

Magazine

Avoiding Pride

Don Wright

After Nathan the prophet revealed to David his sin regarding Bathsheba, David sat down and wrote Psalm 51. David had somehow managed to bury the reality of his sin in the deep crevices of his mind and escape the remorse that should have plagued him from the moment of his offense. But now the true depth of his sin has been exposed and brought to the forefront of his mind by the vivid illustration of Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-5), and David is finally overwhelmed with guilt (Ps. 51:1-4). In his state of contrition, David begs God for forgiveness. But David pleads for something else as well. David asks God to create in him a clean heart. David seemed to realize that sin originates in the heart (Mark 7:21-23).

One of the sins mentioned by Jesus in Mark 7 is *pride*. The sin of pride is overlooked most of the time. Not too many folks are disciplined by the church because of pride. Not too many brethren are considered weak in the faith because of pride. Not too many people think that their soul is in jeopardy because of pride. After all, pride, it is thought by some, is not as bad as fornication or stealing or covetousness or one of the other many sins that are condemned by God. The truth, however, is that pride is deplorable to God. A proud look is the first of seven sins listed in Proverbs 6 that is hated by God (Prov. 6:16-19). Pride is an abomination to God and must be avoided if we want to maintain a relationship with him and go to heaven.

Pride Defined

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines pride as "inordinate self-esteem or conceit." There are at least three Greek words translated pride in our English Bible and they all carry the idea of being puffed up, boastful, or high-minded. The word "pride" appears forty-nine times in the KJV and the word "proud" appears forty-eight times, and never is either word used in a positive way. We should be careful about saying that we are proud of something or someone. We sometimes use the word "pride" in a way that denotes simply being pleased with something. For example, we may say that we are proud of our children. What we mean is that we are pleased with them. However, the Bible never uses the word "pride" in such a way and thus we should try to eliminate such use of the word in our speech.

Illegitimate Offspring of Pride

Sinful attitudes beget sinful action (Jas. 1:14-15). Since pride is a sin of the heart, we should expect that it will sooner or later cause one to sin outwardly. What are some sins that may be associated with a prideful heart?

1. Pride causes one to act without proper love (1 Cor. 13:4). The importance of acting with proper love is seen, not only in the text of 1 Corinthians 13, but also by the nature of this love under consideration. This love that Paul deals with is *agape*. It is not just an emotional feeling,

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Special Issue
"Create in Me a Clean
Heart, O God"



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Envy and Jealousy

Karl Diestelkamp

As with most vice, envy and jealousy seem to be taken for granted by much of society and are considered almost “natural” to man’s being. Not so, by those who ask the Lord to create in them “a clean heart.” The wise understand the principle, “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). To entertain either envy or jealousy in the heart is to court ruin. Solomon writes, “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30) and again, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:4). Envy and jealousy eat at the spiritual vitals of those who allow them into their hearts and those who continue to entertain them will pay the ultimate price.

Our English dictionaries define *envy* as “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another with a desire to possess the same advantage,” and *jealous* as “hostile toward a rival or one believed to enjoy an advantage.”

In the New Testament, two different words are translated “envy.” The first, *zelos*, can be used in either a good or a bad sense, to be determined by the context in which it occurs with some translating it “envying” and others “jealousy.” The second, *phthonos*, “is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word” (Vine 367). Commenting on the two words, Vine says, “The distinction lies in this, that envy desires to deprive another of what he has, jealousy desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself.” Both words occur as “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21) demonstrating this variation in meaning. In verse 20, the KJV has “emulations” for *zelos* while the ASV, NASV, and NKJV have “jealousy.” In verse 21, all of these have “envying” or “envy” for *phthonos*. The creation of “a clean heart” requires not only the elimination of evil attitudes, but must also focus on preventing their development in the heart.

Pontius Pilate recognized envy as the motivation of the chief priest and the elders of the Jews, who asked him to put Jesus to death, “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matt. 27:18). A few days before, Jesus had entered Jerusalem to praise and honor from the multitudes, infuriating the Pharisees who demanded that Jesus should rebuke the people (Luke 19:39). That they were envious of him is seen as they reasoned among themselves, saying they had accomplished *nothing* to offset his popularity and “the world is gone after him” (John 12:19). Judas became a willing pawn to deliver Jesus in a setting away from the multitudes, because the conspirators “feared the people” (Luke 22:2-6). Envy and jealousy do not inspire real confidence and courage.

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“Lust” (The Silent Soul-Killer)

Brian V. Sullivan

“Lust,” the very word itself, seems to conjure up images of something that is tantalizing, tempting and even terrible. Yet, if you were to say, “The Miller’s are manifesting a ‘lust for life’ since their early retirement” the connotation of evil is absent. We are simply suggesting that they are enjoying the blessing of retired life and using some of the benefits they had stored up through their long years in the work force.

As Bible students we are fully aware that there are contexts in which “lust” is not used in a good sense. For example, in 1 John 2:15-17, we read: of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” These lusts are avenues by which Satan can influence us to evil (cf. Gen. 3:1-8; Matt. 4:1-11). Is it possible for something to be descriptive of good in one setting and descriptive of evil in another? Is “lust” indicative of “inherent evil” or is it possible that it could be a useful slave but a pitiful master?

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

In 1 Corinthians 12:18, we learn that “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (NKJV). Later, in that context, the inspired apostle draws an analogy between the physical body and Christ’s spiritual body (the church). Your attention is drawn to what is revealed about our physical bodies. In God’s great design we find that God made those “members of the body which seem to be weaker” necessary. He was able also to “bestow greater honor” on the “less honorable parts.” God also desired that the “unpresentable parts” might have “greater modesty” (see 1 Cor. 12:22-25). Simply put God designed every part of our bodies to function; to work in harmony with the other members; and to act in the overall purpose of the body (life, rest, reproduction, and enjoyment). Only a Master of Design could create such a body and develop within it the necessary traits that would accomplish his purpose for the body (cf. Ps. 139:14).

Within our nature, is the ability to appreciate beauty, a longing to find a suitable helpmeet whom we might wed, and a desire to participate in a physical union with another to bring forth offspring (Matt. 19:4-5). That same God who created man and woman, also “solemnized” the first marriage relationship when he spoke of “man and his wife” (Gen. 2:22). These two were wed in God’s sight. “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25, NKJV).

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Everything appears beautiful and pure in this splendor of Eden. Satan, that old master of deception and untruth, entered into the Garden and spoiled the setting by encouraging disobedience to God and his law. One of the consequences of that sin was a loss of innocence that resulted in man — aware of his nakedness — hiding from the presence of God his maker (Gen. 3:9-13). God, “made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:20, NKJV). From that moment, Satan has been doing everything he can to counter God’s influence, to encourage the disrobing and display of that which God had clothed and hidden, to entice evil thought and actions.

Lust As Our Master

It is the beloved John who writes: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NKJV). What is the Holy Spirit warning us of here? It is not a condemnation of the basic desire of the flesh that compels us to seek food, drink, companionship, or intimacy as permitted by our Maker. Nor does it appear that he is condemning the ability to see that allows us to observe and experience so many of the beauties of the world that surround us. Nor does he want to destroy all our self-confidence or will to advance. What the Spirit warns us of is the danger that occurs when that master of subtle shades of grey (Satan) moves these things from the realm of right, holy, and good (their role as our servants) to the role of master in our lives.

Every sin is the result of Satan identifying a natural impulse or desire, using his resources and influences to prompt us and tempt us to take it far beyond the lawful or permitted means of satisfaction that God has prescribed. It is important to remember that he (Satan) can put the incentives before us; but we, and we alone, make the decision as to whether we will do it or not (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

Satan’s Cunning Appeals

Satan knows that his greatest work is accomplished through obscuring the lines, blurring the colors, and changing the shades or tones. Many people still have the ability to discern between “black” and “white” (things diametrically opposed, such as truth and error), but Satan blends the colors and encourages a wider stance, a more permissive view that ultimately leads to the slippery slope of sin. He plied his trade on Eve (in the garden, Gen. 3); he tried to work it on the Christ (Matt. 4, to no avail) and he works on each of us (1 John 2:15-17).

Paul, by inspiration, reveals that Satan can only use those three avenues or combinations thereof to do his evil work (“except such as is common to man,” 1 Cor. 10:13; see

also 1 John 2:15-17). You and I need to look for the way of escape so that these natural desires are satisfied in God-honoring and God-approved ways. As an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), Satan has sold many a scheme on your “right to be satisfied,” your “need for fulfillment,” the “momentary joy that it might bring,” or, “no one should be deprived of his/her pleasure.” His real intent or bent was to get a sale (your soul to his service for a mess of pottage; see Rom. 6:16-20).

Servants Rather Than Masters

Job (of Old Testament fame) shows that man has the ability to control what his eyes see. He stated: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman? For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31:1-4, NKJV). Job knew that he had to make up his mind and commit himself to avoid “shopping with his eyes.” He was aware that God was observing, and he was also aware of his own responsibility to curb his thoughts (contrast that with those who had “eyes full of adultery,” 2 Pet. 2:12-17).

Jesus took it a step further by pointing out: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:28-30, NKJV). That sounds like pretty serious action, but failing to control (keeping these things as servants) will result in “out of control” behavior (these things becoming the master). Jesus, in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, is stressing that, if we control our hearts (remember Matt. 15:18-20), we in turn will avoid or prevent ourselves from further sinful action (such as murder, depriving our parents of due care, or of adultery). The thought is not the action, but allowing the thought in the heart may open the door to sin. Control the thoughts that enter the heart and you will control the actions that proceed from the heart.

Easy Access In Our Hedonistic World

David went up to his housetop in the evening. There, to his shame, he observed another man’s wife bathing. David failed to turn aside as Joseph of Genesis’ fame did (see Gen. 39:6-15). David watched, identified, summoned, and despoiled his neighbor’s wife. His action brought quick disapproval from God, multiplied woes upon his own soul, and catastrophic happenings upon his royal household (2 Sam. 11 and on).

Those scripturally qualified for marriage are encouraged to either exercise “self-control” as Paul did by remaining unmarried, or to marry rather than “burn with passion” (1 Cor. 7:8-9). Young men are warned in Proverbs about how to avoid being ensnared by their own lust when an “evil” woman (she doesn’t always appear as the brazen harlot, but may be that innocent looking neighbor who has caught the young man’s attention; see Prov. 6:20-35; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). A careful look at that text from Proverbs will make it clear that clothing style and the way we present ourselves to others does impact our reception and their perception of us (Prov. 7:10, in contrast to 1 Pet. 3:1-4).

Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the promoters of “young adult singers” have learned that “sex” appeal sells. Television, movies, cable, satellite dishes and “surfing the net” have opened the door to a Pandora’s box that has warped our view of the world, revamped our sensitivity in moral matters, and given some sense of respectability by our oft exposure to that which is odious, harmful, and addictive.

Darkness may provide the shield (though most programming is available twenty-four hours a day to those who seek it); a quiet place away from the family may seem to grant liberties, but the God of heaven still observes (Ps. 139), and the heart still loses its purity and wholesomeness (Luke 6:45; Matt. 6:22-23) so that it is never the same again (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18). Sooner, rather than later, the chickens will come home to roost, as Proverbs 11:6 reveals, “the unfaithful will be caught by their lust” (NKJV). The Holy Spirit does not mix words when he reveals through Paul that homosexual behavior is not innate but the result of “lusts” and “vile passions.” In describing the Gentile world of that day (and sadly of our own day) Paul revealed: “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the 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, NKJV).

Warnings For The Righteous

It is time to wake up to the reality that Satan is only too happy to help us promote the sexual desire that is resident within us to the level of full-blown “lust.”

Though animals of the wilderness by nature allow the impulses of the flesh to prevail (Jer. 2:24), the people of God, however, must exercise restraint and “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:12-14, NKJV). To see the danger in uncontrolled lust one only needs to go back and read the frightful history of the Israelites in the Wilderness Wandering Period (see Paul’s powerful lesson from it in 1 Cor. 10:6-8). The

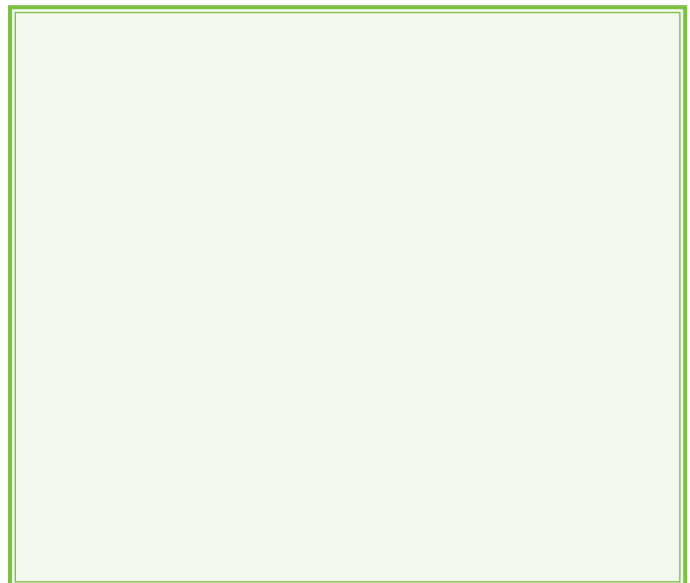
children of Israel lusted after evil and the pursuit of that evil consumed them.

We are to act differently. Paul through inspiration, speaks of “walking in the Spirit” which entails bringing the flesh under the Spirit’s influence (see Gal. 5:16-18). To act contrarily results in the domination of our flesh and a resistance to the influence of the Spirit’s teaching (“so that you do not do the things that you wish,” v. 17). Although God made this a pleasant place with abundant beauty and granted us the ability to enjoy it, he does not desire for us to give ourselves over to it completely (“spend it on your pleasures,” Jas. 4:2-3). It is important to realize that we have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Do not allow the siren call of the television, the DVD — with its seductive title or disguised agenda, the Internet with its pornography and illicit chat rooms to deter you from your home in heaven. Such can only be called “the lust of uncleanness” (2 Pet. 2:10) because these things will destroy your hope of heaven, your heart, your marriage, your home, and your influence in this world.

If Satan has ensnared you, bring it to an end before it destroys you completely. Repent of your wrongdoing; seek his forgiveness and press onward and upward to glorify God (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9-10). Don’t let Satan bring the full-force of this silent soul-killer into your life. Establish solid moral principles in accord with God’s word, pray that you might resist temptation, control your desires, turn away your eyes from that which would entice, flee from evil, exercise that *off* switch, and give yourself to wholesome, God-honoring, Christ-following, Spirit-guided living.

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Greed, A Sin of the Mind and Flesh

Don Willis

David was a wonderful man of Israel, a servant of King Saul, who often played upon the harp to soothe the nature of the king. David wrote many psalms and became a deliverer for the people of God. As a young man, he would slay the giant, Goliath (1 Sam. 17). This pleased King Saul, who brought the young man into his house and service. “. . . David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him” (1 Sam. 18:14). David married Abigail after the death of Nabal, her husband (1 Sam. 25:39); later he married Ahinoam of Jezreel (1 Sam. 25:43; 30:5). David also took to himself more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:13). But David was not completely satisfied! One evening, from the rooftop, David saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing. She was the wife of Uriah, and in his *greed* and *desire* for her, he lustfully sent servants to bring her to him (2 Sam. 11:1-4). Learning that Bathsheba was “with child,” David ordered that her husband, Uriah, be sent into battle and had him killed. Greed led to adultery, which led to murder! *Greed is a horrible spiritual disease. Greed will destroy the spiritual heart.*

Balak, king of the Moabites, (2 Sam. 22) sent messengers to Balaam to “. . . come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people” (Israel, DW). Balaam refused the desire of Balak. Balak sent higher authorities with a greater reward. The king said to Balaam, “I will promote you to great honor.” Again Balaam said, “I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more” (v. 18). Then, desiring the rewards, he replied, “Tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me *more*” (v. 19). So God told him to go, but only to do what God said. God was very angry with Balaam. God utilized Balaam’s animal also to convict Balaam; permitting the animal to speak (vv. 28-30). Balaam so desired the rewards of the king. He was filled with *greed*. What *more* will God permit me to do in order that I might possess this reward? Balaam, in his *greed* used his abilities in order to attain these rewards. 2 Peter 2:14 declares that Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness.” Balaam “taught Balak to

put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14). *Greed will eat away one’s morals.* Some “. . . have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah” (Jude 11).

For forty days, Satan tempted Jesus to an easy reward of world rulership. After the trial, Jesus was hungry. Satan tempted him to command stones be made bread. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” The devil took Jesus into a high mountain and showed him the kingdoms of the world, and offered them to Jesus . . . if only Jesus would “bow, worship, do homage” (various translations) unto Satan. Jesus replied, “Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8). Jesus knew his mission in life — to be the Savior of the world. There was *no shortcut* to the glory. Jesus “died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). The agony and tears of Jesus would not weaken him in his mission to the world. Jesus was not *greedy* to seek an easier way to salvation. Concerning Jesus’ coming death for our sins, Peter said, “Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Matt. 16:22). But Peter did not fully understand. There was no other way. Christ was the only suitable sacrifice, and he died for our sins, to pay the price of our sins. He submitted himself to the will of God. Never will there be another sacrifice for sin. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Andrew Greeley said, “The most serious spiritual problem in the country today is reckless and untrammelled (unrestrained, DW) greed” (Copyright 2004, Digital Chicago Inc). The Catholic church lists *greed* as one of Seven Deadly Sins. *Greed* is a desire to obtain more money or material possessions or bodily satisfaction than one is considered to need” (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). Pliny said, “the lust of *avarice* has so totally seized upon mankind that their wealth seems rather to possess them, than they

to possess their weath” (*The New Dictionary of Thoughts* 38). *Gluttony* is a form of *greed* relating to food and drink” (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). “*Gluttony* is the source of all our infirmities and the fountain of all our diseases. As a lamp is choked by a superabundance of oil, and a fire extinguished by excess of fuel, so is the natural health of the body destroyed by intemperate diet” (Burton, *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* 234).

Greed will destroy an individual. Webster defines greed as “excessive desire for acquiring or having; desire for more than one needs or deserves; greediness; avarice, cupidity” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary* 635). Webster also notes that “greedy” is derived from a “hunger, craving . . . wanting excessively to have or acquire.” *Greedy* suggests an avaricious concern for money or riches and often connotes miserliness; *avaricious* stresses a greed for money or riches . . . ; *grasping* suggests an unscrupulous eagerness for gain that manifests itself in a seizing upon every opportunity to get what one desires; *acquisitive* stresses the exertion of effort in acquiring or accumulating wealth or material possessions to an excessive amount; *covetous* implies greed for something that another person rightfully possesses.” It was said that *infectious greed* led to the destruction of the powerful Houston based energy company, Enron. One rightfully surmises that *greed ignores the realm of the spiritual, and is detrimental to one’s faithful service to Jesus Christ.*

Greediness is never associated with godliness, but always casts an undesirable shadow over the person who is greedy. Paul describes greediness as the way “Gentiles walk” (Eph. 4:19), certainly not the way a Christian will walk. Many of the Jews had hearts filled with greed.

Look at additional scriptural reference.

For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord (Ps. 10:3).

So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners (Prov. 1:19).

He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, But he who hates bribes will live (Prov. 15:27).

The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long. But the righteous gives and does not spare (Prov. 21:25-26).

Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory (Isa. 56:11).

Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness (Luke 11:39).

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah (Jude 11).

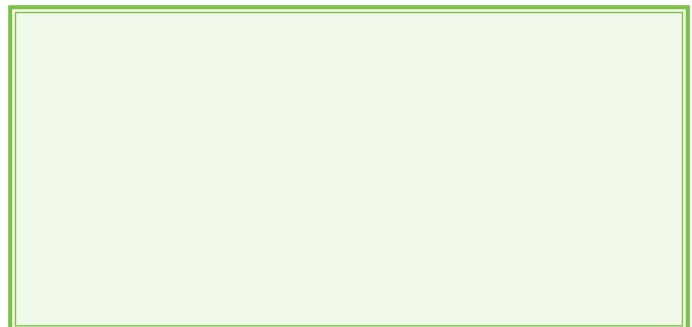
In church leadership, greediness is condemned! Titus 1:7, a bishop “. . . must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, *not greedy for money.*” Also note, Titus 1:11 speaks of some “. . . whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, *for the sake of dishonest gain*” (KJV says “filthy lucre”). 1 Timothy 3:8, “Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, *not greedy for money.*” In other words, Christians cannot have this ungodly desire within their heart.

“Greedy for filthy gain” should never be an attribute of a Christian. Greedy for filthy gain is an excessive desire for monies, whereby one loses all spiritual restraints in order to achieve. Webster said *avarice* as “greedy, from *avere*, to wish, desire, too much desire to get and keep money; greed for riches; grasping and miserly.” Webster further defines *avaricious* as *greedy for riches, cupidity.* This *cupidity* is further defined “strong desire, especially for wealth; avarice; greed.” These concepts are definitely contrary to the teachings, practices and emotions that God desires for his children. We are made in the image of God. God so loved . . . that he gave! The worldly individual so loves that he keeps, uses illegal means to attain, hoards what he has, worships his money.

Greed is of the world! Greed is against godliness! Greed will keep one from heaven. One can and must change! Romans 6:23: “. . . the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Life can be lonely
When all you have are your possessions
Greed becomes your main obsession
Just take it slowly
If what you want ain’t what you need
You’ve become a victim of your greed.
(Liberty X Lyrics, from Internet).

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Deceit

Tom Wheeler

“Deceit” is listed in the catalog of ugly sins in Romans 1:28-32 and the one who practices deceit is said to be worthy of death. Romans 3:13 talks about those who “with their tongues they have used deceit.” “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

When you look up the definition of “deceit,” you do not find a pretty description. It means false, guile, feigned, fraudulence, subtly and treachery. Have you ever been deceived? I am sure the answer is “yes” from everyone. People use “deceit” to play rather innocent pranks, some we had rather forget and some we would like to pull on someone else. Some use deceit to sell cars, houses, and other goods. Some use deceit in trading horses and cattle. Some, it seems, had rather use deceit than truth in their dealings with others. This lesson is not about things that are innocent but rather “deceit” that causes harm or causes one to sin.

“Deceit” has been around since the beginning of mankind. The serpent lied to Eve and deceived her into partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-7). “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14). The effects of this sin has had a bearing upon all living beings ever since. Sickness, pain and death are an every day occurrence and had their beginning with the deception of Eve.

Laban deceived Jacob and ruined what might have been a good in-law relationship. Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel and received Leah instead. Even after he eventually received Rachel too, Laban continued to

be deceptive. Jacob said to his wives in Genesis 31:7, “Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.” Deceptions can ruin family relationships. Many a marriage has come apart because the mother-in-law descends upon the new home of her daughter-in-law and, instead of that sweet person she had been, becomes bossy and over-bearing. Sometimes the father-in-law has been quiet and even kind until the young couple are married, then that young man just doesn’t measure up to his expectations and the father-in-law will try in every way he can to make the young husband look bad in his daughter’s eyes. Sometimes young men pretend to be what they are not until they get that sweet young lady to say “I do.” That young lady can attend every worship service with her prospective husband, until the “I do’s” are said, and then never darken the door of the church building with him again. These people are “deceitful.” They are not what they appear to be.

Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said: As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, As long as my breath is in me, And the breath of God in my nostrils, My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me That I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity

from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live (Job 27:1-6).

Job's speech here is very impressive. It would be great if we made the same promises to God and ourselves. Among other things he promised that his tongue would not "utter deceit." After all that happened to this godly man he would not become bitter and deceitful. Both the Old and New Testaments condemn those who cause others to stumble (Lev. 19:14; Rom. 14:13).

In 2 Samuel 11-12 we find a very sad story. David, someone we love and appreciate, apparently deceived himself into believing that he was going to get by with stealing Uriah's wife and having Uriah killed. He used deceit to have Uriah killed. He was trying hard to use deceit in the attempt to cover up Bathsheba's being with his (David's) own child. Many times, when deceit is used, it will take a second deceitful act to cover the first, and then it won't work for God, who knows all, is watching. When Nathan the prophet went to David and revealed God's anger, he then knew that God knows all. David became very penitent and humble but it was too late. What he did had a very grave effect upon his family and his ability to reign over his own children and the children of Israel. His son Amnon deceived David and his half sister Tamar into believing that he was sick and begged for Tamar to come and feed him. All of this so he could force her to lay with him. How sad this was for Tamar as she was now a cursed woman. Tamar's brother, Absalom, later used deception in killing his half brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:6-33). Absalom also deceived many of the people and tried to take the kingdom away from his father. Deception can ruin our lives, whether it is performed against us or by us and we know what a sad end Absalom came to.

I have never known an alcoholic that thought with the first drink that he

was heading for such a miserable life. The beer ads talk about the refreshing taste. Those ads show beautiful people having a grand time, much fun. Those ads are nothing but deceit. They never show the wreck and the mangled bodies, bodies that are mangled because someone drank the alcohol and then drove drunk. Those ads don't show the wives, or husbands, grieving because of the activities of their spouse while under the influence of the evil brew. Those ads don't show the abused and hungry children who are suffering because alcohol has consumed one or both of their parents. Those ads don't show the drunk wallowing in his own vomit in the gutter or ditch. Those ads are a prime example of deceit. Other liquor ads are just as deceitful. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." A wino is just a drunk who uses wine instead of the other beverages to get drunk. Remember the shame that Noah brought upon himself and the sin that his son committed because of Noah's drunkenness in Genesis 9:20-27.

The person who becomes addicted to pornography doesn't do it with the first dirty picture that he sees. When we read about these addicts, they begin with one picture and the habit forms and grows into an addiction. Most of those who become addicted to porn are men. Again deceit is involved. They think they can quit any time they want. They think it will not hurt their relationship with their wife. They think it will not cause them to abuse the computer at work and steal their time from the boss. They think that it will not cause them to fondle or rape a young girl. How many times they are wrong! (Prov. 6:25-28; Matt. 5:28). Pornography sites are being put on the Internet faster than a person can count. They will deceive in every way they can to get people, even children, to see their site the first time. An AFA post said that one porn site could be accessed by using the name of a very popular children's toy. If you want to

explore some government web sites you had better put the correct last three letters in the address or you will be in a porn site. Yes, they use clever deception for they know that a certain number who accidentally drop by will return and they don't care if it is small children.

I have never known a young lady who began "to make out" thinking I am going to get pregnant and have a child out of wed-lock. The deceptive nature of the activity, the desire to explore, the excitement of the moment. All of these lead her further than she intended to go. Do we even remember that God calls these children "bastards"? That is what everyone called them up until several years ago. It was in the late 1960s or early 1970s that I first heard someone say that we shouldn't use that word. And people began to say, "that word is too harsh," "it is not the child's fault." Nobody said it was the child's fault. That word was to bring a stigma upon the mother and father of the child. Young people don't be deceived. That person who you are running with will have an influence on your life. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (ASV). One translation says: "don't be tricked by false words." Another one says: "Do not deceive yourselves." The best way to marry a good person is to date a good person. The best way to have a good mate or spouse is to be a good person while looking for that good mate or spouse.

In Proverbs 7:6-27 we find the description of the seductive tactics of the harlot. She knows how to deceive and uses all the tricks of the trade. As he succumbs to her deception, the wise man describes him as an ox being led to the slaughter and as a bird caught in a snare. Look at the strong warning of the last three verses of this chapter.

Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been

slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”

Many men of all ages have been deceived by the seductive woman. Families have been torn apart, careers have been ruined, and fortunes lost because the man went to a woman whom he had no God given right to.

Lying seems like the easy way to get out of a tight spot. Lying is deceit and when one lie is told it usually takes other lies to cover up the first one. In one survey, answered by school age children, the vast majority said that they told more than one lie per day. How long can a nation stand with that much lying taking place? The liar will not go to heaven (Rev. 21:8).

Every time you purchase something at a store a certain portion of the purchase price is paying for goods that others have stolen. People steal from the company for which they work. Johnny Cash sang a song about stealing a Cadillac one piece at a time. The deceitful thinking must be that “I need this more than my employer or the owner of the store.”

In close kinship with lying and stealing is cheating. From what young people tell me, cheating is so common in school that some teachers (I hope the number is small) even encourage it. One young high school student whom I had considered to be a faithful Christian, told me that a student could not pass unless he cheated, and no young person in the class disagreed with her. This young lady was on the honor role and went to college on a scholarship. Cheating goes on in all walks of life. Deceit is at the heart of it. People are deceived into thinking that it is acceptable to cheat on their taxes. The percentage of people who cheat on their spouse is frightening.

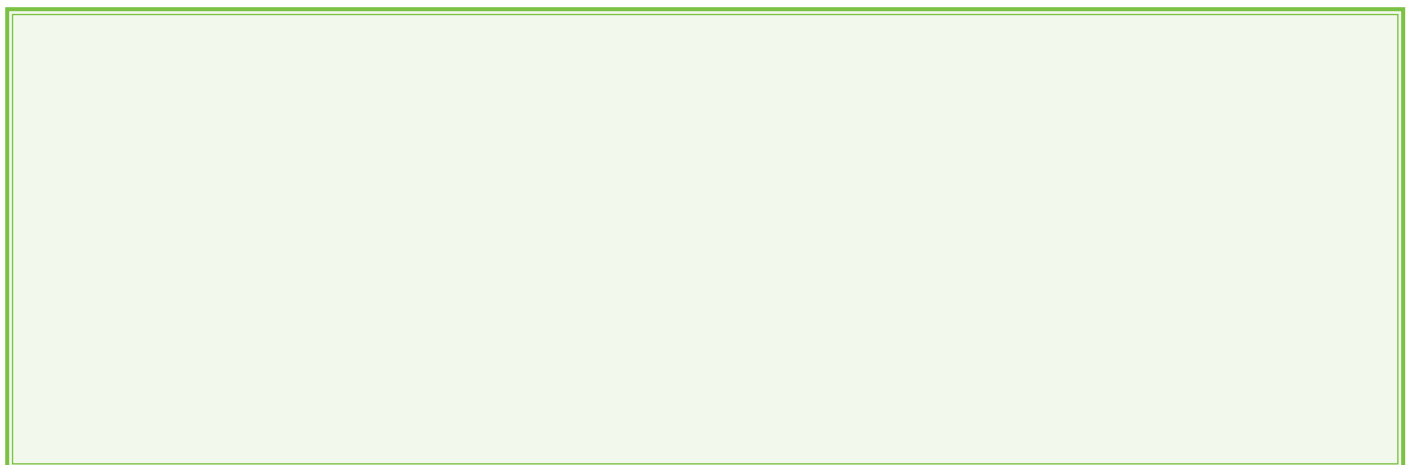
The gambler doesn’t become addicted with the first game of chance, the first football pool he enters, or the first lottery ticket he purchases. When I preach on the

subject of “gambling” the first words out of my mouth are: “gambling is dumb.” Just from the standpoint of common sense “gambling is dumb.” If the money spent on government promoted and/or condoned gambling were spent on consumer goods think how much the sales tax would be increased. Much of the money spent on gambling goes into a “black hole” and is not re-circulated in the community. Much of it ends up in the criminal world. God has provided that man is to work, trade, or receive as an inheritance his income. He has provided no other way as far as I know. Look at the deception. The daily paper names the big winners in the state and multi-state lotteries. All you have to do is by a ticket and look how rich you could become. You could then live the life of luxury and ease. No more money worries, buy that big mansion, drive that expensive sporty car and wear the best clothing. You can even wear that expensive jewelry you have always admired, or lusted for. Everyone knows that the percentage of winners is so very small, but the deceit is so strong. The lure of gambling begins early as many grade schools have their carnivals with their raffles, cake walks, and assorted other gambling games. I have stood in line behind young children who were purchasing their lottery tickets at the corner convenient store. Are there any working adults who have not been approached about putting some money on the office or company football pool?

Conclusion

“Deceit” is listed in the catalog of ugly sins in Romans 1:28-32 and the one who practices deceit is said to be worthy of death. Romans 3:13 talks about those who “with their tongues they have used deceit.” “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). If you look up “deceit” in all of it forms in both the Old Testament and the New Testament you will find many warnings of its dangers.

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Ingratitude

Charles Willis

Norman Rockwell, the famous American artist, was able to capture the spirit of America in his paintings. For this reason his work has endured and continues to be popular. He lived and worked a few generations ago and times have changed for the worse. Many have seen his portraits of people praying, of people in church, and of people lending a helping hand. I suspect if he were alive today and were to paint a portrait of someone being thankful, many in our culture would not be able to relate. There is a growing sense of ingratitude for the freedoms, the opportunities, and the benefits of citizenship in this nation. Beyond that is an even more frightening sense of ingratitude in a spiritual sense as evidenced by the number of false doctrines being taught and the general attitude of righteousness being determined by our own thinking rather than by divine command. These point to a self-righteousness in religion that is decidedly lacking in gratitude toward God.

Some definitions will help our understanding. The word “Ingratitude” does not appear in the Bible, but the concept assuredly does. No discussion of ingratitude can be undertaken without a consideration of thankfulness. There are six different Greek words which are translated into the English as: thank, thanks, thankful, thankfulness, thanksgiving, and thankworthy. We will primarily deal with three of those words all coming from the same Greek root: *Eucharisteo* (Strong’s #2168) meaning to give thanks. An example would be a prayer before a meal. This is used negatively of the ungodly in Romans 1:21. This is the most common Greek word translated “thanks.” *Eucharista* (Strong’s #2169) meaning to give freely. We also get the English word ‘Eucharist’ from this Greek word. Strong’s indicates this was thanks to God as an act of worship. It was a grateful language to God. This is seen in Philippi-

ans 4:6 and 1 Timothy among several passages where it is used. *Eucharistos* (Strong’s #2170) meaning primarily gracious, agreeable — grateful, thankful, as seen in Colossians 3:15.

For the purpose of clear communication it is helpful to examine current definitions in the English. Here are two references from the *New Webster’s Dictionary Expanded Edition* published in 2003 by Paradise Press. *Thank*: Expression of gratitude; an acknowledgement of favor or kindness. *Gratitude*: Quality of being grateful; an emotion of the heart, excited by a favor received; thankfulness. *Ingratitude*: Want of gratitude; Unthankfulness.

Our English translations are accurate. Even current English definitions point to the attitude under discussion as being from the heart. We can determine then that the lesson for us is as much about our heart as anything else.

The Ten Lepers

An example in the life of Jesus is seen in Luke 17:11-19. The ten lepers recognized Jesus. As he was passing through town, they called out to him. They had to do so from a distance because of the disease. They called him by name and asked for mercy. It is certain they knew he performed miracles of healing and that is what they sought.

Jesus instructs them to show themselves to the priests. The priests were given detailed instructions in regard to inspecting someone who was suspected of having leprosy. A priest could pronounce one “clean” or “unclean” (see Lev. 13-14). For Jesus to send them to the priests must have caused a leap of hope in their heart.

Thankfulness should be our reputation. Ephesians 5:4 says the kind of talk we should be known for is “the giving of thanks.”

While on the way to the priests, they were healed. They asked for mercy and they were shown an unmerited favor. They could not heal themselves and realized their only hope was from God. Mercy was extended while they were yet in their disease.

One turned back and began glorifying God with a loud voice. The other nine could have heard him and perhaps watched — we're not told. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and gave him thanks (v. 16). He was a Samaritan. One who was detested by the Jews as being lower than a dog.

Jesus' soul searching question lingers in our thoughts as he asks: "Where are the nine?" Only the foreigner turned back to give thanks. This seems to imply that some or all of the other nine were Jews. By this statement Jesus *condemns the ingratitude* of the nine, as well as our own ingratitude for the mercy he has shown toward us.

The Life of Jonah

After being thrown overboard by a great fish, Jonah prays in Jonah 2:9 saying, "I will sacrifice to Thee with the voice of thanksgiving." God has mercy on him and the fish spits him out on shore. He goes to Nineveh and preaches as God commanded him. God relented from the calamity he was going to bring upon them because of their repentance. Jonah was "greatly displeased" and he "became angry" (Jon. 4:1). He was not thankful for the salvation of the people. His conclusion was "death is better to me than life" (4:3).

A few verses later God causes a plant to miraculously grow and provide shade for Jonah. Verse 6 tells us "Jonah was extremely happy about the plant." The next day God caused a worm to attack the plant and it wilted. Jonah was again in the sun and proclaimed "death is better to me than life" (v. 8).

Where Jonah had prayed in the fish's belly with the "voice of thanksgiving," once his own condition improved his voice did not give thanks! He could not rejoice in the salvation of others or be thankful for a plant which he had nothing to do with.

No matter how difficult our course in this life, there are always things for which we can give thanks. Consider how many times Paul wrote from prison thanking God for the believers he knew in various places.

The book of Jonah ends abruptly on a condemning note toward Jonah. God saw that Jonah did not have compassion when he should have. Without the compassion he was naturally unthankful. We need to be careful not to adopt the attitude of Jonah.

The point of this lesson is to indicate God's commands are more than actions and behaviors which we must obey. Our *attitudes* must also be in obedience. Thankfulness is

not just a good idea, it is not merely a suggestion or even a command, it is the attitude the Christian should have.

Thankfulness is a *duty* (1 Thess. 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:13; Col. 3:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:1). We are to be "devoted" to prayers with thanksgiving (Col. 4:2). Thankfulness is to be *without ceasing* (Eph. 1:16; 5:20). Thankfulness is to be *in everything* (Phil. 4:6). Thankfulness is to be *in Jesus' name* (Eph. 5:20).

We do not often remember the teaching of Hebrews 13:15 which says: "Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." New Testament Christians offer *sacrifices* to God just as men of the Old Testament did. We no longer offer animals and blood but thanks from our lips! We should not tire from offering thanks for all the blessings afforded us in Christ Jesus!

Thankfulness should be our *reputation*. Ephesians 5:4 says the kind of talk we should be known for is "the giving of thanks." Verse 3 speaks of things improper to be named among the saints. Thankfulness should be a character trait, an attitude that those in the world recognize and see in us. The New American Standard translates Colossians 2:7 as "overflowing with gratitude." The degree of thankfulness is herein established: overflowing.

Where does ingratitude lead? God told Jeremiah, "My people have forgotten Me, days without number" (Jer. 2:32). He later says they had perverted their ways (3:21) and trusted in falsehood (3:25). Not one time in the 52 chapters of Jeremiah are we told the people were thankful to God. Jeremiah 2:20 says, "For long ago I broke your yoke and tore off your bonds; but you said 'I will not serve!' for on every high hill and under every green tree you have lain down as a harlot." The context speaks of the numerous idols to which the people bowed down. We see they were not grateful or thankful for what God had done for them.

Ingratitude Leads to Forgetting God

Peter says we can forget our purification from former sins (2 Pet. 1:9). He instructs us to have diligence in following the things he taught. We must keep God in the front of our thinking, constantly thanking him for his mercy and goodness toward the faithful. Romans 1 speaks of horrid sins that men and women were committing, whose hearts are described as foolish and futile in their speculations (v. 21). In the midst of what we would consider the most heinous offenses possible, we are told, "neither were they thankful." We need to recognize how serious it is to develop and harbor an ungrateful attitude. We endanger our soul's salvation. Jesus (Luke 17) and God (Rom. 1) indicate the heart that is ungrateful is a heart that is not right with God.

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Bitterness

Bob Waldron

In the *Classic Greek Dictionary*, published by Follett, a greater number of words in this family (*pikria* and *pikros*) are discussed, and in defining them, words such as “bitterness of temper, bitterness, malice, venom, spleen”; “of sound: sharp, piercing, shrill; of taste: sharp, pungent, bitter; of persons, words, acts, etc.: bitter, cruel, harsh, stern, morose, severe; also hateful, hostile” (560).

Often bitterness is the result of things that have happened in one’s life. When Naomi returned to her home in Bethlehem, her former acquaintances asked, “Is this not Naomi (Pleasant)?” She answered, “Call me not Naomi (Pleasant), call me Mara (Bitter) for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20). This is the person who has had such suffering as to cause despair. In the words of King Lemuel’s mother, wine is not for the king who must think clearly and exercise good judgment. “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto *the bitter in soul*: let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more” (Prov. 31:6-7). Of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the Bible says, “And she was in bitterness of soul” (1 Sam. 1:10). This bitterness may consist of one’s conviction that his situation is hopeless. He sees no good anywhere. He is depressed, disappointed, and cynical.

Probably there are times when we have all experienced this feeling. We may have been betrayed by a friend, defrauded from what was rightfully ours. We may have suffered great loss or seen our aspirations dashed to the ground. Think of Jesus. “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:10-11). What did he do when these things happened to him? He “committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). At times like these we need our faith the most, and one of the great lessons of Scripture is to wait on the Lord. The message of Psalm 25 is so helpful to avoid bitterness arising from life’s inequities and disappointments. “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my

God, in thee have I trusted, let me not be put to shame; let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Ps. 25:1-2). Verses 3, 5, 21 all entreat us to wait for the Lord. Our prayer should be: “The troubles of my heart are enlarged; oh bring thou me out of my distresses” (Ps. 25:17).

Of the greatest concern in the Scriptures is bitterness toward others. Sometimes one’s faith has been so shattered that he is completely cynical and sees no good or hope in anything. One may be so motivated by hatred and malice that every action is filled with venom and spleen. The Hebrew writer warns us to look carefully “lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15). The idea of bitterness is found in the context of “following after peace with all men” (v. 14). This “follow” is plural. Everyone is to follow after peace. This following involves a “looking carefully” lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble those involved with the result that the many be defiled. Bitterness was associated with poison because many natural poisons are bitter. It was probably such bitterness that alerted the sons of the prophets that “there is death in the pot” of pottage that had been cooked for them (2 Kings 4:40).

In Paul’s description of the wickedness of men in Romans 3, he says, “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom. 3:14). This bitterness includes the excesses of language, such as railing, that many practice. It is disturbing to see how those who claim to be brethren can say the sharpest things. Even when one disapproves what another teaches, there is no room for bitterness, and one wonders what really drives the harshness of language that is used. Could it be matter of ego to think that anyone would challenge what another says? Could it be a matter of personal dislike that spills over into hatred of a person, and not just hatred of the evil that another does? If ever excessive language would be justified, it would be in dealing with the devil. “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of

Selfishness

Richie Thetford

One of the very first things that every Christian should realize is that Christianity is all about doing for others instead of doing for yourself. We need to be individuals who are totally committed in our service for Christ and others. The apostle Paul writes: "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:4). Yet there are many Christians who hurt themselves, their families, and the church because they have not listened to the words of Paul and other New Testament writers. They are selfish individuals. Webster defines selfishness as; "The act of caring unduly or supremely for oneself; regarding one's own comfort, advantage, etc. in disregard or at the expense of others." Selfishness is nothing more than excessive or exclusive concern with oneself. A selfish man is one who is bent on pleasing himself first and foremost. In many cases it is a man who overvalues his own conclusions and

determinations, who often obstinately maintains his own opinion, or asserts his own rights in total disregard for the rights, feelings and interests of others. I personally believe that selfishness is the leading cause for problems in the home and in the church of our Lord.

Personal Selfishness

Selfish individuals have not known the true joy of Christianity. They too are known by their fruits in life. They have not learned how to cultivate true happiness and friendship because of their actions. They will not be known as the ones who gave up the "better seat," or the "bigger piece of pie," or perhaps a more "promising advantage in a competitive enterprise" because they are the ones who are regulating their own life with absolutely no respect, care, or concern for others. Selfish individuals care very little about what others might think; they are going to do whatever it is that

Moses durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee'" (Jude 9).

In dealing with bitterness remember that it can just be short-circuited. If one refuses to harbor bitterness, then it cannot prompt him to manifest bitterness in wrong-doing. Suppose one is truly mistreated by another. If sin is involved, go to the brother and talk to him about it (Matt. 18:15-17). Whatever another person does, determine that bitterness will not find a home in your heart. And be doubly determined not to cause bitterness in another by your words or deeds.

When Paul tells husbands to love their wives and to be not bitter toward them (Col. 3:19), he is warning those who have been given leadership in the relationship not to be harsh. Husbands, listen to yourselves when you deal with your wife. How would you like to spoken to like that? As the physically stronger, as the one who is the head, harsh-

ness can come easy in dealing with those who are under our care and who are dependent upon us, but it must not, neither to our wives, nor to our children.

Bitterness begets bitterness. Harsh, severe treatment tends to provoke a response in kind. Moulton and Milligan define the word found in Ephesians 4:31 (*Pikria*) as "properly 'an embittered and resentful spirit which refuses reconciliation' (Robinson *ad* Eph. 4:31)" (512). Coupled with the word "wrath" in that passage, bitterness means "bitter hatred." In any relationship we need to remember the admonition of the apostle Paul: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1-2).

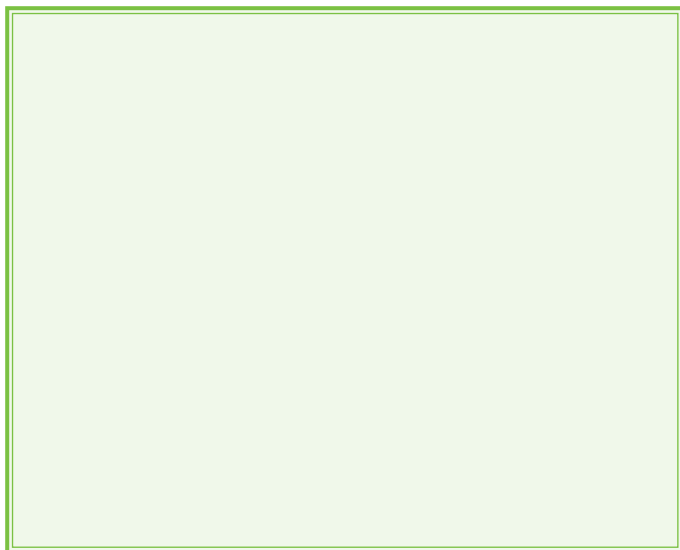
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they want to do, no matter what. Paul writes: “For men will be lovers of themselves” (2 Tim 3:2).

The faithful child of God fixes his attention, not on self alone, but on others. Faithful children consider their brothers and sisters in the Lord above their own desires. The Bible teaches; “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being” (1 Cor 10:24). This is quite opposite of the selfish individual whose interests circle around himself. His foremost concern is his own comfort, convenience, and enjoyment. Even his language gives him away in words such as I, my, mine, and me. Jesus’ parable of the rich man in Luke 12:15-21 tells the story of a covetous man who wanted everything for himself; not considering that others could be helped by his good fortune. He was selfish, caring nothing about others but only for himself. The selfish man will also have as his guiding rule “what’s in it for me?” He is one who thinks that others owe him something. This is the one who attends church services and thinks of the classes and worship in terms of receiving and not giving. Selfishness curtails devotion to duty and personal concerns outweigh their service to God. The faithful Christian understands that God demands that our personal interests not take priority over our service to him.

Selfishness in the Home

A selfish individual will also affect that which is the closest to him. For example, a husband will make sure that he buys whatever he may need for himself, such as electronic devices, sports equipment, and tools while neglecting his wife and children. A wife may neglect her home responsibilities because she is too busy working at a job outside the home or because of her involvement in social activities. Some children are selfish because they make demands on their parents to satisfy their desires and ambitions without any consideration of the hardships that they may cause their parents.



Many failed marriages are a direct result of selfishness on the part of the husband or wife. For example, a husband may become unfaithful to his wife resulting in a divorce. He became absorbed in his own wants and pleasures because of a selfish attitude and in the end it destroyed his marriage, his home, and his reputation. The inspired apostle Paul wrote that love “does not seek its own” (1 Cor 13:5). Yet the leading cause of marriage and home breakdown is because of selfishness; seeking one’s own. Love and selfishness are polar opposites of each other. I firmly believe that if all married couples would adopt the following words of Jesus in their lives then the home environment would thrive. Jesus said: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12).

Selfishness in the Church

Generally speaking, men’s lives are governed by one of two fundamental philosophies; namely, whether to live as self pleases or to live as God pleases. Both of these philosophies are active and alive in the local church. As a gospel preacher it doesn’t take me long to see which of these two philosophies are at work in the lives of individual Christians. There are some within the church who are constantly giving of themselves for the work and service of the Lord and to others because they understand that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Some ladies are constantly updating their classrooms and bulletin boards for their students. Others take time out of their busy week to clean the building, make necessary repairs, and do other things around the building so that it can be in good order for each and every service. This work is not left for the preacher to do, but is accomplished by Christians who have the best interest of their brethren at heart. Others are constantly sending cards, letters, and making phone calls to encourage their brothers and sisters.

On the other hand there are those who are selfish, looking only to please themselves. You won’t find them at the building doing anything other than showing up to services (often times missing Bible class), expecting to receive everything while giving nothing. The selfish Christian puts very little or nothing in the collection plate because his first priority is making sure that he can possess all the material things in this life that he can have. These same selfish Christians do expect that when they walk into the foyer and then into the auditorium that all is cleaned, prepared, and that the preacher, song leader, and those leading in the service will give their best to make all go well. Then they will leave with no intention of returning until the next fully prepared service time. We should thank God that we have dedicated individuals who care more for others and God than they do for themselves. Could you imagine a local congregation only having a group of selfish Christians? Probably not, because that church would not exist at all!

Brethren, if we are to be obedient and pleasing to God we must acquire an unselfish disposition and help others. Since it is a difficult virtue to obtain, we should begin at once to practice the acts of kindness and thoughtfulness, learning to give more than we receive. The Lord's church will survive and thrive when it is made up of unselfishly motivated Christians!

Subtleties of Selfishness

I believe that most Christians do not intend to be selfish but that their selfishness is subtle; meaning that it is not open, direct or in most cases not grossly obvious. However if we are not careful, in time, we will become habitually selfish. Most Christians have a soft heart, wanting to do what is right and also wanting to help others. How do Christians slowly evolve into selfish people? In today's society we live in a fast paced world. Everyone seems to be coming and going in a flash, from one appointment to the next. Our jobs take up so much of our time, often working 10-12 hour days. Mothers who stay at home with their children are often times taking them from one appointment or social event to the next, trying to juggle that with the time she involves herself with school activities and things that need to be done around the house. Recreational activities has also become a priority in some Christian's lives. The problem is that many Christians have taken on so many things in their lives, and in the lives of their family that it has prohibited them from doing things for the Lord and others. Because we are so pre-occupied with our own lives we often neglect the shut-ins among our number who need visits from time to time. We don't take the time to call, visit,

or send cards or letters to the people who have taken the time to visit our local congregation. We don't think about the elderly among our number who may need some help or meals provided for them. Our personal Bible study suffers and we may find ourselves hurrying off to Bible class without taking the time that week to prepare our lesson. The work of the local church suffers, in that it is often hard to get teachers for the various classes or members to help with other work that needs to be done in and around the building. You see, we don't mean to be selfish, it just happens because "things" become more important than our service to God and others.

Conclusion

Selfishness is categorized with some very heinous sins. The Christian cannot be pleasing to God by always seeking his own good at the expense of everyone else. Do we seek the good of others, or are we selfish? May we always try to cultivate within ourselves a heart that is completely void of selfishness and pattern our lives after Jesus who unselfishly gave his life for our sakes. Paul writes: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). If I am concerned only with my own agenda, I will give little more than token service, if that, to Christ's agenda. Our life, our home, the church — one thing that can and will sabotage all of these three is selfishness!

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The Joy of Anxiety

Luke 10:38-42; Matthew 6:24-34; Philippians 4:8

Harold Tabor

When Jesus visited the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), both women sat at the feet of Jesus to hear his words. But Martha tried to serve the group alone and became “cumbered about with much serving.” Finally, she stood over Jesus to insist that Mary help her serve the large group. Jesus replied, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, for Mary has chosen the good part, that shall not be taken away.”

Mary had made a decision. She had discerned what was good. She determined what she loved and had the courage to choose the “good part.” What was this choice? It was not to have position above others, or to have the learning of the world, or the riches of the world. She chose the “good part,” to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn spiritual truths. Learning spiritual truths “shall not be taken away.”

There are “many things” that will solicit your choice in this life such as health, wealth, learning, beauty, pleasure, fame, power or position. These will fade away in this life. But choosing the “good part” will not be taken away or fade.

Merimnao is used nineteen times in the New Testament and in the KJV it is translated with four words or phrases: take thought (11 times), care (5), be careful (2) and have care (1). It is used six times in Matthew 6. *Merimnao* is translated in three different ways in verse 25: “be not anxious for your life (ASV, RSV, YLT); and “do not worry about your life,” (NKJV, NASU); and finally, the Amplified Bible translates it “stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life.”

Jesus clearly shows the two choices of life: God and mammon, beam and mote, evil and good gifts, narrow and broad gates, evil and good fruit, rock and the sand (Matt 6). The choice is ours to learn about and pursue.

Just as Jesus rebuked Martha for her “excessive solicitude” about something to eat (Luke 10:41), so Jesus also teaches the proper “thought” about our “food.” There is proper “thought” about this “life.” Paul taught us to work for our food (2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8). But food for this life should not be our primary concern. It should not lead us to anxiety and take time from our spiritual “life.”

The quality and quantity of food, clothing, and shelter will depend upon the choices we make in regard to our work. We will either work for ourselves or for someone else. We will be satisfied with the level of income based upon the level of our abilities, knowledge, and training.

Jesus also teaches us to put our confidence in the providence of God. Consider the birds round about us. Even if we did not have a bird feeder in our backyard, God would take care of the birds. They do not have to sow and reap crops, they do not have to store up food for the winter. All they have in this life is to fill the air with songs at the break of day until the evening shadows come.

Jesus taught us that we cannot change everything in this life. One cannot add by worry and being anxious “one cubit” to the measure of his stature or span of his life (Ps. 39:5-7). We are taught to “measure” our days (Ps. 39:4). Life is frail and we may live to be sixty or seventy years or by reason of strength eighty years (Ps. 90:10). But man cannot increase the length of his life! All anxiety will not prolong life for one minute beyond the time appointed for death (Heb. 9:27). The quality of life normally will depend upon genetics and nutrition.

Jesus taught us about being anxious for clothing. Consider the lilies, how they grow without toiling and spinning. God has provided the splendor of beautiful colors in their season (Eccl. 3:1). We look forward to the bloom of flowers in the spring and the changing colors of leaves in the fall. But Jesus said: Why be anxious about these changes?

Three times Jesus instructed us to not be anxious: about life (v. 25), one cubit of stature or life, (v. 26) and raiment (v. 28). We need food, drink, clothing, and shelter. But these must not be our main choice in life. The Father knows that we need these essential of life. And we have been taught about how to pray for them (Matt. 6:11).

The Words of Agur says, “Two things have I asked of thee; Deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies: Give me neither poverty nor riches: Feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor and steal, and use profanely the name of my God” (Prov. 30:7-9).

If we cannot trust the Father for the essentials of temporal life (for food, drink, and clothing) how can we trust the Father of our spiritual blessings?

Jesus gives us the command to “Seek first the kingdom and his righteousness” and the promise is “all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). This must always be our supreme quest in this life. We must remember that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

Accidents will happen. Natural calamities happen (Job 1:19). These can change the quality of life and/or shorten the length of our lives. We may suffer for a short period of time or even all our lives. These events may be totally outside a person’s control or influence. There may be no answer to some problems and difficulties. But we must know the providence of God’s hand is in it all. There is a reason or purpose for the suffering in our lives (Jas. 1:2-4).

After teaching the precept of avoiding being anxious, even under extreme circumstances, we must learn to leave circumstances in the hands of the Lord. The Psalmist said, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Ps. 55:22). There is no other alternative to trust for our soul’s redemption. “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man” (Ps. 118:8). We must learn to trust the Lord for an answer that will bring us a peace of mind and heart. We may never understand fully the answers to questions like “why me?” or what motivated that person to do or act a way to cause a problem. We must also accept that some problems and difficulties just do not have an answer, at least, right now.

“Who is responsible for this adversity?” Sometimes it is our own fault. Sometimes it will be someone else, sometimes it will be the devil, and sometimes it may be a combination. But again, the Psalmist said, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 96:1). We should choose a positive approach, looking forward to the question, “Who can bring me out of this situation and turn my life into good?” This is our choice.

Some one has said: “If we get our heart and mind faced in the right direction, our feet will follow”. We must have this inward and outward harmony (2 Cor. 4:16). We must bring about a balance in our lives between the principle of faith and the principle of action. Put our trust in the Lord (Ps. 115:11; 118:8-9; Prov. 3:5) and set our mind on the things above (Col. 3:1-4). Remember, life is not a state of rest, but is a sustained motion toward a goal. Live one day at a time: “Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt 6:34). “Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that” (Jas. 4:13-15). So learn to live one day at a time with our spiritual goal always in mind. We can overcome (Rom. 12:21; 1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; 3:5; 12:21).

Finally, Paul instructed us: “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:6-8).

Lord, teach us to pray, without ceasing, and in every situation, until the Lord comes. Amen. (Jas. 5:7-8).

NOW

Why fret about tomorrow
When you have this precious day?
Why fill it up with sorrow
As you waste the hours away?

These moments are your treasure,
And tomorrow may not come;
Let God’s will be your pleasure,
As you scatter joy to some.

Why fret about God’s blessings,
And complain they’re not enough,
Or think it so distressing
That you have so little stuff?

This day so soon will vanish,
And the past you can’t recall;
All fears you need to banish;
Play the game! You have the ball!

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Lack Of Brotherly Love

Terry Sanders

Let me say at the beginning that I appreciate this opportunity to participate in this special issue of *Truth Magazine*. I hope the few words I write will be beneficial to you in your activity among the Christians with whom you fellowship. This is an important subject and we should approach the study of it with much seriousness.

You've been there. A congregation meets somewhere and you can almost feel the "bad vibrations." Some of the brethren do not care for each other and it is so apparent that even you, as a visitor, can tell. What has happened did not materialize in an instant. It is something that has developed over a period of time. One thing is sure — somewhere along the way brotherly love was left out of the picture. Oh, it may have existed at one time. However, things changed and brotherly love was replaced by other things. Where care and concern once lived is now occupied by that which is bitter and malignant. This lack of brotherly love is definitely not a pretty thing.

What Is Brotherly Love?

Brotherly love comes from a Greek word that has been transliterated into the English word *philadelphia*. This is a compound of two words: *philos*, "to be friendly to one, wish him well" (Thayer 653) and *adelphos*, "brother" (Vine 156). This word is found six times as a noun in the New Testament (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7 [twice]) and one time as a verb (1 Pet. 3:8). In one of these instances Peter says, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Pet. 1:22). This brotherly love is to be sincere as opposed to what would be hypocritical. Sincerity requires that brotherly love be present in word and deed. John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). It is one thing to give mere lip service to loving the brethren. It is entirely another thing to back up those words with

one's practice. Brotherly love is to be employed fervently. Thayer says the original word for fervent means "stretched out" (Thayer 200). I get the idea that this means to extend oneself which is a real factor in practicing brotherly love. To practice brotherly love we will need to "stretch out" in regard to patience and forbearance with each other.

Brotherly love does not just happen. Brotherly love is not a suggestion or an option. It is absolutely commanded by God *for* his people today (John 13:34; 1 John 4:20). The fact that brotherly love is commanded shows that it is not a natural or inborn attribute. Jesus has given us an example (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21) of how to love one another. He demonstrated that love in giving his life for us (John 15:13). "By this we know love, because he laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John. 4:11).

We ought to think of brotherly love as the foundation from which other things spring forth. Brotherly love will manifest itself in patience, kindness, sympathy, compassion, respect, courtesy, charity, hospitality, and such like. When this is realized the words of Jesus will be our practice — "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The world is anxious for an opportunity to criticize the Lord's church. When we do not let brotherly love continue (Heb. 13:1), we are giving them such an opportunity. Those in the world will simply wear themselves out telling how "those Campbellites don't even like each other." Yes, when we fail to practice brotherly love, we give the heathen an opportunity to blaspheme and we will have to answer for it.

The Lack of Brotherly Love Develops Gradually

If brotherly love is to continue (Heb. 13:1), then it is possible for it to discontinue. It is likely that this will happen over a period of time, in a gradual fashion. As it

begins to vanish away it is replaced with other repulsive acts. Brethren become weary of each other and begin to complain about one another. Soon there is nothing that another Christian can do that will be satisfactory in the least. Every action, no matter how slight, will be examined and pronounced flawed. There will be outbursts of carping criticism and open confrontations will take place more than once. Character assassination and ostracism will be skillfully practiced as carnality flourishes. Brethren may occupy the same building for years and barely be able to stand the sight of one another as they now bristle with hostility toward one another. At the end of this is the most loathsome manifestation of all — a glee when some damage is experienced by those perceived as the opposition.

Example of a Lack of Brotherly Love: Diotrephes

We are introduced to a man by the name of Diotrephes in John's third epistle. He is said to be one "... who loves to have the pre-eminence among them" (3 John 9). His actions are described as "... prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 John 10). How hard is it to see that Diotrephes has discontinued the love of the brethren? When one assumes such an arrogant and tyrannical position among brethren, he has obviously steamrolled over many other Christians to get to where he now stands. It no longer matters what God has said or what is best for the church, it is now a matter of what I want for myself. Diotrephes is now calling all the shots and they will all be fired on his command. Anyone, brother or otherwise, who gets in his way is an enemy who needs to be eliminated. Please keep in mind that Diotrephes may even defend himself as loving the brethren, but it is not the sincere love that Peter writes about in 1 Peter 1:22. More to the point it is not even love at all. This ugly picture of Diotrephes came about because he first set aside the love of the brethren for love of power. How many times since John wrote these words has the spirit of Diotrephes manifested itself? Be assured that each time it has it found its beginning in a lack of brotherly love.

Example of a Lack of Brotherly Love: Corinthians

The church at Corinth is introduced to us as a group of brethren whose unity is severely fractured (1 Cor. 1:11-12). This has led to a number of serious factions within this church that is almost unbelievable. What we call chapter 13 of this letter is devoted to the subject of love. This was not written by the apostle Paul in order to dazzle them with his knowledge of the subject. It was written with the express purpose that they practice among themselves the things he writes. Why do so? In order to heal the many fractures that have resulted in this factionalism that is running amuck among them. You simply cannot expect to solve the problem of factionalism unless there is first a feeling of brotherly love.

Every time I read what Paul wrote to the Corinthians on the subject of spiritual gifts I am left with the same feeling. Namely, there seems to be an unhealthy competition over spiritual gifts among the Christians at Corinth. Brother Mike Willis wrote, "The Corinthians apparently exalted flamboyant gifts, such as tongue-speaking, above the other gifts. Hence, those with less flamboyant gifts tended to feel useless and those with gifts improperly evaluated as greater gifts tended toward arrogance and haughtiness. We can only imagine what personal interactions occurred between those with the various gifts; however, it is not hard to imagine that some were impatient, rude, jealous, braggadocious, arrogant, etc." (*A Commentary on Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* 444-445). Thus, it is easy to see that, given this disposition, some at Corinth had very likely set aside brotherly love. They would be exhibiting behavior foreign to that of brotherly love. The very idea that some could be "puffed up" (a term used six times in 1 Corinthians) at Corinth indicates a placing of oneself on a higher level than others. I do not think for a minute that this type of behavior would only be limited to the area of spiritual gifts. It would be administered in other areas as well. The presence of so many factions in the church at Corinth indicates that some had to have set aside brotherly love in order to persist in the support of these other doctrinal aberrations.

The lack of brotherly love on the part of the Corinthians is evident when one considers their reaction to Paul. Even though he was instrumental in the origin of the church at Corinth (Acts 18), they were not reluctant to attack him when he tried to correct them. Consider how much Paul defended his apostleship in both Corinthian letters. From this we can tell that some were more interested in attacking Paul personally than heeding his apostolic authority. This tells us how far down the road they were in lacking brotherly love. Their concern for their position and for their factions left no place for love of brethren and Paul is no exception.

How many times do we find things like this today? Issues arise that disturb brethren and soon factions are firmly entrenched. Great swelling words of admiration and respect are produced for those opposed over some controversy. Almost immediately on the heels of these words come other words that castigate and excoriate the very brethren who were just so richly applauded! Ask yourself if that is an indication of brotherly love or not. I think you know the answer.

Love God and Not Love the Brethren?

I am sure that there are those who lack brotherly love but nevertheless insist that that they still love God. Such is not possible. John writes, "... Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10). Yes, the one who does not love his brother is not of God. John also writes, "If someone

says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21). Suppose a person had meters attached to his body, one showing love of God and another showing love of the brethren. When one begins to show a decline the other will show the same decline and at the same rate. You cannot love God and not love the brethren.

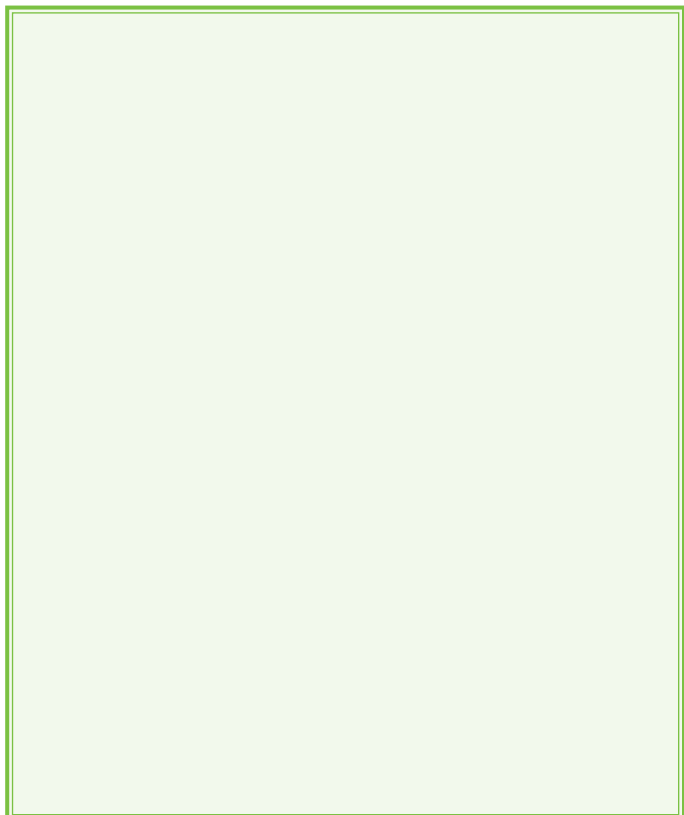
Conclusion

I do not want to end this article without once again offering something positive. Let us consider what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:1-4,

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

By developing these qualities within ourselves we will likewise develop a spirit that will allow for much love of our brethren.

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“Pride” continued from front page

but rather a reasoned choice. Mike Willis emphasizes this point in his commentary on 1 Corinthians.

Another fact which needs to be said about *agape* is that it is an act of the will rather than the emotion. Modern Americans tend to consider love to be something which either happens or it does not and, in the event that it does not, there is nothing that can be done about it. That may be true of *philein* but not of *agapan*; it is an act of the will and not of the emotion. Man has as much control over it as he has over faith (*A Commentary on Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* 448).

Since this love is an act of the will, it can and is commanded by God (John 15:17; Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:18). To not act with this love, then, is to sin against God and man and results in separation from God (1 John 3:14).

Pride is a sin of the heart which causes people to act without love. While pride itself is sin and a demonstration of a lack of love, it also leads to one being boastful and arrogant. Paul says that proper love does not boast. To boast is to sound one's own praise. It is usually a characteristic seen in those who look down on others whom they view as being inferior. They dominate most conversations because they think that their information is the most enlightening and their view is always the best view. Those puffed up with pride feel that others have very little to contribute to them because they already know what needs to be known anyway, and so they very rarely listen to other's advice or consider any point of view that may conflict with their own. They become very condescending towards others, often times not even realizing how they are coming across. Their pride has blinded them to the truth. All of this is contrary to the spirit of Christ. Christians must remain humble, esteeming others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3). We must always maintain meekness (Gal. 5:23; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:12), demonstrated by visual humility (1 Pet. 5:5) and a willingness to serve others (John 13:1-17).

2. Pride causes one to ignore specific precepts of God.

There are those who disobey God ignorantly. While this is not justifiable (Acts 17:30-31), those who willfully refuse to adhere to the Lord's commands are worse, or at least worse off. Those ignorant of God's Word might hear the gospel and obey, but those who have heard the word and have shamelessly refused it, have no other recourse to deal with the sin in their lives. Often it is pride that is behind their refusal to listen to God. Some are just too proud to bow. Many have developed the "Pharaoh mentality" that says, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" What pride is demonstrated in such a statement, yet many feel the same way today. They may not be so blatant about it, but nevertheless they refuse to do God's will because of their

inordinate self-esteem or conceit. In the minds of many, their way is better than God's way. Naaman displayed such an attitude when he refused to dip in the Jordan to be cleansed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:11-13). Pride was behind his refusal. In anger he said, "... Behold, I thought." What did Naaman think? He thought that he had a better way. Cain showed the same mentality when he offered a sacrifice that was contrary to the instructions of God (Gen. 4:1-7). Pride causes people to disobey God because it convinces man that his way is better than God's way.

This is the mentality that causes man to add innovations to the work and worship of God today. The use of musical instruments falls into this category. God commands that we sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12). Man has come along and introduced the playing of musical instruments as a form of worship in the church. Why? Because his way is better than God's way and so he needs to do a little more than God says. Those who preach and practice a social gospel do so on the same basis. God's word reveals that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) and that it is all we need in the converting of souls (Ps. 19:7). But some brethren have come along and said in effect; God's way isn't good enough. We have a better plan for attracting souls. We will use fun and frolic in the way of gymnasiums, multi-purpose centers, and recreational programs to draw men to Jesus. Can we not see that pride is at the heart of this matter? God doesn't need man's help. Let's be humble enough to do what God says, how he says to do it, and nothing else.

3. Pride causes man not to give God glory. The classic biblical example of this is Nebuchadnezzar. In the height of his glory, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). This great king did not realize that his greatest was given to him by God. Thus, God took his kingdom away and sent him into the field to live like a beast, eating the grass like oxen and growing feathers like a bird (Dan. 4:33). Finally Nebuchadnezzar understood his sin and praised God and gave him the glory for his greatness. In

Daniel 4:37 we have record of Nebuchadnezzar uttering the following words:

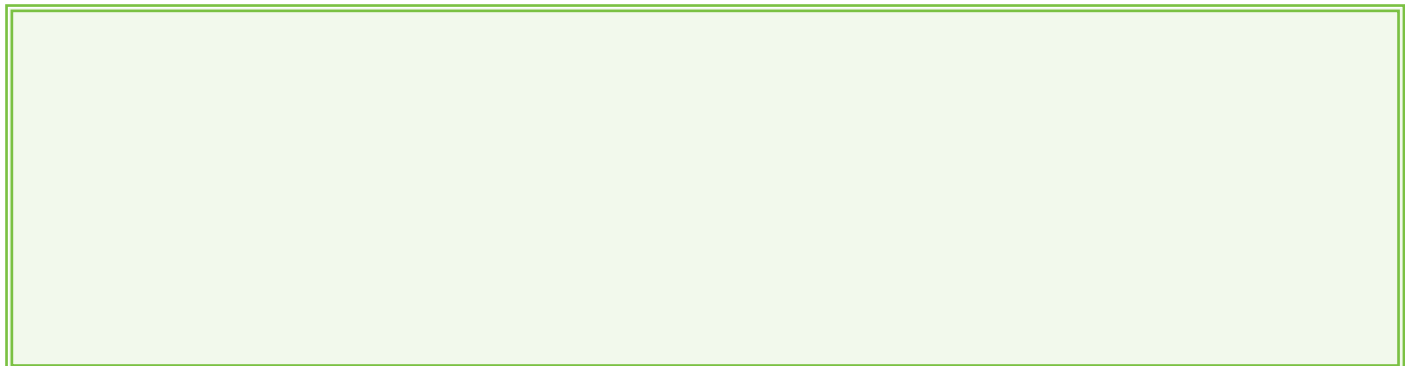
Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

While Nebuchadnezzar was not at this point totally rehabilitated from a spiritual standpoint, his statement indicates that he now understands two things. First, the God of heaven deserves to be praised and second, this same God is able to humble those who are full of pride.

The practical lesson here is that we should always give God praise, honor, and glory for our accomplishments in life. Nothing that happens to us can take place apart from the permissive will of God. Thus, God has at least an indirect hand in all that we become, and sometimes his hand in our life is more direct than we know. Paul, a man who reached great spiritual heights and accomplished as much for the cause of Christ as any Christian who has ever lived, once said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). Every servant of God should have this same attitude. It doesn't matter what a great speaker a preacher may be, he should always make sure that God gets the glory. It doesn't matter how many souls a personal worker wins to Christ, God is the one who should get the praise. Every preacher, elder, deacon, Bible class teacher, song leader, etc. should give God all the honor, praise, and glory for all that they do. Don't let pride ever cause you to rob God of his glory because as Nebuchadnezzar learned, God is able to humble those who lift themselves up (Luke 18:14; Jas. 4:6-10).

Let us all say with David, "Create in me a clean heart O God." If our hearts are clean, pride won't be a problem and the sins associated with pride won't stop us from making it to heaven. Let us all be careful to examine ourselves to make sure that we haven't been taken unaware by the sin of pride.

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“Envy” continued from p. 2

Jealousy drove the enemies of Jesus to make drastic charges against him before Pilate, accusing him of “many things” (Matt. 27:13; Luke 23:1-5), none of which convinced Pilate. When this was not enough they threatened Pilate, saying if he released Jesus he would not be Caesar’s friend (John 19:12). They also stirred up the multitude (Mark 15:11) and resorted to the weapon of mob hysteria, *insistent, loud voices*, “and their voices prevailed” (Luke 23:23). Envy drove political expediency and cowardice to infamy — the high priest and elders of the people perjured themselves, a murderer went free, Pilate sentenced an innocent Jesus to crucifixion and Judas hanged himself. Yes, “Who can stand before envy?”

Those with reprobate minds are said to be, among other things, “full of envy” (Rom. 1:29). In contrast, the Christian is to *put away* “all envies” (1 Pet. 2:1), the result being, that such things as malice and envy are part of what is *now in the past* to the one saved through “the washing of regeneration” (Tit. 3:3-5). While the command to “put them away” should be sufficient for the child of God, the Holy Spirit supplies additional, stern reminders since *envy* shows up in numerous New Testament catalogs of evil. “But if your hearts have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (Jas. 3:14-16). Paul told the Corinthians they were “yet carnal” because of “envying, and strife, and divisions,” among them (1 Cor. 3:3). He also feared that when he came to Corinth there would be “debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults” as well as finding some who had not repented of a list of immoral things (2 Cor. 12:20, 21). Envy and jealousy keep bad company.

The false teacher, not consenting to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, is said to be “proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt mind” (1 Tim. 6:3-6). From such we are to withdraw ourselves. Those who are subject to God are to “cast off the works of darkness” and are not to walk “in strife and envying” (Rom. 13:13, 14), making no provision to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

The commands are straightforward, but how do we resist that which seems to be such a common attitude? It will be helpful to be aware that other attitudes can trigger envy and jealousy.

1. Elevating ourselves: Paul writes that a man is “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom. 12:3). 1 Peter 5:5, 6 says we are to “be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Humility has a way of defusing envy.

2. A desire for things: Many covet the prosperity of another, whether it is his house, his wife, his servants, his animals, or something else that is his neighbors (Exod. 20:17). Christians must *learn* “to be content” in whatever state they find themselves and to know how “to be abased” and “how to abound . . . both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil. 4:12), *even when others fare better*. Keep in mind that “godliness with contentment is great gain . . . and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:6-8), or “be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). Those who learn contentment will not be envious.

3. Rivalry and competition: In athletics, these motives have led some to cheat, inflict injury, and even slander others, creating envy and jealousy. In spiritual matters, such competition (*either real or imagined*) may involve gossip, backbiting, slander, misrepresentation, and lying, in hope of being seen as having the recognition, reputation, ability or spirituality of someone else. Carnal brethren in Corinth seemed to think there was rivalry between Paul and Apollos. That they were not jealous or envious of each other is seen in Paul’s claim that they were simply servants by whom the Corinthians believed and that each had a role to fill “as the Lord gave” them. Paul planted, Apollos watered and God gave the increase and neither of them was “any thing” before God, yet they were “one” and each would receive his own reward, being “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:3-8). Skills, strength, and spirituality vary among brethren, but should not become an occasion for envy and jealousy.

We can develop attitudes that not only destroy envy and jealousy, but will also prevent them from lodging in our hearts. Determine you will sincerely “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15), and if one member of the body is honored, be sure to rejoice with it, because we are to have the “same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12:25, 26). Control *your* attitudes. “Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory; but let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3, 4). One can hardly have the best interest of others in mind and envy them at the same time. Find out who your neighbor is and “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Jas. 2:8). “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor” (Rom. 13:7-10), and “Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification” (Rom. 15:2). Genuine love, active good will toward another, will not produce envy and jealousy.

The apostle Paul encountered some who thought that by preaching the gospel, they could stir up affliction for him while he was in bonds. These may have surmised they could undermine his influence and gain a better standing for themselves. Perhaps the presence of an apostle overshadowed them. Whatever their motive, Paul said they “preach

Christ out of envy and strife” and that was certainly not a compliment. However, his attitude is worthy of imitation. He said that even if they preached out of envy and strife, “notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Phil. 1:15-18). He was not critical of *what they preached*, but exposed their attitudes. Surely such selfless service for Christ should have shamed those who so used Paul. We can learn much from this example if we will. Preaching and teaching for the purpose of undermining another, competing for recognition, or to “outdo and outshine” another makes a mockery of the divine purpose of this great work, “to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). When we undermine the work, reputation, enterprise, and influence of others, under the guise of preaching the gospel, the hypocrisy of envy and jealousy attach themselves to us whether we realize it or not.

Vice rarely advertises itself as vice. When identified, we must try to avoid contamination, without *dwelling* on the evil itself. In *An Essay on Man*, Epistle II, the English poet, Alexander Pope, wrote:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen.
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Too much familiarity with any vice exposes us to being overcome. Unfortunately we tend to want to debate the *extent* of our own weaknesses, compared to others. On “The Extreme of Vice,” Pope continues:

“No creature owns it in the first degree,
But thinks his neighbour further gone than he.”

It is easy to imagine we see a lot of room for improvement in others, when we really need to get our own life in order. Envy and jealousy have no place in the life of the follower of Christ. Let it not be named among us.

8311 – 27th Ave., Kenosha, Wisconsin 53143



Obadiah: The Last Word

Larry Ray Hafley

The last word. God will always have it. Make no mistake about that. Be not deceived, God is not mute at last. Obadiah gives us a foretaste of the last of all words and worlds, when he tells the proud and profane Edom of their certain destruction and his ultimate victory, “And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (Obad. 21).

Whether the Assyrian then or now, whether Babylon or Bagdad, whether Moscow or Muslim, whether the land of the free, or the home of the knave, “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Mighty men and noble nations attempt to stamp their footprints upon mountains of stone. Inevitably, their mountains are ground to powder. “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen . . . for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. . . . Praise our God. . . . for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” In other words, “And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Where is your eagle’s nest? Edom had one hewn out in the clefts of the rock. She nested and nestled “among the stars.” Like the rich fool, she had “much goods laid up for many years” (Luke 12:19). However, God’s gleaners and gatherers, with their besom brooms of destruction, searched her out (Isa. 14:23; Obad. 5). The rains of affliction, the floods of assault, and the winds of adversity beat against her house, “and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Just so, our secret residences will be ferreted out. Our hidden domiciles of darkness will be brought before the spotlight of divine judgment (1 Cor. 4:3-5). When he is done with us, as it was when he was done with Edom, “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit” (Ps. 139:7)? That is not a question which the Psalmist asked for an answer. The answer is rhetorical, a foregone conclusion. Edom could not hide, neither in hades nor the heavens, neither in the depths nor the heights. Our own escapes are equally futile. If we seek denial, confession will be wrung from us. If we seek the refuge of lies, truth will peel back its covers. If we seek the charade of self deceit, or the masquerade of hypocrisy, reality will be forced upon us. That is why “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). When we fall into those hands, whether for good or ill, whether for heaven or hell, we shall see that Obadiah indeed had the last word, “And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Field Report

Religious Discussion

A religious discussion between Bruce Reeves (preacher for the Highway 65 church) and Gene Cook, Jr. (Foothills Fellowship Bible Church) is scheduled in Conway, Arkansas June 20, 21, 23, 24, 2005. The propositions to be discussed are:

Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the alien sinner is forgiven of his past sins by faith only, before and without water baptism.

Affirm: Gene Cook, Jr.

Deny: Bruce Reeves

Resolved: the Scriptures teach that water baptism is essential in order for the alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of his past sins.

Affirm: Bruce Reeves

Deny: Gene Cook, Jr.

This discussion will take place at the Reynolds Auditorium on the campus of UCA, Conway, Arkansas. The time will be at 7:00 each evening.

Mr. Cook is endorsed by the Foothills Fellowship Bible Church which is located in Cleburn County, Arkansas. Bruce Reeves has preached for the Highway 65 church of Christ in Conway, Arkansas for the past five years.

Quips and Quotes

Moratorium Mess

"In an unprecedented move, the top-ranking bishops of the Anglican Communion (called primates) have asked the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to dismiss themselves from a key Anglican body until the next Lambeth Conference in 2008.

"The primates asked the Episcopal Church to explain why it consecrated an openly gay bishop, and asked both churches to explain why they allow pastoral blessings for gay couples. They have asked that the Episcopal Church not approve more openly gay bishops without a broader consensus in the Anglican Communion, and that both churches refrain from blessing gay couples.

"Archbishop Andrew Hutchison of the Anglican Church of Canada suggested that his church might not withdraw

its three representatives from the Anglican Consultative Council, which meets in June in Nottingham, England. The Episcopal Church's House of Bishops has deferred to the church's national board, the Executive Council, which planned to hold a special meeting April 13" (*Christianity Today* [May 2005], 17).

Say What?

"New recommendations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) would allow congregations to bless homosexual unions and to have non-celibate homosexual ministers. Though the January 13 recommendation acknowledged that the official teaching of the ELCA prohibits homosexual ordinations and marriage, the task force said the church may choose to refrain from disciplining members for violating these prohibitions.

"U.S. theologians who are members of the ELCA urged the denomination to reject the recommendations because they threaten the 4.9-million-member church's unity, stability, and 'ability to proclaim the truth of the gospel'" (*Christianity Today* [May 2005], 18).

Medical-Record War Heats Up

"Two Kansas abortion clinics continue to oppose a court order to hand over medical records of about 90 women and girls who possibly had late-term abortions or were raped in 2003.

"Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline said he is looking for evidence of child rape and abortions occurring after the 22nd week of pregnancy.

"In spring 2003, Shawnee County Judge Richard D. Anderson sent a subpoena to every abortion clinic and hospital in the state. In a grand-jury investigation, Anderson ruled that there was probable cause that some abortion providers had violated state laws. In Kansas, sexual intercourse with someone younger than 15 is considered rape, while abortions performed after 22 weeks are legal only if the unborn child is not viable or if the pregnancy presents a significant health risk to the mother" (*Christianity Today* [May 2005], 20-21).

Second Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

July 11-14-2005

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	What About Islam and the Qu'ran? Kyle Pope	Is the Biblical Text Reliable? John Smith	Are There Lost Books of The Bible? Mark Mayberry
9:00 - 9:50	Evidences: Unity of Bible: Steve Wallace	Evidences: Prophecy: Kevin Maxey	Rody Gumpad
10:00 - 10:50	Addictive Behaviors Pornography: Steve Wolfgang	Addictive Behaviors Substances of Abuse: Art Adams	Addictive Behaviors Gambling: Joe Price
11:00 - 11:50	Creation: Dan King	Genesis 3: Paul Blake	Genesis 6-8, The Flood: Tom O'Neal
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
10:00 - 10:50	Dealing With Someone Addicted to Pornography Bette Wolfgang	Teaching Children to Respect Authority Sherilyn Mayberry	Creating A Peaceful Home Violet McDaniel
Auditorium			
2:00 - 4:00	Open Forum		Elders & Work of the Church
Singing 7:00 - 7:30 — Lead by R.J. Stevens			
What Does the Bible Claim For Itself? Donnie V. Rader	Is the Bible Adequate to the Modern World? Walton Weaver	Oh How Love I Thy Law: Johnie Edwards (<i>After Wednesday eve- ning Bible Study</i>)	First Century Morals For the Twenty-first Century: Andy Alexander



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