



Letter To My Sons When I Gave Them a Bible

Abraham Smith

(**Note:** *I gave my twin sons, Zachariah and Isaac, Bibles. The letter below is a copy of what I plan to insert in those Bibles for them to have in the future and throughout their adult lives, even after I am gone should the Lord allow me to go before them.*)

Dear Son,

It is my pleasure to give to you a copy of the greatest gift on earth, God's holy word. It is my hope and prayer that throughout your life you will think on, follow, and profit from these words I now write to you to the degree that the truth is contained in them. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Always bear in mind that the word of God dwelling in your heart by faith will give you the power to live a godly life. As the above Scripture also shows, it will help you to test your motives as to

whether they are right. Always strive to be able to truthfully say as the psalmist said, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11). Filling your heart and mind with God's word will kill your desire for sin.

God's word will give you faith (Rom. 10:17). "And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (1 John 5:4). Strong faith is the foundation of strong convictions in right and wrong and the foundation of great courage to dare to do good things that are difficult even when those things are not popular.

But strong faith begins with your knowledge of the Scriptures.

Please let the Timothy of the Bible be your example in that the Bible says of him, "... from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). No doubt, Timothy was acquainted with the words of Scripture
see "Letter To My Sons" on p. 408

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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mike.willis001@cs.com.

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Condemning Brethren and Other Tidbits

Mike Willis

CONDEMNING BRETHREN

Some brethren habitually condemn preachers who go around the country condemning their brethren. Now think about that! These brethren condemn their brethren for condemning brethren. There's something inconsistent about that.

All of us condemn something, whether that be sins of sensuality (fornication, lasciviousness), division, immodest dress, or false religion. Even those who want a positive religion are swift to condemn those whose preaching is too negative.



As a matter of fact, those who cry the loudest about religious zealots among us who are going around the country preaching sermons in which they mention the names of brethren who have loose views of fellowship are equally guilty of condemning brethren — only they condemn another group of brethren. These brethren are free with their condemnation of brethren who review the teaching of others in articles written in periodicals among us. They have condemned as jingoists, buzzards, and snarling dogs those who review loose positions on fellowship. Whereas one group of brethren quote and document the teaching they are examining, the other calls names, but both groups condemn other brethren. In respect to condemning brethren, there is no difference between the two groups of brethren.

A fundamental difference in the two groups is in what they are censuring and condemning. The first group is reviewing the teaching of those who have moved away from the plain teaching of Matthew 19:9 on divorce and remarriage. They have reviewed and examined the teaching of Homer Hailey, Jerry Bassett, James D. Bales, Sam Dawson, Olan Hicks, and others who have espoused false doctrines on divorce and remarriage. The second group has reviewed the teaching of those who have opposed these false teachers and false teaching. While saying that they agree with the first group on divorce and remarriage, their strongest condemnations have been aimed at those (such as Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Tom Roberts, etc.) who have reviewed Homer Hailey, Olan Hicks, Jerry Bassett, and others. They are quick to point out what they perceive as inconsistencies in those who examine the teachings of Hailey, Bassett, Hicks, etc. but they never get around to exposing the false teachers and their false teachings.

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Elders in Every Church

Connie W. Adams

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). “And for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee (Tit. 1:5).

These verses show that it was the practice of inspired men to appoint elders in every church, in every city. Paul had the same order for all the churches. Touching marriage in a time of distress, he wrote, “And so ordain I in all churches” (1 Cor. 7:17). His practice in this regard established a rule or norm to be followed by others, for he wrote, “Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9). They were all to “walk by the same rule” (Phil. 3:16).

PATTERN AUTHORITY

The verses cited establish pattern authority, in spite of the fact that many today say that there is no pattern. One writer said that “pattern authority has been our undoing.” Nearly twenty years ago, Milo Hadwin wrote a book on apostolic examples which was published by *Firm Foundation* and editorially endorsed by then editor, Ruell Lemmons, in which he said that apostolic examples do not form a binding pattern for the church of the present. He further said that there was no reason for brethren to be alarmed about that, for after all, not a great deal was at stake in accepting that premise. The only practices at stake, said he, were *the first day of the week observance of the Lord’s Supper and a plurality of elders in every church*. That amounted to saying that the worship and organization of the church are really not that important! That was too large a pill for some of us to swallow.

PREPARATION NEEDED

Men are not prepared to be elders when they first obey the gospel, for no novice is to be appointed (1 Tim. 3:6). Neither is one an elder just because of chronological age. Paul “ordained” elders in every church. Men get older whether you “ordain” them or not. Time takes care of that. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, divine qualifications are set forth in order that men prepared for this work might be recognized and chosen in keeping with divine wisdom. When such men are found and ordained, they are made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). That means they have met the standard determined by God and revealed in the Scriptures by the Spirit. They are then to “take the oversight” of “the flock of God among them” (1 Pet. 5:1-3). They have a “rule” for which they shall “give account,” hopefully “with joy” (Heb. 13:17).

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God's order then, is a plurality of elders in every church, exercising oversight of that flock, and no other. They are not to be overlords, supplanting the authority of Christ, who is the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), but are to be worthy examples before the flock in doing the work of the Lord. It is a fact that some men chosen as elders are far from qualified and that others have perverted the Lord's plan for the function of elders. But that does not mean that God's plan was wrong and that elders should be abolished. When the storm door on your house needs repair, you don't tear down the whole house — you fix the door! Certainly, situations arise which need correction. But in the process, let us not throw out God's arrangement which he ordained for all the churches.

A GREAT NEED TODAY

We hear much about a preacher shortage. There is one, and it is serious. But there is also a serious shortage of qualified elders. We need to ask "Why"?

How is it that a congregation exists fifteen or twenty years and never has at least two men qualified to serve as elders? Are the elders such poor examples that younger men are discouraged from this work? Have gospel preachers failed in their teaching to inspire younger men to equip themselves to serve? Are younger men so preoccupied with earning a living and the pursuit of material goals that they fail to rear their children to be faithful to the Lord, thereby ruling themselves out of consideration because they do not have "faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly," though they themselves may finally awaken to their own need for spiritual growth?

Or is it that preachers in congregations without elders enjoy having things in a rather fluid state so they can run things more easily? Could it be that there are some brethren in these congregations who know they could never be appointed, but who, at present, have much influence on congregational decisions? Are they afraid of losing their voice? Have some brethren read more into the qualifications than God put there, and acted arbitrarily in rejecting qualified men? Have some decided that they have done

all right without elders and therefore do not need them? Beware, brethren, for this assumes that we know better how to carry on the Lord's work than he knew. God's order is not to be perverted, subverted, or supplanted.

UNSCRIPTURAL SUBSTITUTES

Some congregations without elders have settled for majority rule and speak freely of "voting" to settle questions. Surely, some means must be found to determine a consensus of judgment to arrive at workable plans. But to speak of "voting" to settle every matter leaves the impression that the church is a democracy to be ordered by popular opinion. It is the language of Ashdod. It also presents the temptation to play politics to line up enough "votes" ahead of time to carry the desires of selfish and ambitious men.

Some years ago, a northern Ohio congregation had no elders. Deciding that none was qualified, they selected seven men who were empowered to make decisions for the congregation. These men were styled "the board of governors." They had no elders, but they had "governors"! I had a session once with the preacher of that congregation and with one of those "governors" and both defended the practice. Another place appointed four men to function "in lieu of elders." Whether seven or four, if anyone knows the Scripture for such a practice and will send it to us, we will print it for all to see!

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

On the brighter side, we know a number of younger men over the land who have told us that they are trying to grow spiritually, work harder for the Lord, and rear their families with a view to someday being prepared to tend the flock of God. Not long ago, a teenage boy told me he would like to prepare himself to serve one day as an elder in the church. The success of his intention will depend on the kind of woman he marries and how well his children turn out. It is vitally important that we train the young and give them opportunities to develop.

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Sprinkling's Major Wrinklings

Wrinkles are not desirable, whether they be wrinkles in our clothing, wrinkles in our skin, or wrinkles in our life. The dictionary defines a wrinkle as “a ridge or crease on a normally smooth surface, caused by crumpling, folding or shrinking.” Some have taken the smooth and level gospel message and crumpled it full of man-made wrinkles. They have folded a little here, shrunk a little there, and perverted the truth (Gal. 1:7). Our definition of wrinkle continues. It is “an ingenious new trick or method; clever innovation.” Some have formed major wrinkles on the inspired teaching of baptism. They have introduced a “clever innovation” that says baptism can be performed by sprinkling. Let’s investigate some of sprinkling’s major wrinklings.

COMMAND FOR BAPTISM

We must first establish the necessity of baptism. Christ clearly commanded baptism when he said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19). When the guilt stricken Jews on Pentecost asked, “What shall we do?” Peter answered, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37-38). Without baptism we cannot “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27), “enter the kingdom” (John 3:3-5), “wash away” sins (Acts 22:16), “be saved” (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), or rise to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). These verses clearly establish that baptism is essential. But now we ask, how is this essential act of baptism to be performed? Is it by immersion or by sprinkling?

ORIGIN OF SPRINKLING

If sprinkling did not originate with Christ or the inspired teachings of the apostles, then it is not authorized by God (Matt. 28:18f). When did sprinkling first originate? The first record of sprinkling is that of Novatian in A.D. 251. In A.D. 753 Pope Stephen II proclaimed sprinkling admissible only in cases of necessity. The council at Ravenna, which met

in A.D. 1311, declared it no longer mattered which form was administered. By A.D. 1550 the practice of sprinkling was more common than immersion.

There is no record of sprinkling in the first century church. Even denominational leaders recognize this. John Calvin said, “It is of no consequence at all whether the person baptized is totally immersed or whether he is merely sprinkled by an effusion of water. This should be a matter of choice to churches in different regions, although the word baptize signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was practiced by the ancient church.” Calvin, though wrong in his application, admits that sprinkling did not come from the first century church. We must remember that anything that does not originate from, as well as harmonize with, God’s word is unscriptural. We are to “do all in the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17). Holding to the apostolic “pattern” is essential (2 Tim. 1:13). Anyone teaching another doctrine is “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9).

DEFINITION OF BAPTISM

1. In Greek lexicons. The English word “baptism” comes from the Greek word, *baptidzo*. Thayer defines this word as “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge, overwhelm.” Pickering defines it as “to dip, immerse, submerge, plunge, sink, overwhelm, to steep, to soak.” Altingius says “baptism is immersion when the whole body is immersed, but the term baptism is never used concerning aspersion.” Venem said baptism “is nowhere used in the scripture for sprinkling.” Even Martin Luther said subjects of baptism “ought to be wholly immersed, and immediately to be drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it” (Bretners 222-223). T.W. Bretners, in his classic work, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, lists an impressive series of quotes from thirty-four lexicons and seventy additional scholars who all define baptism as immersion. He also lists thirty-eight different versions of the

New Testament which each translate *baptidzo* as meaning immersion.

2. In Greek literature. Contemporary literature used *baptidzo* in reference to immersion. Polybius, who was born in 205 B.C. describes a sea battle with the word *baptidzo*. “They made continued assaults and submerged (*baptidzo*) many of the vessels” (*History*, Book 1, 56:6). The ships were not fatally sprinkled. They were immersed in water. Josephus, who was born in A.D. 37, describes the murder of Aristobulus this way, “And there, according to command, being immersed (*baptidzo*) by the Gauls in a swimming bath, he dies” (*Jewish Wars*, Book 1, 22:2). This was not a death by sprinkling. Cassius, who was born in A.D. 155, describes the effects of a violent storm. “The ships which were in the Tiber . . . were submerged (*baptidzo*)” (*Roman History*, book 37, chapter 58).

3. In God’s word. The Bible itself defines baptism for us. Baptism is a washing. “Be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26). Sprinkling does not wash, but immersion does. Baptism is also a burial. “We were buried with Him through baptism” (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). Burial requires a complete covering. Sprinkling does not cover, but immersion does.

GRAMMATICAL INCONSISTENCIES

Sprinkle means “to scatter into drops.” Grammatical accuracy denies the possibility of sprinkling someone. You cannot scatter someone into drops. You can scatter liquid into drops, but not a person. However, a person can be immersed, which fits the accurate definition of baptism. Sprinkling does not grammatically fit the context of the passages on baptism. If you add the meaning of sprinkle into Acts 22:16, it would say, “Arise and be scattered into drops.” Or, try Mark 16:16, “He that believes and is scattered into drops shall be saved.” What about Acts 2:38? “Repent and be scattered into drops.” Such a meaning is absurd. But the true definition of baptism as immersion

fits. “Arise and be immersed.” “He that believes and is immersed shall be saved.” “Repent and be immersed.”

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

1. Jesus. The baptism of Jesus requires immersion. Jesus “was baptized of John in the Jordan” (Mark 1:9). The Spirit descended like a dove when Jesus was “coming up out of the water” (Mark 1:10). Going into the water and coming up out of the water signifies immersion. Why get in the water if you are merely sprinkled? We must follow Jesus’ example, and he was immersed, not sprinkled.

2. John the Baptist. John the Baptist practiced immersion. We can see this from the previous example of him baptizing Jesus. Also, this baptizer went to Aenon “because much water was there” (John 3:23). Sprinkling does not require much water, but immersion does.

3. Ethiopian eunuch. The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch affirms immersion. “Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water . . .” (Acts 8:38-39). Going down into and coming up out of the water would be a ridiculous thing to do if this traveling eunuch was only to be sprinkled. The eunuch went down into the water because he was immersed as God’s word commands.

HAVE YOU BEEN IMMERSSED?

But what if someone is sick? What if it’s too cold? What if enough water cannot be found? Such questions constitute thinking “beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6). Excuses and hypothetical examples do not change what the Bible commands of you right now. Don’t be guilty of trying to wrinkle the smooth and level truth of God’s word on baptism. Have you been immersed in water for the remission of your sins?

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“Go, and Sin No More”

In John 8:11, Jesus told an adulteress, “Go, and sin no more.” This is indeed a powerful and precious passage, one that gives hope to every sinner. It has been often misunderstood and misused to suggest that Jesus was “non-judgmental,” that he only encouraged but never condemned the sinner. If Jesus did not require the penalty for sin, it is said, we should be “more tolerant” on the subject of adultery and on a wide range of other sins today. Let us consider these beautiful and blessed words of Jesus in their original context.

THE TEXT IN ITS CONTEXT

In John 8:1-6 we read, “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.”

It has been well observed that the enemies of our Lord were hoping that he would so explain away the seventh commandment, which forbids adultery, as to encourage them to break the sixth commandment, which forbids murder. In other words, they were looking for an excuse to put him to death.

“But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him” — why did he delay answering them? Jesus, by ignoring them, was giving them plenty of rope with which to hang themselves. They thought they had him trapped, and that he could not answer them without destroying himself, and so they pressed their argument harder and harder upon him. Verse 7 says, “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Now what is the meaning of that statement?

Jesus is pointing out that they had not come to him out of concern for justice in this matter. This is obvious on the face of it because they brought only the woman and not the man. The Law of Moses plainly taught in Deuteronomy 22:22 that both the adulterer and adulteress were to be put to death. But they brought only the adulteress. Where is the adulterer? If the police caught two men robbing a bank, arrested only one of them, and let the other go, scot free, would we not think that the police themselves were implicated some way in the crime? In other words, we would not expect them to conduct themselves that way unless they themselves were overturning justice. These men were not interested for one moment in justice as is evident because they did not bring the man who committed adultery with this woman.

Jesus called attention to this miscarriage of justice when he said, “He that is without sin among you,” that is, he that is not implicated in this crime. He who is truly seeking justice may cast the first stone. The point of that reference is that in Deuteronomy 17:7 the Law of Moses required in a capital case that the witnesses to the crime must cast the first stones. This is the exact meaning of the statement by Jesus, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her.”

Jesus was *not* saying, as is sometimes supposed, “Well, if there is any one of you who has never made a mistake and never committed a sin of any kind, then you are free to stone her.” Jesus was *not* advocating a tolerant, non-judgmental, broad-minded attitude which says, “Since we all make mistakes, let us not be too strict in the application of God’s law on adultery or any other sin.” That was not the point at all, but rather Jesus is referring to the teaching of Deuteronomy 17:7 which they understood very well. In fact, Jesus is insisting that the law be applied strictly and accurately, exactly as God gave it. They attempted to use God’s word hypocritically, twisting it to serve their own sinful aims, namely the rejection of the truth taught by Jesus and of the evidence that he was the Messiah. Rather than teaching tolerance for sin, Jesus is publicly exposing and rebuking all sin.

In verse 8 we read, “And again he stooped down and

wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.” In other words, they knew they were implicated in this matter; they knew they were not seeking justice; they knew they did not bring both the man and the woman who committed the sin. *Therefore, none of them was truly qualified to carry out the penalty of the law because none of them was innocent in this matter themselves.* Instead of convicting Jesus of sin, they ended up convicting themselves of sin!

“GO, AND SIN NO MORE”

Finally, the Bible says, “And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.”

Now, some have imagined that when Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn thee,” he was saying we should never condemn sin. But what he was teaching was that he could not carry out the penalty of the law because he was not a personal witness to the crime. Remember that Deuteronomy 17:7 said that the witnesses to the crime must cast the first stones. It would be impossible then for Jesus to cast the first stone. Therefore, he said, “Neither do I condemn thee.”

Now, what more could he say that would be helpful to this woman? The men who brought her to Jesus were not interested in this woman for one moment, but were only interested in trapping the Lord. Jesus was truly interested in the woman. She had narrowly escaped with her life. Jesus says something to her to truly bless and to truly help her, “Go, and sin no more.”

Many years ago a preacher named J.W. McGarvey, who lived in Lexington, Kentucky, received a note on a Sunday afternoon from a prostitute. She was well known for her sinful life in that community. She told brother McGarvey she would be at the service that night, and she wanted him to preach and explain whether a person like her could be saved. Brother McGarvey chose to preach from this text in John 8 and to show her that Jesus taught there was hope for the adulteress when he said, “Go, and sin no more.” Yes, that prostitute heard brother McGarvey’s sermon and obeyed the gospel, and then she became well known in the community for her deeds of benevolence to those who were in need.

The proper use of this passage is that God hates sin, and God condemns sin, and if we are going to be saved from our sins, we must turn away from sin. This passage

is misused when it is twisted to teach that we should never condemn sin in any way. Jesus came to this earth not to destroy the sinner but to save him by exposing, opposing, and, yes, *condemning* sin of every kind (John 3:18-21; 8:24, 32). God expects us to respect his word and to obey his word. We need to realize more and more the importance of submission to the will and to the word of God.

The Lord is telling us today, “Go, and sin no more.” The Lord does not teach this doctrine that says, “You’re OK and I’m OK, and it does not matter how we live.” He does *not* teach that we can “do our own thing” and be saved in defiance of the word of God. He teaches us to repent of our sins and to turn away from our sins in genuine, godly sorrow and repentance, and to obey the gospel without delay. Jesus is telling the person who has committed a single act of adultery that he must not do so again. Jesus is telling the person who habitually practices adultery by going to the bed of adultery in an adulterous marriage that he must end such a relationship. Jesus is telling any of us who commit any sin to stop and quit the practice before it destroys us in this world or in the world to come.

If we are to be saved from our sins today, we must turn to Christ. We must believe that he is the divine Son of God. We must remember that Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,” or condemned in hell. Yes, dear friend, Jesus taught the reality of both heaven and hell. We must make a choice between heaven and hell. We plead with men today in the very words of Christ that they might turn away from every sin: “Go, and sin no more.” Will you not submit yourself to the Son of God who died for your sins and who is coming again to receive us to a home in heaven? We urge you to obey the gospel of Christ today without delay.

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“Ye Have Heard That It Was Said . . .”

Jim McDonald

Six times in Matthew 5 Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time” or “it was also said” (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). In each instance after giving what was said, Jesus adds, “But I say unto you. . . .” These added words by Jesus are intended to be a contrast, but a contrast between Jesus and whom? Does he contrast what the law said with that which he said or is he contrasting what the Pharisees said (the teachers of the law) with what he said? Does it matter who or whom it was Jesus was contrasting his teaching with? In the first option (Jesus versus the Law), one sees Jesus preparing the people for a new law versus the old. In the second option (Jesus versus the Pharisees), another idea prevails. That idea is that Jesus, by saying “but I say unto you” was setting forth the true spirit of the law as contrasted with the external form as taught by the Pharisees; not contrasting his doctrine with that of the law. In this thesis Jesus sets forth nothing distinctively different from what the law taught.

According to this philosophy, he calls the people back to the spirit and tenor of the law which the Pharisees had ignored and left. Is *this* the proper approach to the subject matter Jesus deals with? Jesus did have problems with the Pharisees. One only need read his searing reprimand of them in Matthew 23 to see the great chasm between him and them. And, it is apparent that in this sermon Jesus condemns the self-righteousness of these teachers, warning his disciples they must have a different spirit if they would enter the kingdom of heaven.

Yet, while Jesus charged the Pharisees with hypocrisy (Matt. 23:3); making void the word of God by their traditions (Matt. 15:6); and binding grievous burdens upon the people (Matt. 23:4), it is also worthy to notice that Jesus said, “The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat. All things whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe, but do ye not after their works for they say and do not” (Matt. 23:2ff). His principal grievance with the Pharisees was that through their traditions they set aside the law they taught rather than an actual defacing of the law itself.

Are we are to say then, that when Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time” that Jesus had the Pharisees in mind who, as teachers, had corrupted the law Moses gave? I think not. How could we say such when each passage in which the Lord said, “Ye have heard that it had been said to them of old time” is *exactly* what the law did say? “Thou shall not kill”; “Thou shall not commit adultery”; “Whosoever shall put away his wife . . .”; “Thou shalt not forswear thyself”; “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Deut. 5:17; Exod. 20:14; Deut. 24:1; Lev. 19:12; Exod. 21:24). The only one of the six which is not an exact quotation says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy” and yet this is a representation of the spirit of that law for the Law said “Love thy neighbor” (Lev. 19:18).

God’s instructions to the nation to drive out the Canaanites and to make no covenants with other nations does translate into “Hate thy enemy.” None of these six quotations was a twisting or wresting of what the law said, nor some perversion the Pharisees had made of the law. It was not what the Pharisees said that is the contrast Jesus makes; it was what the law said which Jesus contrasts his teaching with. One thing that must not be forgotten as one studies this part of Jesus’ sermon on the Mount is that the law was given to a physical nation and designed to regulate their physical behavior. In such a case the law could enforce no punishment for the attitude and spirit of its subjects so long as those attitudes did not lead them to a violation of its precepts. It could hold no man responsible as guilty of a criminal act such as hatred, so long as that hatred did not cause him to murder. It could punish no lustful man who did not commit adultery, it could hold no man responsible for his disposition to vow, so long as he kept his vows. But, Jesus’ kingdom is spiritual, a spiritual law for a spiritual people. And, unlike a nation with national laws, God can *and* will hold a man liable for hatred, as well as murder, for lusting, as well as adultery, for holding a man accountable for divorcing his wife and her subsequent adultery in her marriage to another man.

Jesus’ statement “Ye have heard that it was said” and

Poison For the Mind

Society's choices of entertainment have never been kind to those seeking to honor God and live for him, but there should be little doubt that the industry spawning current entertainment fad and fashion has sunken to new lows. In previous generations the ever-present teenage rebellion was met and countered with relatively higher standards by parents, educators, and entertainers in general. It is no longer the case!

It is regrettably true that while many parents today encourage the misbehaviors of the young by their "hands-off" approach to parenting, many educators do so by their offer of philosophical justification for the conduct, and the moguls of the entertainment industry encourage anti-social behavior and mannerisms for the sake of "filthy lucre." Their ill-gotten gain will rise up to testify against their greed later in this life, as well as in final judgment (Jas. 5:3).

The general situation of this infamous industry, typified by the award of a Peoples' Choice Award to the rapper Eminem, was recently the focus of a biting analysis of a column by Bill O'Reilly. Under the cover of "artistry," the money-hungry advance the cause of social and moral degradation (Prov. 14:34) by selling mind poison and one-way tickets to misery, as charged by the columnist. The coarsening of America is the undesirable consequence of this endeavor. The abuse of women; the portrayal of American society as a deck stacked against the poor and minorities; immediate gratification on all levels; promotion of the "gangsta" attitude; encouragement of gutter language, tattoos, and body piercings; approval of obscenity and

then "But I say unto you" is a contrast of Jesus' teaching with what the law taught preparing his people for his law to come.

P.O. Box 155032, Lufkin, Texas 75915-5032 jim_mc@juno.com

violence; and the selling and use of dope characterize this moral abyss that has developed around Hollywood. Is this really the people's choice, or just the Peoples' Choice?

What can the godly do? They must continue to live their lives by divine standards (Rom. 12:1-2), pray fervently to the Father to be used to bring better times (1 Tim. 2:1-7), let the light of Christ and the gospel shine in them (Matt. 5:13-16), and seek to teach the gospel to all (Rom. 1:16). It is still the hope of the world because it points people to Christ, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Letters to newspaper editors, church-sponsored teaching articles, and other righteous involvement might gain the attention of a few, but the personal interaction of Christians with individuals in the world will produce the most results. O'Reilly charged that Eminem is as dangerous to society as al Qaida, but we can be thankful that God's people have the only antidote to the moral and spiritual poison being spewed on the unsuspecting masses.

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

The Eternal Kingdom

by F.W. Mattox

A history of the church. Good survey written by a former president of Lubbock Christian College in 1955.

Hardback — #10085 — \$13.00

Paper — #10084 — \$10.50

Weeds

Sweat, sorrow, and weeds have gone together as a curse ever since our first parents sinned in the garden. God often takes adversity and makes something beneficial out of it. He does that with suffering and trials. He did it with the crucifixion. If he could do that with the crucifixion, surely he could do it with weeds.

When I announce my topic you will have a hint at what I've been doing lately. I've never heard, preached, or read a sermon on weeds, but that's my topic today.

In the spring and summer when we plant flowers and vegetables, like it or not, weeds occupy much of our attention. And it all seems like a waste of time and energy. I've never been more tired than after a few hours of pulling weeds.

Some time ago I preached a sermon on questions that few books, if any, attempt to answer — except the Bible. Here is another we can add to that list. I know of no other book or set of encyclopedias that even attempt to answer why we have weeds. You won't find it in *Brittanica*, *World Book*, or any of the academic books on horticulture or agronomy. Why do we have weeds?

THE GROUND WAS CURSED (GEN. 3:17-19)

This is the reason given as to why we have weeds. Sweat, sorrow, and weeds have gone together as a curse ever since our first parents sinned in the garden. God often takes adversity and makes something beneficial out of it. He does that with suffering and trials. He did it with the crucifixion. If he could do that with the crucifixion, surely he could do it with weeds.

SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF WEEDS CAN BE LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE

Hardly anything serves as an

antidote for an over-aggressive and rambunctious youngster than to put him in the field or garden chopping and pulling weeds, preferably that renegade Bermuda grass that has that wild and crazy root system (You cotton choppers will know what I'm talking about). I know of nothing that will take the aggression out of a person like that will. I have always thought that boys and girls who grew up in the country, as a general rule, had a better perspective on life and were more settled than those who grew up in the city. It may be difficult to assess, but I have always suspect that weeds had something to do with it.

I must add that after a time of reprieve, that aggression might return to an extra-spunky youngster. But so will the weeds! I might also add that there is nothing more satisfying and refreshing than to see a garden, be it flower or vegetable, which has been cleaned out so the nourishing and beautiful plants can grow. It's a peaceful feeling and you sleep better that night. In raising youngsters, I recommend that you keep a good patch of weeds nearby. It wouldn't hurt to fertilize them once in a while.

We think of weeds as worthless and useless things. The Bible doesn't use the word "weeds" but one time. "Weeds wrapped around my head" (Jonah 2:5). There, it was associated with Jonah's sin. Weeds are always associated with sin and representative of evil. The Bible uses words like "brambles," "briars," "nettles," "tares," "thorns," and "thistles."

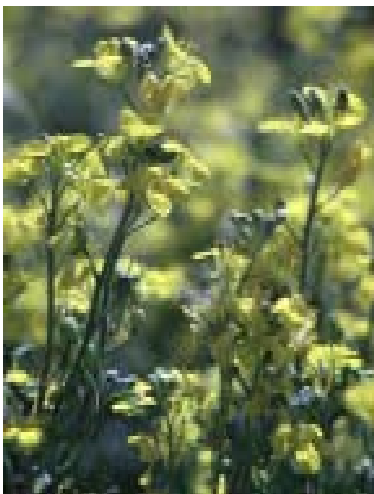
They're all weeds and they're worthless. But worthless doesn't mean harmless. Some weeds are noxious and some are obnoxious and all are dangerous! Some look extremely like a good plant and don't appear all that harmful. But that's deceitful. Do you know what they can do? They can choke! I can't imagine how terrible it would be to be choked to death. Gasping for that last breath! It's a horrible way to die. And you can often uproot a good plant while trying to pull up a bad one.

ANOTHER PRACTICAL OBSERVATION

If we don't take a nearsighted view of weeds, we can see that one good aspect of weeds is that they create jobs. There are gardeners, tool-makers, tool sellers, tractors, tillers, plows, disks, herbicides and all kinds of weed killers, lawn care services, etc. Farming and weeds go together, unhappily. But if you take away all the businesses that are in some way connected with weeds, our unemployment rate would sky rocket (2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 4:28). As long as there are weeds there is no reason why anybody should ever be out of a job.

WEEDS REMIND US OF THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

The curse God placed on the ground is to last until man returns to the ground (Gen. 3:19). There is ironic symbolism in that: (1) man was cre-



ated from the ground, (2) a curse was placed on the ground, (3) man would eat of the ground in sorrow all the days of his life, until (4) man returns to the ground. Sounds like God really wanted to make a point. He really wanted to "run it in the ground" that sin has consequences and one of them is weeds.

Again, who can assess the man hours, the amount of money, the amount of energy and toil, the tools and weed-killers that have been expended to try to get rid of weeds? Yet they are with us in abundance! How powerful, sure, and certain is the word of God, even on things we may deem as insignificant as weeds! Many books have been written on weeds. But the one that has never been written is "How To Totally (Once And For All) Get Rid Of Weeds."

GOD USES WEEDS TO TEACH US LESSONS (IN ADDITION TO HELPING US RAISE OUR YOUNGSTERS)

Weeds are a constant reminder of the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:17-19). Don't we need reminding? The parable of the sower talks about "thorny" ground (Matt. 13:17, 22). Thorns are some of the most obnoxious weeds: thorn in your eyes (Josh. 23:13); thorn in your side (Num. 33:55); thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). The parable of the tares and wheat is a judgment parable (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). And, remember Jesus' lesson in Matthew 7:16-20? Men do not judge a tree by its leaves or bark, but by the fruit it bears. It is a law of universal application that whatever is useless and evil shall be eventually swept away.

WEEDS IN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER (MATT. 13)

Weeds choke out. When I have been gone from home or been extremely busy, I have returned to my garden or flowers to see a beautiful and expensive plant that I really cared for, choked to death by worthless weeds. If only I had tended to it! Spiritually, that is happening to some of you in the congregation here. Some

of you have job obsessions, sports obsessions, hobby obsessions, and society obsessions. These may serve a need in our lives but they need to be done in moderation or they can easily become weeds that choke out a beautiful life. We are too busy!

Sometimes we hear sermons on giving. They're nearly always about money. Did you know the hardest thing to give is not money. It's the easiest. The hardest thing to give is time. We don't usually hear sermons on that. Although money has a place of importance in the Lord's work, it is really the blood, sweat, tears, and time that make a congregation and a soul beautiful, like a garden. There are various ones who need our time, and Jesus said when we serve them we are doing it unto him (Matt. 25:25-30).

We recently had a sermon on becoming a more spiritual person and not being discouraged. We observed that being busy in the Lord's work and serving others is the cure. Afterwards, in talking with brother _____, he said, "I learned that lesson many years ago." I thought to myself, here brother _____ has spent many years taking care of his wife who became an invalid, and has spent thousands of hours making thousands of tapes so others could hear the gospel and spends a lot of time here at the building using the copy machine and distributing good articles to others, while he also suffers physical problems. He seems happy and well-adjusted to his lot in life, and for some reason, when I'm around him I never feel depressed. I have learned a lot of lessons from elderly members of the church. And that's a good one all of us can observe first hand.

We get too busy in many things that are not worthwhile or beneficial. They drag us down physically and spiritually and are trying to choke us. When we are always on the move, going here and there and don't have time for the truly important things, we're too busy! When we don't have time

to spend with new converts, send cards to our visitors, or visit the elderly and shut-ins, we are too busy! When we don't have time for young mothers and fathers (especially those who don't have a mate who worship with them), those struggling with personal problems, those struggling with the world, we are too busy! When we don't have time to show hospitality, prepare a Wednesday night invitation, get our Bible class lesson, attend gospel meetings, and business meetings, we are too busy!

When we don't have time to read the bulletin, assemble on a consistent regular basis or find ourselves arriving late more and more and leaving early, we may be too busy! When we try to organize a personal work program but have difficulty getting participation and it fizzles out, we're too busy! The problem is, we haven't got time to be Christians, except on Sunday morning. We've got too many "weeds" in our lives and if we don't do something drastic they're going to choke us to death! Whether we're climbing the career ladder to success, or enjoying our favorite sports or hobbies, or social club or high societal event, they can become noxious weeds. It is not enough to love flowers, we must hate weeds. "Through they precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:104).

Sometimes we need to just put on the brakes and come to a complete stop (not a rolling stop!), and ask, "What in the world am I doing? What am I thinking? I want to go to heaven more than anything in the world. Why am I doing this?" You all know who I'm talking about, don't you? I'm not talking to the person sitting next to you. I'm talking to the person sitting next to them! We have a duty roster that we sometimes call a "work list" with various assignments like prayer, Lord's table, Scripture reading. We're calling that "work"? It's not work, it's worship. What we do when we leave here is where the work begins. We don't get much work done because after we've been to worship we think we've worked. Boy has the devil pulled a fast one on us if we fall for that! We often don't appreciate the men who keep the duty roster updated and posted every month. Much less do we appreciate the fact that when we don't show up for our assignment, and we didn't notify anyone or got here too late that they're on pins and needles because they don't know if we're going to make it. So they're scrambling around at the last minute to get some one to take your place that hasn't had time to prepare. Maybe we're too busy.

Happiness is inward and not outward. It does not depend on what we have, but on

Remember, we're Christians. We don't have to join the rat race. On judgment day it won't be much of an accomplishment to win a crown for being the fastest rat. Is it because our friends got a new car or a new house, so we've got to have one too? We can have so many weeds in our live that we can become a weed. Remember the parable of the tares?

WEEDS — THEIR LOWEST POINT IN HISTORY

Weeds don't have a very good past. But never in all their history did they sink so low than the shame they represented when my Lord received, not a crown of beautiful flowers or a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns (John 19:2-5). This crown came from evil men who were representative of us all — a cursed, sinful world. That was the shame and suffering he endured for me. A crown of weeds.

CONCLUSION

Weeds have always been associated with and representative of evil. Not only have weeds had a terrible past, they have a very bleak future. The tares will be gathered and burned. The tares represent people. Are you one of them? There are many lessons to be learned from weeds. The next time you're out there chopping and pulling, think about these and your labor will not have been in vain. You can't say you enjoyed this sermon. It wasn't intended for enjoyment. Someone said it is the work of a preacher to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. I'm only trying to help you go to heaven, and that's what it's all about.

Just as God could take the crucifixion and make something beneficial out of it, he has done that with numerous things. Just as there are a number of questions that only the Bible answers and explains, it does that also with weeds. And there may be another reason: sermon material for preachers. Where would we be and how could we explain the principles of a life suffocated by the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world than with the parable of the sower? That illustration cannot be improved upon. Marvel at its wisdom!

You need to decide whether you want to be a beautiful flower or a weed. I hope on judgment day you are not a weed. You can change that now, but you can't then. Remember, Jesus wore a crown of thorns so you could wear the crown of life. For you who have never become Christians, could it be the weeds in your life that are holding you back?

(A sermon delivered at the Northside church of Christ, Jonesboro Arkansas, June 9, 2002)

P.O. Box 3032, State University, Arkansas 72467 rlb612@aol.com

Joe R. Price

Remembering Sister Lela — The Follow Up

Please refer to the first article that I wrote “Remembering Sister Lela” in the September 20, 2001 issue of *Truth Magazine* to connect the thoughts of this final article regarding the life of this precious saint.

Since I wrote the first article, “Remembering Sister Lela,” many things have happened. Monies for a memorial stone to honor sister Lela and a fence to be installed



around the cemetery plot were slow coming in but, enough was finally generated by good brothers and sisters in the Lord to have first the memorial stone cut and placed and then the fence installed. The stone was placed there in the fall of 2001 while I was in Mississippi for a gospel meeting. I drove up there in June of 2002 to watch and take pictures as the fence was installed with the final work completed.

I want to personally thank each of you who sent money to see that this honorable project was completed. I have taken pictures of the memorial stone as well as a picture of sister Lela and her husband.

Since the last article was written, two very significant things have happened. One is that sister Lela’s husband has also passed away and his body is now beside that of his faithful wife. The other thing is that their oldest son Judge

was baptized into Christ in the fall of 2001. He regrets he failed to obey the gospel while his mom was still living but, as I assured him, there will be a reunion in heaven one day where we shall all rejoice together.

I held another gospel meeting for the Sturgis church this past October and the church continues to grow both numerically and spiritually. Brother Leo Henry from Wilsonville, Oregon, faithful companion of mine in meeting work in Mississippi for four years straight (he flies in each year at his own expense to lead singing for me), was able to meet the saints in Sturgis for the first time this year. He had looked forward to this for some time after hearing of the struggles of these precious souls. Brother Alexander Caldwell is still the evangelist there and his good wife, Kristi, is a good helpmate. Brother Caldwell has stood four square for the truth and helped bring to pass the dream sister Lela had of a good, strong church existing that the Lord would be pleased with. Sister Lela would be so happy to see how the church has grown and become a symbol of truth in that area. Please keep these saints in your prayers and if you are ever in the area of Starkville, Mississippi (Sturgis is only twelve miles out of Starkville), please stop and worship with them and both you and they will be encouraged by your visit.

219 Timothy Trail,
Duncanville, Texas
75137 Bholmes180@



Can God Count On You?

Ron Daly

Do you love God? How much? Are you willing to be fully committed to him in every way? Is there anything that you would not do for God (Mark 12:29-30)? We live in a world that is constantly at war, at war with sin (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Whose side are you on?

Can God count on you to increase your knowledge of his word so you can defend it against false teachers and their disciples? “You must continue growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). God wants us to go beyond a state of spiritual infancy and advance to maturity (Heb. 5:11-14). We do this when we pray, study, and apply the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Will you resolve to study the Scriptures on a daily basis?

Can God count on you to defend the truth against every foe? Too many people will defend the gospel if someone they do not like is perverting it. But, if one of their friends perverts God’s word, they tend to be very tolerant, or they will make excuses for them. When truth is at stake, we should have no friends except God. Do you find yourself wetting a finger and sticking it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing before you take a stand on a controversial issue? The Bible says stand! (Eph. 6:13-14; Jude 3).

Can God count on you to take an active role in the work and worship of the local congregation? God has not placed the responsibility for building up the local congregation on the shoulders of only one person. The evangelist’s role is to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-5); the elders oversee (Acts 20:17, 28-32); the deacons serve (Acts 6:1-6), and everybody is to work! As the old timers used to say, “Don’t no one monkey run no show.” In short, everybody’s got to work if we are going to grow.

Can God count on you to be uncompromising in the fight against sin, shame, and immorality? When people in the work place laugh at homosexuality, unscriptural multiple marriages, the use of alcohol and drugs among the nations’ youths, teen pregnancy out of wedlock, do you go with the flow, or do you plead God’s case (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:9-21)? If God can count on you, prove it!

The Two Covenants

by Ashley S. Johnson

A well-known writer and educator of the past analyzes the Old and New Covenants, showing the necessity of living under the law of Christ. 328 pages. Hardback. #10504

\$10.00

Seeing Ahead by Looking Back (4)

Twenty-three years ago my wife and I lived in a fifth-wheel trailer for almost a year. Our intent was to study with brethren in small churches who had apparently followed the larger churches and “big-time” preachers into error, thinking that they perhaps had not heard the truth relative to the institutional question and the social gospel concept. We had hoped that we could lead at least some of them back to the faith from which they had departed. We were wrong.

In one way or another, we were associated with five different congregations in this endeavor. While we failed in our original purpose, I learned that there was one basic, common error among them all, without exception. This defect was their failure to distinguish between the local church and the individual Christian in those realms which the Scriptures identify.

A preacher who was attending the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas, argued that the Scriptures authorized churches to support the so-called orphanages. When asked for the Scripture that taught it, he cited James 1:27. After an analysis of the passage and under some pressure, he finally admitted that the passage was to the individual, then added, “I can’t see the difference.” I told him that I did not believe that he could either and that was one of his problems. I took him to 1 Timothy 5:16 and asked him if when the woman of the passage relieved her widows was that the church doing it. He answered, “No.” I said, “Then you can see a difference between the individual and the church.” He replied, “Well, I can in that instance, but I can’t in any other.”

Through the years some brethren have attempted to play down this distinction, because they knew if they made it, they would be without anything upon which they relied for authority for having the church to engage in unscriptural practices. Notice the example below that occurred 43 years ago.

“It seems to be common knowledge that editors are ‘fair game’ and there is never a closed season on them, hence the practice of taking a few pot-shots at them now and then seems to be in order. The editor of the *Firm Foundation*

receives perhaps more than his share, but has no one to blame but himself. He just exposes himself more frequently than others do.

“An organ such as the *Firm Foundation* with its glorious past and uncertain future is a powerful potential for either good or evil, and it seems that the present editor is determined that it shall produce both judging by the way he writes. One editorial one week will contradict what he wrote the week before, and even in the same editorial, he will be found opposing himself.

“In a recent editorial headed ‘A Study in Ecclesiology’ the editor chides the use of such terms as ‘Church as Such,’ ‘Universal Church,’ etc. He said, ‘Such terms were invented hundreds of years this side of Pentecost to describe a condition that did not arise until hundreds of years this side of Pentecost.’ Then he put the clincher to his argument and demonstrated his proficiency in the ‘Study of Ecclesiology’ when he said: ‘Wherever a group of saved people come together it is a congregation of the church of Jesus Christ.’ Did the editor not learn in his study of ecclesiology that the word translated congregation (Heb. 2:12 RV) is the same word from which we get the word ‘church’? So he is actually saying that saved people together are the church of the church of Christ. Just when was that phrase invented? I don’t recall seeing it in the New Testament. I heard one say the other day that he was a member of the church of Christ church. Strange language, but no more so than church of the church of Christ. Both do a fair job of denominationalizing the church.

“In his efforts to destroy any line of separation between the church and the individual, as well as any distinction between the local church and the saved in the aggregate, the editor condemns the use of such terms as ‘church as such’ and ‘church universal.’ Will he deny that such terms express scriptural facts? He just does not like to hear such terms used. That is, he does not like to hear others use them, for in the very editorial in which he condemned the use of the term ‘church as such,’ he used it himself. He said, ‘The church is the expression of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. As such it is obedient to him’ (Emp. mine HOW).

...That Ye Might Believe ...

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through His name (John 20:30-31).

Contrary to the actions of those who claim miraculous powers in this day and time, the Bible demonstrates that real miracles always had a purpose. John tells us those recorded in the gospels are “written that ye might believe.”

Too often, due to the errors of so-called “faith healers,” we study miraculous events only to refute these false teachers. Perhaps, we lose sight of the great import and tremendous value that these biblical signs, wonders, and miracles have for us. Real miracles are more than displays of God’s power. Every miracle recorded is a powerful teaching tool that reveals the character of God in his Son.

Let us consider one miracle in the life of our Lord. In Luke 5:12-13 we are told of a leper who comes to Jesus to be cleansed of his leprosy. What is leprosy? Leprosy is caused by a bacillus and is characterized by formation of nodules that spread, causing loss of sensation and deformity. On the basis of a hair in a scab, a pimple, or a spot on the skin that had turned white, the priest would declare a person to be a leper and would quarantine him for seven days. If no change in the spot occurred by then, the quarantine would be extended another week. At that time, if the spot had started to fade, the “leper” would be

pronounced cured and returned to his normal life. However, if the spot remained or had spread, he was declared unclean and banished.

Now notice Luke 5:12-13, “And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And *He put forth His hand and touched him*, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.” This is a genuine miracle. It demonstrates the power of God. It provides proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Let us look closer and notice there is a valuable lesson for each of us in the example of our Lord.

Jesus could have simply spoke and this man’s leprosy would have been clean, but Jesus, “*put forth His hand and touched him.*” Do you see the powerful act of kindness and tenderness? This is a leper, unclean, subject to isolation and separation. I cannot but wonder how long has it been since this man has experienced the touch of another. Jesus communicates with his touch. He communicates compassion, acceptance, willingness, and love.

Jesus was willing in spite of the social stigma and the man’s physical condition. Jesus loved the unlovable, those whom others seek to avoid! Do you realize that includes me and you in our lost condition (read Rom. 5:8).

What can we learn? We can evaluate our mercy and our compassion. Does it end with our race? Does it end with our social class? Does it end at the crossroads of inconvenience? Are we willing to put forth our hand and touch a world that is so much like this leper? Sinners who are lost need our compassion and mercy. When questioned about eating with publicans and sinners, Jesus said, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

The church . . . as such! What condition is the editor trying to describe here that did not arise until hundreds of years this side of Pentecost?

Let us see what lies ahead by looking back.

4234 Heathfield St., Pasadena, Texas 77505-4241

204 Backusburg Rd., Kirksey, Kentucky 42054
dcmor@apex.net

Grumbling, Murmuring, and Complaining

Someone might say, “I’m not guilty of the sin of murmuring.” However, do you find yourself cantankerous and complaining? Dour and downcast? Ill-tempered and irritable? Morose and moody? Prickly and petulant? Furthermore, do you give expression to such discontent, through muttered words, facial expressions, or body language?

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 10:10, Paul said, “Nor *grumble*, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (NASU). The KJV says, “Neither *murmur* ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.” The NRSV says, “And do not *complain* as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”

In this lesson, we will briefly consider some of the relevant words and their definitions. Second, we will consider various Old Testament examples. Third, we will note New Testament occurrences. Finally, we will make relevant application to our daily lives.

DEFINITIONS

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says that murmuring “is an outward expression of deep inward discontent and rejection of one’s lot” (s.v. “Murmur”). Several Greek and Hebrew words communicate the idea of grumbling or murmuring.

The most significant Hebrew words are *lun* (#3885b), *ragan* (#7279), and *talul* (#8519a). The first word means “grumble against, blame, i.e., make a verbal complaint against another” (Swanson) (Exod.15:24; 16:2; etc.). The second word means “complain, grumble, i.e., to express discontent in low tones” (Swanson) (Deut. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; see also Prov. 16:28; 18:8; 26:20; 26:22; Isa. 29:24). The third

word “grumbling, murmuring, i.e., speaking words of complaint expressing dissatisfaction, implying a failure of proper relationship and possibly faith” (Swanson) (Num. 14:27, etc.). It is also suggestive of that which is “exalted” or “lofty” (Thomas) (Ezek. 17:22).

The Greek verb *gogguzòð* (#1111), occurring eight times in the NT, is an onomatopoeic word (i.e., it is a vocal imitation of the associated sounds: buzz, hiss, murmur) which means “to mutter, murmur” (Thomas), “complain, grumble, mutter” (Swanson), or “to murmur, mutter, grumble, say anything against in a low tone; (a) of the cooing of doves; (b) of those who confer secretly together; (c) of those who discontentedly complain” (Strong).

BDAG defines it as “generally to express oneself in low tones that are not readily distinguishable,” meaning (1) “to express oneself in low tones of disapprobation, grumble, murmur” (Matt. 20:11; Luke 5:30; John 6:41, 43, 61; 1 Cor. 10:10), or (2) “to express oneself in low tones of affirmation, speak secretly, whisper” (John 7:32).

The Greek noun *goggusmos* (#1112), occurring four times in the NT, refers to “a muttering, murmuring” (Thomas), “a secret debate or a secret displeasure not openly avowed” (Strong), or a “complaint, whispering, grumbling talk in private”

(Swanson).

BDAG say it describes an “utterance made in a low tone of voice (the context indicates whether the utterance is one of discontent or satisfaction), behind-the-scenes talk. Negative aspect: complaint, displeasure, expressed in murmuring” (Acts 6:1; Phil. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:9). In reference to both discontent and satisfaction: secret talk, whispering . . . there was much secret discussion about him (John 7:2).

The Greek noun *goggustōs* (#1113), occurring one time in the NT, refers to “a murmurer” (Thomas), “a grumbler” [BDAG], or “one who discontentedly complains (against God)” (Strong).

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

The people of Israel grumbled over a lack of water (Exod. 15:23-26; 17:1-7). They grumbled over a lack of food (Exod. 16:1-8). They grumbled over the evil report of the faithless spies (Num. 14:1-4, 26-29, 36-38). Korah and his rebellious allies grumbled over the leadership of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1-11). When divine judgment fell upon those associated with Korah’s rebellion, the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You are the ones who have caused the death of the Lord’s people” (Num. 16:41-50).

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

In the parable of the vineyard laborers, some workers grumbled at the landowner over their pay (Matt. 20:1-16). The scribes and Pharisees grumbled at Jesus and his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” (Luke 5:29-32). Some grumbled because of the hard statements of Jesus (John 6:41-69, esp. vv. 41, 43, 61). False teachers often grumble, finding fault with those who would stand for the truth, speaking arrogantly, and flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage (Jude 16-21).

Some murmuring was tentatively supportive (John 7:10-12, 31-32). (See

BDAG’s definition of the Greek word #1112.) Sometimes grumbling had a reasonable basis, as the complaint that arose in the Jerusalem church on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food (Acts 6:1-7).

CONCLUSION

Why do people grumble? Because of dissatisfaction over physical circumstances. Because of faithlessness, obstinacy, and rebellion. Because a task or teaching seems hard. Because of perceived inequity. Sadly, complaints often echo through the house of God. If there is a real problem that exists in a local congregation, or a genuine need that is not being properly addressed, then by all means, let us promptly fix it. However, we must avoid the rabble mentality that says, “Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna” (Num. 11:4-6).

Murmuring is opposed to the spirit of faithful obedience, and if left unchecked will soon destroy it. Ultimately, sinful murmuring is an affront to God the Father. It is an assault upon his pattern and provision. It is a denial of his goodness and grace. Note the following comments from the *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*:

After discussing the examples of Israel’s murmuring against Moses, Aaron, and God Himself, Harris says, “the verb [murmur] means to express resentment, dissatisfaction, anger, and complaint by grumbling in half-muted tones of hostile opposition to God’s leaders and the authority which he has invested in them.

In the final analysis their murmuring was always against God who commissioned the leaders of the people. The murmuring, of course was not without reason, namely,

hunger or thirst in the desert, or an apparently unattainable goal. But they sinned because they doubted God and cast aspersion on his justice, goodness, and power.

The true nature of this murmuring is seen in the fact that it is an open act of rebellion against the Lord (Num 14:9) and a stubborn refusal to believe God’s word and God’s miraculous works (Num 14:11, 22, 23). Thus the right attitude in real difficulty is unconditional acceptance and obedience. God’s own must never stand in judgment upon him (TWOT #1097a).

Self-examination is necessary (2 Cor. 13:5). Someone might say, “I’m not guilty of the sin of murmuring.” However, do you find yourself cantankerous and complaining? Dour and downcast? Ill-tempered and irritable? Morose and moody? Prickly and petulant? Furthermore, do you give expression to such discontent, through muttered words, facial expressions, or body language?

Let us avoid all manifestations of murmuring. Remember the words of Paul, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain” (Phil. 2:14-16). Heed the admonition of Peter, who said, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint” (1 Pet. 4:8-9).

markmayberry@earthlink.net



New Hope Missionary Baptist Church

The following comments are by a Baptist preacher, Billy Mann:

NEW HOPE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Why and where was the name New Hope selected as the name of one of the Lord's institutions? It was obviously selected by some who were acquainted with the word 'hope' as it is used in God's word. One old scholar said we live our lives under the principle of hope.

In past years I pastored Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church and gave interpretation for her name in John 6:31-35. Bethlehem by interpretation is the "House of Bread." We could easily go to the name "Landmark," "Calvary," and others giving explanation through their name — their established intent.

Hope means confidence in regards to the future. We (you and I) first have hope in salvation. That hope being accomplished we move to hope in maturity and progressively move toward hope in eternity.

Romans 8:24-25 tells us, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

The Scripture tells us that once reality occurs hope is replaced by reality. Hope is confident anticipation prior to the reality of fulfillment.

New Hope Church (the classroom) offers confident anticipation (hope) to all. In the time in which we live the believer, because of his new birth, possesses the first of a series of hopes. This is a reference to the thirty-six things we present at New Hope to a new convert. Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Through the teaching of God's word, the fact of salvation becomes clear. Love, rewards, and blessings are the evident hopes found in the maturing believer. In turn this hope becomes an all important issue in the maturing Christian's life. With this hope the maturing Christian moves on conquering the world before him. The Scripture scales for weighing such growth is found in John 13:34-35. "A new

commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

". . . be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). These things point to our hope in time while with anticipation our hope reaches into eternity.

The system of hope becomes the motivator in the life of the believer. Your confidence in regards to the future will be tested before men. God allows it. Hope that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. 1 Peter 3:14 points to the mature believer's testing. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." "Happy are ye" simply means spiritually prosperous and to be envied.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). God extends hope that will enable a person to apply himself to the purpose of the above Scripture. The Lord's churches extend new hope to a community and then in their missionary efforts, the regions beyond.

Billy Mann, Pastor Emeritus, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Billy,

Neither the Lord, the Holy Spirit, nor any of the New Testament apostles and prophets made any reference to a Baptist Church of any kind. As a matter of fact, one can find no reference to a Baptist Church or Baptist churches in any literature, whether sacred or secular, written before A.D.1600. The Bible says nothing at all about "Baptist Churches," whether they be "Southern" or "Missionary Baptist." If we are content to speak "as the oracles of God," we will not speak of Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Catholic churches, for such institutions are wholly foreign to word of God. (Just out of curiosity, I see how you have attempted to justify the name "New Hope Baptist Church." In view of that, could you tell me how a "Southern Baptist Church" could be shown to have a

scriptural name? Or, does a Southern Baptist Church have an unscriptural name?)

1. Using your logic, I can show that “The Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints” is a scriptural name. The church is the Lord’s. He built and purchased it (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). Hence, is “The Church Of Jesus Christ.” Its members are called “saints” (Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:1). They were so designated “in the last days” (Acts 2:17). Thus, “The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints” is shown to be “scriptural” according to your reasoning. Would you say, Mr. Mann, that your “New Hope Missionary Baptist Church” is also a “Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints”?

Further, since Peter’s sermon is recorded in Acts 2, and since he, too, was both a saint, a preacher, and a member of that church, should we say that he was a “Latter Day Saint” preacher (a Mormon)? Are you a “Latter Day Saint” preacher? In the same sense you are a Missionary Baptist preacher, I can show that you are a Latter Day Saint preacher.

2. Again, using your argument for the name “New Hope Missionary Baptist Church,” I can prove that the United Pentecostal Church has a scriptural name. The church was united (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32). It was a church formed on the day of Pentecost, therefore, it was a “United Pentecostal Church.” Would it be proper to name the “New Hope Missionary Baptist Church,” the “United Pentecostal Church”? Why not? What would be wrong with employing

that name? Are you a Pentecostal preacher, Mr. Mann? I say you are a Pentecostal preacher upon the same basis that you would accept being called a Missionary Baptist preacher.

3. Mr. Mann, according to you, the church could be called the “United Methodist Church.” As we have seen, it was a united church (Eph. 4:2, 3; Phil. 1:27). It also had different operations and methods of work (cf. Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-8, 12-30). So, according to you, the United Methodist Church has a scriptural name. Tell me, Mr. Mann, is the church of which you are a member a United Methodist Church? Are you a Methodist Minister?

On and on we could go. Using the wisdom of Mann, not the wisdom of God, we could “prove” that the Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches have scriptural names.

Why not, though, be content with the descriptions and designations of God’s people as found in the Bible? We can read of the “church,” “churches of Christ,” of “the church of God” (Acts 5:11; 8:2; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2). We cannot read of Catholic or Protestant churches of any kind whatsoever. We do not read of “Baptist churches,” of “Methodist churches,” or of “Episcopal churches.” Can we not be satisfied with the terms the Spirit of God used (1 Pet. 4:11)?

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At The Feet of The Master Teacher

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“Letter to My Sons” continued from front page

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccl. 12:1). You are young now, unlike your father whose mind is not sharp and has trouble remembering facts and committing to memory new things. Now in your youth is the time to begin the never-ending journey of being acquainted and understanding all of God’s word. Never be content to know only some of God’s word. Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).

In order to know and be acquainted with all of God’s word, you must make it your never-ending goal to obtain that knowledge. You must set aside the time to achieve this goal (regularly reading the whole Bible) more than you do to achieve other goals in your life. Let this be a habit in your life, a habit to pass on to all with whom you may come into contact. Having made this your goal then be committed to stick with it whether that goal is the daily reading of two, three, four, or ten chapters of the Bible. My desire for you my son, is that you would have the attitude of the psalmist who wrote, “Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold” (Ps. 119:127). Let the word of God be precious to you!

The word of God will prepare you to be the person you should be. Such a life of godliness will allow you to be drawn to a life long mate dedicated to godly principles. Your godliness will attract such a person to you. Remember, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord” (Prov. 18:22). When you find a good wife, others will be able to say of your wife and children what Paul said of Timothy and his mother and grandmother. “I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). A good wife will help you raise your children to have strong faith in God.

But that all begins first with you now by immersing yourself in God’s holy word. It is important for you now to make sure the word of God is ingrained in you so that you may be able to fulfill Deuteronomy 6:6-8, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” As the power to change our hearts is the word of God, the same will be true with your own children. Let them be molded by daily readings of the Scripture. As they learn to read, ensure they read the Bible daily as you would ensure they have physical food for their own bodies. To do any less than this is to fail as I have failed in doing this to you which was my duty. I desire your forgiveness in failing as a parent in this and many other

things. But the challenge to you is for you to learn from this and not make the same failure in your own lives.

To my dear son whom I love, I want you to read the Bible daily. But I also want you to bear in mind that if the word of God is not obeyed, your heart will drift away from it. “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Heb. 2:1). But determine to be one “having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Do not be one of those who, after reading the Bible, “go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity” (v. 14) or one of those “who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away” (v. 13). If you sin, remove it quickly from you life in repentance so your heart will not be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). If you don’t, your desire for the word of God will be taken away.

Always remember that a great and essential tool of the word of God is prayer. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas. 1:5). Ask God to help you in your studies. Ask God to help you understand what you read. Never be fearful to use study helps. I have given you some study helps, the concordance and *Vine’s Complete Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. But bear in mind that no study help can replace your reading of the Bible.

Always remember the words of the apostle Paul when he said, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). It is often profitable to use the knowledge of uninspired men to help understand the Scriptures. Such men may be preachers or they may be commentators. But after everything is said and done, what they say must be in agreement with the writers of the Bible who wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “. . . knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Always remember that “God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33). This same God gave you the Bible I have asked you to read. Therefore if at anytime any part of it seems to contradict another part, that will only mean you have misunderstood something and have arrived at an improper interpretation. At such a point, you must keep studying, praying, and seek help as the Ethiopian eunuch did. When, reading the Scriptures, he was asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:30-39).

Sometimes when we do not see the answer, someone

else does. But the Scriptures must test every answer. “Test all things, hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

Do not be ashamed of the word of God or to stand for what it teaches! Shame is always overcome by boldness. Boldness to speak to others the truth though it may be unpopular. Boldness to flee fornication, boldness to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. When you do this, you create a home for the word of God to dwell in your heart.

I have not been perfect, but the word of God is. I desire for you to consider my strengths and weakness, successes and failures in the light of the word of God. That is, the Scriptures determine my strengths or weakness, success or failures. From the day I obeyed the gospel at age thirteen until this very day, I have only known one person sexually and that began on the night of the day I married your mother. That was the right thing. That is the right thing for you. No other child will compete for my funds, because I have followed the teaching of the Lord in this regard. I have no other children but you and your brother. I have challenged you to do better than your father. But don't do worse.

As I close this message, please remember, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). May I say to you the words of the apostle Paul, “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

I love you very much,

Your father,
Abraham Smith

34 Knights Cove #2, Columbus, Mississippi 39705,
asmith22229@hotmail.com

“Condemning Brethren” continued from page 2

The first group examines the teachings of Shane Scott and Hill Roberts on the days of creation to show how the teaching that the “days of creation cannot be twenty-four hour days” is wrong. The second group condemns those (such as the 67 who signed the open letter to Florida Col-

lege, Dan King, and others) who have reviewed Shane Scott and Hill Roberts to condemn them as trouble makers.

One can tell a lot about where a person stands by the direction in which he aims the edge of his sword. If his sword is constantly aimed against those who are standing for the truth and he has nothing but the highest praise for those who are teaching error, this should tell you something about where the brother stands. Some brethren have their sharpest condemnation aimed at faithful gospel preachers and their highest praise for such denominational men as Bill Hybels, Rich Warren, and other denominational folk. Some have sharp criticism for men who stand for the truth on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (such as Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Connie W. Adams, etc.) and the highest praise for Homer Hailey, Don and Jerry Bassett, etc. Watch which way one's sword is turned and you will see where the man stands!

HEAD IN THE SAND

There are any number of elders and preachers who have decided that the best way to avoid controversy is not to take any of the papers. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches one must subscribe to brotherhood papers to go to heaven anymore than there is anything in the Bible that teaches one must send his children to Florida College for them to go to heaven. However, the papers have served a good purpose for Christians.

The papers have allowed brethren to stay informed about what doctrines are being taught and are spreading among brethren. During the battle on instrumental music and church support of missionary societies, the *American Christian Review*, *Lard's Quarterly*, and *Gospel Advocate* served a useful purpose in informing brethren about the conflict and alerting brethren to the dangers. There was a significant amount of teaching and instruction in those papers about those issues. During the battle on premillennialism, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. served the cause of Christ through the pages of the *Bible Banner*, *Gospel Guardian*, and to a limited degree in the *Gospel Advocate* (before he was removed as editor) to teach brethren about the dangerous views being taught by R.H. Boll and others. During the battle on church support of human institutions (colleges, orphan homes, old folks homes, unwed mothers home, hospitals, etc.), the sponsoring church arrangement, and fellowship halls, papers such as *Truth Magazine*, *Searching the Scriptures*, *Gospel Guardian* and others served the Lord's cause well by warning brethren about the false teachers and false teaching being done on these subjects. Many brethren buried their heads in the sand and pretended that these papers were the source of the trouble; they refused to read the papers because brethren were always arguing in the papers.

The bury-your-head-in-the-sand spirit is alive and well among us today. Brethren have quit subscribing to the

papers and pretended that all of the doctrinal issues that are cropping up among us are just so many “paper fights.” Soon they find themselves with a preacher or a group of elders who are leading the local church of which they are members in the direction of looser views of fellowship, changing the name of the church, not knowing what the truth really is on divorce and remarriage, saying that the days of creation is not a salvation issue, and asking what difference does it make whether hell is eternal punishment or annihilation.

Let me suggest to you, that if every preacher associated with *Truth Magazine* were to die today, we would not have any less a problem of divorce and remarriage, of the days of creation, of whether hell is annihilation or eternal torment, of changing the name of the church, etc. These issues will not die because those who oppose them cease to exist. Blaming those who oppose false teachers and false teaching for the problems among us is like blaming George W. Bush because we have terrorist attacks. If George W. Bush were to die today, that would not mean that the Islamic fundamentalists cease to hate Israel and America and no longer want to attack and destroy both nations. There were terrorists attacks against Israel and America before George W. Bush and there will be terrorist attacks after him. If George W. Bush were to die today, that would simply mean that one of those most responsible for fighting terrorism was no longer there to prevent and stop the terrorists; it would not mean there were no more terrorists. Similarly, if one were to destroy everyone associated with *Truth Magazine* in one fell swoop, that would not mean there were no more false teachers spreading their loose views on divorce and remarriage, the days of creation, the duration of torment, and such like things.

Those who take a “bury your head in the sand” approach to brotherhood issues leave themselves vulnerable to false teaching and false teachers. An informed church is the best safeguard against false doctrine. How well informed are you and the church where you are?

THEY DON'T WANT MY KIND OF PREACHING ANYMORE

Several months ago, my wife and I visited her brother in Orlando, Florida and, while there, we worshiped where James P. Needham preaches. Brother Needham was kind enough to invite me to preach that morning and I heard him that evening. During the course of our visit, brother Need-

ham and I talked about our respective works. As he spoke about his meeting schedule, he made the comment, “Brethren don’t want my kind of preaching anymore.” I think I am quoting him accurately. As the months have passed, I have recalled his words on more than one occasion.

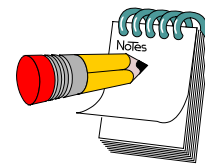
Brother Needham’s preaching was popular and well received when I started preaching in 1966. His bulletin from the Expressway church in Louisville circulated all over this country. His concise articles got to the heart of an issue in as clear and forthright a way as that of anyone among us. I heard him preach in a meeting in Alexandria, Indiana where I preached and again in Marion, Indiana in 1968 or 1969. His material was well organized and full of Scripture.

But, I agree with brother Needham. This isn’t the kind of preaching some churches among us want anymore. They want a meeting that has less Bible content, that is more devotional and motivational. We are witnessing some strange titles for sermons cropping up among us — sensational titles designed to “hook” the interest of those who have no interest in Bible things. Brethren are having youth meetings with accompanying recreational activities (advertised by the church but arranged by the individuals), which may pave the road for church sponsored activities of this sort. The reason that this kind of preaching and these activities are needed is because the church cannot draw and hold a crowd with simple Bible preaching.

There used to be a phrase that went around among brethren about denominational folks who drew a crowd with fried chicken, ice cream, and tea. Brethren said that such folks were dead as the chicken, cold as the ice cream, and weak as the tea. When brethren tire of the kind of preaching brother Needham and others like him preach, we are in the same boat!

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis001@cs.com

Quips & Quotes



Senate Votes to Ban Partial-Birth Abortions

“The Republican-led Senate voted 64-33 on March 13 to prohibit partial-birth abortions. Congress passed similar bills twice before, but President Clinton vetoed them. Observers expect the House to approve the Senate bill. President Bush has promised to sign it.

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"President Bush praised the vote, saying, 'Partial-birth abortion is an abhorrent procedure that offends human dignity.'

"The bill imposes fines and possible jail time for doctors who commit an 'overt act' to kill a 'partially delivered fetus.' In the controversial procedure, doctors deliver most of the baby through the birth canal, crushing the head while it is still in the womb" (Christianity Today [May 2003], 19).

Marriage in the Dock

"If the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court overturns a ban on homosexual marriage, traditional family supporters predict that activists will use the ruling as a wedge to force the rest of the country to accept legalization of same-sex marriage. A decision is expected this summer.

"In March the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court heard arguments in *Goodridge v. Massachusetts Department of Public Health*, in which seven same-sex couples claim they have a fundamental, constitutional right to marry. Four of the couples are raising children.

"The plaintiffs — eight women and six men — lost an opening round a year ago when Suffolk Superior Judge Thomas E. Connolly denied them a right to marriage licenses. The judge, citing the marriage laws and traditions of Massachusetts and the nation, said only the state legislature is empowered to make such profound changes. The couples appealed to the top Massachusetts court.

"Matt Daniels is president of the Springfield, Virginia-based Alliance for Marriage, which supports traditional marriage. Daniels predicts that same-sex activists will prevail — if not in Massachusetts, then in similar cases pending in New Jersey or Indiana. 'Once we lose, they will file suits in every state,' Daniels said.

Massachusetts Citizens for Marriage, another traditional marriage advocate, filed suit in January with the Supreme Judicial Court. The group demanded that a state amendment defining marriage as 'the union of one man and one woman' be sent directly to the legislature. Last year lawmakers adjourned without voting on the measure. The session ended even though the organization had gathered enough signatures to require a statewide ballot initiative vote" (Christianity Today [May 2003], 19).

Boys Report More Peer Pressure to Have Sex

"Washington — One in three teen boys reports feeling peer pressure to have sex, and the majority of teens say that while waiting to have sex is a nice idea, nobody really does it, a survey of teenagers finds.

"Boys were more likely than girls to feel pressure and more likely to think that waiting is a myth, the survey found. It also found a close link between use of drugs and alcohol and sexual

activity.

"The survey was released yesterday by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

"Teen pregnancy and birth rates have been falling for a decade — a trend that other surveys have attributed to a drop in sexual activity and an increased use of condoms and other forms of birth control.

"Still, the Kaiser survey spotlights areas of concern: Four in 10 sexually active teenagers have taken a pregnancy test or had a partner who did so.

"A significant minority of young people — about one in six — say having sex without a condom occasionally is not a big deal. And one in five say they have had unprotected sex after drinking or using drugs.

"Other surveys have found that nearly two in three teens will have had sex by the time they graduate from high school.

"The Kaiser survey shows that many have intimate relationships before that, with more than half of 15-to-17 year olds saying they have been with someone in a sexual way. Among teens who have not yet had sex, nearly a third say they have been 'intimate' with a partner.

"Changing social norms and cultural expectations as well as delayed marriage means many young people have multiple sexual relationships in their lifetimes and need the information and tools to make healthy decisions and communicate with their partners,' the report said.

"About one in three teens said they had been in a relationship where they felt things were moving too fast sexually" (The Plain Dealer [May 20, 2003], A2).

Preachers Needed

Foster, Oklahoma: The Mt. View church that meets in Foster needs a preacher. The church started in the late 1980s. They have no rent on their meeting house. There are 21 members and are able to provide some of the financial needs. Support from other churches will most likely be needed. Foster is 60 miles south of Oklahoma City. For more information, call Larry Anderson at 580-432-5407 or write Mt. View Church of Christ, Rt. 1, Box 116-B, Foster, OK 73434.