



Gospel Gleaner

Volume 4

Number 1

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Robert Oliver

The question, "when may one scripturally remarry" is a very important one. It has to do with the salvation of our souls. Notice first of all that it is God's plan that one man have one woman as long as they both shall live. In Malachi 2:14-16, we learn that God hates putting away. In Romans 7:2-3, we find a comparison of the old law concerning marriage and the taking of a new law. In the comparison, the rules governing marriage, divorce and remarriage are expressed. If a man or woman marries another while the first yet lives, that person is living in adultery. Again in Matthew 19:4-8, Jesus points out to those present that it has never been God's plan for a man and woman to separate. He quotes Genesis 2:24 showing that from the first, man and woman were to stay together. In Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18, we read likewise concerning remarriage. In all of these verses the same conclusion is seen. If a man or woman shall put away his or her spouse and remarry, the result is that they are living in adultery.

There is, however, one exception to the above rule. Man has no authority to make exceptions, but Christ does. Christ made one exception. If one party of a marriage commits fornication (any illicit sexual act) and the other party divorces because of that fornication, then the innocent party is free

to remarry. This is expressed twice by our Lord (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). If anyone is considering remarriage after a divorce, one should first ask himself the question, "Did I put away my spouse because of fornication on his/her part? If one cannot answer that question with a "yes," then he cannot scripturally remarry because that is the only person that is eligible according to Christ.

The next question to consider is: What should one do, if he cannot scripturally remarry. Paul, in dealing with a problem of distress in Corinth, directed that a man and woman should stay together, but if they separated, they were to remain **unmarried** or be reconciled to one another (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Paul speaks in terms referring to the woman only in this passage due to the specific situation among the Corinthians, but knowing that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), we know that the rule is the same for man or woman. Therefore, if a man or woman is unable to scripturally remarry, he/she must remain unmarried or go back to the original spouse.

But what if the other party was in the wrong? If the other party was in the wrong in a case of fornication, the innocent party may remarry (Matthew 19:9). If the other party were in

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EDITORIAL

Something No Man Can Do

Bill Dillon



Man has always been capable of vast accomplishments. The world marveled when Tenzing Norgay and Edmond Hillary conquered the summit of towering snow capped Mt. Everest. The world's tallest mountain felt the picks and footprints of human climbers at last. In July, 1969, Neil Armstrong became

the first man to set foot on the moon and, again, the world marveled in awestruck silence at the majesty of such an accomplishment.

Man can plummet the depths of the oceans or traverse the poles of the planet. Men can change their nationality, as did the infamous Benedict Arnold, who after traitorous disloyalty took refuge in England. Men can change their families, as is frequently the case in this day of disposable marriages. (Notwithstanding the prevalence of easy divorce, it is still contrary to God's laws and remains odious in the minds of the decent.)

Men can redirect the course of rivers, blast mountains from their places and redraw the boundaries of nations; yet for all this, there remains one change that no cleverness can ever produce: the salvation of the soul! Man is not saved by cleverness, but by Christ. Abraham Lincoln could free an entire race from slavery; but no son of Adam can ever liberate a soul from sin. All human efforts at redemption, apart from God, are a dismal wallowing in the slough of despond. For salvation man looks beyond himself and receives heaven's counsel. At the household of Cornelius, the heavenly messenger promised that Peter would come and tell Cornelius words whereby they could be saved (Acts 11:14). The emphasis is continually upon the importance of the word in the saving of the soul. Paul wrote, "the word is nigh thee" (Romans 10:8). The Lord's language in John 15:3 was "now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

God could have made man's conversion a hard, complicated concern, but He loved us too much for that. His wisdom and love were

married in the bringing forth of the plan of salvation. The only barriers that prohibit man from accepting God's way of salvation are such things as pride, unbelief and a love for the unholy.

It is a thankful matter that man, among his numerous other lofty and far reaching achievements, also has the power to dethrone Satan from sitting in his heart. Man's response to heaven's grace is faith. Faith that turns from sin and speaks the good confession and acts by being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins is a faith that opens the door that makes deliverance from sin a reality. Man continues his journey of living by faith realizing that the life in Christ, despite its sorrows, is one hundred times worth the living. The journey ends in death; and death in Christ, even with its pain and parting, is ten thousand times worth the dying.

There is therefore something no man can do but there is something every must do to be pleasing to God. He must believe and obey (Hebrews 11:6).

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

P. O. Box 506
LaFayette, GA 30728

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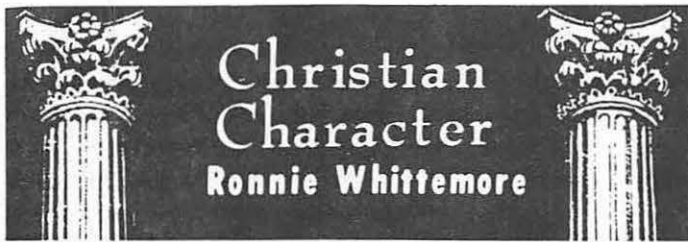
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EDITORS: Bill Dillon & Ronnie Whittemore



WHEN MEN DISAPPOINT US



One of the greatest obstacles which Christians must overcome is discouragement. Sometimes an illness or affliction will discourage the hearts of God's children. For others, trials and tribulations become wearisome and disheartening. Likewise, Christians are burdened with grief and sorrow over the death of a loved one.

These obstacles are a part of life. There is no escape from their pain and sorrow. However, they can be conquered. Even in death, there is hope and there is victory for the faithful child of God (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

Yet despite these burdens, there is one obstacle which many people have difficulty in hurdling—the evil conduct of some brethren. The Bible teaches that it is possible for the child of God to sin and fall from grace (1 Corinthians 10:11-12; Galatians 5:4). In fact, it is possible for one's heart to become so seared that he will never return unto the Lord (Hebrews 6:4-6). And so, one should not be surprised when such happens. The good news is that one may return to the Lord (Luke 15:11-32). The sin of Simon the Sorcerer was so serious that Peter warned him, "*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*" (Acts 8:22-23). Remember that previous to his conversion (Acts 8:13) that Simon had "*bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one*" even to the point that many men said, "*This man is the great power of God*" (Acts 8:10). By desiring the power of the apostles to impart spiritual gifts and then offering to buy this ability, Simon not only sinned (Acts 8:20-21), but he also placed his soul in the same corrupt position that it occupied previous to his conversion (Acts 8:23). Thankfully, Simon repented, but not all men do.

Whether it is due to false teaching, compromise of the truth, immorality, pride or arrogance, many men prove to be a disappointment. Some brethren who once stood four-square upon the truth of God have departed from righteousness. They may have fallen prey to the snares of worldliness, power and prestige. They may have yielded to the lusts of the flesh and eyes and are guilty of immorality and other conduct unbecoming to a Christian. For any brother or sister in this condition, we pray and hope for their restoration and reconciliation unto God.

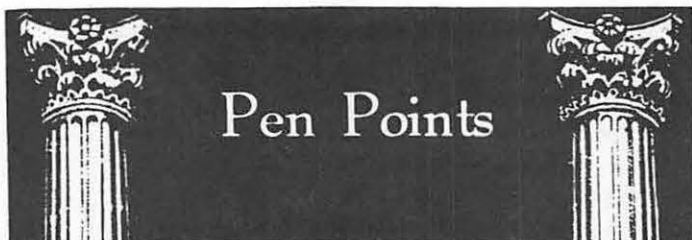
When men disappoint us, we must be careful of our reactions. Certainly this is not a time for joy, but sorrow. It is not a time to ignore their transgressions, but to plead for repentance. And above all, it is not a time to forsake God and His work. Unfortunately, many brethren become discouraged and lose their faith, confidence and trust in God and His Word. For those individuals, we "bring these things to your remembrance."

1. The Bible speaks of those who departed from the faith. In the Old Testament, the first king of Israel, Saul, son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, departed from the word of God. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul's impatience led him to defy God's instructions and he offered a burnt offering unto God. Samuel rebuked Saul, saying, "*Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee*" (1 Samuel 13:13). In chapter fifteen, Saul disobeyed God's commandment to destroy utterly the Amalekites.

During the days of Jesus' ministry, "*many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*" (John 6:66). The apostle Paul, in both letters to Timothy, mentioned men who left the faith. "*Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme*" (1 Timothy 1:19-20). "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having love this present world*" (2 Timothy 4:10).

2. The Bible speaks of those who will depart from the faith. The inspired writers of the New Testament recorded many exhortations for steadfastness lest their readers stumble and fall. Their writings include Old Testament examples for admonition. The Hebrews writer referred to rebellious Israel: "*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness*

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"YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN!"

Guy F. Hester



Recently almost every church in and around the Birmingham area received an invitation by mail from the Homewood church of Christ, where J. Wayne Kilpatrick is the "pulpit" preacher, to attend a play put on by the "Homewood Player": **"You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown."** The printed brochure stated, "Happiness is...Snoopy, Lucy and the whole Peanuts gang!" The advertisement urged people to call the church phone number "today" because "seating is limited" and reserve free tickets for the show. In a personal note signed by Wayne Kilpatrick, he said, "I hope you'll join us...for 'You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown' at Homewood Church of Christ. What better way to get Mom, Dad and the Kids together for an evening of family fun?"

Now I have nothing against Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy and the rest of the "Peanuts gang." I am all for family fun especially when the tickets are free. But what business does the church have for getting into the theater business? Can you imagine the apostles sending out invitations to attend a show being put on by the Jerusalem Players? The Jerusalem church is a model church for every generation and the divine record tells that they spent their time going "every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Why is there not the same urgency to preaching the Word today as there was in the first century? Are there not more people in the world today than there was then? Are there not those lost who have not obeyed the gospel today just as there were then? Every reason that can be given as to why it was the mission of the church in Jerusalem to preach the Word instead of putting on plays and entertaining can be given for every congregation of the Lord's church today. Entertainment is **not** the work of the church.

The late brother G. C. Brewer in his book: The Model Church, page 153, said,

"In considering a model church, we must, of course, have some standard by which to model a church—some ideal to which we can appeal. In the minds of some modern religious teachers no church would be a model church till it added to its services all the paraphernalia of the theater and some of the adjuncts of the barroom. Connected with the house of worship there must be a gymnasium and a culinary department, and possibly a pool room and a swimming pool. But with such we have nothing to do. We have a standard, a criterion, and to it we appeal. It is the Lord we wish to please, and not man."

When brother Brewer said, "But with such we have nothing to do. We have a standard, a criterion, and to it we appeal," he was talking about churches of Christ. I wonder if brother Brewer ever imagined that the time would come when some churches of Christ would build gymnasiums with the Lord's money, put on theatrical performances, etc. There is not one mention in the New Testament of the church ever engaging in any work other than preaching the Word, caring for the less fortunate and edifying the saints. It is the responsibility of the **home** to provide fun, entertainment and recreation for the family.

It cannot be disputed that the churches who are in the entertainment business are growing in numbers more than the churches who are not, but does that make it right? Certainly not! The Lord's way is not always the popular way, but the true Christian is more concerned about being right than popular.

The gospel is still "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). If a man or an angel preaches any other doctrine he will be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). All of those who "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

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WHEN MEN DISAPPOINT . . .

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of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Paul also warned the elders of Ephesus, saying, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). He also wrote, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). The apostle Peter wrote of "scoffers" in the last days (2 Peter 3:3) and John mentioned "false prophets" (1 John 4:1). Jude announced the presence and coming of the ungodly sinners who are "murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16).

3. The power of salvation is in the gospel, not men. Though God's plan calls for the use of men in preaching His gospel (Romans 10:13-17), the power of salvation rests within the gospel (John 1:12; Romans 1:16). For this reason, one can hear, believe and obey the gospel regardless of the preacher's motives (Philippians 1:14-18). It is the Word of God that saves (James 1:21), not His worker. It is the message that saves, not the man. It is the preaching of the cross that saves, not the pretenses of men (1 Corinthians 1:18-21). Therefore, a preacher may preach the gospel for "filthy lucre," but the power of the gospel is unscathed.

Besides the warning for man not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think (Romans 12:3), Paul makes it clear that men plant the seed and water the ground, but God "gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Though men may disappoint us, their actions do not negate the power of the gospel!

4. The sins of one person do not change the salvation of others. Paul wrote, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Ezekiel recorded, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

Moses, the great lawgiver and mediator for God's people in the Old Testament, offered himself on behalf of the people. In Exodus 32, the Israelites build built that golden calf to worship while Moses was receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Upon his return, Moses said unto the Lord, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive

their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32). However, the Lord answered Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:33). On the last great day, every man will give account of himself and he will be judged by the things written in the books (Romans 14:12; Revelation 20:12-15).

5. The sins of one now should not negate his good labor of the past. Sometimes, a gospel preacher serves the Lord faithfully for many years. He has visited the sick, mourned with the bereaved, preached the gospel and labored diligently in the Lord's vineyard. Then, later in life, he may depart from the truth of God. Perhaps he became discouraged; maybe he became arrogant; or he may have grown "weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9). But whatever the circumstances, his past labors are not made void.

Every man's work shall be tried by fire. If the man has been faithful, he will be saved, regardless of what others may do (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Likewise, the gold, silver and precious stones that he built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ will receive their reward though the laborer may be lost when tried by fire.

When men sin and depart from the paths of righteousness, they may disappoint us and our hearts may sink. But rest assured that God will always be faithful to His promises and His Word will endure forever (1 Peter 1:25). The prophet Elijah on one occasion felt alone and betrayed, but God reassured him that there remained "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). Friends, Jesus was forsaken, denied and even betrayed, but He did not disappoint the Father, the angels or man; He died on the cross.

10015 Woodville Road
Kevil, KY 42053

HEATH CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Schedule of Services)

Sunday Bible study	9:45 a.m.
Morning worship	10:45 a.m.
Evening worship	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible study	7:00 p.m.

(Located on Woodville Road—
½ mile west of the Heath Mall)

MAY 23, 1971

Thomas Joseph Dillon

JANUARY 30, 1988



Thomas Joseph Dillon of LaFayette, Georgia died in an automobile accident on January 30, 1988. Funeral services were conducted at 9:00 a.m. on February 2 at Lane's Funeral Home in LaFayette, Georgia by brother Johnny Polk. Grave-side and burial services were conducted at 3:30

p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery in Dyer, Tennessee by brother Max Miller.

Joey is survived by his father and mother, Bill and Kay Dillon, two brothers, Mark and Jeff, grandparents, Tom and Mary Chambers and several uncles, aunts and cousins.

Joey attended the LaFayette High School and was a junior. But most importantly, Joey was a faithful member of the Lord's church and he worked and worshipped with the congregation in LaFayette. In the book of Revelation which speaks of the "great victory" in Christ, these words are found: *"Blessed are the dead*

which die in the Lord from henceforth, ye saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Joey often accompanied his father on trips where Bill would conduct gospel meetings and mission work in the United States. He also financially supported gospel endeavors overseas including the mission work in Ghana, Africa.

Though Joey was only sixteen years old, this young man had a lasting influence for good upon the lives of all, young and old alike, who came to know him and love him. The Christian life which he exhibited is seldom found in those so young. These characteristics and many others we shall remember.

The Psalmist penned these words, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"* (Psalm 116:15).

We extend our love and deepest sympathy to the Dillon family.

Allen Carmichael
Boaz, KY

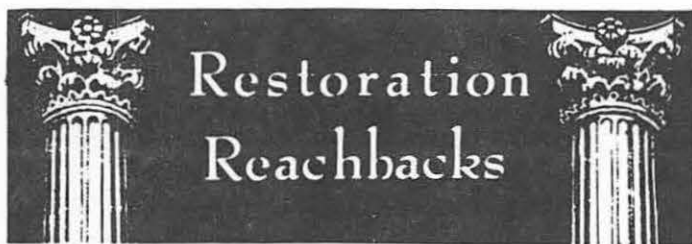
DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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the wrong concerning something else, there is no authorization to remarry. In 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, we read where it is wrong for one to withhold due benevolence to his spouse. If they separate, it is to be for only a short time and that by consent of both parties. Yet, if one is guilty of disobeying this charge, it still does not give the other party a right to remarry. Two wrongs do not make a right. Wives (as well as others) are also told not to be busybodies (1 Timothy 3:11-12), but disobedience to this command does not allow divorce and remarriage, and neither will disobedience to any command except the **one** that Jesus allowed in Matthew 19:9.

One who remarries unscripturally is living in adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Romans 7:3). No person living in adultery shall enter into heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Therefore, it is important that one follow the Bible concerning this subject. When one finds himself in a position of being divorced and unable to scripturally remarry, he finds himself in extremely difficult position. This is the reason why it is so important that people take their time and consider well the persons whom they have chosen for mates before they are married. Marriage is until death parts. A wrong choice may result in one's having to live unmarried for a large portion of his life, or suffering eternal damnation for not doing so.

P. O. 193
Clinton, NC



CHRISTIAN UNITY

H. Leo Boles

The unity taught in the New Testament is the unity of Christians. They are united to Christ and to each other. The New Testament knows nothing about "church unity" in the modern sense of that term; neither does the New Testament teach anything about denominational unity. Many religious leaders are stressing "unity of the denominations." If every denomination in the world could be united into one denomination, this would not be the unity which is taught in the New Testament. Even if all the churches of Christ should be federated by some superorganization, we still would not have the unity taught in the New Testament. This unity in the New Testament is presented in many ways.

Christians, The Body Of Christ

There are many Scriptures which bear directly on the subject of unity; there are many more that indirectly teach the idea of unity. Frequently the New Testament declares that Christians are the body of Christ. *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread"* (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Again, Paul declares to the church at Corinth: *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit...That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof"*

(1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 25-27). Again, Paul declares of Christ that *"he is the head of the body, the church"* (Colossians 1:18). And again: *"So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another"* (Romans 12:5). Once more: *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all"* (Ephesians 4:4-6). These Scriptures and others that could be quoted show clearly that all Christians constitute the one body of Christ, in which there should be no division; these emphasize the unity of Christians.

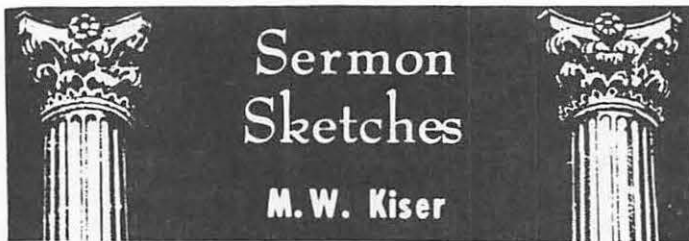
Christians, The Kingdom Of God On Earth

The church is the kingdom of God on earth. Since Christians constitute the church, they compose the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus said to his disciples: *"Blessed* are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God"* (Luke 6:20). The Holy Spirit said through Paul to Christians at Colosse: *"Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love"* (Colossians 1:13). John, in writing of Christians, said: *"Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father"* (Revelation 1:5-6). Christ has been crowned *"King of kings, and Lord of lords;"* he is the King of his kingdom. Every Christian has sanctified or set apart Christ in his heart as Lord. *"But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord"* (1 Peter 3:15). Christians are subject to the law of Christ; they acknowledge the regal authority of Christ. The kingdom of Christ is an organic unity. Christ is not divided, neither does he reign over a divided kingdom. The one Lord demands unity among his subjects. All the Scriptures that apply to the unity of the body of Christ may be applicable to the unity of the kingdom of God. The tendencies toward denominational unity today are strong evidences of the belief in the New Testament teaching of unity. There is a struggle to get back to apostolic unity as is taught in the New Testament. It can be done only by giving up denominationalism.

Christians, One In Christ

Christians are not only in Christ, but they are one in Christ. This is emphasized by Christ in his prayer recorded in John 17. *"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father,*

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THE HORRORS OF HELL

Matthew 13:47-50

Introduction:

1. Read the text.
2. There is something to be feared more than a crippling accident or a murderer's threat (see Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 10:48).
3. My aim is to convince you that hell is real and to leave you with a sense of fear and dread of the place.
4. Law implies penalty. All law (civil, natural, moral) contains penalty.
5. Why will hell be horrible?

Because those who go there will:

I. Not Be Alone

- A. That all will finally be saved is both false and demoralizing (Matthew 7:13-14; Ezekiel 13:22).
- B. Who will be in hell?
 1. The wicked (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 13:47-50; 25:26, 30).
 2. Those who have rejected Christ (Mark 16:16; Revelation 21:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 25:41).
 3. The Devil and his angels (Revelation 19:10; 20:10; 2 Peter 2:4).
 4. Those who have tampered with the word of God (Revelation 22:18-19).
 5. Lukewarm and backsliding church members (Matthew 25:26-30; James 5:19-20).
- C. How would you like to spend one day with all the criminals of this county, state, nation, world?

II. Know Where They Are

- A. "He lifted up his eyes in torment" (Luke 16:23).
 1. You say that this is just a parable. Parables always spoke of things that were or could happen.
 2. You say that this is just figurative language. It too, conveys thought. Now what thoughts do you get from "fire and brimstone?"

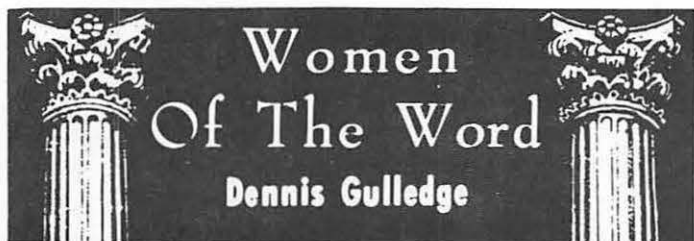
- B. The nature of hell as described by Jesus
 1. "Fire"—a special kind: See Exodus 3. (Mark 9:44-48; Matthew 5:25; 18:9; Revelation 19:20).
 2. "Darkness"—farthest removed from light: See James 1:17; 1 John 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 13; Matthew 25:30).
 3. "Punishment/Torment"—this indicates consciousness; there could not be punishment without it (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 14:11; Luke 16:19-31).
- C. If God loves man, how could he make a place like hell?
 1. It was not prepared for men, but sinning angels (Matthew 25:41).
 2. Men will go there by choice, rejecting their own moral conscience, God's law, and gospel pleadings.
 3. These will not be fit for heaven, could not be happy in heaven, and if allowed to go would turn heaven into hell (Revelation 21:11; Romans 1:28; Daniel 12:12).

III. Will Take Their Memory With Them

- A. "Son Remember"—two of the most terrible words in the Bible when considered in the context.
- B. What are some things to be remembered in hell?
 1. God's love (John 3:16).
 2. Gospel sermons (Romans 10:17).
 3. Invitations to receive Christ (Revelation 22:17).
 4. Unsaved loved ones (Luke 16:27-28).
 5. This life, this hour, this sermon—THIS!
- C. Are there degrees of punishment?
 1. What does it matter? Do you still want to go?
 2. If there are, the coolest spots won't be for anybody in this crowd! You have been warned!
 3. I would rather go to hell from the darkest corner of Africa, than from this place.

IV. Never Get Out

- A. Hell will have no fire exits through which the inhabitants can escape (Luke 16:26).
 1. You say you don't believe in hell? Does that make it "not so?"
 2. You say scholars say it isn't so. They didn't believe Jesus on other subjects! (Luke 19:41-44)
- B. How long is "everlasting?"
 1. As long as there will be a God.
 2. As long as there will be a heaven for the righteous (Matthew 25:46).



"LYDIA: SELLER OF PURPLE AND SERVANT OF THE LORD"



The year was about A.D. 50. The church of Christ had been in existence about twenty years when Paul and his company answered the call from Macedonia by journeying to Philippi, *"the chief city of that part of Macedonia"* (Acts 16:1-12). As far as we know this was the first effort to carry

the saving gospel to Europe.

Our text in Acts 16:13-15 speaks of women, but spotlights only *"a certain woman named Lydia"* (Acts 16:13). There is no more attractive character in the New Testament than Lydia. her character speaks to the credit of the fairer gender as a *"Portrait of Yesterday, a Pattern for Today."*¹

Who Was Lydia? (verse 14)

Luke introduces Lydia to us as a progressive woman of business—*"a seller of purple."* Fabrics made with the rare and expensive purple dye of that time were the dress of the rich and privileged (Luke 16:19; John 19:1). Emperors and kings wore purple. It is of interest to note that Lydia was a seller of purple rather than a wearer of it, as few such were called by the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:26).

However, such a career must have required some degree of financial independence to begin and maintain. She was a home owner. She was probably either unmarried or widowed. Philippi was a likely place for her to ply her trade, as it was a Roman colony, meaning that it enjoyed special privileges being under Roman rule. Prominent Roman officials probably resided there.

Lydia was a native of Thyatira, a town in the province of Lydia. Whatever it was that brought her to Philippi (her work or something else), it took her 300 miles from her home.

May it also be said to the eternal credit of Lydia that she was a woman of prayer and

one who *"worshipped God"* (verses 13-14). These are wonderful traits in anyone, but were insufficient, as the context shows, because Lydia had not yet come to Christ that she might be complete (Colossians 1:10-12). She worshipped God according to the knowledge which she had, but she did not have Christ, because she worshipped God according to the Law of Moses, meeting on the Sabbath rather than the Lord's day.

Something of the sterling character of this woman may be learned here, and that to the shame of many who call themselves Christians today. These lessons are apparent: (1) She did not permit business to interfere with her worship of God at the appointed times. As E. A. Elam tells us, "While she was in Philippi on business and while here rivals in business were at work on the Sabbath she found time to quit business and go to the place of prayer in order to worship. She did better then, though not a Christian, than many professed Christians do now."² (2) She was not ashamed of her religion in business circles. If religion has no place in business it has not place in life. (3) She did not excuse herself from worshipping even though she was away from home, and finding no synagogue in Philippi.

Lydia's Conversion to Christ (verses 14-15)

What facts enter into this woman's conversion to the truth of God? First, she heard the word of God. No one is converted to Jesus Christ who does not first hear, or otherwise perceive the meaning of the gospel (Matthew 13:23; Romans 10:13-17). Lydia did her part. She gave the word of God a chance to do its work by listening to Paul. Curiosity and sentiment may all come short of bringing the mind to accept and respond to divine truth. Lydia, *"received seed into the good ground"* of her heart (Matthew 13:23). It was her will to do God's will; therefore, she knew the doctrine (John 7:17). She had *"the love of the truth"* that she might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

Second, the Lord opened her heart. What is meant by opening the heart? As J. W. McGarvey suggests, "The statement that the Lord opened Lydia's heart implies that previously her heart was in some way closed."³ In spite of her many great attributes her mind was still closed, that is, the gospel had dawned upon her understanding (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). McGarvey adds, "It was closed in the sense in which the pious and earnest heart of a Jewish worshipper might be closed. Every Jew, and every Jewish proselyte, was at that time so wedded to the belief that the coming Christ

(Continued on page 10)

worshipper might be closed. Every Jew, and every Jewish proselyte, was at that time so wedded to the belief that the coming Christ would establish an earthly kingdom, as to have the heart very tightly closed against the conception of a crucified Christ, whose reign as a king is purely spiritual."⁴ Her heart was closed, not by hereditary total depravity (as Calvinistic teachers interpret it), not by the hardness of a sin-filled life, but in her failure to accept the truth concerning Jesus Christ. There are multitudes of good, honest and even "religious" people of whom the same might be said today.

We are not surprised that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. He opens men's ears (Psalm 40:6) and eyes (Psalm 119:18). These metaphors simply suggest that one comes to the point where he hears and obeys the truth of God. God opens the human heart by his truth (Hebrews 8:10), and we assist by our own strong determination to do exactly as God requires in his word. Indeed, the honest heart and sincere soul whose only desire is to obey his Lord, will find it easy to do as Lydia did in "attending" to the things spoken in the New Testament.

It is tragic that this wonderfully simple example of conversion to Christ has become a rallying point for those who handle God's word deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2) and wrest the scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). The Calvinist, for example, insists that we have in Lydia a case of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon a person's heart in order that she might be able to receive Paul's message and profit by it. However, the Holy Spirit is nowhere mentioned within the context of Lydia's conversion, but Paul's teaching is (verse 13), and Lydia's hearing is (verse 14), thus again confirming the truth, that, "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17).

Again, denominationalists deny the import of baptism in this context. For example, the noted Baptist scholar A. T. Robertson wrote, "Evidently Paul had spoken of baptism as the next step after conversion. Paul did not make baptism essential to salvation. He was not a sacramentarian as is plain from 1 Corinthians 1:17..."⁵ (Emphasis mine, D.G.). Why did not Mr. Robertson round out his comments on baptism by telling his readers what the Bible says on the matter elsewhere as it relates to salvation (i.e., Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)? The reason is he would have to surrender Baptist doctrine to do so, and we suppose become a "sacramentarian" in the process. What about Paul's teaching on

baptism in Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 3:27 and Titus 3:5? Is he "sacramentarian" in these places? Of course not! How sad that the case of Lydia's conversion is subjected to such abuse by false teachers.

The human heart may be closed to heaven's truth in a number of ways. It may be closed by sin, ignorance, neglect, prejudice, selfishness or worldliness. It must be opened, by removing the strength of sin which holds it shut, and infusing it with the expanding love of God through the gospel.

-Endnotes-

¹Donna Bentley, "A Portrait of Yesterday, A Pattern for Today—Lydia" Gospel Advocate (Volume CXXIV, Number 13, July 1, 1982). (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company). p. 388.

²E. A. Elam, "The Macedonian Call," Lesson VIII—August 23, 1925. Elam's Notes on Bible School Lessons. (Nashville: Williams Printing Company, 1925). p. 222.

³J. W. McGarvey, New Commentary on Acts of Apostles. (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.). p. 90.

⁴Ibid.

⁵A. T. Robertson, Types of Preachers in the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972). p. 128-129.

540 Tatnall
Milledgeville, GA 31061

PLAN OF SALVATION

GOD'S PART

1. The great love of God for man. (John 3:16)
2. He gave Christ as the Savior. (Luke 19:10)
3. Sent the Holy Spirit as a guide. (John 16:13)
4. Gave the Gospel as "the power" unto salvation. (Romans 1:16)
5. Provided atonement by the blood of Christ. (Romans 5:9; Colossians 1:14)

MAN'S PART

1. Hear the Gospel. (Romans 10:17; John 8:32)
2. Believe the Gospel. (Hebrews 11:6; John 20:31)
3. Repent of past sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30)
4. Confess faith in Christ. (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32)
5. Be Baptized. (Galatians 3:27; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)
6. Be faithful unto death. (Revelations 2:10)

that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20-21). This union for which Christ prayed was a visible union. "That the world may believe that thou didst send me" suggests visible unity. This is further emphasized by the words of Christ when he said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). The love that Christians are to have for each other impels them to be one in Christ. All the churches of Christ are alike in type of character, faith, love, joy, and peace; they constitute the one body and are "severally members one of another." Christians are so closely united, if faithful to the Lord, that if "one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Any division or strife is contrary to the fundamental relationship that Christians sustain to each other. All division among the people of God is condemned (1 Corinthians 1:13; 2:1-2; 3:1-3). James and Peter in their writings reprove sharply Christians for strifes and divisions; they also urge unity in brotherly love (James 4:1; 5:9, 16; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:1; 3:11; 4:8). Nearly all of the New Testament writers have emphasized the unity of God's people.

Christians, Brethren

God is our Father, Christ our elder brother. Christians constitute the family of God; hence, they are brethren in Christ. This indicates their unity. This term "brethren" is applied to Christians more than two hundred times in the New Testament. It implies the unity of a family. "But by not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). "This saying therefore went forth among the brethren" (John 21:23). "Let there be no strife,...between me and thee,...for we are brethren" (Genesis 13:8).

GOSPEL ADVOCATE
March 28, 1940

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"THE BIBLE SPEAKS"
12:00

"SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES"
12:30

THE HORRORS OF
(Continued from page 8)

3. No purging then release...no second chance.
- C. Are we getting some or all of our punishment in this life?
 1. Then we are getting some or all of our heaven.
 2. Then some are getting heaven who should be in hell.
 3. Punishment comes after the resurrection and judgment (John 5:28-29; 2 Peter 2:9).

Conclusion:

1. "Free bubble-up and rainbow stew" (?) Will the circle be unbroken? No doubt, if it is broken now.
2. "I don't know why I can't convert my relative!" Maybe it is because you put everything ahead of the kingdom.
3. "You don't scare me." Impenitence doesn't change the facts!
4. If you don't believe in hell, where did you get your information? If you do believe in hell, have you acted in the best interest of your soul?

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Readers' Response

Dear brethren:

I have been acquainted with the GOSPEL GLEANER for sometime, and, although I have not read it with regularity, I am well aware of its power as a gospel proclamaunt.

Because of this, the men of the west side congregation wish to be placed on your mailing list in order to receive a bundle of twenty (20) GOSPEL GLEANER's each month. We trust that this will be no inconvenience.

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Because He lives,
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Yours in Christ,
Hilda Bradford
Metropolis, IL

Since its inception in January of 1985, the GOSPEL GLEANER has attempted to be a well-balanced and forceful tool for the Lord's kingdom. The paper focuses upon the basics of the Bible and defends the truth from its opponents whether from within or without. The GOSPEL GLEANER is a means of seeking the lost and edifying the saints.

We are grateful for the continued support of our sister congregations, Arlington church of Christ in McMinnville, Tennessee and the Garfield Heights church of Christ in Indianapolis, and we appreciate the generous contributions of various individuals who are dedicated to the proclamation of the gospel through this means.

- Editors

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BAPTISM IS THE ANSWER

Melvin Elliott

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Chirst" (1 Peter 3:21).

This is a remarkable passage of scripture, and our understanding of baptism would not be complete without it. Its teaching is irrefutable, proving beyond any doubt that scriptural baptism is essential to salvation. The passage tells us what it is not designed to do as well as what it is designed to do. The sectarian world with few exceptions adamantly refuses to be governed by this teaching and does its best to pervert this passage. In this article, I intend to let God's design for baptism stand forth as taught in this passage.

One such perverting effort is made by A. T. Robertson in Word Pictures of the New Testament, p. 119. He gives a correct assessment by saying, "So here baptism is presented as corresponding to (prefigured by) the deliverance of Noah's family by water." Yet, in only three lines further he states, "The saving by baptism which Peter here mentions is only symbolic (a metaphor or picture as in Romans 6:2-6), not actual as Peter hastens to explain." Observe, please, that the deliverance of Noah's family was an actual deliverance. If, as he states, baptism corresponds to this (actual) deliverance, how, then, can it be symbolic?

Although baptism may, indeed, picture the death, burial and resurrection of Chirst, Peter does not "hasten to explain" that baptism is symbolic of salvation, but just the opposite.

As we will see, this is proven because baptism is not for "putting away of the filth of the flesh," but it is for "the answer of a good conscience." Robertson, as well as others, refuses to be governed by what the Bible teaches concerning the conscience. To see this, we point out some basic and simple matters clearly established in this scripture.

First, it is clear that Peter is comparing something in the Old Testament to something in the New Testament. Peter names the facts that are comparable: salvation through water for Noah and salvation through water baptism for us. The facts not comparable are: Noah's salvation was deliverance from "the filth of the flesh," of that ungodly generation, and ours is for the "answer of a good conscience" or deliverance from an evil conscience. Unless we understand the guilty conscience under the old economy, we will never understand the good conscience under the new. By the study of some words in our text and seeing how they are used in the Bible, we will see the obvious truth our text is teaching.

Words are the vehicles of comprehension. We must know what a word means and how it is used in its context in order to know what is taught. Words have definite meanings that are often further specified by their contextual usage. The test of proper understanding is: Does it harmonize with the overall teaching of the scriptures, seeing they do not contradict themselves?

(Continued on page 3)

EDITORIAL

THE GREATIST TREASURE

Bill Dillon



Mankind has always manifested a keen interest in hidden treasure. To talk of gold mines, cryptic maps, buried fortunes, sunken galleons, and such things has triggered the spirit of high adventure almost every one at one time or another. Are you intrigued at the prospect of searching for hidden wealth? Are you fascinated by the thought of being the first to locate one of the 5,000 possible lost treasure sights mentioned in The U.S. Treasure Map Atlas?

Even the Bible speaks of earthly treasures like coins, gems, and precious metals. The dram of Ezra 2:69 is said to be the only coin mentioned in the Old Testament. The breast plate of the High Priest was composed of a sardius, a topaz, an emerald, a sapphire, a diamond and other set stones, (Exodus 28:17-20). The New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:19,20 is described as "garnished with all manner of precious stones." Also, silver and gold find frequent mention in the Sacred Page (Genesis 2:11,12; 4:22, 2 Samuel 22:35; Ezra 8:27). Temporal things, however, fall far short of being the greatest of all treasures.

Because men have often had difficulty in showing greater appreciation for their souls than for the trinkets and baubles of the world, genuine treasure has just as often been undervalued and overlooked. In our monetary society, we need constant reminding that true treasure is spiritual not temporal. The Bible tells how fleeting and deceptive earthly wealth may be. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Again, Luke

9:25, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away?"

Even though the majority of humanity sees money as the chief acquisition of life, yet, the truth of Matthew Henry's remarks is preferred by those who have long recognized the limitation and the disappointment of material riches, "There is labor in the getting of them, care in the keeping of them, responsibility in the use of them, guilt in the abuse of them, sorrow in the loss of them, and a heavy accounting to be given for them in the end."

What is the greatest treasure? The greatest of all teachers gave the answer in the parables of the hidden treasure and the goodly pearl. In Matthew 13:44-46 Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Dear reader, there is nothing under the blue skies of earth to surpass the worth of membership in the Kingdom of heaven. Here is wisdom. This is the greatest treasure.

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EDITORS: Bill Dillon & Ronnie Whittemore

In our text we must understand the words: figure, answer, and conscience. The word figure in the original is literally antetype. It will, therefore, follow that something about the flood is identical about baptism. To illustrate, consider the same word (figure) in Hebrews 9:24. The context shows that the high priest went into the Holy of Holies to offer the blood of animals, which is a "figure" of Christ's entering into heaven to offer his own blood. What is the only identical action? Both offered a blood sacrifice before God (vv. 13,14).

Next, we come to the word conscience. Thayer defines the word as "joint knowledge" (p. 602). The word is used in connection with a number of things in the scriptures. Our need in this discussion is to see how it is used in reference to sin and salvation. As our text deals with a comparison between the old and new order, we will note some passages in Hebrews, as it is also a comparison between the two.

In the Old Testament symtem, the worshippers were not made perfect in conscience (Hebrews 9:9), because with those sacrifices they, the worshippers, remembered they were yet guilty of sin (Hebrews 10:3), because it was impossible for those sacrifices to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, in their conscience they remained guilty of sin (Hebrews 10:3). Consider the application of Thayer's definition. I have knowledge of God. I also have knowledge of myself in relation to God. In this case, I have a knowledge of my being guilty of sin resulting in an impure conscience, because there was no forgiveness in those sacrifices.

Further, the blood of animals was limited to sanctifying, "*to the purifying of the flesh*" (Hebrews 9:13). Those worshippers had a "*divine service*" but only a "*worldly sanctuary*" (Hebrews 9:1). This was the tabernacle, and while it stood, the way into the holiest of all, where sins would be atoned and man's conscience purified, was not known (Hebrews 9:8). So, we see that the old system purified the flesh but left the conscience guilty. It only pictured that the new system, with the blood of Christ offered in heaven, would purge (purify) the conscience because he "*put away sins by the sacrifice of himself*" (Hebrews 10:10, 9:24-26).

What about the word answer? Again, Thayer gives "an inquiry, a question—a demand." He goes on to state, "As the terms of inquiry and demand include the idea of desire, the word thus gets the signification of earnest seeking: i.e., a craving, an intense desire—to long for something" (p. 230). Man is thus seeking for a solution for the guilty conscience and,

therefore, answer gives the sense in this context. If one insists the translation should be question, inquiry or demand, it remains obvious that a satisfactory reply must be found and forthcoming. By our word study, it is irrefutable that the answer will not be found in the old system even when it was in force. The answer was found in the promise of the Messiah then, and now, in the reality of his coming and sacrifice.

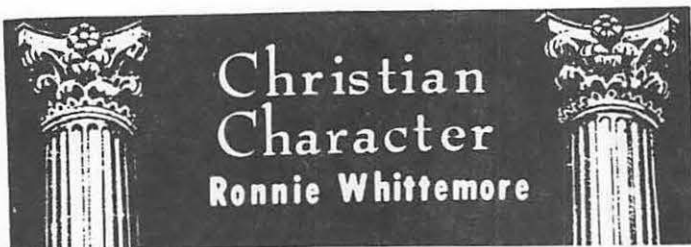
It is foolish to get involved in a discussion of the arrangement of the words of our text which would indicate whether baptism is the result of a "*good conscience*" or the reason for a "*good conscience*." If one will not accept the clear statement, "*...baptism doth also now save us*," and the many other scriptures clearly stating salvation follows baptism, he is not likely to accept any reason given for word arrangement to indicate such.

Now, to see the unanswerable truth of our study, we simply apply our word study to our text. First, Peter states the type, "*eight souls were saved by (through) water*" (1 Peter 3:20). What is the "*like figure*," or antetype? Peter names it: "*whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*."

What is the identical matter (type and antetype)? The type Noah and family were saved through water. The antetype - through water baptism we are now saved! That is simply what the text says and the word figure allows no other understanding.

We now apply the words answer and conscience together as they are so closely related. Noah was indeed delivered from a world corrupted by sin, but not from the guilt of sin. Who would argue that the flood took away the guilt of sin? No one! The flood only took away the filth of the flesh of that corrupt generation, but that did not purify the conscience. The animal sacrifices of both patriarchy and the Mosaic symtem left the conscience impure as we have seen. What is the solution for this unsolved problem of the conscience? Peter said the answer is baptism.

This is shown to be the case by stating it was not for "*putting away the filth of the flesh*" to prevent one from making the mistake of thinking that baptism was designed to do no more for the guilty conscience than the flood or the sacrifices of the old law. Our text states that this was not the case at all. For centuries, the guilty conscience had longed for a remedy, but found none. The flood only prefigured, and animal sacrifices only foreshadowed the good things to come. Therefore, if baptism is only a sign or symbol, we have no cleansing from a guilty conscience, and are no better



"BORDER-LINE CHRISTIANS" (Part One of Two)



In Matthew 12:30, Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."* Without a doubt, this passage does not allow for a middle ground on one's allegiance to Christ. There are many other passages in the Bible which likewise teach that

one cannot be neutral when it comes to: God and His word; sin and salvation; Christ and His church; truth and error; right and wrong. The Bible teaches that *"a double minded man is unstable in all his ways"* (James 1:8).

It is quite disturbing and sad to see so many people in our world who lack principle and conviction, and not just in religious matters, but even politically, people waver and promise whatever is beneficial for them at the time. In this country, morality has to be at an all-time low in its history. *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34). It is commonplace to be lied to and dealt with dishonestly in business. Sexual permissiveness is rampant and being promoted even through the disguise of education. Perversion (such as homosexuality and lesbianism) has been tolerated and now accepted by many people as a "lifestyle" rather than being rejected for the sin that it is. The leaders of this nation display hypocrisy and cowardice by "waging a war on drugs" while ignoring the number one drug problem in the United States, namely the drinking of alcoholic beverages. And every election year, principles, conviction and integrity are "thrown out the window."

But Christians expect this from the world. Thankfully, God will have His day. *"...As it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* (Romans 12:19). *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements*

shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). The Bible teaches that the wicked shall be cast out (Matthew 25:46). The "Last Day" shall be a "Great Day" for the righteous because 1) they will enjoy heaven and be with God; 2) they no longer will have to associate with the wicked.

Yet, the tragedy in all of this is when God's own people, "Christians," possess little or no principles or conviction. Such people often are termed "Border-line Christians." In actuality there is no such person. In its definition and practical use, the name Christian should not be applied to the erring and unloyal child of God (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). But for the sake of argument and to make the point, let us use the term "Border-line Christian" loosely to describe the one who has: 1) Heard the gospel (Ephesians 1:13); 2) Believed the gospel (Mark 16:15-16); 3) Repented of his sins (Luke 13:3); 4) Confessed the name of Christ (Romans 10:9-10); 5) Been baptized *"for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38); 6) Been added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). But somewhere along the line, he has lost his allegiance to Christ. He no longer deems it necessary to *"seek the kingdom of God first"* (Matthew 6:33). He is satisfied with the name "Christian," but not with the practice of Christianity.

Such an individual possesses many signs or symptoms of this spiritual illness—a lack of faithful attendance, apathy or indifference, undependability, unwillingness to give as he has prospered, lack of participation in Bible classes, and work of the church. He will not visit the sick and needy. He engages in immoral activities (dancing, gambling, mixed swimming with immodest dress, social drinking). He lacks conviction to withstand the false teacher or compromiser. He studies his Bible, a little. He prays, once in awhile. He sings in worship, but without zeal or understanding. He is critical of the preacher, elders, Bible teachers, etc. He does not train his children properly (and how can he when he lacks conviction himself). But this is a list of the signs or the effects of a cause. There is an attitude or philosophy behind the "Border-line Christian" which does not promote soberness and dedication, but, instead, worldliness and carnality. Perhaps by examining these philosophies, one can gain a better understanding of this problem and avoid or overcome it.

(Continued on next page)

The Attitude of "Rolling with the Flow"

This philosophy may be worded thusly: "Things ought not to be that way, but they are; we cannot do anything about it. So we'll roll with the flow." This philosophy includes an attitude of surrender. Now, the Bible teaches that one must surrender to God (1 Samuel 15:22-23; John 4:34; Hebrews 5:8-9, James 4:7); wives must submit to their own husbands (Ephesians 5:22); children must obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). But, one must not surrender to Satan and his ways (Hebrews 11:24-26).

This philosophy includes the attitude that one cannot make a difference. It truly is difficult to stand alone. When "everyone else" seems to go one way, then why be different? *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord"* (Genesis 6:9). Luke did not become like Demas (2 Timothy 4:10-11). Daniel did not do as the other Hebrews (Daniel 1:8). However, in most cases, men and women have assessed the situation incorrectly because **not everyone** has surrendered to Satan (1 Kings 19:18). But, even if one is alone, why lose his own soul? David fought Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

This philosophy includes the attitude that God's word will change (or will not matter) if only a few are following God. Did God's word change when only eight souls obeyed his voice and entered the ark? Did God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah change when Abraham could not find ten righteous souls? Should one no longer express gratitude since only one of ten lepers returned to thank Jesus for cleansing his leprosy? Man's obligation to God's word does not change because the majority fails to obey Him.

This philosophy ignores God's eternal law and principle of "sowing and reaping." *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* (Galatians 6:7).

The Action of Getting As Close to Sin As Possible Without Sinning

Perhaps no philosophy better describes the "Border-line Christian" than this. There are many brethren who toy with sin and play with fire and try not to get burned. Surely, one can see the foolishness of taking such risks. After all, remember Lot. He *"pitched his tent toward Sodom"* (Genesis 13:12). The

wise man wrote *"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent"* (Proverbs 6:27-29). This writer wonders how many people have committed adultery in which the dark episode began with "innocent" flirtation. How many brethren have been guilty of mental adultery, which is also sin (Matthew 5:28) because they tried to get as close to sin as possible "without really sinning?" Joseph did not flirt with Potiphar's wife nor take advantage of her advances. The Bible teaches that he was wise enough to *"flee and get out"* of the house (Genesis 39:12). He would not *"do this great wickedness, and sin against God"* (Genesis 39:9).

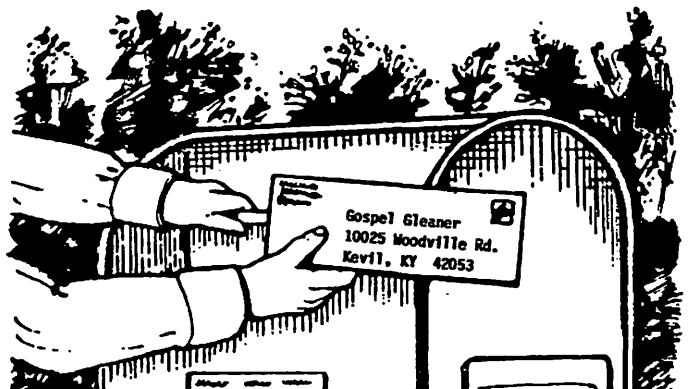
Friend, the Bible does not subscribe to this foolish notion, but rather the opposite. The writers of the New Testament in their instructions for Christian living wrote the following: *"Flee fornication..."* (1 Corinthians 6:18). *...Flee idolatry..."* (1 Corinthians 10:14). *"Abstain from all appearance of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:22). *"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness"* (1 Timothy 6:11). *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

The day has arrived for God's people to stand up and be counted. Neighbors need to see godly examples of "real" Christians. Children need to have godly parents in the home. The Lord needs convicted and courageous followers in His ranks. Earth **can do** without "Border-line Christians." Heaven **will be** without "Border-line Christians."

In the next issue under "Christian Character:"

- * The Adoption of A False Standard
 - * The Assumption of A Minimum Line of Approval
-

10015 Woodville Road
Kevil, KY 42053





SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN GUYANA

Guy F. Hester



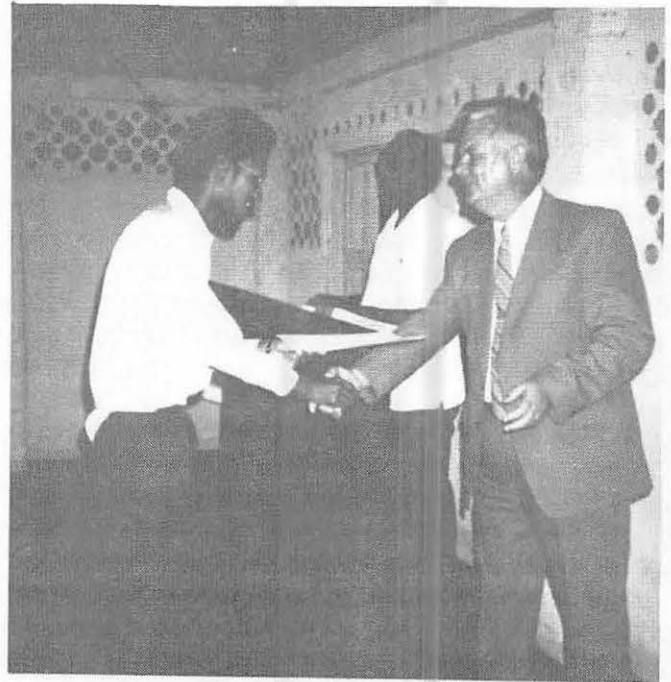
On February 22 of this year, Larry Montgomery, Ferrell Hester, Tim Hester and this writer left the U. S. for Guyana, South America where we spent two weeks with the brethren in Vreed-en-Hoop, West Coast Demerara. Brother Harichand Bhola is the local preacher with the

Vreed-en-Hoop church of Christ. He is supported in his work by the Heath church of Christ near Paducah, Kentucky. Brother Bhola, his wife and son were converted a few years ago by brother Steve Miller, one of the deacons at Heath. Brother Bhola is well educated having graduated from the Guyana University and a denominational Bible college. For twelve years, brother Bhola taught school in the Guyana government school system. He also preached for several years in a denominational church. Since his conversion, he has become well grounded in the scriptures and is completely free of any denominational influence. Being a native of Guyana, he is doing an excellent work among his own people.

We arrived at the airport in Georgetown, Guyana on Tuesday morning, February 23, and were met by brother and sister Bhola and their son, Earl (Tulley). Three of the four of us lost all of our baggage and had only the clothes that we were wearing. Yet, we were thankful that we had arrived safe and sound, and after exchanging greetings with the Bhola family, we loaded in two cars and headed for Vreed-en-Hoop, a drive of about 45 minutes.

When we arrived at the meeting house where we were to stay in the upstairs rooms, we rested for an hour and then went to work in making personal contacts for the meeting that would begin on Wednesday night. The meeting got off to a good start with a large gathering of people for the first service. This was also the first service in their new facility. They had formerly met in an upstairs room, but with

people for the first service. This was also the first service in their new facility. They had formerly met in an upstairs room, but with money provided by the Heath church, they enclosed the downstairs and made an auditorium that will accommodate 150-200 people. On Friday night, we had the formal opening of the new meeting place, and also graduation exercises for about forty Bible Correspondence students. We had more than eighty present for that service, which broke all previous attendance records. But then on Sunday, we broke that record by having 103 in the morning service.



Bible Correspondence Course students receive their certificates of completion.



On the first Friday night, the brethren began meeting in the newly enclosed lower flat.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN . . .
(Continued from page 6)

Many of the students who had been studying the Bible by correspondence lived in the community of Stewartville, so we gave a lot of attention to that area. Daily Bible studies and preaching services were conducted in Stewartville, and there are hopes that soon a congregation will be established there. [Editors' note: In a recent letter from brother Bhola, the church has been established in Stewartville. They are assembling for worship on Sunday afternoons. Their average attendance is about thirty.]



Larry Montgomery preaches to a group in Stewartville.

During the two weeks, twelve persons were baptized, and there were several restorations. Plans are now underway for a Preacher and Teacher Training School to be started in Vreed-en-Hoop. The elders of the Zion church where this writer preaches will sponsor the school. We are now in the process of raising approximately \$1300.00 per month for this work. Those interested in helping with this work may contact the elders:

c/o Garrison Short
Route 2
Parrish, AL 35580
(205) 686-5360
or
c/o Guy F. Hester
1101 Airport Circle
Jasper, AL 35501
(205) 384-0153

We hope to get this work underway in July of this year.

We continue to appreciate the work that the Heath church is doing both in the U. S. and in Guyana. We are thankful for good elders like brethren Rodney Miller and Wilford Brandon who love lost souls and have the faith and foresight to carry on the many good works in which they are engaged. We appreciate the Zion elders and church for their interest in training men to preach the gospel.

1101 Airport Circle
Jasper, AL 35501

IF YOU LIVE IN THE PADUCAH
OR SOUTHERN ILLINOIS AREAS:



THE GREATEST TREASURE . . .
(Continued from page 2)

Membership in God's kingdom (church) allows us to be rich without money by possessing faith (James 2:5); it gives security by increasing in value with the passing of time (1 John 2:15-17); it places emphasis on the only everlasting thing man has—a soul. With this treasure I am superior to the greatest man on earth. I have remission of sins (Acts 2:38). I have the privilege of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I have the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2,3). I am able to triumph over the three great enemies of man, "guilt, grief, and the grave." Little marvel Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God; and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33). Little marvel, too, that the Word of God forcibly teaches, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6:7). For every man saddened by Paul's statement to Timothy, there are at least twenty relatives made happy by it!

One's depth of gratitude for all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) ought to be great. How necessary for sinful men to seek the greatest treasure.

P. O. Box 506
LaFayette, GA 30728

BAPTISM IS THE
(Concluded from page 3)

off than they were; and, hence baptism symbolizes a symbol.

Thanks be to God that such is not the case. Baptism is not a symbol, because it was not designed to put away the filth of the flesh (the symbolic cleansing of the old system), but it was designed to purify the conscience. In God's sight being saved and having a good conscience is the same thing. Since the text says baptism saves us, then it follows that baptism is the answer in order to have a good conscience toward God. Four things are under consideration in our text: the flood, putting away the filth of the flesh, baptism and the good conscience. The flood corresponds to the cleansing of the flesh; therefore, baptism must correspond to the good conscience.

Dear reader, this is the only answer inspiration has ever given so one could have the cleansing of his guilty conscience. But one may say, "My conscience is good and I have not been baptized for salvation." We have a Bible case that addresses this exact situation. Paul said, "...I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). However, since Paul (Saul of Tarsus) had been persecuting the church, this proves one can do that which is wrong and yet have a good conscience. Saul was reared a Pharisee and practiced his religion with dedication. Therefore, his conscience was clear; but he was wrong, persecuting Christ and hurting himself (Acts 9:4-5).

Like Saul, your conscience is good if you have been taught that baptism is not essential to salvation, although you have not done what God commands. It is obvious that one is not taking into consideration two essential factors. One, conscience is not a teacher, but a judge that judges in accordance with what it has been taught. Second, we must know the conditions under which God says that our conscience can be good. There has never been, nor will there ever be, any way to know this other than by that which the Bible states. He is the author of salvation only to those who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The Bible states, "...baptism doth also now save us...the answer of a good conscience toward God..." How can one have a good conscience toward God when he has not done what God says he must do? It is impossible unless one is deceived into believing false doctrine. It is only when one submits in faith to all God's requirements, which includes baptism, that his sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). Such

an one has "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). Thus, the baptized believer can "draw near with a true heart (good conscience) in full assurance of faith (because of the testimony), having our hearts sprinkled (by the blood of Christ) from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 9:13-14, 18-23; 10:22). There is nothing special about the quality of the water, but it is the good conscience produced that is pure (1 Peter. 1:22). It is now cleansed from the guilt of sin.

How can this be? Peter said that baptism saves us "by the resurrection of Christ." Of course, the resurrection implies all that was necessary for it; i.e., his death, shedding his blood and his burial. It also implies his ascension to heaven where he offered his blood for our sins. Thus, baptism is based upon and ratified by these events (Romans 6:3-18; Colossians 2:12). This is what makes it effective as the remedy for sin.

Baptism is the answer!

920 E. Cragmont Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46227

**WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?**

HEAR the gospel of Christ
Romans 10:13-17

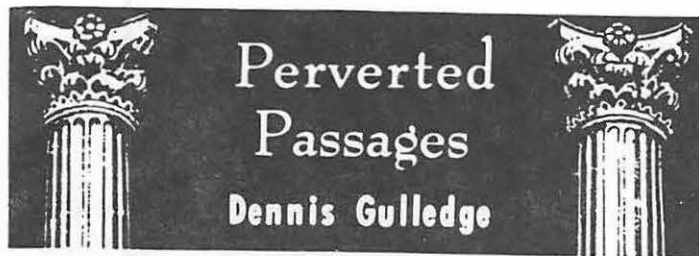
BELIEVE in Christ
Mark 16:15-16

REPENT of past sins
Acts 2:36-47

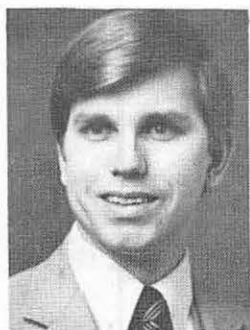
CONFESS faith in Christ
Romans 10:9-10

BE BAPTIZED into Christ
Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21

LIVE FAITHFULLY
Romans 12:1-2



"MATTHEW 7:1-5"



It is sometimes the case that backsliding and wayward brethren object to efforts made to restore them to Christ by insisting emphatically, "Now, don't start judging me!" At times people object to any criticism of denominational doctrines by seeking refuge in the words of

Jesus, when he said, "*Judge not that ye be not judged*" (Matthew 7:1). I have a good friend, who as a defense attorney, will cite this passage in his arguments against the prosecution in court room procedures. The words of our Lord in Matthew 7:1, and the verses following, constitute an often misapplied passage.

It is a fact that there are two kinds of judging referred to in the New Testament. the same Lord who said, "*Judge not that ye be not judged*," also said, "*Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). We must conclude, therefore, that Jesus does not prohibit any and every kind of judging, as some insist. There is a "*righteous judgment*" which is most certainly permitted, yea, commanded of us. To "judge" means, "to hear and decide a case; to determine; to place sentence." To judge righteously means to do so in keeping with principles of right, and not by "appearance," that is, what we see on the surface of things before we really understand the facts involved in the case.

The Wrong Kind of Judging

The kind of judging which Jesus forbids in Matthew 7:1 is, "...rash, censorious and uncharitable judgments, and that fault-finding spirit or disposition which condemns upon surmise without examination of the charges, forgetful that we also shall stand in the judgment and shall need mercy (Roman 14:10; James 2:13)."¹ The word "judge," in this context, means, "condemn"—condemn not.

ment and shall need mercy (Roman 14:10; James 2:13)."¹ The word "judge," in this context, means, "condemn"—condemn not. Applying the text locally Jesus directed it to the Pharisees, whose harsh judgments of Him darkened the pages of the gospels, and who with bitter spirit condemned as being beyond the pale of mercy, whole classes of their countrymen, such as, Gentiles, Samaritan, Sadducees, Publicans, etc. This is the fault-finding spirit which looks on the ill side of people and their actions.

Why is such judging wrong? First, Jesus prohibits it (vs. 1). That is enough. Second, it is dangerous (vs. 2). In judging (condemning) others we judge (condemn) ourselves, by incurring the severe judgments of others upon ourselves, and by failing to remember that the Lord will deal with us, in part, as we deal with others (Matthew 7:5; 6:15; James 2:12-13). Third, it is hypocrisy (vss. 3, 5). The harsh critic is the last to perceive his own sins. His own fault may be as a "beam"—a log, joist or a rafter. But, he can't perceive it while searching for the "mote" (particle or speck) in his "*brother's eye*" (life). The fault-finder often possesses to a greater degree the same fault which he condemns in another. This amounts to sheer hypocrisy. Fourth, it is futile (vss. 4-5). Both parties depicted in these verses have the same trouble or fault. However, the Lord pictures the one having the greater fault endeavoring to correct the one who has the same fault, but to a lesser degree. However, the beam must go first! No one can help another with his sin if he is blind to the same fault in himself (Cf., Romans 2:21-23). Ala Jimmy Swaggart! This does not require us to rid ourselves of all faults before correcting someone, but it does demand that we rid ourselves of a given fault before seeking to correct the same in another.

The Right Kind of Judging²

The kind of judgment which Jesus mentioned in John 7:24 is obviously righteous and therefore, proper, Scriptural behavior. Let us consider some of the aspects of righteous judging which we are commanded to carry out:

(1) Judging a man by his "fruit" or life (Matthew 7:15-20. "*...by their fruits ye shall know them.*" His conduct, including speech is his life or "fruit."

(2) We are commanded to condemn the sin in people's lives (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

(Continued on page 11)



THORNS IN THE SIDE

Numbers 33:50-56

Introduction:

1. This passage tells of the specific instructions from God to Moses before the taking of the land.



2. God had a reason and it was made clear.

- a. The Canaanites were past repentance and Israel was the tool that God would use to punish them.

- b. Those allowed to remain would only be an evil influence upon Israel and con-

tinual source of trouble.

3. This lesson can be applied to the situation of the church today.
 - a. We have enemies which must be driven out (1 Corinthians 5:6).
 - b. God wants us also to be victorious (Romans 6:18; 8:37).
 - c. Those we allow to remain will be a source of trouble!
4. What are some thorns in our side today?

I. The Thorn of False Doctrine

- A. Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44).
 1. This includes religious lies.
 2. Those who join in telling them are his children (Romans 6:16).
- B. He has never been bashful in his attack against the truth (1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:10-12).
- C. Every aggressive move against the church's purity in doctrine is of the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4).
 1. Whether from within (2 John 9).
 2. Or from without (Galatians 1:6-9).

II. The Thorn of Worldliness

- A. Too many are compromising with the world (James 4:4).
 1. The spirit of Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).
 2. I heard about a wild duck that spent all winter in the barnyard. By the next spring he could not and cared not to fly higher than the loft!

3. A worldly church member is the puppet of Satan (1 John 2:15-17).
- B. The preaching of the cross will always remain offensive to the devil's crowd (1 Peter 2:6-8).
 1. Why then do members resent the truth (Ezekiel 2:1-8)?
 2. It still remains the standard of judgment (John 12:48).
- C. The godly should expect persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).
 1. The dens of sin will never close as long as the professed Christians keep them open.
 2. The world is just as wicked as it has ever been.

III. The Thorn of Indifference

- A. It is harder to move some Christians than some sinners (2 Timothy 3:1-8; 4:1-4).
- B. The silence of Mt. Carmel is often our response (1 Kings 18:21).
 1. They did not oppose Elijah's program of revival.
 2. They made no statement in favor of idolatry.
 3. They just stood unconcerned.
 4. What does silence advocate?
- C. Complacency and self-satisfaction result in moral and spiritual degeneration (1 Corinthians 10:12).

IV. The Thorn of Fruitlessness


- A. This will be the saddest cry on the judgment day (Psalm 142:4).
 1. "Until we start believing that:
 - a. Sin is black;
 - b. Hell is hot;
 - c. Judgment is certain;
 - d. Eternity is long;
 - e. Grace is free;
 - f. Obedience is necessary—
 2. Then the church will stay lukewarm and souls will stay lost!"
- B. Why are there no showers of revival (Jeremiah 3:3)?
 1. At no time have opportunities been more abundant.
 2. We once had results without handholding, gimmicks, entertainment, and peer pressure.
- C. Notice the expectation of Christ (Psalm 126:5-6; 51:11-12; 78:36-37; John 15:1-8).

Conclusion:

1. Review the case of Israel.
2. Review our enemies again.
3. Have you hindered or helped? (Are you a thorn?)

THE CHURCH THAT DENOMINATIONALISM DENIES

DENOMINATIONALISM LABORS TO DESTROY THE FOLLOWING TRUTHS



CHRIST <i>Built</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Loved</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Died For</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Betrothed To</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Purchased</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Head Of</i> The CHURCH	CHRIST <i>Savior Of</i> The CHURCH
--	--	---	---	--	--	--

THAT IS DONE BY TEACHING THAT THE CHURCH IS "NON-ESSENTIAL"

"MATTHEW 7:1-5"
(Continued from page 9)

"...reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering." Notice some Bible examples of this: (A) Paul rebuked Peter at Antioch (Galatians 2:11). (B) Paul rebuked the church in Corinth for division, carnality and many other sins (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-3; 5:1-2, 6).

(3) We are commanded to condemn religious error [false doctrines (Matthew 15:8-9; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 1:13; 1 John 4:1-3)].

(4) We are commanded to judge other members of the church when carrying out disciplinary action in the church: (A) Paul had "judged" the brother who was committing fornication (1 Corinthians 5:3). (B) Paul commanded the Corinthian church to judge him too (1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 12-13). (C) In order for the brethren at Corinth to obey Paul's commands not to eat with any member of the church who was a fornicator, idolator, covetous or extortioner, they would have to pass judgment (draw conclusions) as to who in the church was chuilty of such sins (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). (D) In restoring unfaithful, negligent members of the church, judgment must be passed as to who such people are so we can go to them to restore them (Galatians

6:1; James 5:19-20). (E) Paul judged Hymenaeus and Alexander for their blāshpemy and shipwrecked faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20). (F) The apostle John judged Diotrophes for his desire for preeminence in the church (3 John 9-10).

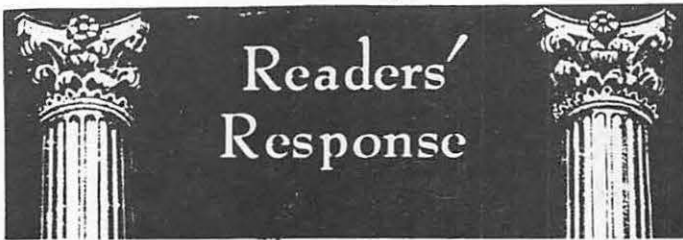
We see, from a comparison of Matthew 7:1-5 and the many other passages given, which deal with the matter of judging, that not all human judgments are wrong. Of course, it is wrong to judge (condemn) another with a fault-finding spirit, but that is not the same as judging (drawing conclusions) about a brother by the fruits of his life.

-Endnotes-

¹J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, The Fourfold Gospel. (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 260.

²For the points presented here I am endebted to Steven P. Waller, preacher of the church of Christ in Barnesville, Georgia, in an article of his, entitled, "Can We Judge People With God's Approval?"

540 Tatnall
Milledgeville, GA 31061



Dear Sirs:

A friend gave me a GOSPEL GLEANER to read. I just enjoyed it so much especially the article on "Divorce."

Please add my name to your mailing list. I am 87 years old, but I read my Bible, and gospel papers. I am a member of the church of Christ at Hebron, Alabama.

Mrs. Ila M. Masters
Joppa, AL

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Please put my name on your mailing list to receive your publication.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
H. H. Gardner
Glenwood, AR

Dear brethren:

Please send me the GOSPEL GLEANER.
Thanks for the good articles.

Ben S. Flatt
Henderson, TN

Dear brethren:

Please add me to your mailing list to receive the GOSPEL GLEANER. I recently received a copy of your paper from a friend and I would certainly like to receive it on a regular basis. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Lester Kamp
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Thanks for your consideration.

In His Service,
Leamon Stewart
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Thanks so much.

Yours in Christ,
Doug Greenway
Booneville, MS

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Gospel Gleaner

Volume 4

Number 3

WOULD JESUS PLAY THE LOTTERY?

Mitchell K. Temple

In the upcoming fall election, an important moral issue faces Kentuckians, namely, the employment of a state lottery. Despite the statistics and the obvious failures of lotteries in neighboring states, some Kentucky legislators are pushing this form of gambling. Gambling is a moral issue. Christians have the privilege (as Americans) and the responsibility (as defenders of truth) to make an impact at the polls. We urge every Christian in Kentucky: (1) To read the following article on the lottery, (2) To make sure that you are registered to vote, and (3) To vote NO to the state lottery--Editors.

In the State of Florida, the government has passed the bill to start a State Lottery. Our government promises us better highways, schools, police protection, and many other things from this revenue received from the lottery.

No matter what a Christian does or partakes in, he should first ask himself some questions; "Does God approve of my partaking in this?" "Could this in anyway hurt my influence as a Christian?" "Does this edify, or is this a stumbling block?" "Would Jesus do what I am about to do?" If we answer "no" or even "maybe" to any one of these questions a **Christian Should Not Do It Whatever** it is. It would be wrong to participate in such!

When one takes a first look at buying a lottery ticket for only one dollar and hoping to win a million, it seems harmless. But is it? Should it be done by a Christian? Does it edify him and build up the body of Christ? Does it suggest to the non-Christian world that I am a gambler? Again if we answer yes, or maybe to any one of these questions, we should stay away from it. It **may** not be **wrong in and of itself**, but **can** it be wrong? My answer is **Yes!** To me, it is nothing more than **another** form of gambling. Websters dictionary says that the word **gamble** means

"to play a game for (as money or property); to be on an uncertain outcome; to stake something on a contingency." Is that not what is being done when you pay one dollar for a lottery ticket? What's the difference in paying a dollar for a lottery ticket and buying a poker chip at a casino? Why not put that same dollar in a slot machine? What's the difference? The answer is **none!** If one is right, the other is right. Are we then prepared to say that **Gambling** is not a sin? I think not, because we know it is!

Gambling is sinful for a number of reasons: (1) Because it involves the desire to obtain something from nothing--something which belongs to another person and for persons. It is stealing by permission; where two people or two parties (like the government and a lottery ticket buyer) agree to take from each other according to which way the dice turns up; the cards are dealt; the roulett spins, or the numbers on a lottery ticket; (2) Money is to be worked for and **earned** (Genesis 3:19; Matthew 20:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). What one receives from gambling is **not earned**, it is not a gift, therefore, it must be called "agreed stealing." Some people might say,

(Continued on page 5)

GOD'S LOVE AND BROTHERLY LOVE

Bill Dillon



In searching through the oil fields of God's Word, we occasionally come upon passages that are rich gushers of truth. One such passage is John 3:16 which says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is the most famous of all Bible verses telling of the great love of God and of matters of utmost consequence to the peace and salvation of man's never-dying soul.

GOD HAS LOVED US

How is the love of God to be described? It is an unchanging love. An old farmer had the words "God is love" (1 John 4:8) inscribed on his weathervane. A visitor, noticing the weathervane changed direction with every new gust of wind, asked if that meant God's love was changeable. The farmer replied, "Oh, no, it just means whichever way the wind blows, God is still love!"

Heaven's love is a self-denying love. What greater love could be displayed than heaven emptying itself of its most wondrous treasure? There is no greater nobility than a father giving his son to die. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

God's love is an universal love. God loves the world in general and every sinner in particular. Jesus received men without respect of persons. (John 6:37)

God's love is an everlasting love. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Romans 5:8, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Without God's unending love, we would have no hope of salvation. To be indifferent to the great love of God is to judge oneself unworthy of eternal life. But there is something else to consider.

WE ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Another treasure text is 1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

The roots of hatred and grudge-bearing often run deep and poison the well spring of spiritual life. Envy and bitterness, sometimes found among men are evidence of a lack of brotherly love.

What has happened to brotherly care and concern? Are we cruel instead of kind? Is there hatred instead of harmony? Some brethren, in dealing with one another, display the mentality of a dog-eat-dog world, rather than the just, fair and honorable ways of Christ. Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Men will have their differences. But, let Christian men have their differences in a holy, not hateful, way. Evil must be opposed. The unfruitful works of darkness must be reprov'd (Ephesians 5:11); but in all things let us remember that forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel. We have been forgiven and we must in turn forgive.

Let us charge nothing to any man, unless

(Continued on page 10)

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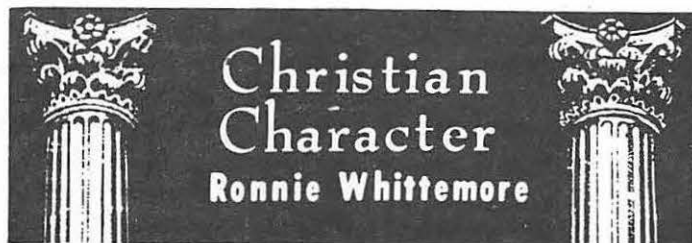
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EDITORS: Bill Dillon & Ronnie Whittemore



"BORDER-LINE CHRISTIANS" (Part Two of Two)



In the last issue of the GOSPEL GLEANER, a study was begun concerning "Border-line Christians." Of course, these two terms are contradictory. One cannot be a true Christian and also withhold his whole allegiance to Christ. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). But the phrase "Border-line Christian" is a play on words which denotes the apathy and instability of some of God's people. Any child of God who serves the Almighty out of convenience and not conviction must repent! Every child of God should be honest with himself, his brethren, and God. The prophet cried in the long ago, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings..." (Jeremiah 3:22).

"Border-line Christians" usually possess philosophies that indulge their attitudes of indifference. In the last article, two of these philosophies were examined: (1) The attitude of "rolling with the flow," and (2) the action of getting as close to sin as possible without(?) sinning. The article now continues with a look at two other philosophies.

The Adoption of A False Standard

(1) **Feelings.** There is a popular belief held by millions of people called "Universalism." This belief is attractive and popular. It is based upon emotions and sentiment, not intellect. It is found among people of the world and people in the church. It has various forms and many applications. It is the belief that God will save everyone and condemn no one despite man's actions. Universalism has no Bible foundation. Yet, people have their eyes blinded by this philosophy and use their feelings as their

standard. The Bible warns, "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" (Colossians 2:8). "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). When a person begins his religious reply by saying, "I know that the Bible teaches this, but I feel..." or "I know what the Bible says, but don't you think..." or "I know that he has never obeyed the gospel, but he's a good fellow, won't God...", then that person's standard for religious authority is his feelings, not the Bible.

(2) **Parents.** When one discusses and studies the subjects of sin and salvation, the source for information is the Bible. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Men and women are challenged to "search the scriptures" (John 5:39; Acts 17:11). Man's authority in word and deed must come from God (Colossians 3:17). With those facts in mind, how do the words of parents alone become one's basis for authority? Parents' words are right only when based upon the Bible (Psalm 119:33-35; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). "For the word of the Lord is right..." (Psalm 33:4). What a tragedy for many lost souls because they based their salvation upon the invalid words of parents.

(3) **Other people.** A very common practice for many people is to determine their conduct by the conduct of others. This can be done if that person is following Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), but this usually is not the case. Many people are too lazy to investigate the word of truth for themselves; therefore, they follow someone whom they admire or respect. But our standard is Christ (1 Peter 2:21)! One ought to recognize the danger of blindly following others (Matthew 15:14). One's salvation is based upon God and His word, not the lives of those who "appear" godly (2 Timothy 3:5; Matthew 23:3). Jesus spoke of the scribes and Pharisees as "fools and blind" and "blind guides" (Matthew 23:16-17, 19, 24, 26).

(4) **Other churches.** This may sound odd, but it is true. Many brethren follow the pattern of sister congregations. Someone reasons,

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"BORDER-LINE CHRISTIANS"

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"Well, _____ church built a gymnasium, so can we." Another congregation rationalizes, "_____ church endorses and used brother _____ in meetings, so can we." Another church decides not to exercise church discipline because _____ church does not see the need for such. Many rural churches follow the examples of city churches. Many smaller churches imitate larger churches and reason, "Well, they must do something right; look at their large numbers!" Remember, a crowd and a church are not the same. Brethren, should every local congregation adopt the practices and philosophies of erring congregations? There needs to be more asking and answering of the question, "By what authority doest thou these things." Should a church today imitate the sins of the church at Corinth, lukewarmness of Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-19), the blasphemy of Smyrna (Revelation 2:9), the digression of Ephesus (Revelation 2:5), the false teaching of Pergamos (Revelation 2:15)?

Many churches are also guilty of "apeing the denominations." This is that old "be like the nations round about" philosophy. Israel possessed it during the days of the judges (1 Samuel 8:5-7). Many churches have it now. They do not want to be left out. They want to be social rather than evangelistic and benevolent.

The Assumption of A Minimum Line Of Approval

This philosophy is based upon false assumptions. (1) **One can earn his salvation.** Although the Bible teaches to "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), salvation cannot be earned. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..." (Titus 3:5). Man is saved by the grace of God and obedience to His word (Ephesians 2:8-9). Is God keeping a tally or score in which He adds up the numbers of sick people visited, the people taught, the hours of Bible study and the prayers offered to God whereby when one reaches a certain number then his debt is paid? How absurd! (2) **God compares each Christian's work to a national (brotherhood) average.** What percentage is fair? Has God adopted a standard of "passing" like the school system (95-100=A; 85-94=B; 70-84=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F)? Is God going to have A-saints; B-saints, etc.

as schools have A-students; B-students, etc. The one-talent man was not condemned because he did not double his talent like the other two men, nor, could he be praised by being lumped together with the other two (as a team effort). He was condemned because of his own slothfulness (Matthew 25:14-30). The apostle Paul recorded, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

This philosophy also neglects the proper motives in worship and service. The reason for one's worshipping God should not be because he has to worship, but he wants to worship his Creator and Redeemer. The apostle John wrote, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

This philosophy ignores God's mercy, His call for humility and His justice. Despite a person's work and diligence, he is still an unprofitable servant. Man is saved by grace through faith. Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which is our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). The overwhelming grace of God is even more apparent when one considers the inspired words of Peter. "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear" (1 Peter 4:18)?

This philosophy also takes a few things for granted. This writer is convinced that one's degree of happiness and enjoyment of heaven will depend upon his sacrifice, work and understanding. For example, the apostle Paul listed a number of physical and mental afflictions which he endured for the Lord's sake in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28. He also spoke with confidence about the "crown of life" which God had reserved for him (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Surely, no one will enjoy the benefits and privileges of heaven more than the fearless apostle because of his understanding and sacrifice. In this country, faithful children of God enjoy many freedoms because of democracy. They are not faced with the opportunity to endure physical afflictions like the apostle Paul; therefore, "heaven will surely be worth it all," but there may be a degree of pleasure in heaven which no one else may experience. [For example,

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WOULD JESUS PLAY . . .
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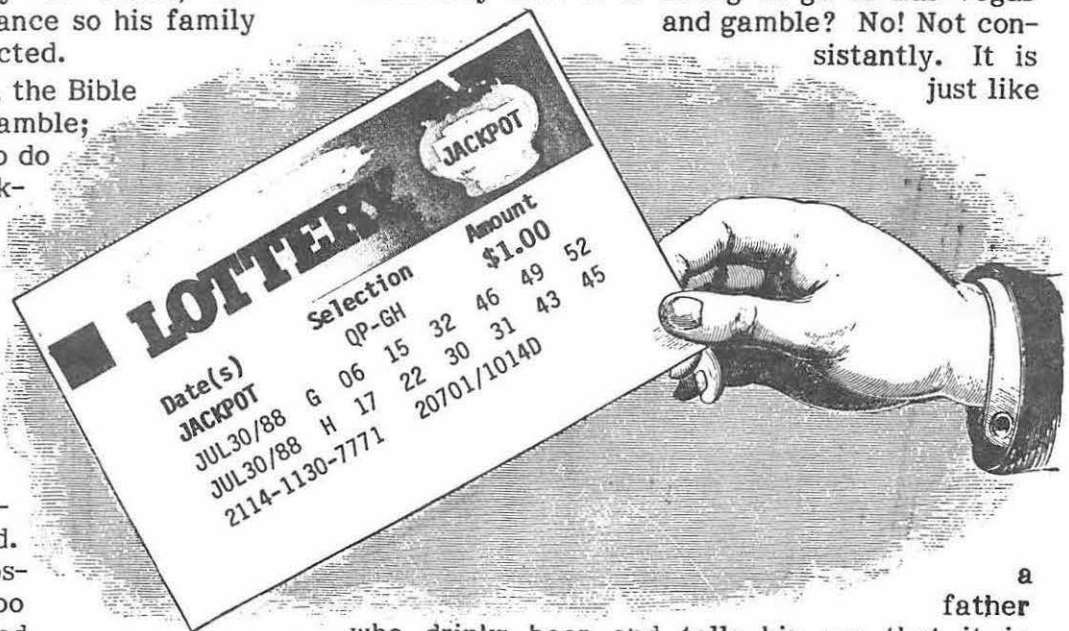
"Well it is not stealing because both people agree to it." My question is this, when two people agree to commit fornication, does it become alright just because they agreed to it? If two people agree to commit suicide does it make it alright for them to do it just because they agreed on it? Certainly not! But some still might object and say, "Well if that so, then it's wrong to put money in a bank and draw interest off of it, or put money in stocks and bonds, or buy insurance." My answer to this is "not so." (A) Putting money in a bank is alright because that it **your** money and you know that you are going to get it back. There's no gambling involved. Jesus **approved** of this principle and also approved of getting interest on your money too (read Matthew 25:28). (B) When someone invests in stocks and bonds he is **investing** or **buying** a part in a factory, industry, facilities, etc. (C) When one buys insurance he **pays** (not gambles) for protection of the possibility of illness, injury or death, for the individual who buys insurance so his family will be provided for and protected.

Someone might say, "Well, the Bible does not say, Thou shall not gamble; therefore, it can't be wrong to do it." Well, if that's so, then taking drugs, raping someone playing a mechanical instrument in worship are all okay because the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not do these things." The Bible does not specify that a thing is wrong before it becomes wrong. Sometimes we know that something is wrong because of the principle involved. If the Bible specified **every** possible sin, the Bible would be too thick to carry though condensed.

The Bible stresses the importance of Christian stewardship (1 Peter 4:10). We are to be faithful and wise stewards (Luke 12:42). We are required to be faithful as stewards (1 Corinthians 4:2). This means that someday we must give an account of our stewardship (how we used what God has given us including our money) (Luke 16:1-2). All that we have belongs to God (Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore why foolishly gamble away what God has given us.

Gambling also is wrong because it destroys ones influence as a Christian (Romans 12:17). Our influence is so important as a Christian (Matthew 5:16). We are to be very careful

what we do, because once we have hurt our influence it is almost impossible to gain it back. Gambling associates us with greed, crime and corruption. It often robs children of food and clothing. It destroys homes. It must be included in the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 under the heading of "such like." Why take the chance brethren? Why be labeled as one who gambles or favors it by participating in the lottery? Is it not but a legalized organized form of gambling? Apparently the world thinks so. On January 18 a newscaster for a local radio station here in Pensacola said that the lottery had definitely affected the Dog Track business (an undisputed form of gambling) and para mutual gambling. Does not this show us that the lottery is just another means of gambling to society? That playing the lottery has taken the place of playing the dogs for many? And if society recognizes it as another form of legalized gambling then should Christians take part in such and hurt or destroy their influence as Christians (1 Corinthians 8:9-13)? Could a Christian who plays the lottery teach somebody that it is wrong to go to Las Vegas and gamble? No! Not consistently. It is just like



a father who drinks beer and tells his son that it is wrong for him to drink! Such inconsistencies are seen by the observer and therefore the observer loses respect for such people.

Others still object "Well, the government has legalized the lottery and sponsors the lottery and, besides that, the money is going to be put to good use." In the first place, just because the government legalizes some thing, that does not make it right to take part in it. It is legal to drink alcohol in the United States, **but** it is a sin for a Christian to do so. It is legal to kill unborn children in the United States (sometimes with

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government funding), but for a Christian it is murder. To justify playing the lottery because the government has legalized it, one must also justify drinking and abortion. And besides, if the government used **every dollar** of the millions collected from the sale of lottery tickets on doing "good" things of "us citizens" (i.e. better highways, education, etc.) that still would not justify it! One cannot do right by doing wrong! The mafia may donate thousands of dollars every year to Catholic orphanages, but does that justify their killing, slaughtering and gambling to get the money to support orphanages? No! Certainly not!

Let us think this thing out! Just because it "seems" harmless on the surface to play the lottery, does that justify the Christian to take part in it? Why should a Christian risk his own soul on something like this? On a chance that is "one in a million." The local paper said that the odds show that you had a better chance in being struck by lightning than to win the lottery. Why should the Christian steward throw his money away when he could be giving that money to help the poor and support mission work? We would

be surprised at how many mouths a few dollars will feed, and how many souls it could save overseas.

Why would a Christian want to take a chance in such a thing? Is it because we are covetous and greedy? Does the thought of being a millionaire **cancel out** and override our concern of being the proper example to others and giving our love and devotion to the Lord instead of mammon? Paul said that "**thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God**" (1 Corinthians 6:10). (Also read Exodus 20:17; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Timothy 3:2). Peter condemns those who were guilty of "**covetous practices**" (2 Peter 2:14). I believe that gambling and lottery are practiced in order to satisfy the sin of **covetousness** (the lust or longing after money and the world; greediness).

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lost his own soul" (Matthew 16:26)? Brethren, "**think on these things**" (Philippians 4:8). Would Jesus play the lottery?

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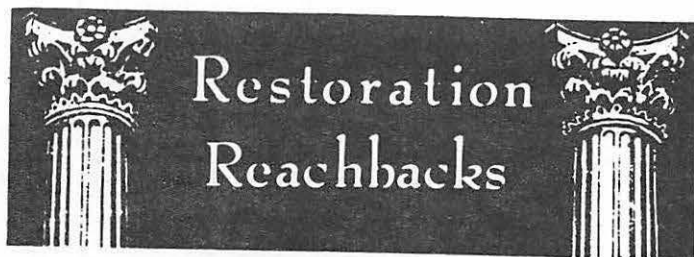
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• 54 •



ELEMENTS OF CONGREGATIONAL STABILITY

A. C. Williams

If a congregation is not stable, it is a failure regardless of any other items that herald its importance or boast its fame. The church in any community must as surely stand on solid footing of truth as must individual Christian stand firmly on feet that are fixed on the rock. This is no time to be pushed around or tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. But it is a time for sober and sensible thinking, for checking our bearings by the compass of truth, by the Sun of righteousness, by the bright and morning star.

1. The size of a congregation is not always elemental. A church may be very small, and at the same time be very weak. But it may be very large, and also very weak. Weakness is spiritual shabbiness and shoddiness whether it be loose or baled. Size doesn't always count for as much in the eye of heaven as it does in the eye of man. So we ought not to settle upon the assurance of some fancy that the congregation is dimensionally important just because of the size of its proportions. Remember God looks upon the hearts of men. You may be a very weak member of a very weak congregation. But again, you may be a very unprofitable member of a very large congregation. So don't ever be proud because you are a member of a large church, or ashamed because you are a member of a small one.

2. The financial condition of a congregation doesn't guarantee greatness. It is encouraging to see large sums at the disposal of the church provided such means are being used as the gospel directs in the salvation and benefaction of souls and for the glory of God. But the spirit that goes with the giving and serving does much to vitalize the economic activity of God's servants. Money is only a medium, and must of necessity get its character from the heart and hand that handles it.

3. Popularity of a congregation doesn't give infallible warrant as to its stability. Popularity is only an impression, and depends

upon those with whom we are popular — and why. If it appeals to soft and spineless men, and compromises the truth of God to be popular with men, it is most wobbly and staggering in its bearing.

4. On the positive side of the proposition, that congregation is strong — when it is girded by the truth that makes men free. When it holds fast that which it has—and what it has is God-given, Spirit-inspired, gospel-revealed truth.

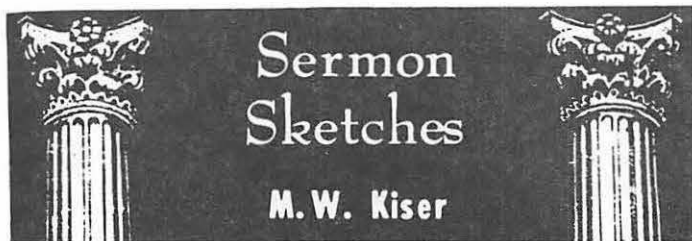
5. That congregation is strong—when its members love the truth more than they love the praises of men. It is pleased if men gladly receive this truth and obey it. But it flinches not when multitudes snarl and sneer and leer at the precious facts, commands, praises of the gospel of Christ. If seasonable winds waft their odorous aroma of spring flowers to bathe the face of him who proclaims the truth, good and well. But if the truth stirs up the storm clouds of devildom—still the Lord's church must nobly stand her ground, in the face of the storm.

6. That church is strong when its members faithfully assemble according to the New Testament way. (Heb. 10:25.) We cannot be strong at home while refusing or neglecting to meet with the saints of God and join with them in the worship appointed for the assembly. No man is strong enough to stand by himself. And no man who forsakes the assembly can please God. Such a disciple will have one day the visitation of the fiery indignation of the Almighty God. And it will be a fearful thing to fall into such avenging hands at the judgment. But with the assembly is the fellowship of every act of worship engaged in by the congregation. Think of the unison of voices, petitions, thanksgivings, songs—all these are a foretaste of glorious things in the next world. Why, then, should a child of the King be satisfied to sit at home and starve, when such morsels are his for the obtaining? Who in his right mind could think of depriving himself and his family of these beautiful and soul-satisfying blessings obtained in the assembly of the children of God!

7. That congregation is stable when it continues to honor the name of Christ, the love of Christ, the commandments of Christ, the promises of Christ, the cautions of Christ, the rebukes of Christ, and the instructions of Christ. So a strong church is a listening church. Its ears are open. Its heart is open. Hence its hands will be open to perform the things learned.

8. That congregation is strong when members

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THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG John 8:31-36

Introduction:

1. Reader's Digest (May, 1986) gave as a "Quotable Quote" the following: "The greatest right in the world is the right to be wrong." This is a time when various groups are interested in "rights." Religiously, does a person have the right to their own belief?
 - a. If the Bible teaches it, then everyone should.
 - b. The only right answer to a religious question is a Bible answer.
3. The Bible allows for freedom of religion, but it calls for us to be right religiously!
 - a. What is "legal" is not always "scriptural."
 - b. See John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 10:18.
4. Here are three arguments against the idea that man religiously has the right to be wrong.

I. Examples from the Bible (1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4).

- A. Cain did not have a right to his own belief (Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17).
- B. Naaman did not have a right to his own belief (2 Kings 5:10-14).
- C. Paul did not have a right to his own belief (Acts 23:1; 26:9-10; 22:16).
- D. The twelve at Ephesus did not have a right to their own belief (Acts 19:4-5; Matthew 28:18-20).
- E. The Galatians did not have a right to their own belief (Galatians 1:6-10; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9).

II. The Nature of Truth (Ephesians 4:11; Jude 3).

- A. Only truth can save (John 8:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-13; 1 Peter 1:22).

- B. Only truth should be preached (Galatians 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:1).
- C. Only the truth will judge us (Romans 2:2; John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

III. The Character of God (Acts 10:34-35; Hebrews 13:8).

- A. All are to obey the same gospel.
 1. All are to hear it (Mark 16:15).
 2. All are to believe it (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
 3. All are to obey it (Hebrews 5:8-9; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31; Galatians 3:26-27).
- B. All are added to the same church (Acts 2:47).
 1. I have no choice if Jesus takes care of the matter (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4).
 2. We all have the same name to wear (Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).
 3. Hear Jesus on "churches" (Matthew 16:18; 15:7-9, 13-14).
- C. All are expected to live by the same rule.
 1. To worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 5:7).
 2. To be different from the world (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9, 11).
 3. To serve according to our abilities (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Matthew 25:14-30).

Conclusion:

1. If thinking something is right makes it right, there would be nothing false in the world!
2. God in His word sees the case as follows:
 - a. Broad and Narrow ways (Matthew 7:13-14).
 - b. Foolish and Wise builders (Matthew 7:24-27).
 - c. Life or Death (Romans 6:16-18).
 - d. Satan or Christ (Colossians 1:13).
 - e. Good or Evil (Hebrews 5:14).
3. It makes a difference to God (Matthew 25:31-33; 13:47-50; 7:21-23).

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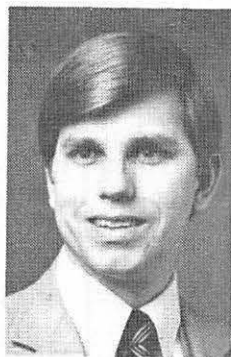
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Women Of The Word

Dennis Gullledge

WHO ARE EUODIAS AND SYNTYCHE?



"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2). Euodias and Syntyche are doubtless the names of two women in the Philippian church. Marvin R. Vincent indicates that, "Euodias is incorrect, the name being feminine,

Euodia."¹ Many expositors seem to agree that they were prominent women in the Philippian church, and probably deaconesses, but that is mere conjecture. In fact, to try to extract more than our text reveals is loves labor lost.

All that is known about Euodias and Syntyche is that there was a disagreement between them and Paul entreats them to settle their differences. Paul does not mention the nature of their grievance, but he regarded the affair to be serious enough to demand correction. It should be observed that the admonition to reconciliation is directed toward both parties in the dispute. Which was in the wrong, or whether both were at fault is not suggested to us here, nor elsewhere, and it is not necessary that we should know. All we need to know is that there was alienation between two Christian ladies, and both of them were urged to see that the matter was settled.

So it is in all cases when two brethren have locked horns in a dispute, that both are responsible in the pursuit of peace, and neither party is right if he waits on the other before he acts in the matter. "If you feel that you have been injured, go and tell your brother kindly wherein you think he has done you wrong. He may at once explain the matter, and show that you have misunderstood it, or he may make proper confession or restitution. Or, if he will do neither, you will have done your duty, Mat. 18:15. If you are conscious that you have injured him, then nothing

is more proper than that you should go and make confession. The blame of the quarrel rests wholly on you. And if some meddling third person has got up the quarrel between you, then go and see your brother, and disappoint the devices of the enemy of religion."²

Who are Eudias and Syntyche? They are two brethren in Christ, in any age and in any congregation who are at odds with each other over some matter of doctrine or discipline. On whatever account, it may be that they are of different opinions or sentiments, and can hardly greet one another in the hall, or shake hands in a crowd. What church does not have them both? What a pity that two Christians can be heirs together of the grace of God, and yet in heart be vastly separated by different aims and attitudes. Whether brethren are at variance over matters of doctrine, opinion or clashes in personality, for the sake of truth may we strive for unity.

Lottie Beth Hobbs wrote, "Nothing is so definitely taught and yet so frequently violated as the principle of peace and unity among God's people."³ Indeed, there is no stronger positive duty for the child of God than that of making and maintaining peace in the church of Christ (Romans 14:19). A Christian is one born into the family of God, the author of peace (John 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus, our Lord, is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), and his gospel induces men to put away anything which disrupts harmony and unity in the body (Isaiah 2:2-4). The Christian must be a peace maker (Matthew 5:9). Unfortunately, some brethren, by their actions, would make this verse read, "*Blessed are the strife makers...*" (Cf., Proverbs 6:19). Strife is a work of the flesh, but peace a fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:19-22). Strife is proof of a carnal spirit within a church (1 Corinthians 3:3).

The apostle Paul outlined paths that promote peace and harmony among God's people. First, we must endeavor "*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3). Second, we must "*follow after the things which make for peace*" (Romans 14:19). Third, we must "*seek peace and ensue it*" (1 Peter 3:11). Fourth, we must "*be at peace among yourselves*" (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

There are many things which will inevitably destroy peace in a congregation of God's people. Solomon said, "*As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife*" (Proverbs 26:21). Thus, the contentious man or woman is always a source of trouble in the church. A self-willed

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WHO ARE EUODIAS . . .
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person is certain to disrupt the peace in the local church, whether he be a hard-core extremist or way-out liberal. This is why elders are not to be "self-willed" (Titus 1:7). An unholy ambition for power is a guaranteed way to start church problems (3 John 9-10). A church with a modern Diotrophes is certain to be a breeding ground for trouble and discord. We can stir up strife in the church by attitudes, such as anger (Proverbs 29:22), wrath (James 1:19-20) and maliciousness. We can destroy peace by our words, with the use of offensive language (Ephesians 4:29), hasty words (Proverbs 29:20), gossip (Proverbs 26:20) and harsh words (Proverbs 15:1). Pressing our views in realms of opinion will also cause trouble (Romans 14:15).

In the pursuit of peace we are cautioned "to speak the same thing in the Lord." It is possible to be in harmony, and speak the same thing in the Lord, or Paul would not have urged it. Elsewhere Paul said, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16). This is possible when, and only when, we all determine to accept the same infallible authority of God's word, and pledge ourselves to live by it alone in all that we think, do and say. Only thus

can we stand united in matters of faith and doctrine (Ephesians 4:1-6; 2 John 9-11).

Again, Paul said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). This statement obviously implies that it is not always possible to maintain perfect peace in the world, nor in the brotherhood. Yet, often times it is more possible than some of us are willing to make it. We do not ask for peace at any price. That spells compromise, and that is wrong. Sometimes the gospel brings division (Matthew 10:34-37). Yet, for those who may be in a situation similar to that of Euodias and Syntyche, go out and make wrong things right!

-Endnotes-

¹Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 455.

²Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 224.

³Lottie Beth Hobbs, Daughters of Eve (Fort Worth: Harvest Publications, 1963), p. 227.

540 Tattnall
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GOD'S LOVE AND . . .
(Continued from page 2)

it is true; and unless it would do good to charge it.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Let us live in view of God's love, the greatest conceivable love, remembering "this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

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"BORDER-LINE CHRISTIANS"

(Continued from page 4)

consider the greater appreciation which a parent or grandparent may have for what he owns because he faced hard times like a depression or war, yet, his children or grandchildren may take things for granted and not value some things as greatly because they acquired them rather easily]. Of course, all faithful servants of God will be rewarded for finishing the "Christian race" (1 Corinthians 9:24). However, let the "Border-line Christian" take warning. He is not faithfully running the race. His interests are elsewhere. He has deceived himself into thinking that God will reward an apathetic or "barely get by" child of God. No where in the Bible does one read that God is satisfied with anything

less than one's best. There is no minimum line of approval.

The child of God who serves and worships God from convenience has deceived himself. He assumes that being a "good ole boy" and lending a helping hand to a troubled neighbor upon occasion is enough to enter heaven's gates. But *"God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* (Galatians 6:7). May the Lord's church be filled with Abrahams, Moseses, Joshuas, and Samuels. May God's people today join in with the chorus of conviction that God's people shouted hundreds of years ago—"...We will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:21).

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ELEMENTS OF

(Continued from page 7)

are steadfast. In worship they continue in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and in the prayers. (Acts 2:42.) Punctuality and dependability in this makes it much easier to be faithful in all other items of the Lord's program for us. Faithfulness in the word of the apostles keeps doctrine pure. Faithfulness in fellowship circulates our means in unselfish service. Faithfulness in observance of the Lord's Supper keeps memory alive and on the alert and keeps the proclamation of Christ's sacrifice fresh in the eyes of all who behold it—till Jesus comes. Faithfulness in prayer keeps the soul constantly on speaking terms with our Father and carries to the ear of God our gratitude, our needs, our problems.

9. That church is strong where its membership is united in the bond of truth and love. Small or large, that congregation which is united and moving as one man—is stable. The preacher preaches, the elders lead, the deacons serve—and the whole membership works and worships! The devil is afraid of that kind of fortification. But how he smiles when some member or members can cause a rift in the harmony of the church, and leave

it bleeding by a gaping wound. Jesus prayed for His disciples to be one. Let us be the answer to that prayer.

10. That church is strong where its members are noble soul-winners. If we would shine as the stars forever and ever, we must start to shine NOW for the Lord as we carry the gospel to the lost. If we expect to be saved without trying to save our fellowmen we cannot get through the gates into the city. Paul told Timothy to save himself by being an instrument to save others. (1 Tim. 4:16.) Soul-winning is a chief answer to many ills: most of the troubles and problems of a congregation whether of attendance, daily living, Bible study, benevolence.

Let us be strong. Let small congregations be strong in the Lord. Let large congregations be stable and influential because of sterling qualities and faithful service. Let individuals be strong, for as is the individual, so is the congregation. The forest is composed of trees. The beautiful apple orchard decked out in springtime glory is made so by each individual bloom blended into a harmony and unity of nature's handiwork.

GOSPEL DIGEST
February, 1956



Readers' Response

Dear brethren:

Please place me on your mailing list for the GOSPEL GLEANER. Please find enclosed \$5.00 as a contribution toward this fine work.
Thank you.

In Christ,
Eddie Helms
Allons, TN

Dear brethren:

It is the desire of the Elders and Preachers of the Chattanooga area to contribute \$50.00 for the publication of the GOSPEL GLEANER in the memory of Joey Dillon.

The money was collected during our monthly Preachers & Elders Workshop. Would you please let brother Bill Dillon know of our love and our prayers go up on behalf of him and his family.

In Christian love
For the Workshop,
Jerry Weldon
Rossville, GA

Dear brethren:

I received my first GOSPEL GLEANER a few days ago. Thanks for the good articles.

Keep up the good work! Enclosed is a check for \$10.00.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Davis
Paducah, KY

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Gospel Gleaner

Volume 4

Number 4

Why I Like Spuds Mackenzie

John T. Polk

Spuds is a Bud Lite Beer "personality" who is, the ads say, "the ultimate party animal." In the commercials he skis (on water or snow), pole vaults, sails, et al with a bevy of beautiful young women exclaiming, oohing, and aahing about him. Everyone wants to have a Spuds MacKenzie at his party.

He is a Staffordshire bull terrier—yes, a dog! Actually, the dog in the commercials is a "she" but the brewery feels a male is a better concept. "His" picture is on books, T-shirts, sweats, posters, TV, billboards, and displays.

I LIKE HIM! Proverbs 20:1 says, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise,*" but this is the first time the beer industry has been honest. They're saying they think all their beer customers should be considered dogs. To be the ideal party animal one must be a dog. And millions of customers are saying: That's right we are!

There are some striking points of similarity between the behavior of dogs and that of beer drinkers:

DOGS LIKE DEAD THINGS

Dogs in the wild wallow in maggot-infested, vermin-ridden, rotting carcasses. The worse it smells, the more they seem to like it.

(1) Alcoholic drinks (beer) are made from vats of dead stuff. They call it "fermentation," I call it "rotten." The "choicest product of the brewer's art" begins with a grain mash that rots, exactly like a compost pile. Compost

is spread on plants, brew is spread on people. When people drink beer, they belch because the stomach has in it a rotten brew. Illegal stills have been discovered with dead rats, dead coons, and dead cats in the mash. It doesn't seem to matter what it is as long as it is dead and rots! I visited the Jack Daniels Distillery and saw their huge open vats of rot, and someone in my tour group spat in the vat and said, "That'll give someone a thrill." To drink beer, one must swallow a rotten liquid like a dog consumes rotten flesh.

(2) Beer dispenses death, first to the consumer. Each alcoholic drink kills brain cells which are irreplaceable. The idol god of wine was Bacchus to the Romans, Dionysus to the Greeks in the days when the New Testament was written. When God condemned drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18; cf Isaiah 5:11), it was with a word meaning to "to soften." From the first beer, a "Spuds" softens judgment and moral reservation, leading to the next drink. Bacchus was depicted as an effeminate man with womanly-flowing long hair. Beer ads today seek to associate drinking with rugged he-men types who are adored by good-looking women, when the exact opposite is true. Bacchus was a sissy-wimp-type who typified alcohol consumers and a female dog is used by Bud Lite for the same purpose! Real men don't drink beer "with the boys" because real men know that beer makes wimps out of real men. Bud Lite gives the first

(Continued on page 11)

EDITORIAL



Bill Dillon

The modern religious world suffers the illusion that the current nation of Israel is the chosen people of God. The coming of the year 1988 has increasingly incited denominational speculation that Christ will return again soon.

Many millennialists contend that the emergence of Israel as a nation on May 14, 1988 signaled the fulfilling of the Lord's words in Matthew 24:32. *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh."* The idea is that modern Israel is the fig tree and that within a biblical generation (40 years) of that event, Christ will return. Thus, 1988 is a year of pivotal importance to millennialists.

The problem is that Matthew 24:32 does not refer to the modern nation of Israel except in the fertile imaginations of misguided men.

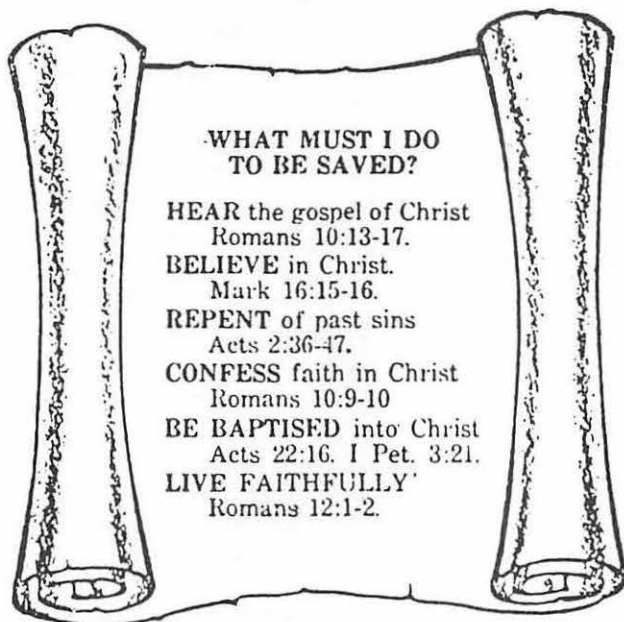
The Fig Tree Fiasco

Matthew 24:1-33 does refer to the destruction of ancient Jerusalem by the Roman legions in A.D. 70, but says nothing of a rebuilding of Jerusalem in more modern times.

The Fig Tree fiasco is starting to bear its fruit. The Israelmania crowd is feeling the glare of the searchlight of truth. They are running out of time and cannot hide from the false prophecies they have promoted for the last forty years.

The true Israel of God today is the church (Galatians 6:16). The chosen people of God now are those who have obeyed the gospel (Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:9). Away with the deceitful theological speculations of men and bring forth the Word *"which is settled forever in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89).

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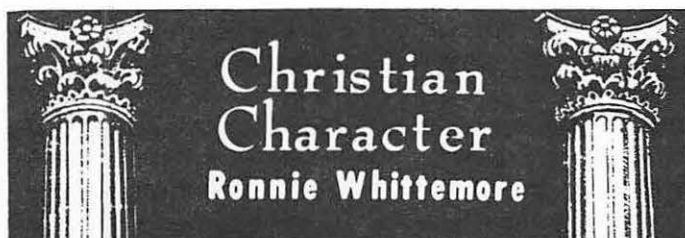
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EVIL EFFECTS OF DRUNKENNESS



Without any doubts or arguments, one of the greatest evils and most serious problems in this society is the drinking of alcoholic beverages. The prophet Jeremiah refers to wine as *"the cup of fury"* (Jeremiah 25:15-16). Solomon described wine and strong drink as *"a mocker and raging"* (Proverbs 20:1). The apostle Paul plainly stated that drunkards will not be saved (Galatians 5:19-21). At the start, let it be established that God makes no distinction in His Word regarding the amount that one drinks. One can try to justify "social drinking" but **God** classifies it as sin. One may try to justify beer or wine, but **God** treats it all the same. Proper authorities state that a twelve ounce can of beer is equivalent to one and a half ounces of whiskey or five ounces of wine. Alcohol is alcohol, regardless of its form (whether beer, whiskey or wine). So, let there be no misunderstanding—this article deals with the **drinking of alcoholic beverages**. This writer (in accord with his understanding of the scriptures) classifies "drinking in moderation," or "drinking until one staggers," or "drinking until one passes out" as drunkenness. Thus, the following evil effects apply to every person and every occasion, whereby, the individual allows alcohol to touch his lips.

Drunkenness Weakens One's Restraint Against Sin

The first recorded episode of drunkenness in Bible history is certainly not flattering and occurs with an unlikely and surprising individual. Noah is introduced in the Bible as one who *"found grace in the eyes of the Lord"* (Genesis 6:8). He is listed among other faithful patriarchs in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Yet, proof of inspiration is again revealed when the Bible records this dark episode of an otherwise faithful man of God.

Before and during the flood, Noah manifested courage and boldness. He was a man in control of his physical and spiritual life by the hand of the Almighty. Noah must have been an enduring and patient man of great restraint during the trying days of the flood. After all, the Bible describes him as *"a preacher of righteousness"* (2 Peter 2:5). He is also described as a man of faith. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Hebrews 11:7). He had to endure the mockings of scoffers and doubters in his day (2 Peter 3:1-9). Noah prepared the ark during the long suffering of God (about 120 years). Yet, Noah's own patience and faith prevailed (1 Peter 3:20). He and his family were saved from the perils of the flood. But, in Genesis 9:20-27 (the same chapter that opens with God's blessing of Noah and his family), *"Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken and he was uncovered within his tent."* In William Patton's book, entitled, *Bible Wines*, the author states, "We have the highest authority that alcohol is not found in any living thing, and is not a process of life." He then lists the comments of several noted scholars and chemists in which they also affirm that the process of fermentation is prepared by man, not God. Noah was not naive nor a child. He was an husbandman by occupation and we assume that he knew his trade. Therefore, the only way that he could have become drunken on wine was by purposely processing the drink. Noah, then, for whatever reason, engaged in an unholy activity. This act led to more shame. First, the Bible reads, *"And he was uncovered."* Literally, *"he uncovered himself."* His drunkenness weakened his restraint against sin. Second, Noah's sin encouraged his son, Ham, to sin. By (a) *"wickedly rejoicing in what he saw, which, considering who was that was overcome with wine—the minister of salvation to men and the chief restorer of the world."*¹ And (b) *"in reporting it, doubtless with a malicious purpose, to his brethren."*² In short, Noah nor his son would have sinned except for the evil effects of drunkenness.

In Genesis 19:30-38, The Bible records another ugly episode of drunkenness. By God's mercy, Lot and his two daughters were saved from the destruction of New York

City and San Francisco—oops—rather Sodom and Gormorrah. Fearing that they would remain childless (they lived in a cave), Lot's daughters devised a devilish plan. *"Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father"* (Genesis 19:32). The Bible comments that Lot *"perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose"* (verses 33, 35). Their plan was successful (but not righteous). *"Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father"* (verse 36). The extended consequence of this sinful activity was the strife that later was brought upon Israel, God's chosen people through Abraham, Lot's uncle! The people that came from this incestuous deed were the Moabites and Ammonites who were constant enemies of Israel (Genesis 19:37-38). Drunkenness weakens restraint against sin.

Drunkenness Increases Lust And Baseness

Solomon's description of drinkers is quite different from the portrayals that one views on television or notices on billboard advertisements.

*"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?
who hath contentions? who hath
babbling? who hath wounds without
cause? who hath redness of eyes?
They that tarry long at the wine;
they that go to seek mixed wine.
Look not thou upon the wine when
it is red, when it giveth his colour
in the cup, when it moveth itself
aright. At the last it biteth like
a serpent and stingeth like an adder.
Thine eyes shall behold strange women,
and thine heart shall utter perverse
things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that
lieth down in the midst of the sea,
or as he that lieth upon the top of
a mast. They have stricken me, shalt
thou say, and I was not sick; they
have beaten me, and I felt it not:
when shall I awake? I will seek it
yet again"* (Proverbs 23:29-35).

The reading of this passage nearly brings laughter because of the silly and ridiculous ways in which people behave while influenced by alcohol. Every reader probably can recall acquaintances and co-workers that are living this type of life. This passage alone should discourage everyone from drinking alcoholic beverages.

But notice specifically in this description: *"Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things"* (verse 33). Jesus condemns "lust in the heart" as mental adultery (Matthew 5:27-28). Every male reader (as well as women) knows how easy it is for one to "lust in his heart" if he allows himself to associate with the wrong company, engage in activities with evil surroundings or merely has "an idle mind." Satan is constantly parading sensual and provocative programs on television. The news stand racks are filled with pornographic material. Now video stores make available indecent movies for the home. Everywhere that one turns, he is bombarded with sensuality and sexuality. Every spiritual man and woman must constantly be on guard. *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1 Corinthians 9:27). Now weaken these long, hard battles by drinking alcohol which will lower the defenses. Alcohol will remove inhibitions. The man who cannot be shamed is easy prey for the devil's devices. This writer wonders how many men and women have sinned by committing adultery or fornication and ruined marriages because of alcohol. How many people have destroyed lives and friendships because of the influence of alcohol. How many people have said things and done things which they normally would have never thought of doing except for the use of alcohol. Friend, just think! Drunkenness increases lust and baseness (evil).

Drunkenness Destroys Sound Judgment

The Old Testament high priest, Aaron, was ordered: *"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean"* (Leviticus 10:9-10). The work and service of priests, and especially the high priest, were serious and solemn duties. God demanded that discernment and sound judgment should be used always; therefore, no substance was to be used that might alter their mental and physical faculties. It was essential that Aaron and his sons were able to distinguish between "holy and unholy, and between unclean and

(Concluded on page 5)

clean." Christians are God's priests now (1 Peter 2:5, 9). But, whether in worship to God, daily service to man or everyday living, Christians must be prepared to set the proper example. Using God's word as the standard, Christians must use sound judgment (Hebrews 5:12-14). It is difficult enough sometimes to make good judgments and so often people ask, "Did I make the right decision?" But add alcohol and its effects and proper judgment is destroyed.

Drunkenness Is Riotous And Condemns

The apostle Paul wrote, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). In Galatians 5:21, Paul placed drunkenness, a work of the flesh, among some of its evil companions.

"Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Anyone who has ever worked with the ungodly and heard them boast to their friends on the job about their drunken weekend and wild party recognizes the truth that drunkenness is riotous. Again, read Solomon's words in Proverbs 23 and hearken to his inspired warning. Drunkenness condemns the soul.

Friend, the point often has been made that alcohol destroys one: internally, externally,



and eternally. Alcohol also destroys the home and society (Habakkuk 2:15). Paul exhorted, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The drinking of alcoholic beverages is certainly one evil from which wise men and women will abstain.

- Endnotes -

¹H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, editors, The Pulpit Commentary, Volume I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 149.

²Ibid.

In humility we cherish the hope that this church may speak as the Bible speaks and be silent as the Bible is silent, preacher the good news of salvation to the unredeemed, encourage the weary, lift up the fallen, strengthen the saved and point out the way of life everlasting to all whose lives we touch. To reproduce faithfully the church of the New Testament is our aim. That all believers may be united to Christ is our plea. That God may use us as a channel through which His blessings may flow into the lives of others is our prayer.



DOERS OF THE WORD

David Lipscomb

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). A man who imagines he is benefited by hearing the word when he does not do it deceives himself. A knowledge of the word of God adds guilt to the failure to do it. He that knows his Master's will and refuses to do it will be punished with many stripes. Believing in Christ without obeying him adds nothing to salvation. Obedience to Christ is faith put into practice. Faith is never regarded as fixed and helpful until it leads to obedience, until it controls the whole man. This obedience involves not only baptism and the Lord's supper, or obedience to the positive ordinances of the Lord, but it embraces obedience to the moral and spiritual precepts of the Scriptures.

One must love God with all the mind and soul and body. He must subdue and hold in proper restraint his own fleshly lusts, desires, and ambitions. He must be truthful, upright, honest, and at all times ready to do good to all the children of men. He must help the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan. He must seek to save the lost and to reproduce in his own life the life of Jesus, who gave his life as the example we should follow. The apostle follows up this admonition with the warning that the forgetful hearer is not blessed in the hearing, but that man is blessed only in doing the things required in the word. *"He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing."* The law of God is *"the law of liberty,"* because it frees him who continues in it from the bondage of sin and the service of the evil one. The blessing it bestows is found in his doing the will of God. He then insists that true religion, or the obedience to the law of God, requires persons to control the tongue; that it violates no law of God; and that the practice of religion, pure and undefiled, is so to refrain from the sins and corruptions of this world as not to be spotted or tarnished by them, and to actively engage in helping

the widow and orphan in their need. This shows the words to be done, the laws to be kept, whence the active discharge of the duties we owe both to God and our fellow men. Only in doing his word can his blessing be found.

GOSPEL ADVOCATE

August 15, 1907

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Elijah Goodwin

Now, while the soldiers of the cross are contending, *"Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,"* the apostle commands them, saying, *"Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"* that was in Christ. Have that condescending, humble, long-suffering, sympathizing disposition which characterized our Lord and Savior. Oh, have that deep-settled purpose to honor God, and do his will in all things, which Christ possessed; and under all circumstances be disposed to say, *"Not my will, but thine, be done."*

Come, my Christian readers, let us examine ourselves on each of these points in the fear of God. Have we the mind of Christ? Do we possess, in a good degree, that anxious desire for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners that dwelt in the bosom of our blessed Lord? Can we suffer long and be kind, in imitation of Christ, our pattern? Remember that if we would wear the crown, we must conquer; and if we would conquer, we must have the mind of Christ. Let no Christian say that he cannot obtain that mind. We are commanded to have it; and as no impossibilities are required of God's people, we can arm ourselves with that mind.

But in order to do this, an effort must be made. We never can obtain that disposition by sitting down and whiningly saying: *I CAN'T do it.* To obey any command requires an effort; but we are commanded to have the mind of Christ, then we must strive to obtain it.

GOSPEL ADVOCATE

January 18, 1940

Pen Points

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND CONTROVERSY

Wayne Cox

There is an unfortunate attitude among many in the brotherhood today. Briefly, this attitude could be summed up as: "We should preach all love and peace, and not preach anything that might offend people. Do you not know that people have a right to their own opinion and interpretation? The church should cause no trouble, conflict, or controversy. We must strive for spiritual peace with the world, regardless of its beliefs." In view of the preceding statements, and to see if they are true, we need to ask: Will the church of Christ ever be without controversy? Should the church be at peace with the world?

Think for a moment how nice it would be if the answer were **yes**. Would it not be wonderful to fellowship and get along with all the various religions and denominations of the world? Would it not be wonderful to have unity with **all** of our own brethren (Psalm 133:1) regardless of their teachings? **WHO WANTS CONTROVERSY??**

And, we must ask, did not Christ come to this earth to send peace? As recorded in Isaiah 9:6, one of Christ's descriptive terms is "*The Prince of Peace*." Did not the angels herald at the birth of Christ, "*Peace on earth?*" Did not Paul write that "*the servant of the Lord must not strive*" (2 Timothy 2:24)?

Yes, Christ is the Prince of Peace, but He is also described as the "*Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Revelation 5:5). He came not to this earth to send peace, but a **sword** (Matthew 10:34-36). Paul wrote to Timothy to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (1 Timothy 6:12), to "*endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3). He admonished all to put on the "*whole armour of God*" (Ephesians 6:11), because there is a **warfare** to be fought, controversy ahead for those who will be Christ's disciples.

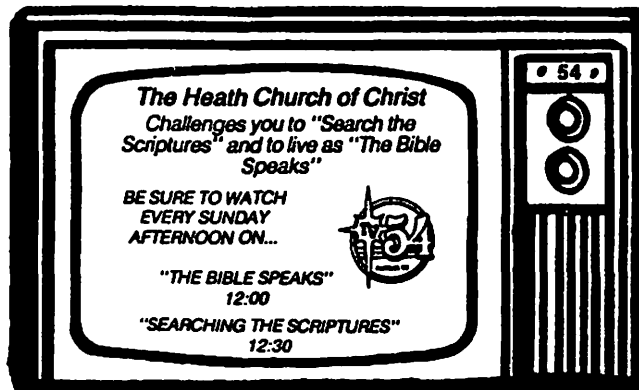
Do these passages of Scripture contradict one another? No! We must realize, that just as there are different kinds of love, there are different kinds of peace. There is that

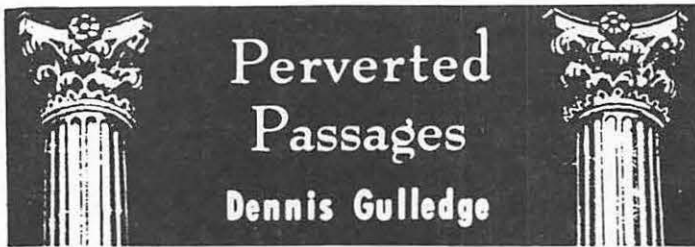
peace which we have within ourselves, peace with others, and then there is peace with **God**. Paul wrote, "*Be ye reconciled to God*" (2 Corinthians 5:20), not just have peace within ourselves or peace with others! We must have peace with God and all others who seek peace with God by meeting His conditions.

Throughout the New Testament, examples are given of the lives of those who followed Christ and their type preaching. Did they preach all love and peace? Did they try to "love people into the church" by preaching smooth and sweet things? Did John lose his head by patting Herod on the back and telling him what a good fellow he was—trying to "leave the door open?" Was Stephen stoned for preaching "food, fellowship, fun and frolic?" Were stripes laid upon the back of Peter because he practiced "go along to get along-ism?" Did Herod kill James with the sword for preaching "unity in diversity?" Why did it take a host of soldiers to transport Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea? Was it because he was such a popular and charismatic "soul talk leader" or the "head evangelist?" And finally, was Jesus crucified for teaching **all positive** truth and love, love, love to the enemies of His day?

Will the church of Christ ever be without controversy? No, not in this life, but later on. There will come a time, we know not the hour, when we will lay down our sword and shield—then we will receive an eternal peace which shall never be taken away. In the meantime, let us realize that we are soldiers in Christ's army, to **fight** for what is right, using the "*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17). All truth must be taught, both **positive** and **negative**!

IF YOU LIVE IN THE PADUCAH
OR SOUTHERN ILLINOIS AREAS:





WHY "PERVERTED PASSAGES?"



Why is it necessary to write such a column as this on "Perverted Passages?" It is necessary because anything that is pure may be perverted, and thus corrupted. This is true of the certified gospel of Christ as with anything else. Since Paul's day there have been *"some who would trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ"* (Galatians 1:7). The meaning of "pervert" in the context of Galatians has to do with false teachers who endeavored to turn the gospel freedom in Christ into a doctrine of renewed bondage in the Law of Moses (Galatians 5:1-4).

The word "pervert" basically means "to turn," that is to change a thing into something of an opposite character than what it was intended to be. There are four examples from the New Testament which illustrate to us the full meaning of this word.¹ First, it means "to turn away" (Luke 23:14). Second, it means "to distort, or twist" (Matthew 17:17; Philippians 2:15). Third, it means "to transform into something of an opposite character" (Acts 2:20; Galatians 1:7; James 4:9). Fourth, it also means "to turn inside out, to change entirely" (Titus 3:11). Therefore, when we speak of "perverted passages," we quite naturally speak of selected sections of God's pure and holy word (Psalm 12:6) which men have taken and corrupted (2 Corinthians 2:17), handled deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2) and wrested (2 Peter 3:16).

Our responsibility as students of God's word is to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The American Standard Version (1901) reads, "handling aright the word of truth." Literally, the expression means "to cut straight." In other words, we are to teach truth accurately in a straightforward manner. The need for a proper handling of divine truth implies the strong possibility of a mishandling of the same. It is possible to know scripture, but have it so confused

as to misrepresent its real meaning. Much confusion is the result of much mishandling.

How often do people misapply the Scriptures to help sustain their particular view of a matter, or an opinion which they hold dear? It is not only the case that we must know what the Bible says, but we must also know what it means. One can memorize and quote the entire Bible, and still not understand what it means. Even the devil can quote Scripture (Matthew 4:6), and just like the devil, many others will misquote and misapply so much of it in order to sustain either personal or denominational views. And some may feel that we are straining at gnats when we concern ourselves with a misapplied passage here and there. They may ask, "Does it really matter that much?" The best way for me to answer that question is to say, that, if it mattered to the Lord it should also matter to us. In Matthew 22:23-29, the Sadducees, in trying to sustain their view that there is no resurrection, tested the Lord with a question which they felt proved them right. They alluded to Deuteronomy 25:5. But, Jesus traced their false assumption to their ignorance of the Scriptures. Thus, in perverting that passage, they perverted the Scriptures!

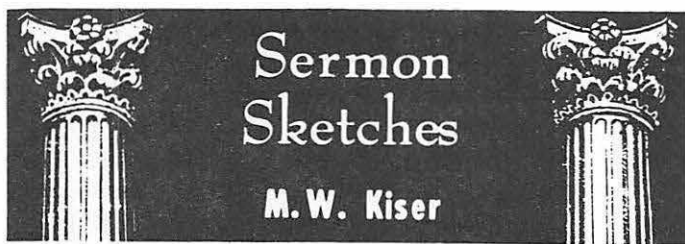
Why would anyone pervert the Scriptures of God. There may be some of humanity who are so calloused in their approach to truth that they purposely pervert God's word and admit that they are doing it. A much broader category of people is that of an honest and earnest humanity who simply have not studied and investigated, for study and investigation always brings out the facts. Be it far from me to judge anyone's heart, but we must be aware of the fact that there are many faulty approaches to Scripture which amount to a perversion of Scripture.

First, there is the practice of eisegesis as opposed to exegesis. That is, some are inclined to read into passages what they wish the verse(s) to say, rather than taking out from them their real and intended meaning. Eisegesis is the reading in of a meaning which the author did not intend. This is often done with "faith" passages, thus trying to make them teach salvation by "faith only." (Cf., Romans 5:1).

Second, there is pride of party "interpretation." In commenting on Galatians 1:7, brother J. W. McGarvey wrote,

One cannot help wishing that modern churches would awaken to the truth here spoken by the apostle. There

(Continued on page 10)



AN ETERNAL KINGDOM FROM DAVID'S DYNASTY

2 Samuel 7:12-17

Introduction:

1. The context of chapter six leads to a "question and answer" time.



- a. What was to be the future of David's house; and who was to be his successor?
- b. David would not build a house (bayith—temple); but God would raise up a house (bayith—dynasty) to David!

2. This chapter marks an important point in the history of Israel. There were two promises which they came to cherish:
 - a. That God would make them a nation and be their God (Exodus 19); and,
 - b. The promise of this continued leadership through David.
 - c. Therefore, this promise is referred to throughout the prophets and the Psalms.
3. The "seed promise" goes back to the very beginning:
 - a. A promise to the human race (Genesis 3:15).
 - b. A promise to the family of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:16, 29).
 - c. A promise to the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).
 - d. And now, the promise to the house of David.
4. Let us notice four things regarding this prophecy:

I. The FACTS Contained in This Prophecy.

- A. It will take place while David sleeps with his fathers (verse 12).
- B. It is to be of David's seed (verse 13).
- C. He is to sit upon David's throne (verse 13).
- D. He is to build a house for the Lord (verse 13).
- E. He is to have a wonderful relationship

with God (verse 14).

- F. God's mercy will not depart from him (verse 15).
- G. The dynasty, kingdom, throne are to be established forever.

II. The FULFILLMENT of This Prophecy.

- A. The divine principle of interpretation (2 Peter 1:20-21).
 1. Therefore: What the Holy Spirit says constitutes the fulfillment of this prophecy!
 2. The Holy Spirit said that Samuel spoke of Christ (Acts 3:24) and the Hebrew writer says that Christ fulfills this prophecy (Hebrews 1:5).
 3. Prophecy is not "applied" but "predictive;" not "dual" with a primary (O.T., physical) and a secondary (N.T., spiritual) fulfillment!
- B. The "earthly" fulfillment (Solomon) fulfilled **part** of this prophecy (in type). See 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 22:6-10; 28:5-7.
 1. Solomon came to the throne of David as his seed while David slept with the fathers.
 - a. He built a house for the Lord.
 - b. God's mercy did not depart from him when he sinned, and the dynasty stayed with the family of David.
 2. "Forever?????" He vacated the throne at death and we must consider what was said to Coniah! (See Jeremiah 22:28-30; Ezekiel 21:25-27).
 3. David did not understand Solomon to exhaust the meaning of this promise (Psalm 72, 2, 110, 89, 45).
- C. The "spiritual" fulfillment in Christ the Antitype (Hebrews 1:5; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36).
 1. Christ came to the throne while David slept with his fathers (Acts 2:29).
 2. Jesus is the seed of David through Coniah (Matthew 1:1, 13; Acts 13:23).
 3. He sits upon the throne of David (Acts 2:30-36).
 4. He built a house for the Lord (Matthew 16:18; 1 Timothy 3:15).
 5. He is the Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-5).
 6. God's mercy was not taken away (Isaiah 53:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
 7. His kingdom has been established forever (Hebrews 1:3, 8-9).

(Continued on page 10)

III. Some FALLACIES Refuted by This Prophecy.

- A. "All prophecy should be interpreted literally."
1. This is the fundamental error of premillennialism.
 2. This would cause us to ignore what the Holy Spirit has said!
 3. Absurd! (Look at Isaiah 66:20-23).
- B. "The throne of God and the throne of David are two different thrones."
1. Again this is the basic argument of premillennialism (See: Walvoord; Barndollar; R. H. Boll).
 2. Consider 1 Kings 2:12 and 1 Chronicles 29:23.
 3. What was the purpose of our Lord's coming and going? Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-32; Revelation 3:21.
- C. "The reign of Christ is yet future, here on earth, in Jerusalem."
1. He is to reign while David sleeps with the fathers; therefore, they number David with the wicked!
 2. The reign cannot be in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 22:30; John 4:20-24; Acts 7:47-49)!
 3. He is to be priest while king — but not a priest on earth (Zechariah 6:12-13; Hebrews 4:14; 8:4)!

IV. The FORCE of This Prophecy.

- A. Jesus is King—therefore His word is law. He has all authority (Matthew 28:18-20; 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; Ephesians 1:22-23)!
- B. There are only two kingdoms—and you are in one or the other, but not both (Colossians 1:13; Acts 2:47; Matthew 16:18; Revelation 3:7, 21). The church is where Jesus exercises His dominion!
- C. Membership in the church of Christ or citizenship in the kingdom is the most valuable blessing that you can possess because it reaches over into the next world (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Hebrews 12:28).

Conclusion:

1. Consider the words of Psalm 24:7, 10.
2. "We shall see the King someday!"

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is and must ever be but one gospel. There is not a separate gospel suited to the prejudices or so-called "tastes" of each sect or denomination. There is but one gospel, and hence all church divisions result from perversions of that gospel, and all such secessions or revolutionary divisions are but the beguiling of Satan, drawing disciples from "the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ"—2 Corinthians 11:3.²

Third, there is the existential approach to Scripture. This is when people talk about what a given passage "means to me," as if they are permitted to search out from a passage what is personally satisfying to them, even to the exclusion of its intended meaning.

Fourth, there is the exalting of tradition over Scripture (Cf., Mark 7:13). The Catholic religion has always exalted tradition over God's word. Anytime we teach "*for doctrines the commandments of men*" we pervert the Scriptures, thus making our own worship vain (Matthew 15:9).

Fifth, there is the general practice of snatching a passage out of its context and making it seem to apply to whatever opinion one wants to set forth. One certainly does not have to venture far into the denominational world to find those who practice this black art. I have seen some of our brethren who are masters at it.

It is sad when something pure and wholesome is perverted and corrupted. It often happens that men pervert the word of God. In the words of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., we close, in saying that, "...the man who adulterates the gospel is a far greater enemy to your soul than the man who would pollute a drinking fountain or poison the source of food to society. Paul said: "Let him be accursed."³

-Endnotes-

¹W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1966), Volume 3, page 180.

²J. W. McGarvey, The Standard Bible Commentary: Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 250-251.

³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., The Gospel For Today (Nashville: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications, 1967), p. 3.

honest picture of beer drinkers since Bacchus and everytime this writer sees a Spuds MacKenzie, it reminds him that alcohol consumers have always been the Bacchus-types of society, and Bud Lite admits it, too.

Because brain cells die, prolonged drinkers begin to have the mentality of a Spuds MacKenzie. Drunk drivers kill more people than all of the wars this nation has been in, and people oppose the latter but sanction the former! Of those who drink at home, domestic violence is the result. Beer drinking is not a "victimless crime." Nationally, three-fourths of those in state correctional institutions are juveniles and 50 percent of them are guilty of drug-related crimes (which includes alcohol)—USA TODAY, 9/18/88. It's little wonder, then, that God condemns the practice of alcohol drinking (Isaiah 5:22-23). It's not just drinking that kills, but drinking beer and almost any other activity that kills.

(3) Beer is destructive. Dogs like to tear up things seemingly for no purpose. Likewise, beer parties are measured by their destructiveness. The "success" of such a party is determined by (1) the wreck of the room/car; (2) the pain of the hangover; or (3) how wild their behavior was. Beer is destructive of social graces and is therefore anti-social! Isaiah said, *"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean"* (Isaiah 28:7-8). Why do drinkers return repeatedly to behavior that creates vomit to be cleaned up? In Proverbs 26:11 we are told, *"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."* Spuds MacKenzies return to their vomit.

Dogs consume parasites with the carrion they eat which destroys them from within. Alcohol consumers destroy their livers (by cirrhosis) with continued use. Alcohol also "triggers" the liver to release its store of vitamin A, which fights colds and infections. Cold medicines contain alcohol, and it does more for the body's immunity than the other ingredients, usually. Spuds MacKenzies keep their vitamin A depleted and frequently die from colds or pneumonia. They consume that which kills their own brain cells, livers or immunities, and like dogs, never correct their destructive behavior.

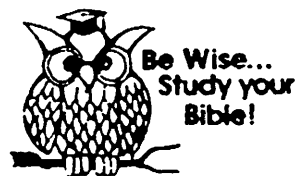
Regardless of their individual training, whatever the pack does, each dog will do. They show no moral choice to do otherwise. Bud Lite in effect says packs of customers will drink their brew. Doesn't it dawn on you why beer commercials almost **never** show someone alone crying in his/her beer, but almost always attending parties, gatherings, beaches or taverns? They know their "doggy" customers will abandon personal moral scruples and use the product if they stay in "packs." "Gang" immorality is often accompanied by "gang" drinking.

God condemns the "pack" mentality. *"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"* (Exodus 23:2). *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:2). Aaron tried to excuse his idolatry because he was running with "the pack" that built the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-6, 22-23) but God would not accept such a lame excuse. King Saul blamed "the pack" for bringing back the spoils of conquest but God's prophet Samuel condemned him (1 Samuel 15:8-9, 13-19, 22-23). Pilate heeded "the pack" calling for a crucified Christ (John 19:1-13) but faced his own conscience and God. Jesus taught where "the pack" is going when He said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in therat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13, 14).

I like Spuds MacKenzie for showing the worldly people how they are viewed by the brewers and for reinforcing the Bible's truthfulness on the subject. **Thank you, Bud Lite** for sinking millions of dollars into a campaign that gets the message across to millions of people. However, I hate what Spuds MacKenzie represents because I would like to think that men would be more moral than dogs. Jesus wants people to follow Him and not "the pack."

Whom do you follow? Are you a Christian or a Spuds?

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***IT'S NOBODY'S BUSINESS
IF I TAKE A DRINK***

The preachers and do-gooders, I know what they say,
About the evils of drinking and traveling the broad way.
But I'm a grown man and I don't care what they think,
It's nobody's business if I take a drink.

He drank down a beer and then, three or four;
He said, I'm all out but I'll go get some more.
He jumped in his car and out of the driveway did spin;
I'll put the pedal to the metal, he said with a grin.

The neighbors were all awakened by the sound of the crash,
The clashing of metal and the breaking of glass.
Mommy, oh mommy, the small child's voice said;
But mommy couldn't answer, she was already dead.

The father was dying, in his own blood he lay;
The drunk was unhurt as they led him away.
He said, I'm a grown man and I don't care what they think,
It's nobody's business if I take a drink.

-- Guy F. Hester

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