or seven years of age, and the daughter of the local preacher, was listening to her parents one day at home as they discussed the persistently bad behavior during worship services of her younger sister, expressed her settled view as to what was wrong with the younger girl by asserting: “She’s just getting worldlier everyday!” While all of us might not agree on that as the correct assessment in that particular case, however, there is one thing upon which we all will agree, and that is that little girl surely had heard her daddy preach against it so much that she realized that, whatever worldliness was, there must have been enough of it to go around that it just might have been the culprit.

We would do well to consider just how much the world’s influence has impacted the church of our Lord today. Someone has observed that so much of the world has gotten into the church that “it is difficult to tell when the world is dismissed from our minds and the church begins and when the church dismisses and the world begins.” The sad thing about it is that it is just about that way! Worldliness is so blended in with the membership of the church that, by the conduct of many so-called Christians, one is hard pressed to tell the difference between them and those of the world.

Perhaps we have not been reading our Bible correctly, but for many years we have had the impression that it says: (speaking of the Father) “Who

hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (cf. Col. 1:12-13). And, if the “kingdom” is the “church,” and we believe it is (Matt. 16:18-19), and “the power of darkness” has reference to one’s relationship in the world, and we believe it does (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:9), then there must be a difference between the Christian and the world! If not, why not?

We trust that your Bible reads just like ours does. Our Bible teaches that the Christian is to be “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Christians are to “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). You see, there is a sharp contrast between “light” and “darkness.” Brother, how acute is that distinction between you and those of the world?

There are passages too numerous to mention in this little article which teach about the Christian’s attitude toward the world. However, let us observe a few. The apostle John wrote: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:15-17). Why, then, should a Christian want to live like the world? Did Christ live like the world when he was on

earth? No! (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21-22). Did the apostle Paul pattern his manner of life after the world? No! He teaches: "And be not conformed to this world. but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). The word "conformed" simply means "fashioned." This should suffice to convince us that we are not to use the world as our pattern by which to live. This is why Paul further said: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Cor. 4:16). Again, he wrote: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). To the Philippians he said: "Brethren, be followers together of me" (3:17). James puts it even more succinctly: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4).

But, reader friend, can you not see how brethren have allowed the world to spill over into the Lord's church today? We submit to you that this is exactly why we are having so many problems in local churches all over this good land. Every one of these things is attributable to one or more of the avenues of sin listed by the apostle John: (1) The lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, (3) and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Consider some of these.

The Craze for Numbers

Many of our brethren will do most anything in order to have great numbers in the assembly! You know as well as we that this is true! No one loves a large audience before which to preach the gospel than this writer! But does this justify us to work on methods by which we may attract the people to our building simply for the sake of numbers? We beg to answer in the negative! Here is the "pride of life" or "boastful pride of life" (NASB). That's worldliness! Brethren we know how to fill a building to overflowing! Yes, there are many

carnal, temporal, physical, or worldly attractions that will bring the people in by the droves! And, those who are filled with worldly pride make use of such. But our assemblies are limited by the Lord to things that are spiritual (John 4:23, 24; Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 2:15). Even the gospel of Jesus Christ is not designed to attract people to a church building! Did you know that? Where on earth did people get the idea that good gospel preaching will draw folks to a church building? As good as it might be, it is a misuse of the pulpit to attract people! Let us consider God's way of attracting folks to hear the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. It is by all of the members of the church living exemplary lives before others. Is that not what Jesus meant in Matthew 5:13-16? Certainly so! Indeed! When others are able to "see your good works" "it will cause them to glorify your Father which is in heaven." Isn't that simple? Not nearly as expensive! Now you might have to build a larger building; but you will not be having to add all of those things that folks are having to add in order to house their worldly attractions due to worldly pride. But, would it not be wonderful to have to increase the size of the building to accommodate all of those good, sincere folks who would be coming to hear the simple gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed? You say it won't work? Well, whether it will or not is beside the point. It is God's way! It is worldly people that have brought the world into the church today!

The Craze for Recreation, Entertainment and Church Kitchens

The apostle John called this "the lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16). It is due to the lust of the flesh that many of our erstwhile brethren are building gymnasiums, fellowship halls and kitchens and making them a part of the work of the local congregation. Do we not remember the apostle Paul saying: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17)? Did not he again say:

"What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? . . ." "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home. . ." (1 Cor. 11:22, 34)? No one can successfully deny that Paul was teaching here that it is not the church's duty to furnish such things. Yes, we know what many are saying: "But if the church does not supply these things, the people will go elsewhere." But let us pose this question: "Where is the Scripture that authorizes the church to furnish these things?" No, we are not opposed to good, clean recreation, entertainment, and kitchens. But such is the responsibility of the home, not the church! Listen to Paul again: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Included in this passage is authorization for fathers to supply everything that it takes to bring up children in the way they are to go. But these are duties of the home, and it is nothing short of worldliness to bring such things into the church of our Lord!

The Craze for Combining Local Churches to Do the Work of the Lord

It is a mark of worldliness that causes brethren to do many things they desire to do and ignore the Bible pattern for the work of the local church (Heb. 8:5). In fact, many have come to the conclusion that since all the debating between brethren on such things has been done for several years, that "After all, it is not that big a deal, anyhow!" Such an attitude is caused by a worldly mind set. Brethren, we can no more ignore the Bible pattern for the church in benevolence and evangelism than we can the pattern in God's plan to save: hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized (Acts 10:33; John 8:24; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38); nor the Bible pattern for worship: teaching, giving financially, breaking bread, praying and singing (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Why would one ignore the pattern in one and not the other? Just so, there is a pattern for the work of the church;

Working With Others

Jimmy R. Short

Being a Christian involves working and worshipping with a sound local congregation of God's people. In so doing, we bring work with others of differing backgrounds and personalities. For this reason it is important for us to learn how to better work with others. The following things are required in order to do just that.

Mutual Respect

Paul encouraged, "bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Col. 3:13). Bearing with (Gr. *anecho*) is "Spoken of persons, to bear with, have patience with in regard to the errors or weaknesses of anyone..." (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 172). In the New King James, the same Greek word is translated "put up with" in 2 Corinthians 11:19. Despite personality differences, brethren must learn to tolerate one another.

To bear with one another will take some godly characteristics. The Holy Spirit teaches, "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). It will take love to bear with some. The Scriptures also teach us to "be kind to one another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:32) Christians must be kind and full of compassion. We must have a forgiving attitude being gracious to pardon. Do not hold a grudge but be sincere in your forgiveness.

Though hobbies and recreational preferences may be different among brethren, remember we all want to go to heaven and we must work together to get there. A mutual respect is shared.

Love

Peter said, "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). Christians must love the brotherhood, i.e., those who are brethren. The following quote explains our point well, "Christian love, whether exercised toward brethren, or toward all men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all . . . and works no ill to any . . . love

and we are as obligated to observe that pattern in anything else that pertains to the Lord's church. The pattern for the church in benevolence is given in Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-32; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Timothy 5:9-16. And the pattern for the church's work in evangelism is given in Philippians 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8.

Brethren, we are persuaded that too many of our folks are so worldly-minded is the reason for most of the problems among us! Denominationalism itself is simply of the world, and many of our brethren have taken on a denominational

attitude toward the truth. This is evident concerning "fellowship, "marriage, divorce, and remarriage," "Romans 14," and their attitude toward "immodest apparel," "theistic evolution," "modernism," etc. And, as the little girl said a long time ago about her little sister, the same may be said about many of the members of the Lord's church today: "She's just getting worldlier every day"!

From The Voice, Florence, Alabama, January 2002

seeks opportunity to do good to ‘all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith’ (Gal. 6:10)” (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, comments on “love” (Gr. *agapao*).

Love is what will hold brethren together in unity (Col. 3:14). Love will be a sure sign of a true disciple. Jesus taught, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). We can all heed the exhortation, “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1).

Trustworthiness

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). If one manages a household or estate, he must be faithful, which includes being trustworthy. One proves himself a faithful steward in that he is responsible and reliable.

Paul wrote, “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ and each member has a share in the work that is to be done. Just like a faithful steward, the Christian must prove himself trustworthy by being responsible and reliable in his duties. Servants of God must pull their own weight if the work is to be done effectively.

The apostle uttered these words, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12). Have you proven to be trustworthy?

Honesty

Paul proposed a commendable question, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth” (Gal. 4:16)? Sometimes it is necessary to confront a Christian about sinful attitudes or actions. While doing this, some will consider you their enemy but others will be grateful. Despite the reaction you may receive, you are a person’s friend to tell them wherein they are not right with God. This is not to be hypocritical judgment (Matt. 7:1-5) but righteous judgment (John 7:24) based on what God has revealed in his word.

When Paul noticed that Peter was not acting in harmony with the truth of the gospel, he confronted him about it to correct him (Gal. 2:14). Paul was not afraid of being straightforward about the matter.

The command of restoration is given, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Those who are not

overtaken in a sin are to restore those who are. This is to be done in a spirit of gentleness, that is, not in a haughty manner but understanding you too are vulnerable. Gentleness is not to be mistaken as weakness but rather strength in character in that your mind is conditioned to demonstrate this gentleness.

Humility

“Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility” (Prov. 18:12). A man full of pride invites his own downfall. On the other hand, a humble man will be honored. It is necessary, on occasion, to be on the receiving end of instruction whether public teaching or personal admonition. When it is pointed out and confirmed that we are in the wrong, we must not be too proud to correct our ways. Pride will lead to downfall. Peter admonished, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (1 Pet. 5:5).

When corrective instruction comes, be aware that it is a Christian’s duty to help others be right with God. So do not look down upon the person(s) involved, but be grateful that they are doing what is right before God and what is best for you.

As a follower of Christ, be prepared to work with others. The Bible clearly defines for us what characteristics we need to improve upon in our ability to do this well. A peaceful, loving, trustworthy, honest, and humble congregation of God’s people will get the Lord’s work accomplished more effectively.

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Let's Hear It For Miss Manners!

Steven Harper

The following letter and response was published on December 25, 2001 in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. I thought it was a worthwhile item to consider what “Miss Manners” has recognized, though many in denominations and so-called “churches of Christ” do not. See for yourself . . .

DEAR MISS MANNERS: As a child, I was taught never to applaud in church. Now it is very common in my church and others I have attended. It seems that everything — singing, speeches or any kind of performance — is followed by someone saying, ‘Let’s give them a big hand.’ Everybody applauds except me. Is this right or wrong.”

GENTLE READER: You are right, but brace yourself. A lot of angry churchgoers are going to come at you with that quote about making a joyful noise unto the Lord. Miss Manners is delighted that they have the joyful noise idea, and is all for music, speaking, and other decently appropriate forms of worship. But she is afraid the good people missed the part about its being directed unto the Lord, and not unto themselves. Their pleasure may be great, but it is incidental to the purpose of worship, and they should not attempt to usurp the Lord’s power of passing judgment on those who are worshipping him.

Did you catch that, friends? Miss Manners (Judith Martin) has apparently recognized what many of our so-called “brethren” and our denominational friends and associates have not: worship is supposed to be directed unto the Lord.

When we applaud a preacher’s words, a singer’s vocal talent, or even some dramatic point during these assemblies that are supposed to be for worshipping our Lord, it is not directed at the Lord at all, is it? Can you imagine the brethren of New Testament times applaud-

ing the apostle Paul as he concluded his late-night address to those in Troas (Acts 20)? Would the crowd in Jerusalem on Pentecost have applauded Peter as he concluded his oration that convicted them of murdering the Son of God (Acts 2)? Of course, not.

When Peter went to Cornelius with the word of God, he fell at Peter’s feet, to which Peter replied, “Stand up; I myself am also a man” (Acts 10:26). When the people of Antioch of Pisidia heard Paul’s words of salvation, they “glorified the word of the Lord,” not Paul himself (Acts 13:48). The word of God was never about the one who brought it, but everything about the word of God itself. When we get those things mixed up, as the Corinthian brethren did (1 Cor. 1-4), nothing but strife and division will result, and God will not be glorified.

My dictionary defines worship as the reverent love shown to (God). It is an expression of our love for God, his word, and all he has done for us. It is not about how well we speak, sing, or even how well we can bring the audience to tears with some dramatic and emotional story. Everything we do should be for the glory of God and showing him our love. When we applaud those who are supposed to be merely facilitators of that expression of our love, we have missed the point altogether.

So, when we come together to truly and sincerely worship God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, remember that it is for him we come together — so let’s do just that. Save your applause for another time.

need address



“Rejoice Not in Iniquity”

The Roman Catholic Scandal (2)

Greg Litmer

When a scandal reaches the proportions of the Roman Catholic sexual misconduct scandal, consisting primarily but not

exclusively of homosexual pedophilia among priests, it is obvious that there must be certain factors that contribute to it. There must be an atmosphere that exists among the Roman Catholic clergy that breeds this kind of behavior — it is too widespread for that not to be the case. I believe that there are certain factors that have contributed to the abuse and that will continue to contribute to this type of ungodly behavior. The purpose of this article is to address those factors.

A view that is being widely expressed now in the wake of the revelations of priestly sexual misconduct is that forced celibacy among Roman Catholic clergy is to blame. I do believe that it is a contributing factor, but that forced celibacy is within itself a result of an even deeper problem. The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally held an unhealthy and unbiblical view of sex.

Early in the development of the system of Mariology that is peculiar to Roman Catholicism, a less than healthy and certainly unbiblical view of physical relations between a man and woman began to surface. Instead of simply accepting the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin in fulfillment of prophecy, uninspired men felt compelled to offer their own explanations for this. As early as A.D. 390 we find

the synod at Milan condemning the proposition that “a virgin conceived, but a virgin did not bring forth.” What the council condemned was simply the idea that during the natural course of the birth, Mary’s hymen was broken and the passage was opened. In his famous work, *Sermons*, Augustine wrote, “For as a virgin she conceived, as a virgin she gave birth, a virgin she remained.” In *DeTrinitate*, he said, “For neither do we know the countenance of the Virgin Mary, from whom, untouched by a husband, *nor tainted in the birth itself*, He was wonderfully born.”

The idea that formal physical relations between a husband and wife somehow “taint” the woman is found as early as the 4th century. Siricius, who was born about A.D. 334 and died November 26, 399 and is called a “saint” by the Roman Catholic Church, as well as a Pope, wrote the following in a letter: “We surely cannot deny that you were right in correcting the doctrines about children of Mary, and Your Holiness was right in rejecting the idea that an other offspring should come from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the flesh. For the Lord Jesus would not have chosen to be born of a virgin if he had judged that she would be so *incontinent as to taint the birthplace of the body of the Lord, with the*

seed of human intercourse.” This was in answer to Bonosus of Sardica who maintained that Mary was not always a virgin. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, 26)

Bible students recognize that the relationship between a husband and wife is so holy and good that Paul compared it to the relationship sustained between Christ and his church in Ephesians 5. Bible students also recognize that the Hebrew letter tells us in Hebrews 13:4, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled . . .” There is nothing incontinent, unholy, or tainted, in the normal physical relations between a husband and a wife.

I mention this here because I believe it shows the early seeds of an unbiblical view of the gift of sex, and begins to lay the foundation of the attitude that has given rise to the sexual abuse that is rampant in the Catholic Church today.

The requirement of forced celibacy of its clergy by the Roman Catholic Church is receiving considerable attention now in view of recent revelation of sexual misconduct. But why has celibacy been enjoined upon the Roman Catholic clergy in the first place? The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally held that celibacy is inherently the better, holier state. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, 481, we read, “Although we do not find in the New Testament any indication of celibacy being made compulsory either upon the Apostles or those whom they ordained, we have ample warrant in the language of Our Savior, and of St. Paul for looking upon virginity as the higher call, and by inference, as the condition befitting those who are set apart for the work of the ministry.” The encyclopedia makes reference to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:7, “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am” and makes no mention of how the “present distress” of v. 26 colors the words of the Holy Spirit.

One paragraph later the encyclopedia states, “From the earliest period the Church was personified and conceived of by her disciples as the Virgin Bride and as the *pure* Body of Christ, or again as the Virgin Mother, and it was plainly fitting that this virgin Church should be served by a virgin priesthood.” (I never cease to be amazed at how frequently entire doctrines are founded in the Roman Catholic Church on no more solid foundation than, “it was plainly fitting.” G.L) Further on we find, “The conviction that virginity *possesses a higher sanctity and clearer spiritual intuitions, seems to be an instinct planted deep in the heart of man.*”

This concept of no sexual activity being a state that is somehow purer, holier, and more righteous gave rise to the unnatural and unbiblical practice of forced celibacy. It is unnatural for God said, “It is not good for man to be alone” and “But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 7:2). To demand celibacy is unbiblical because the Holy Spirit declared through Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-3, that to do such was to pay “attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” Voluntary celibacy is not wrong. It is wrong and sinful, as well as unnatural, to demand it.

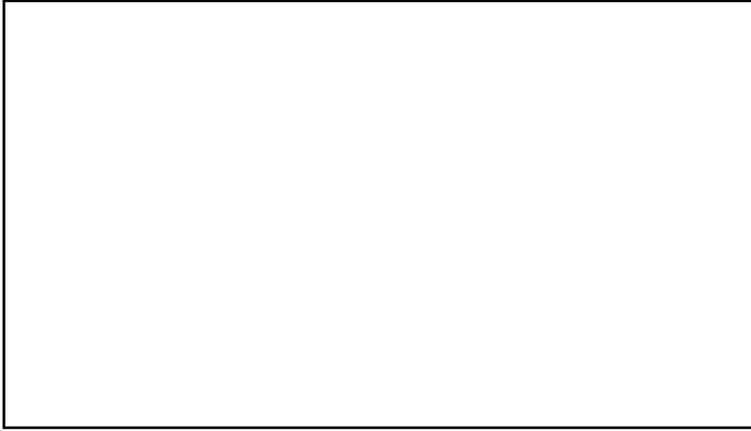
Here is a brief description of how celibacy came to be demanded in the Roman Catholic Church. During the second and third centuries there developed a practice that was originally confined to Egypt, but eventually spread to Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. People were withdrawing from society to devote themselves to God through vows of perfect obedience. Depriving the body of physical pleasures and comforts was part of their practice. These people were hermits, and many came to consider what they did to be the highest form of spiritual piety. As time progressed, there was a movement to impose this lifestyle

on all members of the “clergy.” The earliest decree concerning this was issued by the Council of Elvira, Canon 33, A.D. 305. It said, “Let bishops, priests, and deacons, and in general all the clergy who are specially employed in the service of the altar, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives and the begetting of children; let those who persist be degraded from the ranks of the clergy.”

From the Council of Rome, Canon 9, A.D. 386 (according to a decretal letter of Pope Siricius to bishops of Africa), we find, “We advise that priests and Levites (deacons) should not live with their wives.”

A most interesting decree in the development of this man-made regulation was made by the Quinisext Council of Constantinople, Canon 6, A.D. 692. The Council decreed, “Since it is declared in the apostolic canons that of those who are advanced to the clergy unmarried, only lectors and cantors are able to marry, we also, maintaining this, determine that henceforth it is in no wise lawful for any subdeacon, deacon, or presbyter after his ordination to contract matrimony; but if he shall have dared to do so, let him be deposed. *And if any of those who enter the clergy wishes to be joined to a wife in lawful marriage before he is ordained subdeacon, deacon, or presbyter, let it be done . . .*” This happens to be the norm now for the Eastern Rites of the Roman Catholic Church, known as the Uniate Churches.

In A.D. 1123, there was a decree by the First Lateran Council declaring the marriages of all in sacred orders invalid, and then the Council of Trent, in Session 24, Nov. 11, 1563, Canons 9 and 10, declared, “If anyone saith that clerics constituted in sacred orders or regulars who have solemnly professed chastity are able to contract matrimony, and that being contracted it is valid notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law or vow; and that the contrary is nothing else than to



condemn marriage; and that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Whoever shall affirm that the conjugal state is to be preferred to a life of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more conducive to happiness to remain in virginity or celibacy, than to be married, let him be accursed.

The *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition*, 1983, Canon 277, states, “Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are obliged to observe celibacy, which is a special gift of God, by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely dedicate themselves to the service of God and humankind.”

It is obvious that this state of forced celibacy brought about by the Roman Catholic view of virginity as being holier and purer than the marriage bed, is having a tremendously detrimental and dangerous effect upon many living under it. This, as well as a pre-occupation with sexual sins and conduct in Roman Catholicism, contributes to a decidedly unhealthy view of sex and its righteous practice among many of the Roman Catholic clergy.

Emmett McLoughlin, a former Franciscan priest and the author of *People’s Padre*, wrote on pages 195 and 196 of that book, “The details of the hierarchy’s denunciations of the sins of sex would lead one to wonder if there might not be, at least in the subconscious minds of the moral theologians, something deeper than a war against sin. (The newspapers, in their stories of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, quoted Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey as stating that the largest collection of books in the world on the subject of sex is in the Vatican library.)”

A compendium of Roman Catholic moral theology,

merely a summary of the several volumes studied in the seminary, devoted thirty-two pages of fine print to the infinitesimal details of the multiplicity of sexual sins. In a mere twelve pages it disposes of the hierarchy’s teachings on assault, suicide, murder, dueling, capital punishment, the relations among nations, and the morality of war from the stone age to the atomic age.

The men who comprise the Roman Catholic priesthood, deprived of the God-given outlet for sexual feelings, as well as the wonderful blessings of the companionship in all other ways of a wife, are still supposed to act as spiritual counselors to those who have experienced marriage. They are to be the confessors to whom their parishioners confess their deepest thoughts and sins of a sexual nature. It is a major part of life that they have been denied. How are they prepared to deal with such problems? Consider this statement from the book, *Priest and Penitent*, by John C. Heenan (79), “We need not be afraid, whatever we have to confess, of shocking the priest . . . He must plumb the lowest depths of human depravity, however unpleasant he may find the task, in order that, at no time, in his future ministry, can he be faced with a sinner whose particular difficulties he has not learned to solve. He must become in a sense hardened.”

It is a sad, tragic situation that has come about because God’s word has been ignored, added to, and transplanted as the source of authority in the Roman Catholic Church. It is probably true that more and more of this abusive behavior will come to light even as the Roman Catholic Church is pleading for vocations among its members. They are facing a crisis due to a lack of priests. Would permitting all priests to marry solve their problems? Undoubtedly they would get more priests. Yet, viewing sex as the Roman Catholic hierarchy does, there will still be a certain number of priests with a perverted view of that wonderful gift from God. Marriage won’t stop a pedophile; it just makes him married. Prison stops a pedophile!

The next article will deal with the attitude of the Catholic Church that resulted in the attempted cover-up — a cover-up that was largely successful for a number of years.

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“What Is Your Life?”

Bobby Witherington

profit. Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that (Jas. 4:13-15).

The book of James is a four chapter, 106 verse “general epistle” which was written to “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (Jas. 1:1). The particular “James” who penned this epistle is generally thought to be “James, the Lord’s brother” (cf. Gal. 1:19; Mark 6:3). However, in the letter bearing his name, James simply and humbly described himself as “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas. 1:1). In all likelihood, “the twelve tribes . . . scattered abroad” (to whom this epistle was addressed) constituted Jewish Christians who were “scattered” by reason of persecution. (cf. Acts 8:1-4). As is implied by the subject matter, the primary purpose of this letter was to warn Jewish Christians against various besetting sins, and to encourage them to steadfastness under persecution.

In some respects, Jewish Christians “scattered abroad” faced many of the same dangers faced by their national ancestors who were taken captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians — not the least of which was the danger of blending in with their surrounding culture, and taking a “business as usual” approach to life. And similar dangers face Christians today. In our quest for survival in the world that now is, it is so easy to lose sight of the world to come. In so doing, we lose our focus and we become more consumed in making a *living than in making a life*. Hence, the admonitions contained in this book are as applicable to Christians today as they were to the original recipients of this inspired letter.

With regards to the verses with which this article begins, you will please note that James addressed some who were making business plans — determining to go to some city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit” (Jas. 4:13). Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong in

and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell and make a buying and selling and making a profit. Honorable work, and honest trading for a profit stabilizes the economy and enables people to feed their families. This is good. However, it is not good for a person to make plans irrespective of the brevity of life, and without regard to what “the Lord wills.” Planning ahead is wise, but presumptuous planning which makes no provision for an uncertain tomorrow and a certain eternity is foolish. With this in mind, James asked, “What is your life?” And he then answered his own question, saying “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14). The obvious point is that “life,” at best, is short — so brief that it is likened to a “vapor” that soon “vanishes away!” There is one thing upon which all “old folks” will agree; it doesn’t take long to live a life! Hence, instead of “boasting” (v. 16) about what they plan to do in the future, sober-minded people will say “If the Lord wills we shall live and do this or that” (v. 15), and then act accordingly.

Having made these observations, we now focus more directly upon the question, “What is your life?” Contextually, the question was intended to emphasize the brevity of life. And we must never lose sight of this fact. Indeed, these verses are but a few among many which force upon us an awareness that a person’s journey from the cradle to the grave is incredibly short — especially when compared to eternity. That being the case, the question “what is your life” should receive due consideration by every responsible person. The balance of this article is written with this in mind. We have already addressed this question with regards to the brevity of life, so we now ask:

What Is Your Life With Regards to Purpose?

The real value of life is not measured by quantity, but by quality. The biography of the oldest man on record is given in four short verses (Gen. 5:21, 25-27). These verses tell us about Methuselah. We learn that Enoch was his father; he bore “sons and daughters,” including Lamech, he lived 969 years “and he died.” This is all that is actually stated

about Methuselah. Using a little math, we can conclude that he died in the year of the flood; he may have died in the flood. But, regarding Methuselah, who lived 969 years, everything we know about him can be summed up in one short paragraph which can be memorized in five minutes.

Conversely, Jesus lived on earth for about 33 1/2 years, but four New Testament books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are books of biography dealing with his life. The Old Testament looked forward to his coming; the New Testament looks backward to his first coming, and it looks forward to his return. The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44) all spoke of the coming Messiah. The life of Jesus was so significant that the apostle John, after having already written about Jesus, concluded, saying, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25)!

Methuselah's life had length. Jesus' life had purpose. Jesus summed it up, saying, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My Own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38). Jesus knew his earthly stay would be short; hence, he said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Yes, we know about Methuselah, and we know about Jesus. But, friend, what about you? "What is your life" with regards to purpose! The purpose of many is to accumulate as many material goods as possible, even though each one must die (Heb. 9:27), and not one of us can take any earthly possession with us (1 Tim. 6:7). The purpose of others may be summed up in these words: "eat, drink, and be merry" (cf. Luke 12:15-21), but this approach to life produces misery instead — both here and hereafter.

What should be our real purpose in life! Solomon answered this question in these words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl 12:13).

What Is Your Life From the Standpoint of Destiny?

This question is inseparably connected with the previous question. Purpose and destiny go hand in hand.

Speaking of destiny, there is a hell to shun (Matt. 10:28), and there is a heaven to gain (1 Pet. 1:4). Hell is inconceivably horrible. Heaven is inconceivably wonderful. But the duration of each is the same; it is "everlasting" or "eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

One doesn't have to be morally wicked in order to be lost. In fact, all one has to do to go to hell is nothing! When Jesus returns he will take "vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8). The inspired writer expressed it this way: "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

Mindful of the agonies of hell, mindful of the boundless joys of heaven, mindful of the length of eternity, and mindful of the value of the soul, Jesus asked: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

"The way" that "leads to destruction" is "broad" and heavily traveled, whereas "the way which leads to life" is described as "difficult," and there are but "few who find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). But the "way" in which we travel determines direction, and direction determines destiny.

Conclusion

We could view the question "what is your life" retrospectively, introspectively, and prospectively (looking backward, inward, and forward). But we have chosen, in this article, to ponder this question with regards to duration, purpose, and destiny. Indeed, "what *is your life?*" Do you need to make some changes to make it what it ought to be? If the answer to that question is "yes," then right now is the time to start making those changes! Tomorrow may be eternally too late!

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"It's About Time!"

Lewis Willis

I do not even remember who gave me the column entitled "Dear Padre," but a most interesting point was made in it which I wish to share with you. The article I'm printing was written by "Rev. Paul J. Coury," and it was published by Liquori Publications, 2001, "with ecclesiastical approval." The "Padre" was asked about the place and manner of baptism in the questioner's "parish church." The question concerned the practice of baptism which was now going to be *by immersion*, instead of sprinkling or pouring. The "Padre's" response is most interesting.

You might be happy to know that your retired baptismal font was not a very ancient idea. In the first centuries of the church, the baptism of the Christian was referred to as "The Bath," and indeed it was a head to foot dunking. This dunking followed the example of John the Baptist, who walked into the Jordan River with repentant people and pushed them under water. When they arose out of the water they were released from their sins, saw life as new, and were ready for a fresh start. The Judean ministry of John the Baptist marked the beginning of what became Christian baptism. This tradition of John the Baptist recalls how the prophet Elisha, in the Book of Kings, instructed Naaman to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan River to be cured of leprosy. The word itself "baptism" comes from the Greek word meaning "to immerse."

Your pastor and your church are responding to the signs of the times. Today many churches are returning to the more ancient style of baptism. Your parish's baptismal pool is more in line with the adult style of baptism that was practiced in the early centuries of the Church. The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) also encourages adult converts to have a baptismal ceremony similar to the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17).

The Padre — Some Observations

1. The "Padre" is correct about the "ancient" manner of baptism. It was an immersion, just as the word translated "baptism" requires. Thus, the New Testament speaks twice

of being "buried" in baptism: "Therefore *we are buried with him by baptism* into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4); "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

An alternate practice did not come along until the "Padre's" church started administering "clinical baptism" for those regarded as too sick to be immersed. Sprinkling or pouring was adopted by the Catholic Church (and many Protestant Churches) *without any authority from the Lord* to change the practice. Thus, "*it's About Time*" they returned to the way the Lord wants baptism to be.

2. The "Padre" is also correct when he says, "when they arose out of the water they were released from their sins." Release from sins does not occur *until after baptism*, according to the New Testament. God sent the preacher Ananias to Saul, telling him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and *be baptized*, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The apostles on Pentecost commanded "repentant people" to be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Now, the Baptists (and many other denominations) do not believe this, but that is exactly what God's word says baptism does for us. No wonder the apostle Peter said *baptism saves us*. "The like figure whereunto even *baptism doth also now save us* (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

3. The "Padre" says ". . . many churches are returning to the more ancient style of baptism." I suppose that is possible. Happily, I assure you that we in churches of

Honoring God's Word

Bill Reeves

El Salvador is one of the seven countries of Central America. It is the smallest of these countries, but with the most dense population. Having preached there many times, I am personally knowledgeable of the many conservative congregations in that land. The people are very religious, very God-fearing. The founders of the country named it El Salvador, meaning The Savior. They named their capital city, San Salvador, meaning Saint Savior.

I was impressed when recently I received a hand-written letter from a brother in the Lord who is of that country. I noticed that the white envelope was made opaque, to prevent one's being able to read the writing on the letter inside the envelope. But the opaqueness-effect was unusual. It appeared to me, as I examined the envelope, that there were lines of print on the inside of the envelope. Being curious, I opened the envelope with scissors, and found that the insides were covered with print. The print was in small font, but readable, and covered the entire inside of the envelope. What a surprise to see what the print said!

I scanned it and here present the text on one of the inside walls of the envelope:

Let them shout for joy, and be glad that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good. But thou shalt remember the Lord for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them that ye may prosper in all that ye do. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through

Christ *are not returning* to the ancient style of baptism. Why? Because we never *departed from the ancient style* of baptism to begin with! We have always administered baptism by immersion, exactly as the New Testament teaches. Therefore, we continue to follow the example of “. . . the baptism of Jesus” (Matt. 3:13-17) each time we administer this Scriptural action.

Conclusion

Friends, *baptism is a command of Jesus*. He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them. . .” (Matt. 28:19). The baptism he requires is a burial or an immersion in water, for the remission of sin. We must never change any

part of that Divine requirement. If one has been “baptized” by sprinkling or pouring, or if one has been “baptized,” believing they were already saved, *that individual has not yet been baptized as the New Testament requires*. If you are in this condition and would like to be baptized like the Word says, and for *the reason* prescribed in the Word of the Lord, just let us know. We will happily assist you in doing what God requires. A baptistry, with warm water, is available for use in assisting you to do the will of Christ. Do you wish to do so?

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us thanksgiving to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

These passages in order are from Psalm 35:27; Deuteronomy 28:11; 8:18; 29:9; Psalm 1:3; 2 Corinthians 9:8, 11; Philippians 4:19; Isaiah 48:15, 17.

Of all the material in print which the manufacturers of the envelope could have chosen to use to opaque it, they chose Bible passages! What an honor to the word of God! Someone had God's word in his heart when he designed the envelope. But, such is not surprising to me, knowing personally how people of that nation still fear God.

In the early years of the public school system in our country, when the nation still feared God and respected his word, *McGuffey's Reader* was commonly used. To teach the students to read, this textbook employed many passages from the Bible. Young people of today: do you think that I am making this up? Can you believe what I am saying, given the climate of culture in which you live today? (I am looking just now at a copy of this Reader that I have, dated 1857). Didn't the founders of our nation know anything about the vaunted "separation of church and state"? Why

did the nation so honor God's Word from the beginning until recent decades? Contrary to the thinking of many, the phrase, "Separation of church and state" is not found in our Constitution. It is the creation of the liberal mind-set that is bent on supplanting faith in God with atheism as it seeks to legalize all forms of immorality while destroying the morality based on God's word. The Constitution prohibits the government from establishing a particular religion to bind on the nation. This was put in the Constitution (The Bill of Rights, Article I) by the colonists that revolted against England that had a state religion, supported by public taxes. This our nation did not, and does not, want. But to say "separation of church and state," in connection with our Constitution, is a misnomer, a misrepresentation of what the Constitution actually says. This concocted phrase is designed to thwart any expression of honor for God and his word. A movement is already underway to have removed from our coins the phrase, "In God We Trust." Why? Atheism!

Imagine the furor that would be caused by our government's printing and using envelopes with the above-mentioned passages appearing on the inside in order to make the envelopes opaque! The day may come when "missionaries" from El Salvador may have to come to our nation to "Christianize" us!

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Worship Hanging by a String

Larry Devore

Recently, in a conversation with my friend and brother, Eldred Hess, he told of a conversation he had some years ago with a man he knew. Eldred knew this man went to (a denominational) church regularly. But one Sunday the man did not attend. Eldred asked him about this, knowing that he was not sick or working that Sunday. The man told him, "I could not go to worship last Sunday. My guitar string was broke, and there was no place to buy one on Sunday." I guess the poor fellow never even considered the possibility of going without his guitar! He never considered the possibility of worshipping God without playing his guitar! No guitar string, no worship! To him, instrumental music was not an aid to worship — it was absolutely necessary. He would not even go if he couldn't play his guitar!

While this story is somewhat amusing, it is also *sad* to think that many people cannot even contemplate worshipping God without some kind of aid or equipment. God made man; God gave man a voice to sing praises to him, and if we do, then God gets the glory. On the other hand, man has invented many musical instruments; man likes to play them and men like to hear them, so who is glorified? Man, not God!

There are nine passages in the N.T. that deal with music. They are Matthew 26: 30, Mark 14:26, Acts 15:25, Romans 15: 9, 1 Corinthians 14: 15, Ephesians 5: 19, Colossians 3: 16, Hebrews 2: 12, James 5:13. These all speak of *singing* in worship. That is what the first century church did. Let us be content with that today, and neither our worship nor our salvation will be hanging by a string!

A Night of Darkness!

Louis J. Sharp

We are thinking of the *night* of Jesus' betrayal, by Judas Iscariot. What a terrible night of darkness that night was! Jesus had broken the news to his disciples: "Verily, verily I say unto you, that *one of you* shall betray Me. He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it . . . He gave it to Judas Iscariot . . . then said, that thou doest do it quickly. He then that received the sop went immediately out: and *it was night*" (John 13:21, 26-27, 30). Yes, this is a brief description of a night of gloom and despair. Have you considered what Judas *left*, when he went out that night?

First, he left his friends. Dark it is indeed, for he who has no friends. We sometimes observe those who seem to be all alone. They have forfeited their friends for other *things* throughout their lives. These loners sometimes boast, "I need no friends. I can handle everything all by myself." But the time will come when friends are very necessary to our well being. All of us *need true friends*.

Secondly, he lost all hope. Hope is so essential to our physical and mental health. It is that which keeps us *keeping on!* It is the blessed hope that we possess. The Hebrew writer describes it as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (6:19). The individual who has no hope is, indeed, one to be pitied. There was no hope left for Judas, when he went out into the darkness of that night.

Thirdly, and worst of all, he left his Savior. How utterly hopeless we are without Christ. As we read of Judas' action, we may ask, "How could he do it?" I suggest to you that Judas did it the same way that erring Christians have rejected Christ today. They simply turn their backs to him, and feel that they no longer have any need for him. Because of their love for the world, and the things of this world (1 John 2:15-16), they long for these things *more* than they long for Christ. How sad it is, for those who *once knew the Lord*, and were faithfully serving him, to turn again to the "beggary elements of this world" (See 2 Pet. 2:20-22). The divine record declares it would be better for that man, that he had never been born. Those who turn away from Christ, emulate the deeds of Judas.

Finally, Judas committed suicide. Like Judas, many commit *spiritual suicide* day by day. In despair, Judas went out and hung himself. His vivid memory was that "he had betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). How many are now "crucifying the Son of God afresh, . . . putting Him to open shame" (Heb. 6:6)? Do not go as far as Judas did, in destroying your last hope. Turn back to God, while time and opportunity are still yours. Repent, and pray God for forgiveness. He will hear!

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"Jacob and Israel" continued from page 2

he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." Esau thinks that Jacob is appropriately named because his conduct fits his name. In the former case that Esau mentioned, Jacob would not give his hungry brother pottage to eat until and unless he sold him his birthright (25:28-34). In the latter case, Jacob stole the birthright blessing intended for his brother with the assistance of his mother Rebekah. When Rebekah heard that Isaac was going to bless Esau, she helped Jacob obtain the blessing by cooking goats to taste like venison, coaching Jacob on what to do and say, and helping disguise him so that the nearly-blind Isaac would think that Jacob was Esau.

During this stage of his life, Jacob is a man who uses any circumstance and situation to his advantage, to gain what he wants for himself through subterfuge and devious tricks. He is the trickster.

Meeting His Match

Jacob flees from the land of Canaan because his devious tricks alienated his brother to the point that Esau is resolved to kill him (27:41-46). Rebekah helps him escape Esau's wrath by telling Isaac that she wants Jacob to marry one of their own family. They send Jacob to Haran where Laban lives in search of a mate. In Laban, Jacob met his match.

Jacob meets Rachel and wants to marry her. He agrees to work seven years for her hand in marriage. When the time comes for him to marry her, Laban substitutes Leah in the place of Rachel (28:23). The parallels to his deceiving of Isaac are conspicuous. With Isaac the younger Jacob steals the blessing of the older Esau. In providential retribution, Laban substitutes the older Leah in the place of the younger Rachel. Jacob has received a dose of his own medicine. Nevertheless, he agrees to work a second seven-year period for the hand of Rachel.

At the end of the seven years, Jacob is ready to return home to his family with his wives and children. However, Laban

persuades him to continue working for him upon these agreed upon wages — “all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire” (30:30). Laban tries to keep Jacob from getting his just wages by removing those animals which might produce such offspring. But Jacob uses his own means and soon has more cattle than Laban wanted to pay him. During the course of this work agreement, Laban repeatedly changes Jacob’s wages, trying to take advantage of him (31:7, 41). Only the providence of God protects Jacob from Laban’s treachery and deceit.

Because Jacob prospers so greatly, Laban and his sons’ attitude toward Jacob changes (31:1-2). Under divine command (31:3), Jacob decides to return to Canaan. Resorting to his usual trickery, Jacob leaves Laban unannounced and flees toward Canaan. Three days later, Laban hears that Jacob has fled and pursues him for seven days. Only divine intervention saves Jacob on this occasion from Laban inflicting harm on him (31:4-54).

Reconciliation With Esau

Shortly after Laban and Jacob separate, Jacob faces another problem — Esau. Although twenty years have passed, his mother never sent word that Esau’s anger had abated and that it was safe for Jacob to return home. Jacob decides to send messengers to Esau to announce his coming. The messengers come back with the report that Esau is coming with 400 men (32:1-8). Jacob fears that Esau is coming against him with hostile intent.

He resorts to his usual schemes. He divides his clan into two companies so that if Esau attacks one the other can escape (32:9). Then Jacob prays to God:

O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude (32:9-12).

Having confessed his own unworthiness and appealing for God to deliver him, based upon God’s own promises, Jacob then sends a lavish gift to Esau consisting of 550 cattle (32:13-15). He gives his messengers instructions about what they are to say to Esau when they meet him. Repeatedly, he refers to Esau as his “lord” and himself as Esau’s “servant” (32:4, 5, 18).

That night, Jacob wrestled with an angel. The text

reads:

And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank (32:23-32).

The changing of Jacob’s name to Israel is the climax of this great conflict. The angel tells Jacob, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל): for as a prince hast thou power (אֲרַעְרֶה) with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (32:28). The change in Jacob’s name reflects a change in his character. Heretofore, he sought to dominate men by deceit and trickery; now he prevails by prayer and generous gifts to his brother in order to be reconciled with him. Instead of putting everyone before him, he leads the clan in meeting Esau. In place of arrogance, he displays humility to his brother. In penitence in tries to give back to his brother what he has taken from him. Indeed, Jacob’s character is changed and his change in conduct is reflected in the change of his name. By prayer to God, a change in his character, and generous gifts, Jacob prevails with God and men (32:28).

Lessons for Today

Many still want to accomplish their goals and aspirations using the carnal trickery and deceit used by Jacob more than prevailing with God and man by using the character traits of Israel.

In business. Unscrupulous men try to accomplish their business goals using deceit and trickery rather than through hard work and honest business practices. They portray that their products will do things they cannot do. They televise testimonials which make absurd claims or print advertising brochures with such testimonials. They prey on the naive and the most vulnerable (old folks, the poor, the desperate). Get rich schemes which appeal to the base greed in man’s character promise the weak fast wealth, but only make money for the one selling it. One may replace the odometer in a used car so that he can misrepresent the mileage on the

car. One may not tell that the car which he is selling has been in a wreck and still has some problems.

In the local church. A man wishes to “have more influence” in a local congregation. Usually that means that he wants to run things in the local church. So, he begins to play the part of Absalom. He find those who are malcontents in the congregations and expresses sympathy for their plight. Here is what Absalom did:

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for

judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

In a similar way, men with the desire to rule find those who are discontent with the present rule of the congregation and ingratiate them until they can find an issue on which to ride. When they find some pretense on which to hang their hat, they then press their way until they accomplish their purpose and goal — to take control of the congregation.

Conclusion

This is the character that the wily, deceitful Jacob used to accomplish his purposes prior to his experience at Penueel where he met God face to face (32:30). Those who act like Jacob need an experience similar to what Jacob experienced in which they learn that the way to prevail with God and men, is not through such deceitful and wily deeds of trickery and political maneuvering, but through confession of one’s sins, trusting in the promises of God, and showing beneficent goodwill to one’s brother. Are you a Jacob or an Israel?

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Quips & Quotes



Highlights of Italy Tour

Join Mike and Sandy Willis

Visiting — Venice, Florence, Sorrento, Pompeii, Naples, and Rome

November 2-13, 2002

In Venice the highlights include the Byzantine Basilica San Marco and the Bridge of Sighs. Going through Ravenna which is a city unsurpassed in art treasures we continue on to Florence where we will see Michaelangelo's original statue of David. Leaving Florence, we travel south through the countryside. On the way to Rome we will visit Pompeii. At Rome the sights include Vatican City, including the Sistine Chapel and the famous *Last Judgment* and *The Creation of Man*. We will also tour the remnants of "Ancient" Rome and visit the Colosseum and Trevi Fountain. Rome was an important city for the political events of the first century and was where Paul was imprisoned and later beheaded. On this trip there will be time for relaxing and shopping.

For additional information, please contact Mike Willis at mikewillis001@cs.com, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123 or call him at 317-272-6520.