



“A Wardrobe Malfunction”

Jarrod Jacobs

If, by this time, you are not aware of the “fire-storm” that arose due to the actions of Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson during this year’s Super Bowl half-time show, consider yourself extremely lucky! In the days following the Super Bowl, both performers apologized for their actions after Timberlake succeeded in revealing part of Jackson’s anatomy to the world. In a series of apologies offered by involved parties, Timberlake apologized for his part in the stunt, saying there was a “wardrobe malfunction.” This is laughable considering he was responsible for literally tearing off a portion of her outfit. Seems to me the wardrobe “functioned” perfectly until he tore it off! When Jackson spoke of the incident and apologized, she said a portion was supposed to have been left behind. I guess this is what Timberlake meant by a “malfunction.” Nevertheless, I maintain that if he hadn’t ripped at the outfit, it wouldn’t have torn at all, and we would have been spared a week’s worth of news segments that first week in February concerning what he and she did in front of millions of people.

People reacted to this event in dif-

ferent ways, but most reactions were disgust and outrage that it happened at all. To me, the event stands as a statement on how far our society has sunk. Since I was at worship services during most of the “Super Bowl” on February 1, I knew nothing of what had happened until later in the evening. Yet, it seems that the actions of Timberlake and Jackson were but the climax of a half-time show that was filled with sexual images, filthy lyrics, and similar things. I wholeheartedly echo the question I heard one man ask on the Monday morning following the Super Bowl. He asked: “Whatever happened to the marching bands?” Is this not but one telling factor in showing folks how far we have slipped through the years?

As this saga played out in the media, and as one party after another (NFL, CBS, etc.) apologized to an outraged public, the question that kept popping up in my mind was: “Does anyone know who won the ball game?” You see, after that foolish half-time incident, the Super Bowl ball game itself, the reason people were “tuning in” or attending, etc., was *see “Malfunction” on p. 182*

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New Wine In Old Wine Skins

Mike Willis



And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles (Mark 2:18-22).

These verses of Scripture have frequently been used to justify changing the content of the gospel to accommodate the demands of the contemporary society in which one lives. “Old wine in old wine skins” has been used to describe having the gospel (new wine) in outdated and outmoded expedient arrangements that have calcified into traditions and are bound on brethren as if they were “divine law.” “New wine in new skins” is then used to describe using new expedients in imparting the gospel. The problem for application perennially has been that what one group calls “expedients” another group believes to be essentials.

Let us look at the teaching of the Scripture itself to see what Jesus was addressing in his confrontation with the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. Jesus’ reply consists of two parts: one which replies to the disciples of John the Baptist and one which replies to the beliefs of the Pharisees. But first, let’s consider some background information about fasting.

Fasting

The question which elicited Jesus’ teaching was this: “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”

The Old Testament legislated only one day of fasting: the day of Atonement, the great national day of repentance.

And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, *ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all.* see New Wine on p. 183

The Word of the Truth of the Gospel

Connie W. Adams

From the place of his imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the church at Colosse, a place where he had not personally preached. These citizens of the Lycos Valley had become citizens of the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). Paul was thankful for their faith. He wrote, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love which ye have for all the saints, For the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:4-6).

Several divine principles are tied together in this passage. They had *faith* in Christ, *love* to all the saints, *hope* of heaven, and had come to know the *grace* of God. But notice that none of that could be enjoyed apart from "the word of the truth of the gospel." Indeed, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). There is a "hearing of faith" (Gal. 3:2). Later in Colossians I, Paul spoke again of "the hope of glory" but hastened to connect that hope with the message which he preached: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:27-28). Observe also that "the grace of God" is something which they "knew . . . in truth."

We live in an age of subjectivism. Too many are looking within themselves for satisfying answers to the nagging questions of human existence. Forgotten is the precept stated long ago by Jeremiah, "Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). The humanist philosophy is that whatever we choose voluntarily from alternatives, having considered the consequences, is right for us and that we ought to prize that choice and assert it to the point of making it a pattern of conduct. That is known in educational circles as "values clarification."

Denominationalism has, for many years, placed emphasis on religion that is "better felt than told." Great store has been placed by being satisfied with religious faith and practice, assuming that whatever is sincerely done must be right. Many have relied on subjective "feelings" as the evidence of salvation, whether or not the word of God teaches it.

Much is said about salvation by grace through faith. That is Bible doctrine and is certainly taught in Ephesians 2:8-10. But God's truth on any subject is the sum of all he said on the matter. The passage from Colossians I shows

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that there is a “word of truth” by which things may be determined and that word of truth is in the gospel. So then, the final measure of truth in the spiritual realm is the gospel of Christ. Every doctrine and practice must be measured by that standard. The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into “all truth” (John 16:13). If the Lord did not teach it and the Holy Spirit did not move the apostles and prophets to preach it or write it, then it is not part of “the word of the truth of the gospel.” And since God proposes to save all men, Jew and Gentile alike, by the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), then if it is not in the gospel there is no salvation in it. If it is not a part of salvation, then it becomes a source of condemnation. That is why we must not go beyond “what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9-10).

We all need a warning here. It is not our right to offer pardon to an alien sinner on less terms than God has provided in “the word of the truth of the gospel.” Neither is it

our right to offer pardon to an erring child of God on less terms than the word of God directs. In either case, we have acted presumptuously and have not benefitted our hearers at all. All the sad stories of people killed by a falling tree, or by an accident with a truck, or one trapped in a cave, or praying soldiers in foxholes, or death bed stories about people who died before they could be baptized, will not change what the God of all truth has said. We will have to leave the right of clemency in the hands of him who made us all, but I dare not offer it unless I can put my finger on it in “the word of the truth of the gospel.” Paul said the secrets of men will be judged “according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16) and that is exactly where I intend to leave the matter. I can do no other without intruding into a realm which is not mine. I appeal for others to do the same.

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Custer Won Two Medals Of Honor

Larry Ray Hafley

“Custer.” His last name strikes a chord of mythic military memory. It is a little known fact, I suppose, but Custer was awarded two medals of honor for heroism during the Civil War. He served with great distinction until his death at the Little Big Horn in Montana, Sunday morning, June 25, 1876. No, I am not referring to George Armstrong Custer, his legendary brother, who led the forces which were wiped out by Indian warriors commanded by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Rather, I am writing concerning Tom Custer, one of two younger brothers of the famous general who perished at “Custer’s Last Stand.” (A young nephew and brother in law also died in that same battle.)

Most of us have heard of the illustrious, controversial Custer. His name will endure as long as the history of this country is told. However, most of us know nothing about his brothers, especially, Tom, who, as noted, was a hero in his own right. It is often the same in the kingdom of God. We know of the noble Noah and of the peerless Paul, but how many of us know of Epaphroditus, Andronicus, Junia, Apelles, Persis, Epaphroditus, and Onesiphorus (Rom. 16:5-12; Phil. 2:25-39; 2 Tim. 1:16-18)? We find it difficult to pronounce their names, let alone being able to identify them. That is fine. God knows. He will not forget (Heb. 6:10).

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 remains nameless, as do her daughters who have served and sacrificed silently through the sorrowing centuries. Her husband was prominent among the people while she toiled untiringly in godly, faithful obscurity (Prov. 31:11). She was his heartbeat, the animating spirit of his soul, the pulse that gave him life and strength, joy and hope. And so it has ever been. We cannot praise her enough. Eternity will take care of that (Rom. 2:7; 8:18).

Who will raise up the next generation of sweet, spiritual servants whose lives will grace and adorn the gospel and whose heart will swell the songs of heaven’s chorus? Yes, we need the daring of David and the constancy of Job and John, but who will serve these men? Who will carry their shoes and soothe their souls, bearing their burdens so that they may carry out their great works? They are unknown disciples who will sparkle in the necklace of God when he selects his gems and fashions his eternal jewelry. Who are their parents and partners? “Lord, is it I?”

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Observations and Experiences Regarding Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage (1)

Bill Cavender

From 1926 until 2004, the years of my short lifetime, nations, societies, families, and individuals throughout all the world (untold, unknown, billions of souls having inhabited the earth since Adam and Eve; the estimate of people now living in this present generation is about 6,750,000,000 people, most of them lost in sin, without God, without Jesus, and without hope here and hereafter) have drastically changed in their laws, customs, practices, standards, and public and private attitudes regarding marriages, divorces, morals, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships. What used to be understood and accepted, so it seemed, is now misunderstood and debated in religious, political, legislative, and social circles, i.e., “What constitutes a marriage? What constitutes a divorce? What constitutes a lawful (and to Christians a scriptural, God-approved) remarriage?”

There is no such debate nor discussion in many cultures and countries of the world, especially in Muslim (Arab), Hindu, Buddhist, Hebrew, and staunch Roman and Eastern Catholic countries. Heterosexual unions (marriage “the old-fashioned way,” a man and a woman), same-sex marriages (male homosexual unions and female lesbian unions); homosexual and bi-sexual alternate life-styles; surgical sex changes; companion-civil-marital-rights-and-partnership-benefits, etc., are debated and discussed in “our western culture and civilization” where freedom is thought

and taught to be license, and a false, watered-down brand of divided, denominationalized “Christianity” has been taught, believed, accepted, practiced, and defended for several centuries. In the western states of the USA, polygamous marriages (the Mormon system and the “revelation of God to Joseph Smith” authorizing polygamy) are “making a comeback,” are not uncommon, and are receiving greater publicity in the newspapers and in the television news. In many countries of the world there are still no governmental and civil laws regulating marriages, divorces, remarriages, and no civil registrations of births (in or out of wedlock, legitimate or illegitimate), and deaths. *Times have changed and are changing!* We need to be preaching again those old sermons regarding “A Changeless Christ In A Changing World!”

In many parts of the world polygamy is openly practiced. Our brethren who go to various parts of the world to preach Christ and the kingdom of God, especially in some countries of Africa, in the Philippines, and in southeast Asia, have to deal with polygamy when polygamous people hear and believe the gospel of Christ and desire to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Polygamy is condoned by the Muslim system, Islam, allowing a Muslim man to have four wives if he desires. Civil statutes allow multiple, unlimited divorces in western nations, including the USA.

Instead of a polygamist having ten wives at one time, and violating the laws of God and men (except in Utah!), he can marry and divorce ten women and be acceptable to the civil laws of men and, according to some brethren, to the laws of God also.

Polygamy and concubinage were practiced in olden times by both unbelievers and believers, as recorded in the Scriptures. Adam, the father of the human race in the flesh, had one wife. Lamech, of the lineage of Cain, was a polygamist (Gen. 4:17-24). Polygamy was common prior to the flood of Noah's day (Gen. 6:1-8). Noah had one wife (Gen. 7:7; 13). Abraham had a legal wife, Sarah, and at least two concubines and probably more (Gen. 16:1-15; 25:1-11). Sarah died at age 127, the only woman in the Bible whose age is given (Gen. 23:1-20). Her son, Isaac, had only one wife, Rebekah (Gen. 24:61-67). Rebekah evidently died some years before Isaac. She is not mentioned after Jacob left home, when he was about age 77, to go to Paddan-aram, to Bethuel's house, Rebekah's father (Gen. 27:41-46; 28:1-22). She was buried in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 49:29-32). Isaac lived to age 180, Jacob and Esau then being 120 years of age (Gen. 35:27-29; 25:19-28) when they buried their father's corpse in the Cave of Machpelah. Jacob had two wives and two concubines: Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah (Gen. 29:21-35; 30:1-13). Joseph was born to Jacob by Rachel when Jacob was 91 years old. Joseph was 29 years old and in prison in Egypt when Isaac, his grandfather, died. Esau, Jacob's twin, had three wives: Judith, Basemath, and Mahalath (Gen. 26:34-35; 28:6-9). David, who died at age 70, had at least eight wives whose names are recorded: Michal, Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, Bathsheba and had many other wives and concubines (1 Sam. 18:20-29; 2 Sam. 3:1-5; 5:13-14; 11:26-27). King Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba, had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1-8). God had laws regarding marriage in the Mosaic period, for 1500 years. A permission of divorce was granted to men in and under the terms of that law (Deut. 24:1-4), although God has always hated "divorcing" and "putting away" (Mal. 2:1-17). How that facet of God's marriage law, i.e., Deuteronomy 24:1-4, related to David, Solomon, and so many others who lived under that law, yet practiced polygamy and concubinage, is not revealed and related. For sure those times are included in Paul's statement, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Paul's reference was especially to the Gentile world and their idolatry. But who would deny that even those who lived under the law of God through Moses also came under the purview of Acts 17:30-31?

From the beginning of the creation of man and woman, God has decreed one man for one woman as long as they both shall live (Gen. 7:1-4). God hates divorcing, husbands and wives rejecting and repudiating one another, breaking their covenants with him and with one another (Mal.

2:13-16). Even though hating divorce, God, through Moses, allowed men, because of the hardness of their hearts to divorce, repudiate, and reject a wife, giving the wife a writing or "bill of divorcement" when she had found "no favor in his eyes," because he "found some uncleanness in her" (Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 19:3-9). He rejected and repudiated her in his mind and heart, and then obtained the legal "writing of divorcement." This rejected, repudiated woman, who was divorced unjustly by her husband, being sent out of his house, yet morally innocent and guiltless, could "go and be another man's wife." She could never lawfully return to this ex-husband to be his wife again. She was an innocent, "put away woman," and she had a God-given right to marry someone else.

Jesus, when questioned by the Pharisees about the *cause* or *reason* for divorce; gave rejection, repudiation, divorce rights to a morally innocent, guiltless husband or wife, whose marriage partner has committed adultery against him/her, having broken the covenant with God and with his/her lawful mate (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12). Under the New Covenant, only *adultery, fornication, sexual immorality*, can be the *cause* for the rejection, repudiation, or divorcing of a husband or wife. It is God who "joins" or glues people in marriage and it is God who unjoins, unglues, and dissolves their bonds. No laws of men, of any culture or country, in any century of time, can "join" or "put asunder" marriages for God. God does *that*, the Scriptures say (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:3-6; Mark 10:9; Eph. 5:31). With all the separations, unfaithfulnesses, adulteries, fornications, spousal abuses, mistreatments, divorces, remarriages, and violations of God's will from the beginning of the world, since Adam and Eve, amongst all the billions of men and women who have lived since then through all these centuries, only an *omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal God* can remember, know, and call into judgment all these offenses against and violations of his divine will. He will do so at the last day through Jesus Christ, his Son and our Savior and judge (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:16; 14:10-12; Acts 17:30-31, etc.). He will bring to light all the hidden things of darkness, and will sit in judgment upon the thoughts, motives, words, and deeds of each person.

Of the fifty states in our federal union of states, comprising the United States of America, eleven states still authorize and allow "common law marriages." Those states are: Alabama, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and the District of Columbia. Georgia recognizes such unions contracted before January 1, 1997, Idaho recognizes those begun before January 1, 1996, Ohio recognizes those unions contracted before October 10, 1991; New Hampshire recognizes common-law marriages "for inheritance purposes only." In the early years of our country, all the states allowed and recognized "common-law marriages."

Several states in our country now, in 2004, are tending toward and allowing “same-sex marriages”: Vermont, Oregon, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and others. Over the political and social horizons for all the states, the debates are “heating up,” the politicians are seeking votes, and the political parties are determining their “platforms” as to where they will stand on this issue, for the purposes of gaining votes and entrenching themselves in political offices. “Gay Marriages” and the legality of such unions, in view of recent rulings by the Massachusetts State Supreme Court, will be “a hot button” political issue in this year’s fall presidential election and may well determine who will be the President of the USA for the next four years. It now appears that all states, sooner rather than later, will recognize “same-sex marriages.”

A “common-law marriage” is defined as:

1. A man and woman living together for a significant time (but the length of time is not legislated nor defined by any state; seven years, as sometimes mentioned, is not a time period imposed by law); this man and woman have the intentions of being represented and recognized as a married couple, they do not have to report to nor notify any civil authorities of their intentions of living together as husband and wife.

2. The couple hold themselves publicly as a married couple, having the same last (family) name, referring to one another as “my wife” and “my husband,” having a joint bank account, and filing joint federal and/or state income tax returns.

3. Their children are legitimately born into such unions and birth certificates of the children are duly completed and filed in the states where these couples reside.

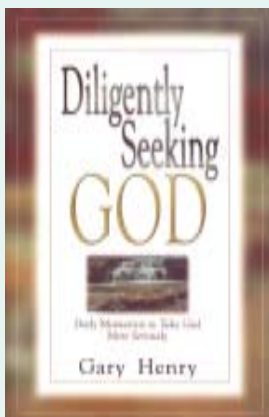
4. If they divorce, they must go through the regular legal divorce procedures in the civil courts of the state where they live.

5. A common-law marriage in a state which permits such unions will be recognized in all fifty states of the USA.

Statistics show that about fourteen percent of all marriages in Canada (our neighbor to our north, the second largest country in the world in land area) are “common-law marriages.” All the early marriages in the Bible — Adam and Eve, Noah and his wife, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, etc., would have been “common-law marriages” according to modern concepts and terminology. In the early years and decades of our country, most marriages were “common-law marriages.”

In a “common-law state,” years ago, there was a family in a church, a husband, wife and four children. He was a deacon. The oldest son was an excellent youngster, outstanding student, and received an appointment to one of the military service academies through his congressman. A family background check was made by the FBI. It was discovered that the boy’s parents were husband and wife under “common-law,” never having obtained a marriage license from any civil court clerk. The man and woman had been married for twenty-five or so years. The church, though surprised, continued to fellowship them, the state laws upheld them, the son went to the academy, as the man and woman had violated no law. In the sight of God and man, they were husband and wife, a legitimate marriage and family by God’s laws and man’s laws. (To be continued)

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Hoosier Millionaire . . . Winner?

Kenneth D. Sils

From *The Indianapolis Star*, dated January 24, 2004, a news story that has been given a lot of play over the past ten days says,

A man who announced plans to buy a car with \$57,000 in winnings from a televised lottery game show was run over by a pickup truck and killed a few hours later while he walked to the grocery store that had sold him the winning ticket. Carl D. Atwood, 73, was knocked to the ground and suffered a head injury in the accident late Thursday near his home in Elwood, about forty miles northeast of Indianapolis, police said. He died later at the Indianapolis hospital.

The moment I saw the headline, “Hoosier Millionaire Winner Killed In Accident Hours After Show,” my mind remembered a parable that our Lord taught in the book of Luke. While Jesus was commanding his followers with some serious admonitions to have the courage to stand for him, even in the midst of Jewish persecution, a man in the crowd interrupted Jesus with an order for him to command his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Jesus’ response was given in Luke 12:16-21,

The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought to himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then, whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

Jesus is correct saying, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Both of these men were on top of the world . . . but, only for a moment and then everything was taken away. We have no promise that all the “stuff” we enjoy today will be available tomorrow.

We have no assurance that all the success and worldly honor that we accumulate today can be enjoyed tomorrow. We can’t even say with confidence that tomorrow will come at all. James said in James 4:14, “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” A vapor, whether it be like steam coming from a tea kettle or an early morning fog; both appear so grand and prominent; yet, they only last for a moment, then they’re gone. Don’t count on tomorrow for tomorrow may never come.



Don’t be foolish! Today is the day to prepare to meet God. Peter told those who believed that Jesus was the Christ in Acts 2:38, “Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” And for those of us who are members of the Lord’s church, let’s apply ourselves to Paul’s instruction in 1 Timothy 6:17, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich

in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up in themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Brethren, leave those lottery tickets alone and start striving for holy living! Jesus knows our hearts and said in Luke 12:34, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” If you strive to please Jesus first, he will supply your needs. If you lust for worldly wealth and fame, one fateful day, you too may recognize those haunting words, “You fool! This night your soul maybe required of you!” Don’t be a fool! Give Jesus your heart and your soul in obedient faith and service! You’ll be so glad that you did!

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An Amoral Basis For Law: It Won't Work!

Harry Osborne

In June of 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the sodomy laws of Texas and, by implication, other states as well. They found the laws to be “unconstitutional.” The bizarre nature of this ruling is readily apparent when one remembers a simple fact — when the Constitution of this country was written (the same Constitution that the present Supreme Court finds to be inconsistent with sodomy laws), all thirteen states had laws making sodomy a criminal offense. It remained a crime when all of those states ratified the Bill of Rights. Sodomy was a crime under common law which provided foundation to our laws.

In the Mosaic law, homosexuality was condemned as unlawful in the same context and even with much the

same wording as adultery, obscenity, prostitution, incest, pedophilia and bestiality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17). Historically, those governments that have respected the same fundamental principles of morality have maintained laws punishing those behaviors as well. If the Supreme Court now is consistent with its ruling, it would strike down every law against consensual acts of adultery, obscenity, prostitution, incest, pedophilia or bestiality. Justices Scalia, Rehnquist, and Thomas noted that consequence as well as the fact that the Court’s ruling destroyed the only rational ground prohibiting homosexual marriage in this country. Sadly, but predictably, it did not take long for a major point of their warning to become a reality.

In November of 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled “that barring an individual from the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage solely because that person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution.” On a 4-3 decision, four judges took it upon themselves to require the recognition of homosexual marriage as equally valid and deserving the same benefits as a marriage between a man and a woman. Their opinion is available to the public as a 75-page document. It is a textbook study of sophistry and the effects of institutionalized amorality. When one reads the whole ruling, it becomes clear how the pieces of our moral decline

all fit together. Thanks to four judges overruling the origin of marriage, its legal definition for hundreds of years in English common law and common sense, we now face the very real possibility that “same sex marriages” may soon have the force of law to validate their acceptability. With this decision, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has arrived at the end many have warned was coming — an attempt to form a fully amoral basis for law and ethics.

As they defined the points at issue in the case, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the majority ruling said:

The question before us is whether, consistent with the Massachusetts Constitution, the Commonwealth may deny the protections, benefits, and obligations conferred by civil marriage to two individuals of the same sex who wish to marry. We conclude that it may not. The Massachusetts Constitution affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals. It forbids the creation of second-class citizens. In reaching our conclusion we have given full deference to the arguments made by the Commonwealth. But it has failed to identify any constitutionally adequate reason for denying civil marriage to same-sex couples.

As the majority summarized their decision, they concluded that there are no “relevant characteristic that would justify shutting the door to civil marriage to a person who wishes

to marry someone of the same sex.” They closed their comments justifying their ruling with these words:

The marriage ban works a deep and scarring hardship on a very real segment of the community for no rational reason. The absence of any reasonable relationship between, on the one hand, an absolute disqualification of same-sex couples who wish to enter into civil marriage and, on the other, protection of public health, safety, or general welfare, suggests that the marriage restriction is rooted in persistent prejudices against persons who are (or who are believed to be) homosexual. . . . The Constitution cannot control such prejudices but neither can it tolerate them. Private biases may be outside the reach of the law, but the law cannot, directly or indirectly, give them effect. . . . Limiting the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage to opposite-sex couples violates the basic premises of individual liberty and equality under law protected by the Massachusetts Constitution.

In the body of the decision, the four judges cited judicial and legal precedents that supposedly justified their ruling. This part of their catastrophic decision was the most disturbing to read. To build their base, they appealed to a variety of legal and judicial decrees that forbade moral judgments in public policy. The “no fault” divorce law changes of the past century were used to set the stage by showing the legislative intent to ban moral judgments in the realm of family formation and dissolution. They noted decrees excluding the use of moral judgments as factors in determining the fitness of prospective parents in adoption or custody cases. This led them to conclude that adultery, homosexuality, or other behavior could not be condemned in public policy as “immoral.” They cited the *Roe v. Wade* case making abortion legal as another example of the right of individuals to engage in action deemed immoral by others and forbidding the government from condemning such acts. Then,

as any thinking person could have predicted, the four justices appealed to the *Lawrence v. Texas* case decided by the United States Supreme Court last summer overruling the Texas sodomy laws. They quoted that decision’s fundamental principle which held, “Our obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate our own moral code.” With that ruling, the last piece of an immoral mosaic was set in place. One cannot discerningly read the *Goodridge* ruling without understanding the process underway for over a generation to “call evil good, and good evil” (Isa. 5:20, cf. Prov. 17:15). Our courts and legislatures have systematically abolished the God-given basis of morality from our legal system and have replaced it with an officially sanctioned and even lauded amoral “legal” system.

With morality sufficiently banished, the four justices turned to examples of judicial and legal correction of racial discrimination as the model for eliminating distinctions between homosexual and heterosexual marriage. They stated their rationale as follows:

For decades, indeed centuries, in much of this country (including Massachusetts) no lawful marriage was possible between white and black Americans. That long history availed not when the Supreme Court of California held in 1948 that a legislative prohibition against interracial marriage violated the due process and equality guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment, *Perez v. Sharp*, . . . or when, nineteen years later, the United States Supreme Court also held that a statutory bar to interracial marriage violated the Fourteenth Amendment, *Loving v. Virginia*. . . . As both *Perez* and *Loving* make clear, the right to marry means little if it does not include the right to marry the person of one’s choice, subject to appropriate government restrictions in the interests of public health, safety, and welfare. . . . In this case, as in *Perez and Loving*, a statute deprives individuals of access to an institution of fundamental legal, personal,

and social significance — the institution of marriage — because of a single trait: skin color in *Perez and Loving*, sexual orientation here. As it did in *Perez and Loving*, history must yield to a more fully developed understanding of the invidious quality of the discrimination.

The fallacy of their reasoning is obvious to all who put their trust in God and his word as the perfect and complete guide to law and morality as God defined it (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God ordained government “for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Pet. 2:14 see also Rom. 13:1-4). In granting government its limited function subordinate to him, God mandated that government base its exercise of power upon morality as he defined it (Prov. 13:34; 11:11; 16:12). Any government’s failure to “take away the wicked” constitutes a rejection of God’s conditions whereby its right to rule “shall be established in righteousness” (Prov. 25:5).

Removal of racial discrimination was moral because it submitted to God’s righteous order: “God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him” (Acts 10:34-35, cf. Rom. 10:12). Though God condemns racial or ethnic distinctions, he ordained and demands distinctions between righteous and wicked conduct. While some have tried to justify bigotry and racism by abusing God’s law, their efforts are without defense to all who depend on God’s word, not human opinion, as the standard for defining right and wrong.

But how does God define the nature of homosexual action? God made that point crystal clear in very plain language:

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the

You and Jesus Christ

Chris Reeves

Friend, consider for a moment the most important question you will ever ask in your life: What must I do to be saved? And, consider the most important decision you will ever make in your life: Whether or not to become a Christian. Actually, the entire Bible theme centers on this question and this decision. The Bible theme is: “Salvation in Jesus Christ.” The Old Testament theme is: “He is coming.” The Gospel theme is: “He is here.” And, the theme of the book of Acts and the Epistles is: “He is coming again.” The whole Bible deals with your relationship to Jesus Christ. What is your relationship to Jesus Christ today? You have one of four choices!

Without Christ (Eph. 2:12) The State of Death

First, you can choose to be without Christ. What does it mean to be without Christ? It means you choose to sin and

serve Satan (Col. 1:14). You are under the power of Satan and in his kingdom. In this state you are alienated, an enemy of God (Col. 1:21). In sin you cannot have fellowship with God. You are spiritually dead in sin and separated from God (Eph. 2:1-4). In sin, you are an object of God’s wrath (Rom. 2:4-8; 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

How do you enter into this state of death? You enter by committing one sin (Eph. 2:1). There are five different ways you can sin and disobey God. You do what God has said not to do (1 John 3:4; 5:17). You fail to do what God has said to do (Jas. 4:17). You add to God’s word (Deut. 4:2), or you take away from God’s word (Rev. 22:18-19). Or, you substitute something else for God’s word (Lev. 10:1-3). Each and every sin will bring you into the state of death without Christ.

woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27).

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

When one leaves God-ordained morality as the standard for law and ethics, he is left without a rational basis for legitimate distinctions giving order to society. Though our humanist friends declare their ability to devise a non-moral (really “amoral”) basis for law, their philosophers have utterly failed in their search as is evident by the depravity, violence and chaos left in their wake.

We do not need more justices and legislators widening their destructive path, “but by men of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged” (Prov. 28:2). As Nineveh of old repented at the preaching of Jo-

nah, let us unashamedly and boldly proclaim the standard of righteousness and call upon our people and leaders to repent! The destruction of any nation that sanctions immorality is certain. It may already be too late, but it is certainly not too early to let our voices and votes be heard! If we remain silent and inactive, what kind of society will we leave for our children and grandchildren? As Christians and citizens of this country, what could be a more important issue upon which we should determine our votes than who will uphold basic moral concepts? Brethren, it is past time for us to raise our voices, ballots and efforts in defense of righteousness and opposition to evil! God gave the charge to Israel which we would do well in our time to heed: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sin” (Isa. 58:1).

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In Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) The State of Grace

Second, you can choose to be in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? It means you no longer want to live by the first choice above. It means you were once a sinner, but now you are a saved (1 Cor. 1:2). You have redemption in Christ (Rom. 3:24) and the promise of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). You no longer stand in the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:1). You have the love of God (Rom. 8:39). You are blessed and forgiven (Eph. 1:3,7). You are reconciled to God and you belong to God's family (Eph. 2:13, 14-22). It is God's grace in Christ that allows you to be saved (1 Cor. 1:4). This state of grace is the cause for great rejoicing (1 Cor. 15:31).

In addition to the blessings you have in Christ, you also have responsibilities in Christ. You are to be active doing good works in Christ (Rom. 16:3, 7, 9, 10; Eph. 2:10). You are to be unified with others in Christ (Rom. 12:5; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:10; 3:6) and love them (1 Cor. 16:23).

How do you enter the state of grace in Christ? First, you are baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27). Next, you choose to live as a faithful Christian. You let Christ live in you each day through his word (Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:16). You get up each day and put on a Christ-like spirit (Rom. 13:14). You begin as a babe in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1), but you grow to maturity. You are obedient each day to the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 4:17; 9:21). You are an active member of a local church belonging to Christ (Gal. 1:22). You walk daily in the words of Christ (Col. 2:6; 1 Pet. 3:16). And, you abide in the doctrine of Christ without going beyond it (2 John 9-11).

Severed From Christ (Gal. 5:4) The State of Apostasy

Third, you can choose to be severed from Christ. What does it mean to be severed from Christ? It means that you have stopped living by the second choice above. It means that while you are a Christian you choose to become unfaithful in your living and you refuse to repent of our sins. In this state, Christ profits you nothing anymore (Gal. 5:2).

All the blessings that you once had as a Christian are now gone. All the good that you once did has now gone to waste. You are severed from Christ (Gal. 5:4; Rom. 9:3). You are fallen away from grace (Gal. 5:4).

How do you enter into the state of apostasy? You might fall through ignorance, like Simon did (Acts 8:14-24). You might fall by following the wrong standard, like the Jewish Christians did (Gal. 5:2-4). You might fall through worldliness, like Demas did (2 Tim. 4:10). You might fall through false teaching, like other Christians have done (Heb. 6:10; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; 3:17). Or, you might fall by erring from the truth (Jas. 5:19-20). Either way, you are in the terrible state of apostasy.

With Christ (Phil. 1:23) The State of Glory

Finally, you can choose to be with Christ. What does it mean to be with Christ? It means you choose to live in Christ, and you choose to die in Christ. You live and die as a faithful Christian and you go home to heaven to be with Christ. It means you are in the very presence of Christ in heaven. Do you desire to be with Christ as the faithful apostle Paul did (Phil. 1:23; John 12:26)?

How do you enter the state of glory to be with Christ? You live a faithful Christian life and when you die, you fall asleep in Christ. You die a faithful Christian. You die in the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:18; Rev. 14:13). You die a faithful Christian and you become a partaker of his glory (Rom. 8:17-18; 1 Pet. 4:13). You enter the everlasting kingdom of Christ (2 Pet. 1:11) where you reign with Christ for all eternity (Rev. 20:4, 6). God desires the blessed state of glory for you.

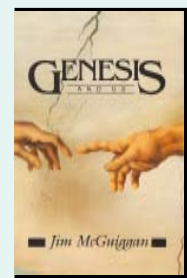
Now friend, the important question you need to ask is this: Where are you with Jesus Christ? Are you without Christ? Are you in Christ? Are you severed from Christ? Will you die and be with Christ?

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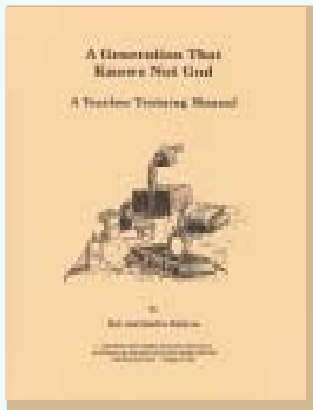


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Fellowship Is a Simple Subject

Olen Holderby

Much writing has been done on this subject, some good, some bad; further, many have taught the truth while many others taught error. It is not uncommon to hear someone say, “I just do not understand the subject of fellowship.” However, the subject is not all that difficult; in fact I suggest that it is a relatively simple subject. Consider the following:

Defining the Subject

I have before me two Bible dictionaries, W.E. Vine and Joseph H. Thayer. Here are some of the terms which they use to explain the word “fellowship”: communion, sharing in common, partnership, partaker, partner, association, joint participation, intercourse, the share which one has in anything, participation. Putting the word “fellowship” in with these terms, and one would almost have to have help to misunderstand the meaning of the word “fellowship.” Having made this point, let us consider the use of the word in the following passages.

Some Passages Which Use The Word “Fellowship”

1 Corinthians 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now, look back at the meanings of the word and ask yourself, “What do I do because I am in fellowship with Christ?”

1 John 1:3: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This passage makes it clear that it is through the word, and always and only through the word that we have fellowship with deity. In what does this word inform us that we do in having fellowship with the Lord?

In junction with the last passage, consider this one, which does not use the word “fellowship”: 1 Corinthians 3:6, 9, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” You get the point?

1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood

of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Upon what is fellowship based in this verse? And, how do we walk in that light?

2 Corinthians 6:14: “. . . for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” (see also vv. 15, 16, 17, 18). In view of the meaning of the word “fellowship,” what are we told not to do in these verses?

Ephesians 5:11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Do not forget the meanings in applying this verse!

In applying this last verse, we suggest another, which does not use the word “fellowship.” Romans 16:17, “. . . mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” If we consistently apply the meaning of the word “fellowship,” of what will we deprive those who teach contrary things?

One may wish to read the following verses also: Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:20; 2 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:9; Philippians 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; and 1 John 1:6. When you read these verses, you will have read all New Testament passages which mention the subject of “fellowship.”

The problem is not in getting people to understand the subject; but it lies in getting them to obey or follow what the Scriptures actually teach. Don’t you agree?

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Some Stirring Examples

Donald P. Ames

So many times we look at our youth, and note their flaws, their short-comings, the things we wish they hadn't done. Then, we tend to excuse them at times — “They're only young once,” “Kids will be kids,” “They're just kids growing up,” etc. I would like for us to focus on three youths of the Bible who had their share of hard luck that should have “set them free” and yet what glowing examples they were to other young people, and how proud their parents must have been (if they had any way of knowing).

Joseph

Joseph started out at the young age of seventeen (Gen. 37:2). He was his father's favorite (37:4) and early in his life he began to have some dreams which implied he was somehow to be elevated later in life above the others in his family. This did not set well with his brethren, and they decided to get rid of this young trouble maker. They faked his death, sold him to some group of travelers headed toward Egypt, and let their father mourn the loss of his son. Joseph had no more either a mother or father, was now sold as a slave, lived in a foreign country, and had no idea how or when he would ever see his family again — or if he would!

Satan lost no time in adding to the conflicts this young man was facing. He lost his parents, so he had no guidance; he was in a foreign country, so why be concerned about God or what he had been taught; he was hired out to the household of Potiphar and advancing in authority, so why not do whatever it took — and why not take whatever he wanted? Then, on top of all of this, Satan offers yet another temptation to get him to “feel his oats.” Why not have some sexual freedom with his master's wife — an older woman, no less! It might even enhance his chances for advancement. Later on, to pull him further away from his God, Joseph is forgotten in

prison after interpreting the baker's and butler's dreams. Why not seek your freedom at anyone else's expense? And why should you do anything to help Egypt — what have they done good for you? Yes, at a time a young man was “breaking free,” “learning to sort things out for himself,” and wanting to “prove he was a man,” Satan was busy trying to lure Joseph away from his God.

But Joseph refused Potiphar's wife, did not forget his God even while in prison, and returned good. for evil when interpreting Pharaoh's dream. God rewarded him by making him second ruler in Egypt.

Then his brothers arrive on the scene, and while Joseph seems to be seeking revenge, he is actually testing them to see if they still harbor the same jealousy, what has transpired, what of his younger brother, and what had they told their dad? Why hadn't his dad made any effort to come and find him? And right in the middle of all these thoughts, Joseph “remembered the dreams he had dreamed” (Gen. 42:9). Suddenly it all began to make sense. God hadn't forgotten him! He was destined to see his family again! God was still in control! And Joseph sees his way clear to *help* rather than take revenge. What a fine young man he had become, despite all Satan's attempts to destroy him, as well as his belief in God. If only his parents could have seen him now — how proud they would have been of him! “Sent by God to preserve life” (45:5), now all God's plans made sense, and he was ready and prepared to fulfill God's purposes in his life.

Moses

The next outstanding example we shall note is that of Moses. Hid in the bulrushes as a baby to save his life, he

had been taken in and reared by Pharaoh's daughter. Thanks to Miriam, his own mother got to nurse him as a baby, but how much contact she had after just a couple of years is open for discussion. Now, this young man was exposed to all "the pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25). He was trained as an Egyptian, educated in all their ways, and had at his fingertips all that the son of Pharaoh's daughter could have desired. How easily Satan must have thought he could mold this youth's mind and make him his servant instead of God's. What great and diabolical plans he must have had in mind for him. Then, when he did go forth to check on his people, he had to kill an Egyptian to save one of his own. Now he had to flee for his life — his parents had abandoned him, his God had abandoned him, and Egypt now turned her back on him. As he fled, how these thoughts must have weighed on his mind. He settled in a foreign country, married the daughter of the priest of Midian, and began his own family. He could not return to Egypt. All dreams of getting his people out were now gone. Why not worship the god his father-in-law served? Had Satan succeeded in his desires to win over Moses?

At the age of eighty, when his habits had become well established, God calls Moses to go tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go." But, Lord, what about my family? They won't listen! I'm too old! How Moses could have multiplied his excuses. But for the next forty years, we see a great leader that God had prepared well to lead his people. Moses had not lost his faith in God, he had increased it with each trial. Again, if his parents could have only seen him now as they were approaching the promised land with all Israel following this great leader, this man of God! And once he was "their son"!

Daniel

The third youth we want to focus on is Daniel. One of the "children of Israel" (1:3-4), Daniel was torn away from his parents at an early age and taken captive to a foreign land. Again, as a youth seeking to become a man, Satan provided every opportunity for Daniel to turn his back on God — prestige in being selected, no parents to provide restrictions, the dainties of the king, and every chance for advancement. Daniel could have even claimed the personal glory for interpreting the king's dreams and look at what he might have gotten then!

But Daniel was not only a leader, he was a God-fearing leader! He refused the king's dainties (1:8), and he dared to refuse the king himself! Yet, Daniel prevailed because God was with him (1:9). He saved the lives of all the wise men in the empire (more glory and more to risk if he acknowledged worshipping this "God of Israel"), yet refused to take the personal glory (2:20, 45; 4:19, etc.). He faithfully worshiped his God to the point even his enemies knew it was their only basis for getting Daniel "out of the way." The king was so impressed he wanted to know if

Daniel's God was able to save him (6:20). In spite of all the allurements, the promise of power and prestige, the special honors, etc., Daniel never swerved in his loyalty for his God. How his parents (while being concerned for his welfare) would have beamed with pride over what a fine young man he had become, who demonstrated to so many that you do not have to sell your convictions to win favor and approval of others. And how God must have looked with approval upon him; he was "not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:16).

Conclusion

Young people, you may choose your "heroes" from those of the world (and the things they do may disappoint you as well), or you can pick some out like these three. What fine, upright, stirring examples they were, and what a challenge for any of you to follow. "Special men"? No, just plain ordinary people, whose parents only had a short time to implant a deep love for God within them, and they grew to love God rather than the world, because they saw he was indeed greater than the world! Parents, you don't know how long you may have, but who knows what great things you may implant in their hearts, and how God may be able to use them if you have done your job the very best you could. And youth, don't forget where your real goal is, and do not remove your eyes from that goal (Heb. 12:1-2). God will use you in his way, at his time, and for his purpose; and who knows what that may be!

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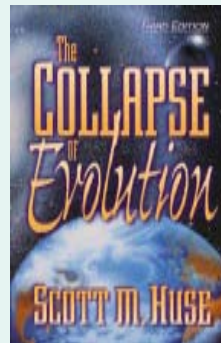
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The Second Coming

Irvin Himmel

A favorite subject with many preachers is “The Second Coming of Christ.” Some have put together elaborate theories relating to end-time prophecies. All speculation aside, since the hope and the longings of Christians are embodied in his coming, let us look at some plain Bible facts.

Is Christ Coming Again?

He promised that he would come again. “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Angels announced that he will come again. When he was taken up and a cloud received him out of the sight of the disciples, they were looking up toward heaven, and suddenly two men stood by them in white apparel, and said, “. . . This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The Hebrew writer testified that he will come again. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

Peter warned that scoffers would arise, saying, “Where is the promise of his coming?” He declared, “But the day of the Lord will come” (2 Pet. 3:3-4, 10). All the mockers and unbelievers, atheists and skeptics combined, cannot change the fact that Christ is coming. God keeps his promises! Let the scoffers rage and let the infidels keep up their denial; Christ will come again. Those who walk after their own lusts cannot change the will of God.

When Is Christ Coming?

The Lord himself said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:36, 42). The disciples were given definite signs pointing to Jerusalem’s overthrow, but no signs were given that would enable them

to know the time of Christ’s personal return. The destruction of Jerusalem was a local event; the second coming is a universal event.

Peter wrote, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Pet. 3:10). A thief does not announce in advance the time of his arrival. Only men who profess to be wise above what is written talk of “signs” that the end is near.

Paul expressed the same thought that Peter communicated by saying, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). He will come suddenly, without special advance warning.

Since the Scriptures do not reveal the time of his return, we need to watch and be ready at all times. “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:37).

What Will Happen When Christ Comes?

The dead will be raised. Jesus taught that “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

The righteous who are living will have no advantage over the righteous who have died, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the *dead* in Christ shall rise first: Then we *which are alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16-17; emphasis mine, ih). Note that the living will not precede the dead. Before the living are caught up, the dead are raised up so that all the righteous are caught up together.

The judgment will take place. This is implied in the prophecy that some will be raised to “life” and others to

“damnation” (John 5:28-29). It is stated emphatically in Matthew 25:31-46. The Son of man “shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). No one will escape the judgment of the Lord.

The righteous will be rewarded. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

The reward of the righteous includes our receiving glorified bodies. We look for the Savior who will come from heaven, and he will change our vile, corrupt body “that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21).

The kingdom will be delivered up to the Father. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Cor. 15:22-24). The kingdom consists of the faithful in Christ Jesus, those who have been “born again” (John 3:3-5). These righteous souls have been delivered from the power of darkness and “translated into the king of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

The “delivering up” of the kingdom to the Father corresponds to the “catching up” of the righteous to ever be with the Lord. It is when the kingdom is delivered up to the Father that the redeemed are ushered into heaven. Christ must reign until the last enemy is conquered. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). Death is fully overcome when all the dead are raised. Following the resurrection and the judgment, God will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). It will be acknowledged by all men that the Father’s rule is supreme.

The wicked will be punished. “. . . The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

The destiny of the unrighteous is clear. Jesus said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the

righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). Peter wrote, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Pet. 2:9).

The earth will be burned up. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Note that the Bible uses such terms as “pass away,” “melt,” “burned up,” and “dissolved” to describe what happens to the temporal order when the day of the Lord comes. This extends even to the “elements.”

The old world was destroyed by water in Noah’s time (2 Pet. 3:6). The present habitation of mankind is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7). The heavens that are a part of the material world (not the eternal heavens) will be on fire, and “being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Pet. 3:12).

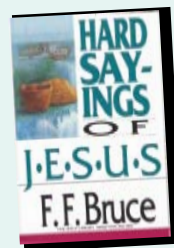
The second coming of Christ will be a glorious event for the faithful. For the wicked, however, it will be a dreadful and terrible occurrence. The redeemed will be indescribably happy. Words are inadequate to picture the terror that will be experienced by the ungodly and disobedient. Those who are ready for the second coming welcome the return of the Lord, saying with the beloved John, “Even so, come Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

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Hard Sayings Of Jesus

by F. F. Bruce

Like his original hearers many people today find Jesus’ sayings hard. Some sayings are hard because they are difficult to understand, others because the demands they make on us are only too clear. F. F. Bruce examines seventy of the hard sayings of Jesus to clear away the cultural and historical difficulties which keep us from grappling with the real challenge of Jesus’ message.



A Salvation Issue

Bobby L. Graham

In more recent years some have responded

There is solid ground where you can stand on the revealed truth of God's word! Plant your feet there and refuse to be moved. You can be that tree planted by the water — fruitful, successful, and un fading in God's service (Ps. 1:3).

in this way with increasing frequency to our insistence upon adherence to the scriptural pattern: "Well, it's not a salvation issue." It might be a matter of the organization of the local church, the use of women in roles of leadership, or the use of instrumental music which they relegate to the area of the unimportant, the non-essential, or matters about which we can differ and still please God. The blinding pace of change noted among some in regard to such issues convinces us that some are truly headed to a stance where nothing will be viewed as a salvation issue except some general belief in God or Christ. In recent weeks this writer learned from a mutual friend about a former brother in the Lord who had gone so far in his departure that he was meeting with the Episcopalians. When confronted by a faithful disciple about his vacillation, he insisted that the Episcopalians would be saved because "they believe in God." He obviously had gone this far because he now thinks that all of the issues formerly separating him from his eventual Episcopal brothers are not matters of salvation. Though they might not agree on all of these issues, they are matters of indifference to all of them. I wonder whether he thinks the appointment of a practicing sodomite as one of their bishops is such an issue. It would be interesting to know, would it not? It so happens that the particular Episcopal congregation which he attends has a female rector/priest. I also wonder how he views this issue, in view of his once steadfast insistence upon such matters. In his years of weakening and departing, he

once said concerning scriptural teaching on the issue of instrumental music, "It's truth for you but it's not truth not for them," as if truth is individually and existentially determined by each one's own experiences. Imagine this kind of language being spoken by one of the Lord's apostles or first-century preachers, in view of their insistence on hearing Christ, obeying him, and not even thinking beyond what is written (Matt. 17:5; 1 John 4:6; Heb. 5:9; 1 Cor. 4:6).

It is certainly relevant for us to consider this matter from a biblical perspective. The relevance is made even more pertinent by our learning that prominent ones among our more liberal brethren have spoken to this effect and by the statement of an elder in a conservative church that the use of the church treasury is a minor matter. I wonder whether many whom we know might also have such feelings which they have thus far silenced. There is probably a greater need for this study than we have thought. My friends, if God is God, if the Bible is his word, if truth and error are distinct from each other, if right is right and wrong is wrong, and if each shall face Christ in judgment, then we dare not permit ourselves to drift into such unbelief without the clarion warnings of God's word.

Who/What Determines This?

To whom has the Lord delegated such a role? Who among men has the wisdom of Deity to speak for God on such matters? Is revelation still operating in certain ones so they can speak

for God? The Lord has taught us that man's thoughts and ways are not his and man cannot guide his own steps (Isa. 55:8-9; Jer, 10:23). It is human arrogance to speak thus for the Lord — an arrogance that manifests major disdain for what God has spoken.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him (be) the glory for ever. Amen (Rom 11:33-36, ASV).

When human beings become as wise as God, they will then be qualified to serve as his advisors in the expectation that he will have to hear them. Until they have advanced that far up the ladder, they will have to be content to listen to him or, in the words of Habakkuk to a similarly arrogant people of his time, “keep silence before Him” (2:20). We need to learn to be quiet and hear him! That lesson is often impressed on children in a family at an early age, but it seems that some of the more mature ones in God's family have forgotten their raisin' in that they thought themselves capable of charting their own course. The major problem now affecting the Episcopal Church in America is the result of the same attitudes that we here examine among our own; it did not develop overnight.

Is there really anybody to whom the Lord has passed this grave responsibility of declaring for him what is a salvation issue? Of course not, not even a group of distinguished scholars who know the language or have thought much about such matters or been selected by their brethren to serve in this capacity. Whoever presumes to speak in this fashion must remember that he, too, will answer to Christ for his lack of faith in Christ and confidence in

his word (John 12:48). Furthermore, there is no revealed basis for making such a determination, no question that must be asked, or no qualities that men can identify as marking an issue as one necessary or unnecessary to salvation. It is a task that nobody knows anything about, for God has not instructed us on this matter. It is in his jurisdiction, not ours. If he makes a difference in the Day of Judgment, at least he will know what he is doing and will have the divine right to do it. We don't know and need to be quiet before him (1 Pet. 4:11)!

Any Non-Essential Commands?

A question often asked by gospel preachers in debating denominationalists, who protested the need to be baptized to be saved, was “Did God give any non-essential commands?” God clearly commanded baptism in passages like Acts 2:38 and 10:48. Did he command something not necessary? The same question applies to the Lord's commands not to add to his words or to subtract from them. Is it necessary for us to observe them? If it is, then we have no right to venture into the arena of innovation where modern religion delights to operate.

Paul's Spirit-directed commands that restrict women from leading roles in the church were not matters culturally driven and thus unneeded in later cultures. We observe in their contexts that other factors prompted the Lord to legislate as he did (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12-14). In every matter that has come before the current “divine counselors” for their official declaration of wisdom, not one convincing point has been made that would remove any of the Lord's commands. They stand as he gave them — essential to our right standing before him and to our eternal salvation. God made no provision for a new group of apostles or latter-day prophets to bless the world with up-to-date changes.

Old Gospel-Doctrine Distinction

Once upon a time in the distant past, the wise ones of that age also thought there is a difference between

things essential and things non-essential. Men like Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside borrowed from the writing of denominationalists (who expounded more about the Greek than the English but still failed to prove their point) to be among the first to speak about such matters among brethren. They distinguished matters necessary to becoming a Christian (styled “gospel” by them) from matters related to growth in Christ (styled “doctrine” by them). Actually they were making a distinction without a difference, for the Bible fails to bear out their use of the terms in such fashion as they alleged. In the New Testament there is really no difference between the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of Christ.

As this writer thought about the present situation, he saw a parallel between the old distinction and the new one. In both cases some matters/issues are seen as necessary to salvation, while others are seen as unrelated. In the area of the unrelated/unnecessary issues, they said there can be unity-in-diversity. One of the major problems attaching itself to this human distinction was identifying who decides which issues belong where. It sounds familiar, doesn't it? In case the reader has so soon forgotten, he needs to re-read the second section of this article.

Willing to Take the Risk?

Are you willing to risk your soul to the meanderings of human wisdom? “Meanderings” is the proper term to describe the uncertain wandering course of one refusing to follow Christ as his guiding star and the Bible as his divinely given chart. All religious history bears witness to the tendency of man thus to wander. The sole solution to this tendency is to heed the Master's instruction in Mathew 7:13-15:

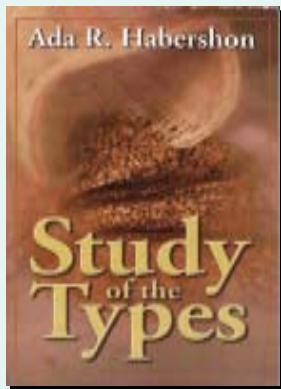
Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find

it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

The gate by which one enters into Christ is narrow, and the way by which he persists in service to God is straitened (difficult). It become more difficult when one loses sight of the truth taught by the Lord and hearkens to the error of false prophets, people falsely claiming to speak for the Lord. The principle of respecting (not relaxing) God's commands, stated under the Mosaic arrangement by Jesus in Matthew 5:19, also prefaces the new dispensation under Christ with a similar warning, which is abundantly stated there as well.

You do not need to meander! You do not need to shift about on the quicksand of human opinion and speculation! There is solid ground where you can stand on the revealed truth of God's word! Plant your feet there and refuse to be moved. You can be that tree planted by the water — fruitful, successful, and unfading in God's service (Ps. 1:3).

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A Study Of Types

by Ada R. Habershon

This classic work unfolds the types and symbols in the Old Testament that represent Christ, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and many other. The wealth of material on typology will strengthen your faith and warm your heart with love and thankfulness to God.

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“Malfunction” continued from front page
completely overshadowed!

Yet, is this not the way of sin? Sin is not static, but continues to be in motion, and takes folks (whether knowingly, or ignorantly) down a path that ultimately leads to destruction. We see this when we read Psalm 1:1, and learn of the progressive nature of sin. The man who was not considered “blessed” by God first “walked,” then “stood,” and finally “sat” with the sinners. James made a similar point when he talked about lust first being “conceived,” and then “full grown” when it brought about death (Jas. 1:14-15).

As the old saying goes, sin takes folks farther than they want to go; makes them stay longer than they want to stay; and makes them pay more than they want to pay! Was not the Super Bowl fiasco just the latest example of this truth? This incident took two individuals, as well as a viewing public, farther than we wanted to go! While Timberlake, Jackson, and others bear their responsibility, let's also remember that the public has some responsibility as well! Had not a willing public asked entertainers for more and more “sexual themes” and “double entendres” through the years (through the purchase of their products and tickets to their events), people such as Jackson, Timberlake, and a myriad of others would not be doing what they are doing! They'd either be unemployed, or would change their songs and actions to more moral standards, and act accordingly. Therefore, if folks buy their CDs, watch their movies, their TV shows, etc., does this not give these people the notion that “we” like that stuff?

Remember what Paul said in Romans 1:32? “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” In other words, though “we” may not be on the stage, or on the “silver screen,” if we stand idly by and encourage such behavior from the entertainment industry, can we be found guiltless before God?

Yes, sin takes folks farther than they want to go. Compare the TV shows of today with those of just a few years ago. Consider the fact that the list of “taboo” words gets whittled down to less and less as the years pass. Consider the fact that what used to be considered “bathroom talk,” or words not said in “mixed company” are now proclaimed loud and long to anyone within earshot.

Yes, the “wardrobe malfunction” in this year's Super Bowl half-time show was a tragedy and a travesty. Yet, does not this malfunction also scream to folks that there is a bigger “malfunction” taking place — the abandoning of godly principles that folks should be respecting? There is a “spiritual malfunction” evident today! Society at large encourages folks to “do your own thing,” and to “live for the moment,” and we are reaping the harvest of that seed that has been sown (Gal. 6:7-8).

Conclusion

Is it too late? Are we so far gone that there is no hope? I don't think that is the case. I believe so long as we are still breathing, and are still concerned about the present state of things, that we have a chance to change. In a strange way, it was comforting to learn of so many being outraged at the behavior displayed during the Super Bowl's half-time show. At least, one knew he was not alone.

In the long ago, God was looking for just one man to stand in the gap so that he would not have to destroy the nation. Unfortunately, he found none (Ezek. 22:30-31). Personally, I believe there is far more than one person among God's people today who is willing to follow the Lord's will. I also believe there are many yet outside of Christ who would be willing to change if they knew how to change. They need the gospel preached to them (Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:21). Yet, we all must recognize that it is not going to be easy, nor is it an overnight change. Yet, folks can change and return to the biblical principles God has described *if* men will listen to the word of God and then obey it! All of us have responsibilities to meet.

Let us determine:

1. To respect what the Bible says on *all* subjects, not merely on the ones we want to do anyway. Peter said God's word gives us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

2. To repent of wrongdoing, and then go to the Bible to find out what we ought to be doing. God wants "all" to "come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Let us not merely give verbal assent that we believe the Bible, but let us also be workers and doers of God's word (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 1:26-27).

3. Not merely to change ourselves, but to also help others change! Part of the responsibility of a Christian is to tell lost souls about Christ (2 Tim. 2:2). While some were outraged at the events of last Sunday, they may or may not know "why" such is wrong. They may not realize the true nature of sin. May we be aware of such opportunities and show folks the truth of God's word so that they can be free from sin (1 Tim. 4:16).

Some made comments concerning the number of children who saw the untoward and lascivious behavior ("unchaste handling of males and females," Strong's) on that Sunday night, February 1. May parents resolve to teach their children the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). May our children see in us godly and proper examples in word and deed (Matt. 5:16; Col. 3:17). Sadly, parents leaving children to raise themselves, or allowing a TV, or the school system, etc., to teach them proper values and morals has resulted in part of the problem we are seeing today. "... A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15).

Ultimately, what this comes down to is that folks need to yield and submit their will to the Father's will. Until this happens, such incidents as happened last week will continue and will flourish. Now that one step has been taken to "break a barrier," or "push the envelope," how long until another move will be made? Remember, sin is not static! There will be a continual progression so long as there is nothing opposing it! What will we do, friend? The answer to this problem is not found in Washington, at NFL headquarters, nor at CBS. The answer is found in the hearts and minds of folks who will yield to the will of God and in humbleness of heart return to the Lord's way! How many prophets cried out that sentiment in Old Testament times? Through their written records (Heb. 11:4b), they are crying out this same message to us today! James said, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jas. 4:8). What will your response be? What will my response be? Reformation and restoration begins at home!

May these "wardrobe malfunctions" and similar sins which are committed end and end soon. I am convinced that they will end, as soon as our "spiritual malfunctions" cease!

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"New Wine" continued from page 2

whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and *ye shall afflict your souls*, by a statute for ever (Lev. 16:29-31).

Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and *ye shall afflict your souls*, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people (Lev. 23:27-29).

And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and *ye shall afflict your souls*: ye shall not do any work therein (Num. 29:7).

"Ye shall afflict your souls" was understood among the Jews to be a reference to fasting (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew-English Lexicon* 776). In addition to this mandated fasting, the Old Testament speaks of fasting to express sorrow for the deceased (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam.

1:12; 1 Chron. 10:12), pain from the suffering of sickness (Ps. 35:13), concern for a national calamity (Judg. 20:26; Neh. 1:4; Esth. 4:3; Zech. 7:5), remorse for sins committed (1 Sam. 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh. 9:1; Ps. 69:10; Dan. 9:3; Joel 2:12), deep feelings in making request of God (2 Sam. 12:22; Ezra 8:23), and anguish (Dan. 9:23). Moses fasted in preparation for receiving revelation (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9). Jesus also fasted prior to his temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).

The idea that fasting is a means of developing and exhibiting self-control is not found in Scripture. As a matter of fact, the New Testament warns against that ascetic spirit that imposes unnecessary hardships upon the body. Paul wrote,

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh (Col. 2:18-23).

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

In Paul's concept, the voluntary neglecting of the body based on the commandments and doctrines of men have no benefit to the spirit. Such things "have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship," but are without value to one's spiritual relationship with God.

Fasting and John's Disciples

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days (Mark 2:19-20).

Jesus' first comments about fasting is a response to the difference between Jesus' disciples not fasting and John's disciples who fast. Their fasting partook of the melancholy signs of mourning associated with fasting. "The immediate disciples of Jesus do not fast like the more pious of

the people, the disciples of John and the Pharisees. When complaint is made about this, Jesus will not accept it. He defends the disciples on the ground that fasting in the presence of the Bridegroom is nonsensical. The presence of the Messiah, the time of salvation which has dawned, means joy. Joy and fasting, i.e., sorrow (Mt. 9:15), are mutually exclusive. Sorrow and fasting belong to the time of waiting for salvation. This is true for the disciples too, who by His death will be rudely put back in the state of waiting, cf. Jn. 16:20. Seen from the standpoint of the Messianic eschatological centre of the message of Jesus, fasting is transcended" (TDNT IV:932).

In response to John's disciples, Jesus says that fasting is incongruent with the joy that comes from the understanding that the Messiah is present with his disciples. For that reason, Jesus' disciples do not fast as do John's disciples.

Fasting and the Pharisees

No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles (Mark 2:21-22).

The second part of Jesus' response addresses the difference between Jesus' disciples and the Pharisees. Among the Pharisees fasting was viewed as meritorious. The pure fast releases sin, heals diseases, casts out demons, and influences God to forgive sins (Apocalypse of Elijah 1:20-22; ca. Third century A.D.). In the first century a pious Jew fasted two days a week (Luke 18:12), usually on Monday and Thursday (TDNT IV:930). Over a period of time, fasting was practiced for its own sake. "Its self-evident character can be understood only in terms of the conviction that God recognizes the achievement as such" (TDNT IV:931). Fasting becomes an end to itself and a means of winning God's favor through meritorious works.

Fasting also is a way of displaying to others one's righteousness. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus said, "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." One can see what was happening among contemporary Jews. As they fasted on Monday and Thursday, they disfigured their faces so that their countrymen would know they were fasting and look upon them as models of holiness.

Coupling the self-righteousness of the Pharisees with

their effort to earn God's approval through meritorious works, one gets a better understanding of the attitude of the Pharisees which Jesus was rejecting. That attitude is manifested in the Pharisee's prayer in Luke 18.

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. *I fast twice in the week*, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:9-14).

Jesus' reply to the Pharisees' view of fasting is this: There is no place in the gospel of Jesus Christ for the Pharisees' attitude toward fasting. Their concept that fasting is an end to itself, a meritorious means of meeting God's approval, is contrary to the gospel's affirmation that salvation is a gift of God's grace. It is by grace, unmerited and unearned. One can no more mix the gospel with the Pharisees' attitude toward fasting than he can mix oil and vinegar, patch an old garment with new cloth, or put new wine in old wineskins. The two concepts cannot be mixed. Salvation is by grace, not through meritorious works. Salvation by grace does not generate feelings of self-righteousness as are associated with the concept of earning one's salvation through meritorious works.

In his reply to the Pharisees, Jesus asserts that his gospel is incompatible with their concept about fasting.

Not Referring to Expedients

In the typical modern use of this passage, the point that is made is that one should have the freedom to put new wine in new wineskins — that is, one should have the freedom to throw aside outdated methods used in preaching the gospel to accommodate the changing of times. While the point that is made is true (one is not tied to use time-dated expedients, such as burning lamps and candles instead of using electricity, having an outdoor toilet instead of modern plumbing, using tent meetings instead radio/TV programs, etc.), this is not what the passage is teaching. The "old wine/new wineskins" illustration spoke of the Pharisees' teaching about fasting and the point was that the two systems are totally incompatible. But the gospel is not incompatible with using lamps/candles in a building instead of electricity, having an outdoor toilet in a building instead of modern plumbing, or using tent meetings instead of radio/TV programs. Those expedients are still authorized practices, should the exigencies of the occasion dictate that

they are the most expedient way to accomplish whatever authorized work is being done (assembling for worship, evangelism, etc.). To apply this passage to what one judges as "expedients" is to misuse the context.

Additional Misuse of the Passage

This passage is misused in another way when it is used as justification for introducing things not authorized in Scripture or to depart from things that are mandated by Scripture. When men justify using mechanical instruments of music in worship, using women preachers (songleaders, announcers, public readers of Scripture), departing from the pattern of organization of the local church as revealed in the New Testament, and such like things on the grounds that they are putting "new wine in new wine skins," they misuse this Scripture. When men justify fellowshiping those who are so departing from God's pattern for his church on this basis, they also misuse this Scripture.

Apostasies sometimes mix the changing of essentials and non-essentials. What I mean by this is that some movements that began with the changing of non-essentials quickly move in the direction of changing essentials. Let me give an illustration. In the Ketcherside-Garrett unity movement, brethren characterized the wearing of the name Church of Christ as denominational (although they never offered a better plan). Though brethren do not usually argue that there is only one divinely revealed name by which to refer to the New Testament church, these brethren accused churches which have "Church of Christ" on their letterheads and signs of being denominational in their mind set. But the Ketcherside-Garrett movement was not limited to changing expedients. The Ketcherside-Garrett movement preached that fellowship should be extended to those who use instruments of music in worship, preach premillennial doctrines, support human institutions from the church treasury (missionary societies, benevolent societies, hospitals, schools, old folks homes, unwed mothers homes, etc.), build fellowship halls, and support a host of other things not authorized by Scripture.

Over a period of time, the same evolution of belief has occurred on more than one occasion by some among us. A local church begins saying that the work of God can be more effectively accomplished by replacing the sign that says "Church of Christ" with something like "Christians Meet Here" or "The Church." The invitation song is eliminated because it makes visitors feel uncomfortable. Brethren who have "three songs and a prayer" are mocked as hide-bound traditionalists. However, there is more working than merely changing an expedient sign. Soon the group is not comfortable with that "confrontational" preaching that mentions denominations by name in their preaching, that teaches there is only one church, that affirms that baptism is essential for salvation and can only be administered by immersion, that condemns dancing, immodest dress, and

social drinking, that tries to enforce the idea that there is only one cause for divorce that gives a person the right to remarriage, and such like things. Soon such brethren cannot see anything wrong with “eating in the church building” (arguing that babies eat in the church building all the time). Some of these brethren are ready to attach the Lord’s supper to a common meal and cannot see the need for a weekly collection.

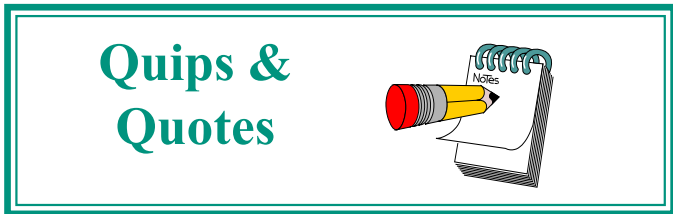
When enough churches have followed the same evolution that it becomes a pattern, it is only natural for brethren to become alarmed when a church changes its sign from “Church of Christ” to “Christians Meet Here” or “The church.” When brethren ask those changing their sign about the direction they are headed, they defend the change as a matter of expediency and castigate those who warn them about the direction they are headed. They vehemently deny that they are changing their doctrinal convictions. But, human nature is such that generally one changes gradually. When one begins to move away from the truth, he does not know where he is headed. *He only knows what he is leaving.* He picks up his anchor and is adrift, not knowing where he will again drop anchor. Consequently, he can truthfully deny that he is headed in a given direction, but he cannot deny that he is leaving something.

Wise brethren will not wait until such drifting has taken brethren all the way into the sailing lanes of the Protestant churches before alarming others. They can and should sound the alarm at the first signs of drifting, making all on board aware of the dangers that might be occurring. If nothing but adjusting the use of expedients is at work, no harm has been done. The danger of drifting away from the truth is ever present and brethren need constantly to be re-

minded of its danger. But, if more is at work than changing the use of some expedients, the call to alarm is the mark of vigilance — the very vigilance which God commanded of his children. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

By the time some brethren become aware of the danger, the church of which they are a member is firmly under the control of change agents who will not tolerate an “old fashion, hide bound traditionalist” preacher. Over a period of months and sometimes years, the church changes in its makeup. Those clinging to the fundamental principles of the gospel leave one by one in search of a church more committed to the truth; those in area congregations looking for a change from the “traditional” worship of other local churches are attracted to the non-traditional church in the area (others see what those who are changing deny is occurring). A sorting out occurs among the churches — one committed to the Jerusalem gospel and the other committed to making the gospel relevant to the twenty-first century (as if it were not relevant in the form in which it has been preached for twenty centuries). As the years pass, the difference becomes obvious and fellowship is at first strained and then broken.

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Pope Asks Media to Uphold Traditional Family Life

“Vatican City — Pope John Paul II criticized the media Saturday, saying it often gives a positive depiction of extramarital sex, contraception, abortion, and homosexuality that is harmful to society.

“The pontiff, in a statement issued ahead of the Church’s World Communications Day in May, urged the media to promote traditional family life.

“The pope urged ‘responsible communicators’ to resist commercial pressure and secular ideologies” (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 25, 2004], A14).

Bishops to Campaign Against Gay Marriage

“Boston — The four Roman Catholic bishops of Massachusetts are taking their fight against same-sex marriage directly to parishioners, with a direct-mail campaign targeting nearly 1 million families.

“Frustrated by what they say is a public mis-perception about their opposition to gay marriage, the bishops are sending a four-page flier to Catholic households asking them to lobby for a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would ban same-sex marriages.

“The Legislature is expected to take up the amendment next month (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 31, 2004],



First Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

The Renewing of Your Mind

July 12-15, 2004

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-

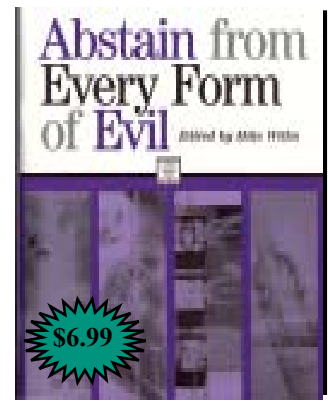
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	Scientific Fore-knowledge and the Bible (Larry Dickens)	House Churches (Harry Osborne)	Testifying in the Worship Assembly (Bobby Graham)
9:00 - 9:50	Renewed View of Morals (Aaron Erhardt)	Renewed View of the Church (Larry Hafley)	Renewed View of Jesus (John Isaac Edwards)
10:00 - 10:50	Renewed View of Sexual Morals (Lewis Willis)	Renewed View of Unity (Russell Dunaway)	Renewed View of Biblical Interpretation (Marc Gibson)
11:00 - 11:50	Renewed View of Marriage (Brett Hogland)	Renewed Commitment to Balanced Preaching (Ron Halbrook)	Renewed View of Worship (Jason Longstreth)
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
1:30 - 2:20	Material available for Children's Classes (Vernita Goodall)	A Biblical View of Femininity (Anne Stevens)	Issues for a Preacher/Elder's Wife (Bobby Adams)
Auditorium			
1:30 - 2:20	Evangelism in Canada (Brian Sullivan)	Evangelism in India (John Humphries)	Evangelism in Nigeria (Karl Diestelkamp)
2:30 - 4:00	Open Forum: No Assigned Topic	Open Forum: role of Government in Divorce/Remarriage (Mental Divorce): Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Donnie Rader, Greg Gwin	Open Forum: Sunday Evening Communion (Al Diestelkamp, Dick Blackford)
Singing: 7:00 - 7:30 Led by R.J. Stevens			
"The Renewing of Your Mind" (Rom. 12:1-2) (Mike Willis)	Renewed View of Parental Discipline (Weldon Warnock)	Renewed Commitment to Evangelism (Connie W. Adams)	Recommitment to Biblical Authority (Bill Cavender)



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