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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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can most easily be molded. Parents who shrug off their responsibility during this time escalate the chore later. Children who learn honesty young become dependable people. The temptation to lie goes with a person for life. However, the early habit of honesty greatly aids future victory.

How is honesty taught? "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Proverbs 20:7). When children see Biblical principles lived out, they are greatly aided in living them out as well. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9). When Father and Mother have put off lying, children have an authoritative example to follow. As children witness events and hear them being related by their parents, they may learn how to be honest or otherwise. They soon determine how important honesty is by how accurately parents relate details to others.

Parents need to give a full measure to others in business. "A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1). A scant measure is soon caught and need not be taught. To diminish the value of a deal is not being honest. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14).

At times parents may be perplexed as to whether a child has told the truth or not. Maybe no untruth was spoken yet a wrong impression was deliberately left. How shall we discover if he was honest or not? We can ask questions. "What did you say?" "What were you thinking?" "Did you want to leave a wrong impression?" "Were you trying to deceive?" Even if the answers to these are right, at times one may need to make the air clear by apology or restating what was said. Sensitivity to honesty is better than a careless attitude about details.

We want to protect the tender conscience of our children. We often can tell if something is bothering our children. How we help them resolve misunderstandings

and lying will either build a safe conscience or degrade it. We need to go with them to any individuals involved and clear the matter. It is better to clear the air and suffer to do so, than to pass it off and stain the conscience.

Waiting until later will make restitution harder and leave the conscience less sensitive. Take time to resolve the struggles your children may have to be completely honest. Yes, fathers, it may mean making a phone call. It may mean unplanned driving to return something or to explain the truth. Our response to the child's dilemma that took away his happiness will tell him how important a clear conscience is. We should not rest until the child is at rest and his joy resumed. Returned joy indicates that the conscience is clear once again. A well-trained conscience seeks rest and knows the joy it brings.

Honesty is the only way to maintain a clear conscience. We want to help our children maintain a conscience "void of offense toward God," and toward men. Maintaining a clear conscience in God's sight is most important. In a world where people place less and less value on honesty, let us be diligent to teach it all the more. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Home Horizons*, April 2009.

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"America, the cultural melting pot, has now become the religious melting pot. Traditional religions are now blending with these new religions. What makes cults so dangerous and so effective in recruiting is their counterfeit appearance. At first glance, many look like variations of Christianity. The biggest threat from cults stems from a combination of factors, including ignorance of the Word of God on the part of Christian believers, spiritual immaturity that emphasizes emotional experiences over sound teaching, and lack of fellowship with other mature believers."

—Author Janet Parshall (in *New Man*, Jan./Feb. 2001, page 21)

Person of the Month:

Christian Nafziger (1776-1836) and the Amish in Canada

Christian Nafziger, an Anabaptist-Amish man, was indeed a courageous person given the honors of the early development of the Amish settlement in Wilmot Township, Waterloo County, Ontario. Having fled Alsace some years earlier for Bavaria, at the age of 46 he left Bavaria on his way to the new world, leaving ship at New Orleans in January of 1822. Choosing not to stay with the small Amish group that had been stranded in Louisiana, he walked all the way to Pennsylvania. Not yet aware the Amish had migrated west into Ohio, he passed within two day's foot journey of them.

Christian appears to have been intensely energetic with great business acumen. In one year's time he had come from Bavaria to Louisiana, walked to Pennsylvania, and upon reaching Upper Canada by August 1822, reached an agreement with Governor Maitland on the price of \$2.50 per acre for 150-acre lots. Besides, each settler would gain an additional 50 acres free if he cleared a two-rod strip along the front of his acreage for roads. [Soon after] Nafziger was again on his way to Bavaria via England where he met with King George IV to ratify the governor's promise. We have no evidence yet of when he returned to Bavaria. However by 1824, Amish immigrants from Europe began to arrive in Upper Canada.

In 1824 the first Amish to settle in Canada was the Michael Schwartzentruber family from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, following Christian's lead. The Pennsylvania group was concerned for the spiritual welfare of this new settlement, so they ordained Joseph Goldschmidt and John Brenneman as ministers along with Jacob Kropf as deacon, sending them on their way north.

Commendably, as in Pennsylvania and Ohio, the relations between the Native Canadians and the Anabaptist-Amish were good. Schwartzentruber was invited and went hunting with the Natives.

Nafziger apparently was quite successful in convincing Amish from Alsace and Bavaria of this great place of religious freedom, for by 1825 there was a steady stream of European immigrants settling the German Block.

Although Nafziger wasn't the first settler, when he returned in 1826 he brought with him his family and some friends. Among these arrivals was Bishop Peter Nafziger from Bavaria.

Migration must have been in the blood of the Amish. Having barely settled in Wilmot Township, some picked up in 1831 and moved to Ohio and farther west to Illinois. Even the bishop left for Ohio. In fact, this very bishop, Peter Nafziger, was the one that frequently walked to New Orleans to serve Communion to the small Amish group which eventually disbanded in the late 1800s.

Early names in the Ontario Amish settlement were Swartzentruber, Fahrni, Oesch, Goldschmidt, Kropf, Nafziger, Ropp, Schmidt, Albrecht, Schultz, Zehr, Jantzi, and

(continued on page 7)

Man's Revolt: God's Pursuit

Genesis 3

by Willard Mayer

Introduction

Some people view the biblical account of the fall of man as mythical and merely symbolical, thus opening up the floodgates of denying the divine authority and biblical inerrancy of God's Word. Satan's often-used arsenal of "Yea hath God said" has plunged many into spiritual darkness and alienation from God. He constantly seeks to cast doubt upon the integrity of God's Word because he well knows that he is soundly defeated when we by faith rely upon the Holy Scriptures. Satan cannot resist the power of the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Jesus fully defeated him and deflected his temptations by stating "It is written." Multitudes of godly men and women throughout the centuries have lived victoriously and died triumphantly by faith in the message of the written Word. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world - 1 John 5:4.

The entire Bible is under Satanic attack. But there are several sections which Satan most viciously opposes, namely Genesis 3 and the Book of Revelation. Genesis 3 transparently exposes Satan and his subtle, deceptive temptations in seeking to alienate mankind from their Creator, while the Book of Revelation clearly predicts Satan's final doom.

Because of what took place in Genesis 3, the rest of the Bible became necessary. The Bible is the record of God's yearning heart seeking to restore fallen mankind. God's plan of redemption is woven throughout the entire Bible. All

Scripture, like roads, leads to Calvary and Christ's glorious triumph over Satan.

Man's Revolt

According to the biblical record God created man last. 1) He was not created for the earth but the earth with all its resources was created for him. 2) He was not created to serve plants and animals but to have dominion over them. Man is divinely endowed with the great privilege of continuous intimate fellowship with God. He is the main recipient of God's altruistic, agape love. The Scripture states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). The image of God in man includes personality, spirituality, and eternal existence. His personality includes intellect, sensibility, and volition. Man was not created a puppet or robot with forced mechanical obedience but was given the sacred power of choice. Eternal destiny is contingent upon one's choices. Because of the gift of choice man was given a test by which to exercise his will. There were many trees in the garden of Eden of which two were named, namely the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life expressed God's marvelous provisions for spiritual growth and development, inviting mankind to move into higher degrees of spiritual blessedness. While the tree of knowledge of good and evil was used to test man's loyalty to God, if they passed the test it would enhance their experiential knowledge of good. If they failed

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they would experience the consequences of evil. This test was a test of faith and reliance upon God. The divine principle of “the just shall live by faith” is always basic to divine fellowship. It was also a test of love. To love God supremely is always an integral part of walking with God. To love God wholeheartedly is the first and great commandment. This test was also a test of obedience. True faith and unadulterated love always responds with full obedience.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not intrinsically evil. God could have tested man’s determinate will with, “Do not cross the Euphrates River.” This would have been much more stringent. The forbidding to eat from one tree carried with it very little restraint in the light of the abundant provisions in the Garden of Eden. They lacked absolutely nothing. Concerning this single restriction God carefully and amply warned of the awful consequences of disobedience. God said, “The day thou eat thereof thou shalt surely die.” Francis Schaeffer states in his book *Genesis in Space and Time* that this phrase is extremely strong in the Hebrew text. It could be rendered “Dying thou shalt die.” Instead of accepting God’s plan to experience fullness of life, man would experience fullness of death. This awful death included instantaneous broken fellowship with our holy God (“dead in trespasses and sins,” Ephesians 2:1). This death also eventually included physical death. If one remains spiritually dead until one dies physically, then death includes eternal alienation from God. The Scripture states in Revelation 20:14, “Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” So basically Adam and Eve’s choice, as well as ours, was between life and death; light and darkness. There is no greater contrast. There is no greater consequence. If Adam and Eve would have responded by faith, coupled with love and obedience, then this tree would have represented the tree of experiential knowledge of good.

The divinely inspired record reveals Satan’s approach to Eve in the disguise of an attractive beast of the field, namely the serpent. In a crafty, subtle, and intelligent approach, Satan sought to inject his poisonous venom by questioning the integrity of the revealed will of God. Eve was no match for Satan except for one thing. She had the word of God, little as it was. If she would have used it for her defense Satan would have been soundly defeated. But instead she tampered with God’s word by adding a seemingly unfair demand by stating that God said, “Ye shall not touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” She also modified God’s emphatic statement “Thou shalt surely die” to “lest ye die.” Thus sin began with the heart and mind and progressed to the outward act of directly violating God’s single restriction. Sin progressed from 1) listening to the evil one to 2) doubting God’s word to 3) looking and then 4) lusting, then 5) coveting the forbidden fruit. Following which she 6) took and then 7) ate. The nature of sinning is to entice others. The Scripture states that Eve 8) gave also to her husband and he also fell. And thus is it yet today that people become especially voluble to sin when the appeal is made by someone else, especially one of the opposite sex.

Lucifer originated sin. He was obsessed by a desire to be like God (see Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19). This same sin of pride was now thrust upon the woman. Satan didn’t only defy God’s pronouncement of death by stating “Thou shalt not surely die” but also stated “For God doth know that the day thou eat thereof thou shalt be as gods knowing good and evil.” This awful deceit of pride progressed even to the extent of created ones seeking to rise above the Creator. Throughout the history of mankind this desired ambition has been expressed time and time and time again. For example when Nimrod built the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-6); when Nebuchadnezzar claimed supernatural powers in having built

Babylon (Daniel 4:28-30); when Herod accepted divine honors (Acts 12:21, 22); and when the antichrist will set himself up in the temple as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:5-15).

The downward path of sin is steep. The appeal was made through the lust of the flesh (good for food), the lust of the eyes (pleasant to the eyes), and the pride of life (desired to make one wise). Satan was so successful with this three-fold appeal that he has been using this scheme ever since. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

James explains temptation and sin as a snare or a trap in Chapter 1:14, 15. The trap is set with enticing bait. The victim is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. The trap snaps. The victim is caught. Death results.

Yes, Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, but to what? To shame, nakedness, fear, and broken fellowship with God. The moment they sinned their inner light went out. Spiritual darkness replaced spiritual light. They were thrust into a prominence of the physical. The garment of light, their robe of righteousness, was gone. They were naked before God and before man. Oh, the awful tragedy of man's revolt against God. Mankind is now aligned with Satan and estranged from their Creator. In great fear they hid themselves. In anxiety they grabbed fig leaves and tried to conceal their nakedness.

God's Pursuit

What if God would not have intervened? What if God's holiness would have immediately and forever cut man off? The fact is that God cannot overlook sin. He cannot ignore it. If He would He would cease to be holy. Then why didn't God immediately destroy Lucifer when

he became Satan? He had the power to do it. Why didn't God immediately cast Adam and Eve into perdition when they sinned? He could have done it. We have much to learn about the attributes and character of God. We have so much to thank Him for because of who He is. Because all of God's attributes are perfect and are interrelated, it cost God Calvary to vindicate His holiness. The love of God provided redemption. This took much time. This called for God's incarnation. This necessitated atonement. This called for an advocate. A merciful and faithful High Priest is needed.

Atonement means covering. All who by choice accept God's atonement are protected from the holiness of God. But all who refuse this divine protection have no covering for their sins and will directly face the awful wrath and judgment of God. Oh, the tragedy of having no atonement. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

The biblical record states in Genesis 3:9: "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" This was a call of agape love. It was a call of justice. It was a call to repentance. Jehovah God was calling. Throughout the temptation Satan refused to recognize God as Jehovah. Consistently he spoke of God as Elohim, thus merely focusing upon God's sovereignty. But when God pursued fallen man, Jehovah God called him. The God of revelation and redemption sought after fallen man. The meaning of the Jehovah name for God is most fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus in His high priestly prayer of John 17 said, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world."

When the penetrating voice of God called Adam and Eve it stabbed them like a sword in their innermost parts. They were lost. LOST. Out they came from their hiding place to face a holy God. Trembling they stood before their

creator and confessed their great fear. They confessed that they were naked. They confessed that they had been trying to hide. But there is much more they needed to confess. God probed Adam first. "Hast thou eaten of the tree wherein I commanded thee thou shouldest not eat?" He could not hide from God. God fully knew. But Adam needed to confess. He needed to repent. At first Adam was evasive. Could it be that at first he even blamed God when he said, "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree"? If Adam had refused to go deeper in his confession he would have had no hope. Thus Satan sorely tempts people yet today to cast the blame of their misconduct upon someone else. But finally Adam broke loose from this awful Satanic grip and confessed, "I did eat." Now there is hope for him. But what about Eve? One cannot confess by proxy. Adam's confession did not meet her need. She, too, must personally and transparently confess her own sin. Like her husband she at first shifted the blame on someone else. "The serpent beguiled me," she said. But, is it not true that if a person has been beguiled (deceived) that one is not fully responsible or fully aware of what is taking place? But she was responsible for her disobedience. If she had gone no further with her confession she would have been eternally lost. Finally, she, too, with her volitional power, broke from Satan's awful grip and humbly confessed, "I did eat." Immediately upon their confessions and repentance God spoke of His redemptive plan.

The serpent must be punished. Satan MUST be overthrown. God pronounced a curse upon the serpent by stating "because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, . . . all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14; see also Isaiah 65:25). The serpent, which lent its body to the evil one for the purpose of destroying the human family, would forever become

an example of degradation. It will need to forever writhe in dust and dirt, repulsed by man. Following God's curse upon the serpent, the prediction of Satan's final defeat is clearly stated. This passage illustrates the hermeneutical law of double mention. The scene moves from the serpent to Satan, much like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, in which cases the then known kings are first addressed, followed by a description of Satan's fall.

God's pronouncement of Satan's defeat in Genesis 3:15 contains the first promise of the Redeemer. God declared war upon Satan. *The seed of the woman* will crush Satan's head. The seed of the woman can be no other than Jesus Christ. He is the only one ever to be born "the seed of a woman." We are all the seed of men. Virgin birth is predicted (see also Isaiah 7:14). The one born of a virgin will crush the head of Satan. In Hebrews 2:14, 15 the Scripture states concerning Jesus Christ, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Had the princes of the world known that the blood of Jesus Christ has the power to cleanse us from all sin I believe they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Satan's dominion over man was broken at Calvary. Jesus in anticipating the benefits of Calvary stated in John 12:31, 32, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Praise be unto God, Satan's head was crushed at Calvary because of the principle "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." Satan will be given his final death blow when he will be cast into the lake of fire.

But what does this prophecy state concerning the effects of this spiritual warfare upon the seed of the woman?

The prophecy is “and thou shalt bruise his heel” (see Isaiah 53:5). Redemption costs great suffering. Redemption called for Calvary. Redemption needs a High Priest and advocate, one who stands between us and a holy God. Not only would it be necessary for God to come to man’s rescue in the person of Jesus Christ but He also would need to come in the person of the Holy Spirit with His manifold ministry in seeking to restore fallen mankind. God could have been spared from so much if He had never created man. But because He is love and because He foreknew that some would respond to His love, God went ahead and created the earth with all its resources and then created man even though the price was very great.

Sin always carries serious consequences. The principle of sowing and reaping is ingrained in all of nature. It affects us all. True, certain effects can be altered through confession and forgiveness but many deep scars remain. For example, because Moses failed to honor God when he angrily smote the rock, he could not enter the promised land. The grace of God forgave his sin and removed it as far as the east is from the west regarding his eternal destiny. The grace of God said, “You may see the good land,” but no amount of confessing his sin could alter the moral law of God. He would die in the wilderness. It was not until Moses spoke with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration that he entered the promised land. David’s sins of adultery and murder were forgiven upon his deep repentance. Yet, with the assurance of forgiveness, God said through the Prophet Nathan, “The sword shall never depart from thine house” (2 Samuel 12:10). And so it was with Adam and Eve. Even though they confessed their sin, and even though God provided redemption, the effects of sin cannot be fully erased in this life. Adam and Eve were sent from the Garden of Eden. The door of reentry was forever closed. The ground before them was cursed with thorns and thistles.

They entered a life of sorrow, pain, sickness, suffering, and physical death. But even though they were barred from the Garden of Eden and the tree of life, God provided a meeting place. They were to bring their offerings to the east of the Garden.

Jesus, in providing redemption for us, identified with many of the physical and psychological effects of the fall. Yet He remained sinless. Throughout Christ’s incarnate state He frequently faced sore temptations. He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). In order to deliver us from the curse of sin Jesus accepted sorrow. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). He identified with the curse of sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane. He suffered the anguish of the crown of thorns. When His outer and under garments were taken from Him during His crucifixion, He endured the awful curse of shame and nakedness. He became extremely thirsty so that we need not thirst. His heart-piercing cry on the cross “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” was a cry of great anguish following the awful three hours of darkness when all Satan’s forces of darkness attacked him. Finally the great price of redemption was paid. God’s holiness is vindicated through Calvary. Atonement is provided. God threw back the awful powers of darkness and declared Jesus victorious over Satan and all the consequences of the fall. Jesus stated, “It is finished” (*teleios*, Greek). Salvation is complete. Perfect. Paid in full. Then with a loud voice Jesus stated, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” Upon this glorious triumph graves were opened. The veil which restricted sinful man from a holy God was torn apart from top to bottom. Jesus went into Paradise and declared His mission of deliverance for all who died in faith and transferred Paradise to the third heaven. He became the firstfruits of them that slept, thus assuring all of a bodily resurrection. All that was lost in the fall is regained

through Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Him will experience full restoration in spirit, soul, and eventually in body. God declares in Revelation 21:4 that He will wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. Praise God!

Conclusion

The bleeding heart of God in seeking to restore fallen man is graphically described in Isaiah 5:4: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Various times in the history of mankind God replanted His human vineyard. His choice vine for His first vineyard was Adam and Eve. Later God, because of

great wickedness, destroyed it with the flood. Noah was then chosen by God to begin again, but soon the far-reaching influence of Nimrod resulted in worldwide rebellion and superstition. Abraham was then selected, and in most unusual ways, God revealed Himself to him and his posterity. But eventually Israel also brought forth wild grapes. Then Jesus Christ came, as the true vine, by which the church becomes His branches. Beloved, what more could God have done for the church that He has not done for it? Could it be that again His heart cry of disappointment is heard with "Why, why all the wild grapes?"

The challenge is ours. Let's each one solemnly vow to live by faith and walk in full obedience to God and His Word! ■

Apology From the Editor-in-Chief

We sincerely apologize for the inclusion of the actual foul language quotes from *The Shack* in the book review by Tim Challies in the May 2009 issue. The point could have been made without the actual quotes.

Thanks to Steve Bayer, editor of *The Vindicator*, for bringing this to our attention.

It is our desire to take the quote "high road" rather than the "low road" in the battle for truth. Paul M. Emerson

— CHRISTIAN NAFZIGER . . . cont'd from page 1 —

Kuepfer, among others. By the 1840s the Amish had spread into South Easthope and East Zorra, Oxford & Perth, Hay & Stanly Townships. Today there are 27 Amish congregations in twelve settlements within Canada.

Inevitably the Canadians, having arrived so late in the Amish immigration period (1730s-1850s) and being so isolated from the rest of the Amish in the states, have developed into a very unique group in language and customs. After 128 years a new Canadian Amish settlement developed farther south in Aylmer in 1952. Two of the four original families were from Indiana, one from Michigan, and one from Ohio. There came to be quite a flurry of migration from the states to Canada for approximately 15 years.

Informational sources used: *Mennonite Encyclopedia*; *The Amish of Canada*, by Orland Gingerich; and *History of the Amish*, by Steven Nolt.

—From a series on *scenes from Behalt*, by Verna Schlabach. Reprinted with permission.

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Partakers of Christ's Suffering

by J. Mark Horst

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

As we reflect on the suffering and death of our Saviour, we shudder at the awful injustice of it all. The mental and spiritual anguish in the Garden, the spiteful mocking of the religious leaders, the searing pain of the Roman scourge, and the shockwaves of trauma from the crucifixion, are all beyond the comprehension of most humans. We recoil from even the thought of such suffering as we would recoil from a poisonous snake in our path!

Yet the Apostle Peter's Spirit-inspired words above, and many other Scriptures, remind us that suffering is a central theme of the Christian life. Rather than seeking every conceivable way to avoid it we are to expect it, embrace it, and to rejoice in it. This concept is so foreign to

our human reasoning, especially to the mindset of our western culture.

I recently read an article written by a Turkish believer. It was titled "Bearing the Silence of God," and it addressed this subject of suffering for Christ. The author referenced Paul's words in Romans 8:28, that God is working all things for "our good." He pointed out that by the Apostle Paul's own testimony, his "life will never be known as a *good one* by today's pop psychology or quick-fix spirituality books. Didn't Paul ever stop and wonder why he wasn't blessed? Since Paul is clearly an intelligent man who can recognize the problem, we are forced to entertain other possibilities."

It is true, our human definition of

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good, and God's definition are very different. We may say we accept God's definition, but what do our lives demonstrate when we actually experience suffering? Peter tells us to rejoice in suffering, not endure it with passive resentment. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus: "*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" The "bottom line" for us is, suffering makes faith real!

The greatest glory Jesus brought to the Father was not the miracles He per-

formed, but His full surrender in the agony of the Garden. Even though it meant darkness, isolation, and the silence of God, Jesus was willing to drink the fulness of that "cup." Was that a good thing? Isaiah said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." And Paul said, because Jesus "became obedient unto death . . . God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name." Are you ready to be a partaker of His sufferings? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Heralds of Hope*.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

JULY 5, 2009

The Covenant Renewed

Deuteronomy 5:1-21

Our lessons in June brought us to the point in Israel's history of their deliverance from Egypt. Then the task before Moses and Aaron was to lead this multitude through the wilderness and into Canaan, the Promised Land. The immediate task, however, was to establish their relationship to God and begin to mold them into a nation. That was done at Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Law and the establishing of the Covenant.

For today's lesson we fast-forward 40 years. Israel had rebelled at the entrance to Canaan and God had turned them back to wander in the wilderness until the

rebellious generation was dead. Now the new generation destined to settle the land was poised on the cusp of entry into Canaan, and Moses was ending his leadership and facing death.

This new generation of Israelites needed to be reminded of God's marvelous work in the nation's past and of the Law given by God at Sinai. That law would govern their new communities in Canaan. This was not a new law, but they needed to understand the law's applications for their lives in settled communities. After reviewing the historical context, Moses called them to commitment (see verse 1).

The likely meaning of verse 3 is that the Covenant was not just given for those who heard it at Horeb, but for subsequent generations of God's people as well. These now hearing the reiteration of the

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Covenant were children, or at the most, late teenagers, at the giving of the Law at Horeb (see 1:39).

Moses here reminds the people that it was God's Law, spoken by God's mouth that they heard at Horeb. Moses said that at that time he stood between God and the people since they were frightened by the display of God's power and majesty. The implication in verse 6 is that because of what God had done for Israel in delivering them from bondage they owed Him obedience.

Moses then recounts the commandments given first in Exodus 20. The first four detail man's duty to God; the following six man's duty to his fellowmen. These laws have never been abrogated. They form the basis for man's judicial systems even in today's world. For God's followers they have been expanded into heart principles in the New Testament.

In these commandments God establishes Himself as the ultimate authority, the only One worthy of worship, and declares that He will punish those who dishonor Him. He is to be held in reverence. One day a week is to be set aside in His honor. Respect is to be shown to one's fellow men—honor to parents, regard for another's life, morality, and honor. The property of one's fellow man is to be respected as well.

An individual or society that lives by these high standards will be an honor to God and a secure place for human habitation. Unfortunately, as we see from Israel's subsequent history and today's society, man too often fails to live up to God's standards and then must suffer the consequences.

Let's recommit ourselves, as did Israel, to obedience to God's law. It is the only way to live securely.

For thought and discussion

1. Review the historical setting for this lesson. Read Chapters 1 through 5 of Deuteronomy. Define the purpose of today's lesson text.

2. Why is it necessary to continually be reminded of God's laws? Describe ways this can be done.
3. Take time to study each of the Ten Commandments and evaluate your life and attitudes in their light.
4. Is there any one of these commandments more important than the rest, or on which all the others hang? Which would it be?
5. Perhaps one or so of these commandments gives you more trouble than the others. Recommit yourself to complete obedience by God's grace and power.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: Stress the importance of a periodic review of God's commandments and a corresponding willingness to obey.

Key verse: Verse 1

JULY 12, 2009

A Call to Remembrance

Deuteronomy 16:1-8

In the chapters between last Sunday's lesson on the renewing of the Covenant and today's, Moses recounts to this new generation of Israelites God's goodness in delivering them from Egypt and preserving them through the wilderness journey. He gives interpretation of the Law and detailed instructions for living in community once in the Promised Land. He lays out restrictions for worship and interpersonal relationships and gives warning of the penalties for disobedience. Then in Chapter 16, in the midst of these instructions, he charges them with a yearly remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage by observing the Passover feast (see Exodus 12:14; 13:10).

Deliverance from Egypt came on the 14th day of the month Abib (see Exodus 12:1-14). On the annual anniversary of that date they were to "keep the Passover unto the Lord [their] God." The purpose

of this memorial was twofold. It was to remind them of their deliverance from 430 years of bondage, and it was to remind them also of God's great power and mercy in orchestrating this significant event in their history.

The instructions given here for the observance of the Passover were only a bit different from the detailed instructions given in Exodus 12, and had to do only with the difference in setting. In Egypt they were to observe this feast in their own houses; once in Canaan they were to observe it "in the place where the Lord shall choose to place his name" (see Deut. 12:5, 6). That would have been the tabernacle and, later, the temple. There the blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar, not the doorposts as in Egypt.

The lamb without blemish for the Passover feast foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world. The unleavened bread was symbolic of the haste with which they fled Egypt and served as a reminder of their bitter suffering under Egyptian taskmasters. Even the time of the Passover was to be at the same time of the first Passover when they ate in the evening, with haste, girded for flight from Egypt.

Another difference in the annual observance of the Passover was that after leaving Egypt, the Passover observance began a week of celebration known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, culminating on the seventh day in a "solemn assembly to the Lord God." This was the first of three annual feasts proscribed by the Mosaic Law which required all able-bodied and ceremonially clean male Jews to attend.

God did not want His chosen people to become careless or forgetful in remembering His mercy and great act of deliverance. Therefore He established this annual ceremony of remembrance so subsequent generations would call to mind His gracious act on behalf of their nation.

The principle of remembrance applies to God's people today, to call to mind God's grace and mercy in delivering from

the bondage of sin. "*Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*" (Psalm 107:8).

For thought and discussion

1. Israel was to observe the Passover Feast in remembrance of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. What observance do we practice as a memorial of our deliverance from the bondage of sin? Observe the parallels.
2. What is the purpose and advantage of specific memorial observances? Do you observe specific events in your spiritual journey?
3. What was the purpose of the restriction to only observe the Passover at God's designated place? What would this do for the nation?
4. List the significant events in the Christian-era calendar and the importance of remembering them in specific ways.
5. Why was it important for Israel to follow God's instructions to the letter? For us?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: That God established the annual feast of the Passover so His people would not forget His great power in delivering them from bondage. The parallel for us is in remembering our deliverance from the bondage of sin.

Key verses: Verses 1, 2

JULY 19, 2009

Commissioned for Service

Leviticus 8:1-13

In today's lesson we move back in time chronologically but still within the scope of God's directions and instructions through Moses to God's people Israel. In establishing the people of Israel into a nation, God gave specific instructions both for personal behavior (Lesson for July 5) and for their

spiritual life and worship. Following the giving of the Decalogue God gave Moses detailed instructions for building the tabernacle and its furnishings. He then instructed Moses to set aside Aaron and his sons to serve as priests to the people. In Exodus 28 and 29 we find detailed instructions for their elaborate priestly garments and for their sanctification to this service.

Today's lesson from Leviticus portrays the actual service of consecration for Aaron and his sons to the priestly office. Moses was instructed to call the people together before the tabernacle and there present Aaron and his sons. He was to bring the anointing oil (Exodus 30:22-33), a bullock for a sin offering and two rams, one for a burnt offering to the Lord (Exodus 29:18), and the other for a consecration and wave offering (Exodus 29:19-28). This was a solemn assembly called by the Lord (v. 1) so all Israel would observe what God had ordained.

Once all were assembled, Moses set forth Aaron and his sons and gave them a ritual washing to symbolize cleansing. Nothing unclean or defiled was to be presented to the holy God. Moses then girded Aaron with his priestly garments. The next ritual was the sanctifying of the tabernacle and its furnishings by sprinkling them with the anointing oil. He then sprinkled the altar and its accompanying vessels seven times, signifying their complete sanctification and dedication to the service of the Lord. The altar was where atonement was made to God for the sins of the people.

After this "he poured the anointing oil upon Aaron's head . . . to sanctify him." Upon the inanimate things the oil was sprinkled, but it was poured out on Aaron's head and ran down over his garments (see Psalm 133:2). Then Moses brought forward Aaron's sons and also girded them with priestly garments. Though not mentioned here, we read in Exodus 40:14 and 15 that Aaron's sons were also anointed with the sanctifying oil, to serve in the priesthood under their father the high priest.

All of this was done to fulfill the plan and

purposes of God. He was establishing His people as a nation and setting up laws to govern their behavior and rituals for their worship. In this setting the whole nation observed the proceedings to give them a sense of responsibility and respect. These men were to represent them to God. It was a solemn and meaningful occasion. Another facet of God's plan was in place. Aaron and his sons were now ready to begin their priestly roles on behalf of God and the people.

For thought and discussion

1. What was the purpose of all the ritual and pageantry surrounding Israel's worship of God?
2. Think about God's mercy in allowing Aaron to become high priest, representing the people to God, when years before he had bowed to the people's wishes and fashioned a golden calf as an object of worship (Exodus 32). What does that tell us about God?
3. Read Exodus 28 for a detailed description of the priestly garments. Note the purpose and significance of the various items.
4. Why was it necessary for all the people to be gathered to observe the consecration of Aaron and his sons?
5. Does ritual have any purpose in our worship experiences today? Explain.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: God's confirmation to Israel of His calling of Aaron and his sons to be representatives between them and God.

Key verses: Verses 1-3, 5

JULY 26, 2009

The Celebration of Jubilee

Leviticus 25:8-24

Here in Leviticus 25 we again find a reiteration of God's instructions given to Moses for the people (see v. 1). God had

established every seventh day as a special day of rest (Exodus 20:8-11) in commemoration of the day of rest He observed following six days of creative work. He also established a seventh-year sabbath of rest for the land (Exodus 23:10, 11; Leviticus 25:1-7).

Here in Leviticus 25 we find the institution of the year of Jubilee, following the seventh of seven sabbatical year periods. On the Day of Atonement the trumpet was to sound throughout the land, proclaiming the beginning of the year of Jubilee. The Day of Atonement signified release from the debt of sin. Jubilee proclaimed release from the bondage of slavery, the forgiveness of debts, and the return of land to its original owner. It was to be a hallowed year, consecrated to the Lord and for the leveling of the economic climate.

Bond slaves were to be set free to return home in the year of Jubilee (Exodus 21:2). Debts were to be canceled (Deuteronomy 15:1, 2), and land was to return to its original owner (Leviticus 25:13; 27:24), in order to maintain the original distribution of land among the tribes and to keep the family structure intact. The land was to lie fallow during Jubilee.

Specific regulations were laid down regarding the use of the land during Jubilee. It was not to be tilled, planted, or harvested. However, they were allowed to use what grew on untilled land. Just as the people were to rest from their normal toil, so, too, the land was to be given a rest from forced production.

In answer to what the people and cattle were to live on during the sabbaths of the land, God promised a super crop in the sixth year, an abundance of food to provide for three years, until the next planting and harvesting on the eighth and ninth years (vv. 21, 22). It was the law of manna (Exodus 16) on a larger scale. God would provide for their needs.

God decreed that the land should not be sold in perpetuity. The land was His (v. 33). The people could use the land as tenants or lease its use, but it could not be

permanently sold. It belonged to God. When the land was leased the price was to be reflected by how long till the Jubilee year when it would again revert to its original owner. In actuality, it was only its crop value that was sold (v. 16b). They were not to take advantage of one another in the lease of the land. God was concerned about fairness (v. 17).

God also promised protection and safety for their obedience to His commandments (vv. 18, 19). God was concerned about His people and their well-being. He made all necessary provisions for their comfort and sustenance. But He expected obedience in return.

It is unclear from the historical record whether Israel carefully observed the sabbatical years and the Jubilee year. Second Chronicles 36:14-21 would seem to indicate that, in part, at least, the Babylonian captivity was in reprisal for Israel's failure to keep the Lord's designated sabbaths (see also Leviticus 26:21-35).

For thought and discussion

1. Study the significance of the "sevens" of the Scripture.
2. Do you understand the purpose of the sabbatical years and Jubilee in God's plan? What do they celebrate? What do they foreshadow?
3. What does this lesson teach us about ownership and responsibility? Discuss.
4. What do we learn about treating one another fairly from this lesson? Good for discussion.
5. How is it possible to apply principles of Jubilee in today's economic environment? Or isn't it possible?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: That God's people and God's possessions should have periodic rest, a time for the people to reflect on God's goodness and blessing. Also emphasize that Jubilee was a time of economic leveling among God's people Israel.

Key verse: Verse 10 ■

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Month in Brief

There are so many intriguing and important stories this month that I'll just have to briefly touch upon many stories with only a phrase or two. The *UK Daily Telegraph* reports that several new scientific studies show that traditional parenting "leads to well-adjusted children" despite the braying of modern theories to the contrary.

The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution declaring that to "defame" a religion is to commit a human rights abuse; while the resolution is non-binding, if the trend continues, it will open up Biblical preaching to prosecution.

The Sunday Times of London reports that Israeli drones attacked an Iranian convoy in Sudan that was transporting rockets to Gaza for use by Hamas against Israeli civilians.

On April 1st in a Royal Bank of Scotland branch in Exeter, UK, a robber entered with a "gun" in a bag. A bank customer walked up to the robber and said, "It's April the 1st, isn't it, mate? It's April Fool's Day," and grabbed the bag from the robber's hand and showed its empty insides to the bank tellers; the robber fled and was later arrested.

The *UK Daily Telegraph* writes, "Growing up with at least one girl in the family also makes people more able to cope with their problems, according to the study. Daughters tie loved ones closer together and encourage them to communicate their emotions more effectively, the researchers believe."

Now that Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska got booted from office by a narrow margin, the U. S. Department of Justice is asking the judge to dismiss the seven-count corruption conviction against him because of

gross prosecutor misconduct, including twisting the facts. Commentators on both sides of the aisle have no doubt he would have been reelected if not for the conviction. This misconduct and throwing of elections becomes especially important given that the Democrats wouldn't have a filibuster-proof majority if this wouldn't have happened.

In Britain, social services is insisting that two young brothers are to be adopted by a gay couple, despite the objections of the Christian grandparents and aunts and uncles who have offered a stable home for the boys.

The *Independent* (UK) reports on "The Dark Side of Dubai" (<http://cli.gs/3Ys2rG>) in a well-researched essay about some of the near-slavery that Dubai has been built upon.

An intriguing op-ed in *Post Scripts* entitled "Women's Right to Vote, the Beginning of the End for America?" (<http://cli.gs/5jMαVU>) stimulates thinking on the roles, strengths, and weaknesses of men and women. I wouldn't endorse or condemn this article; I only suggest you read it to stimulate your thinking.

The New York Times reports that given China's one-child policy and economic and cultural preferences for boys, a new study shows that 120 boys have been born for every 100 girls, creating serious social problems for the Chinese in the coming years.

CBS reports about Congressman John Murtha, "Murtha wants \$8 million for Argon ST, a defense contractor whose CEO gave Murtha the maximum allowed by law —\$2,400 by an individual. He's directing a \$5 million earmark toward Advanced Acoustic Concepts, which also gave the max

—\$5,000 for a political action committee— to his campaign. In all, 10 recent Murtha donors are slated to receive \$31 million in Murtha earmarks for 2010.”

Recently declassified CIA documents show that waterboarding (which many regard as torture) Khalid Sheik Mohammad (mastermind of the 9/11 attacks) procured information about 9/11 style attacks in California which were stopped. This is important news in light of the many protestations that torture does not yield accurate information. What should our attitude as Christians be toward the government torturing evildoers? Does Romans 13’s mandate to the government to use the sword to punish the evildoer and protect the good apply to torture? I don’t have clear answers, only questions.

Haaretz (Israel) writes, “An American professor has become the first Jew to win the King Faisal International Prize in Medicine, popularly known as the ‘Arab Nobel Prize.’”

The Washington Times writes, “On the day the new Congress convened this year, Sen. Dianne Feinstein introduced legislation to route \$25 billion in taxpayer money to a government agency that had just awarded her husband’s real estate firm a lucrative contract to sell foreclosed properties at compensation rates higher than the industry norms.”

* * * * *

Don’t Weep for the Demise of American Christianity

As a follow-up to Michael Spencer’s “The coming evangelical collapse,” Pastor Gregory Boyd wrote an insightful blog post “Don’t Weep For the Demise of American Christianity.” Here are some excerpts:

“For example, Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, concedes that ‘[t]he worst fault of evangelicals in terms of politics over the last 30 years has been an incredible naiveté about politics and politicians and parties.’ Manifesting typical Constantinian tri-

umphalism, many conservative American Christians naively thought we could transform American society in a ‘Christian’ direction.

“After 40 years of intense political involvement, Evangelicals have little positive to show for their efforts. To the contrary, we’ve arguably only succeeded in getting multitudes of non-Christians [or simply non-Evangelicals] to disdain us and the ‘Good News’ message we’re supposed to be bringing.

“For those who are heavily invested in the Christian religion, at least as it’s usually been understood in America, the news that America is entering into a ‘post-Christian’ epoch is understandably alarming. . . . Others of us interpret the demise of Christianity and America’s descent into a ‘post-Christian’ epoch quite differently. Indeed, I and many others see this *as good news!* Yes, the loss of a Judeo-Christian civic religion may bring about a greater degree of moral and religious relativism and intensify American’s moral decadence. This is admittedly unnerving. But here are six reasons why I do not think Kingdom people should weep over the demise of American Christianity.

“1. America has never been, and will never be, a ‘Christian’ nation in any significant sense. Among other things, America, like every other fallen, demonically-oppressed nation (see Luke 4:5-7; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 13), is incapable of *loving* its enemies, *doing good* to those who mistreat it, or *blessing* those who persecute it (Luke 6:27-35). By applying the term *Christian* to America, we’ve massively watered down its meaning. . . . It provides hope that someday the word *Christian* might actually mean ‘Christ-like’ once again.

“2. Related to this, there’s a good bit of research demonstrating that the majority of Americans identify themselves as ‘Christian’ when asked by a pollster, but when asked what this label actually *means* in terms of core values and lifestyle choices, it becomes apparent that for the majority of them the meaning of ‘Christian’ is basically ‘American.’ I submit that the main problem

Kingdom people confront in spreading the Kingdom in America is that a majority of people assume they are already in the Kingdom—they are ‘Christian’—simply by virtue of being American . . .

“3. If Evangelicals lose all their political clout, we may be less tempted to lust after political power, which means we may have one less distraction from actually *doing what God called us to do*—namely, manifesting God’s reign by how we humbly live, love, and serve.

“4. As my friend Alan Hirsch demonstrates in his great book, *The Forgotten Ways*, the Kingdom has always thrived—and really, *has only* thrived—when it was on the margins of society. The Kingdom is, by its very nature, a ‘contrast society.’ If Christians lose all their power and position in society and become marginalized, this can’t help but be good for the Kingdom. If Christians become persecuted, it likely will be even better. We’d be turning back the clock from the disaster of Constantinian triumphalist Christianity in the direction of Apostolic, servant Christianity.

“5. The ‘Christian’ element of American culture was never deeper than the thin veneer of a shared civic religion. A major problem Kingdom people have faced on the mission field of America is that the majority of people mistook the civic religion for the real thing. So it is that so many think that being ‘Christian’ is focused on preserving the civic religion (e.g. fighting for prayer before sports events, keeping the ten commandments on government buildings, holding onto a ‘Christian’ definition of marriage within our government, etc.).

“6. Finally, and closely related to this, if Jesus’ followers lose all their position and power and become a minority (or better, revealed to have always been a minority) in American culture, this will expose the idol of American individualism we have bought into for far too long and perhaps help us realize that we need to cling to each other and that the Kingdom is inherently communal. We are called to manifest God’s uniquely beautiful love and bear witness to

the reality of Jesus Christ by how we share our lives and serve one another (e.g. John 17:20-26; Acts 2:42-47; 4:42-45).

“Other possible positive outcomes of the demise of American Christianity could be listed, but this must suffice for now. I hope it is enough to show that, from a Kingdom perspective, the demise of American Christianity is not something we should weep over. To the contrary, it’s actually good news. Yes, it will likely bring about cultural disarray. But, as has often been noted, the Kingdom thrives best when the broader culture is falling apart. The God-given mandate to Kingdom people is not to keep the broader culture from falling apart, but to offer all who are hungry a radically different, far more beautiful, way of doing life. And often people will not take this offer seriously until everything else is crumbling around them.

“Let the civic religion die. And if the culture crumbles, it crumbles. Our task is to live in a way that gives people hope.”

—Excerpts from “Don’t Weep For the Demise of American Christianity” by Greg Boyd

NOTE: I have received some letters that are critical of my focus on politics during the election season. As with most criticisms, there is truth to the charge; I tend to get too caught up in politics, especially those issues that seem to be clearly black and white in a moral sense. However, while I tend to agree with some of the foundational sentiments expressed in these letters and the thoughts expressed by Greg Boyd above, I also believe that “understand[ing] the times” is an important part of knowing what the church should do. I think I have had a particular focus on corruption which I believe helps us to see politics in its true light and serves as a reminder of the truth of prophecy. Politics is not our mission on earth, but it does greatly affect how we do fulfill our mission here on earth: reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ and making disciples of all nations. Whenever I lose sight of that, please remind me. hansmast@hansmast.com

Beyond Closed Doors

Understanding Missions in Restricted-Access Countries

by Bill Commons

Many countries, especially in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, are closed to traditional missionaries. Fifty years ago, most American Christians had the attitude that “*if God wants missionaries to enter, He will open the door.*” By “open the door” they meant that the country would grant visas to missionaries.

But visas have only been in use for a couple hundred years. And where in the Bible does it say we should only go where missionaries are permitted? Did first-century ambassadors for Christ only go where they were welcome? Did Jesus really mean it when He commissioned us to “make disciples of all the nations”?

Thinking biblically eventually led missions strategists to the realization that there is no such thing as a closed door to the Sovereign Lord and His ambassadors.

Looking at Past Examples

Through the centuries, missionaries have found ways to go beyond “closed doors.” The typical American preoccupation with safety, comfort, and security did not deter these missionaries from obeying Christ. *Like Paul and his missionary teams, they did not only go where it was safe.* In fact, inconvenience and danger were their frequent and expected companions; this is a stark contrast to the priorities of many Western Christians today.

Twenty-first-century ambassadors for Christ, likewise, are willing to go where traditional missionaries are not permitted. Using nontraditional means that are biblically and culturally appropriate, foreign missionaries are gaining entrance into places where they dared not enter before.

Look for a Window

Doors may be closed to foreign preachers in restricted countries, but there are amazing windows of opportunity there for Christ’s ambassadors who enter through fields of education, medicine, development, business training, and humanitarian service. There are a multitude of Christ-honoring platforms that provide opportunities for one-on-one evangelism and discipleship, and also for house-church planting. The Apostle Paul is our model of someone using his professional skills (i.e., tentmaking) where necessary to live and serve Christ in difficult contexts.

Additionally, some religio-political systems have demonized missionaries by portraying them as secret, political operatives seeking to destabilize the government. In such settings, Christ’s ambassadors forego using the M-word (“missionary”), which conveys the wrong meaning to the locals.

Most countries welcome foreigners to come in as experts in professional capacities and provide needed services and training. God’s “foreigners” thus go, motivated by Calvary love for those nations and citizens. When they are established in their new host country, they find opportunities to communicate Christ in a context of compassion by serving the felt needs of the people in order to awaken their unmet spiritual needs. By establishing *redemptive relationships* first, they gain a hearing for the gospel that might not have occurred otherwise.

Understanding Why

“But isn’t it dishonest to pretend they’re not missionaries?”

No, these men and women are forthrightly Christian and professional in

meeting the government requirements for the visa granted. Integrity is paramount; they are, and do, what is expected by the officials. Personally and prudently sharing their faith in culturally appropriate ways seldom causes problems. In some hostile environments where government agents monitor them, local officials themselves often come to respect our personnel, even to the point of protecting and helping them!

“But isn’t it dangerous sometimes?” Yes, sometimes. However, these specialists receive training and know how to function in hostile contexts. They do not take foolish risks. But they have taken up their cross to follow Jesus, and His cross was not

a safe place.

Remember the two young ladies doing humanitarian work in Afghanistan who were kidnapped in 2007 and held by the Taliban? After they escaped and found their way back to their Baptist church in Texas, they expressed their desire to return to the field saying, “Let me go where it is hard to share Your name.”

God is raising up a new generation of servant soldiers who are willing to go beyond closed doors for the cross. Will you join them? ■

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Unchanging Truths

by John J. Forry

It has often been said, “One thing that is constant is change.” The time clock continually moves on and the date on the calendar keeps changing. You and I age with the passing of time. Infants grow to become children and continue to adulthood. Even those of us who were once young parents have become grandparents.

Technology has brought many changes, such as: the computer and cell phones. The speed of travel has changed our ability to encompass the globe very quickly. The medical advances have changed man’s span of life and productivity. People are living longer today than previously. Some changes are good. We rejoice at the transformation of hearts and lives by a new birth experience, then as they grow spiritually, the added responsibilities in church life bring change in their service to God. There are some changes that are neither good nor bad. The aging process is a reality which cannot be remedied. Other changes are bad such as the breakup in marriages (the husband goes one

way and the wife another) or wayward sons and daughters that resent the godly teachings of their parents and leave home to live in sin. We also see about us a great apostasy in the hearts and lives of many people that once embraced the cardinal (important) doctrines of the Christian faith, but have departed from them and are living like the world. Let us consider the fact, there are some things that never change.

God never changes. “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6). God is immutable. He is perfect. He cannot and does not change. In order to change, it must be for the better or for the worse. God cannot get better, because that would mean He was less than perfect. He is omniscient, He is all knowing and cannot improve. Neither can God get worse, which means He would become imperfect. But the Bible says He is holy. Because our God never changes, we can always come to one who is gracious, bringing comfort to those who accept His grace.

The Apostle James describes God as “the Father of lights, with whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning” (1:17).

The Prophet Samuel told King Saul that “the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent” (1 Samuel 15:29). We are reminded that God’s nature and character is without change. The Hebrew writer says that God the Son doesn’t change. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever” (13:8). Churches and church leaders may come and go but the unchanging and sufficient Christ of our salvation holds us secure. Henry Lute said it well in the hymn, “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

God’s Word never changes. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). To younger people, change is a treat, but to older folks, it’s a threat. We like our comfort zone. God’s Word is settled. It is relevant today. Satan questioned the authority of God’s Word to Eve by questioning her, “Hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1). To doubt God’s Word destroys its authority. The atheists, agnostics, scientists, Bible college professors, liberal pastors, and various religious people ignore, and laugh at the Scriptures and try to explain away their truth, but they still stands.

Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments . . . shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). To disobey the Word of God is to unlock its authority upon our lives. It opens the door to violate in other areas. Our response to the Bible should be like a saying I read, “Methods are many, principles are few; methods can change, principles never do” (Warren W. Wiersbe).

The Word of God not only is settled but it “endureth forever” (1 Peter 1:25). It was born in eternity. It is rooted in history and speaks to every generation through the ages of eternity. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Whatever is touched by sin must pass away, but the

Word of God is untouched. David said, “The words of the LORD are pure words” (Psalm 12:6). King Jehoiakim tried to burn the Word of God and authorities of various countries have attempted to confiscate it as well. However, the Scriptures can neither be changed nor destroyed. They will endure beyond the end of this earth.

God’s will for man never changes. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8). God’s disobedient people misunderstood the requirements as stated by Micah. Their spiritual blindness led them to offer everything except the one thing He wanted which was obedience.

First, God requires that we come to Him as broken sinners needing to be saved. The only people God can save are lost people, and the only people He can forgive are guilty people. If we can see ourselves as God sees us, then we can by faith become what He wants us to become. A spiritual commitment of the heart from which right behavior would ensue will be just and merciful (good ethics and consideration for others) and live in humble obedience to God.

Jesus summarized the law by saying that we are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30, 31). We are to be surrendered to Christ so sincerely that we will have no problem with His commandments. Truly, God has a rightful claim on the lives of all people.

God’s promises never change. There are over 2,809 promises recorded in the Bible from God to man. In Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the temple, he said, “Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant” (1 Kings 8:56). He recognized the faithfulness of God in the life of Israel and exhorted Israel to faithfulness to the Lord. The first promise in the Bible was that a Saviour would come

to defeat Satan on behalf of man's sin. Christ, the seed of the woman bruised Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). The same God that kept His Word by fulfilling all His promises in Christ also establishes us in our relationship to Christ.

"For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea [answer], and in him Amen [so be it], unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). God has promised pardon for every sinner that cries out to God in repentance. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6, 7). Jesus has promised that He "will come again" and receive us to Himself (John 14:3). At His second coming, He will take us to be with Him. Can you say with the songwriter, Lanta Wilson Smith, "I believe the promises of God, I can trust His never failing Word; when earthly hopes shall fail, or hosts of sin assail, I rest upon the promises of God"? We can trust in these promises as we comply with the conditions that accompany them.

Final destinies never change. Jesus said to those on His left hand that were guilty of sins of omission, "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). The words *eternal* and *everlasting* come from the same Greek word. Both are eternal.

At the end of life, we go to one of two destinies—either Heaven or Hell. If Heaven lasts forever, then Hell also lasts forever. The Bible does not speak of annihilation for the unrighteous dead. Revelation 14:9-11 includes the words "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Jesus taught us that there are only two paths in life; we must choose one. There is the broad road that leads to destruction. If we live for Satan and self by rejecting the love and mercy that God extends to us, we will be cast into the lake of fire, that is prepared

for the devil and his angels, which is the second death, eternally separated from God and all that is good. Those who choose the narrow road will enter eternal life. If we live for God, we die to the old carnal nature and accept the provision of salvation through Jesus Christ, and we will be received into the glories of Heaven forevermore.

Let us consider some aspects of our lives that should never change:

Our commitment to God should never change. Remember our baptismal vows? We promised "to faithfully abide in the same until death." The Bible says, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:5). Are we being faithful to our vows among the winds of change in our day?

Our commitment to the Church should not change. As we strive to be a Biblical Church, can the Lord and the brotherhood in our local congregation count on your loyal support to the covenant which we made? Every church member needs brotherhood accountability for one's spiritual security. Criticizing the church and church hopping produces instability in the family.

Our commitment to our spouse should never change. When a man and woman are married, God joins them as "one flesh" as long as they both shall live. The Bible gives no room for divorce and remarriage as an option. A commitment that never changes extends love, patience, kindness, and forbearance to each other.

Our word should never change. Jesus said, "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay" (Matthew 5:37). As Christians we should be known as honest people, and our character should be so true, that we will not need any kind of oath to get people to believe in us. In light of the fact that God never changes and at times when changes may be necessary, we should always analyze the change from an eternal perspective.

May we find peace and stability in our lives from a God who never changes. ■



Counseling From the Word

What/Whom Do I Fear?

by Dan Beachy

Suddenly the whole world is asking questions about what is happening to the “secure pillars” of society. The economy appears very unstable. A few short months ago the whole world thought “Wall Street” was as secure as anything could be. The economy was expanding as real estate prices rose through the “stratosphere.” As long as this expansion continued without inflation, all was well.

Just as “9-11” forever changed how American society looks at security, the last few months’ economical reports are clearly telling us that our economical pillars are not any more stable than the pillars that were supporting the twin towers in New York City. As this rapid downward spiral continues, millions of jobs have been lost and investments that were considered secure have vanished. Questions that were not even considered in a doubter’s mind a year ago are now on everyone’s mind today. For example:

- Are we facing a recession that will bounce back to “normal” or is this another Great Depression?
- Will my retirement funds be available when I retire?
- What happened to my 401K or IRA money?
- Will my bank be open for business tomorrow morning?
- What will the dollar be worth tomorrow?
- How will our grandchildren pay for the stimulus package “needed” to get the economy back to “normal”?

As I reflected, I quickly concluded that each person must choose his or her fears. It is easy to become fearful by watching the economical

reports every month. Where my security is focused will determine my fears. If my security is based on the economy, my fears will intensify as the monthly government reports document the validity of that fear.

If, on the other hand, my heart fears the awesome and just God of the universe and I know that He loves me and provides for me, I have nothing else to fear. *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Tim. 1:7).

I am reminded of several additional Scriptures: *“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). *“And he said to man, ‘The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding’”* (Job 28:28 NIV). *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”* (Romans 8:15).

As I began reflecting on the fear of God, I became aware that this is not the type of fear that causes me to hide in terror. Instead, I respect and reverence who God is and that He loves me. As we noted in 1 John 4:18, *“Perfect love casteth out fear.”*

In conclusion, I choose whom I will fear. When I choose to fear God and experience His love for me as His child, I find security in Him as the economy shakes and the economical pillars crumble. *“Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere Him”* (Psalm 33:8 NIV).

What or whom do you choose to fear? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Life Ministries newsletter*, March 2009.

A Guarantee for Child-Training?

by Howard Bean

How are we to understand Proverbs 22:6? “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Does this statement have the force of a promise to be claimed by parents of growing children? Should parents of wayward children feel guilty? Does the existence of a rebellious or spiritually apathetic adult call for a confession by the parents? Should parents be assured they are not to blame for waywardness?

Various opinions and interpretations have been expressed. Perhaps one’s view is colored by how old one’s children are and how they have turned out. Although I don’t feel certain about the meaning of the verse, let me mention four interpretations and four considerations.

Interpretations

1. *A guarantee.* This view holds that if the parents are truly godly and conscientious in their training, it is certain that each of their children will be a consecrated Christian.

2. *A method.* This interpretation sees the need for parents to observe the child, discover his ways and inclinations, and adapt their training accordingly. In other words, treat each child as an individual. *The Amplified Bible* renders it “Train up a child in the way he should go (and in keeping with his individual gift or bent) and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Some children are academic; others are practical and interested in technical things. Some children are aggressive; others are more passive. Children vary in artistic, musical, mathematical, and creative interests and abilities. The wise parent recognizes differences and refrains from trying to fit them into one mold. Then, when the

child is mature (*old* literally means “hair on the chin, bearded”), he will be well-adjusted, rather than frustrated.

3. *A permanent knowledge.* Although children may be wayward and live in sin, the knowledge of right and wrong which they received as children will remain in adulthood. In fact, this knowledge and the operation of an informed conscience may be instrumental in bringing the prodigal home to God. The prayers, hymns, Bible stories, and love received at Mother’s knee will be recalled many years later. The imprint of parental teaching and example remains with them through the years and confronts them with an ongoing choice of yielding to God or continuing in their sinful ways.

4. *A generalization.* Proverbs 22:6 is an Old Testament proverb. We don’t take all the statements in Proverbs as guarantees or promises. Rather, they make observations, draw conclusions, and show relationships. Thus, Proverbs 22:6 states the direct relationship between childhood training and adult conduct and values.

Haven’t you often noticed the link between a parent’s habits and the child’s ways? Parental attitudes, speech, priorities, and practices are frequently mirrored in the children in matters large and small.

Considerations

1. Children have a will of their own. The Bible teaches that we are creatures of volition—of choice not determinism. Although some children are more strong-willed, all are free to exercise their power of choice for Christ or against.

2. All parents fail in child-training (some more than others). Children live a life of

(continued on page 31)



Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expositional sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by “snail mail” or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

The Works of the Flesh

A Study of Galatians 5:16-21

by Harold S. Martin

There are two possible ways of life set forth in the last portion of Galatians 5. The one is lived in the flesh (with its wicked deeds manifested in verses 19-21). The other brings forth the fruit of the Spirit (producing the beautiful Christian characteristics described in verses 22, 23).

As *offspring of Adam* we inherit the flesh nature, but as *sons of God* we are given a new life (and nature) which is subject to the Holy Spirit. It is the inborn flesh nature that urges us to give in to evil deeds. By way of contrast, it is the Spirit living within who produces good fruit. The Christian conflict is described in Galatians 5:16-18: **“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”**

The flesh nature (the sin nature with which we were born), controlled us before we were saved. When we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and met the conditions of salvation—the Holy Spirit imparted to

us a new nature (the nature of God), and now we have two natures. The old nature has not been eliminated, nor has it been changed. Both natures (the old and the new) dwell side by side within us, and so we need to deliberately walk in the Spirit (verse 16) that we don’t “fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The word *walk* in the original Greek is in the present tense, and speaks of a regular, continuous action.

The word *walk* (verse 16a) means “to advance by steps,” but here it is used figuratively, meaning to conduct ourselves day by day in accord with the directives of the Holy Spirit.

The two natures are contrary to one another. They stand in opposition to each other and work against each other (verse 17). This is the reason for the inner conflict which every Christian experiences. All of us sense a civil war within. All people experience a measure of moral conflict within, but Christians find the conflict within is even more fierce than it was in our unsaved days. Satan works hard because he doesn’t want to lose our loyalty to him. However, as we learn to walk in the Spirit, the flesh becomes increasingly subdued. The Holy Spirit has been given to

enable us to gain the victory over enslavement to sin. Paul describes the struggle more fully in Romans 7:7-25, and tells about the victory in Romans 8:5-9.

Only when one is born of the Spirit, and is yielded to the Spirit's leading, will the individual become victorious over *the pull* of the flesh nature (verse 18). A holy life is never achieved by our own efforts through our own strength. It is produced as we yield to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The works of the flesh are described in Galatians 5:19-21. **“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 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.”**

Paul gives us a list of the works of the flesh. No person can be better outwardly than he is inwardly. He may be able to hide his evil desires for a season, but eventually they will become manifest or evident (verse 19).

We note too that Paul's list of fleshly works is not complete. The list is rather comprehensive, but it is concluded with the words “and such like” (verse 21a). The list of fleshly works includes deeds of *impurity*, sins of *idolatry*, sins of *hostility*, and sins of *intemperance*—but there are other “works of the flesh.”

1. Sins of Impurity

The sins of impurity include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness. These are works of the flesh. There is no room for compromise. Immorality shall have no place in the Christian life. William Barclay says that every imaginable form of immorality was commonly and openly practiced in New Testament times—by rulers, philosophers, poets, priests, and

many common people—with no sense of shame or remorse. It was the accepted way of life in the ancient world.

Adultery speaks of illicit sex relations on the part of those who are married. Leviticus 18:20 spells it out plainly: “Thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.” Hebrews 13:4b declares that God will judge “whoremongers and adulterers.”

There are various forms of adultery. These include the *physical* adultery (described in Leviticus 18:20), the *mental* adultery (which involves fantasizing, or saturating the mind with illicit thoughts), and *legalized* adultery (which includes the remarriage of one who is divorced, when the original partner is still living). And then there is a plan which can be called *communal* adultery (where men and women live in a community arrangement that allows freedom for anyone to sleep with any other person).

When God established the home He designed that one man should live with one woman, and the two should become one flesh. The sin of adultery is not a trivial matter.

Fornication speaks of illicit sexual relations among the unmarried. A recent issue of *U. S. News & World Report* indicates that *ten percent of all girls* in the United States have had sexual intercourse by the age of 13. Couples that live together like husband and wife—before marriage—are living in fornication. As a result of the rampant sexual impurity, hundreds of teenage youth are being infected with venereal diseases every day.

Uncleanness describes those who may not necessarily commit outward acts of immorality, but whose thoughts and desires are unclean. Uncleanness is stimulated by reading pornographic literature, dwelling on obscene pictures, and telling smutty, suggestive stories. It is aggravated further by the present-day emphasis on wearing less and less and exposing more and more.

Lasciviousness speaks of uncontrolled

lust. Individuals can be guilty of uncleanness, but when they become lascivious, they become so immoral that they shock public decency by their conduct. One who becomes lascivious has gone so far into impurity that he no longer cares what God or what man thinks about his actions.

These have been sins of impurity. Satan is a vicious liar. He has been trying over the years to stir wrong sexual desires by implying that *secret adulterous love* is more exciting than *true married love*. The moral depravity that is sweeping the world is a cause for concern. Sexual misconduct deeply grieves the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

2. Sins of Idolatry

The “works of the flesh” include a second category which we have labeled sins of idolatry. These include one evil called “idolatry” and another called “witchcraft” [sorcery].

Idolatry is the act of giving something other than the true and living God the principal place in our affections. Most people in our society do not worship gods of wood and stone, but it is easy for us to set our affections on gods of chrome and steel and glass. Some worship the gods of pleasure and fashion and material things. Shopping malls are the cathedrals where multitudes are worshiping in recent times. A newer Milton Bradley game is called “Mall Madness.”

Multitudes plan and scheme for the future like the man in the parable that Jesus told in Luke 12:16-21. The man was prospering financially more and more each year. His barns were full. He was a good man; he was an outstanding farmer; but he was preoccupied with material things. While he was still in the midst of his plans for the future, a Breath out of eternity spoke to him and said, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20).

Witchcraft is translated from the Greek word *pharmakeia*, which refers to

“the use of drugs.” Today, the word *witchcraft* (or “sorcery”) refers to those who claim to have superhuman powers, abilities to cause spells, to use magic, and to attain secret knowledge gleaned from evil spirits. These practices were widespread in the pagan cultures, but Israel was prohibited from allowing sorcerers, spiritists, mediums, necromancers, and the like in their midst. In ancient times drugs were used for a variety of purposes, but especially for abortion.

Many colleges are now offering courses on witchcraft. Superstition is closely related to witchcraft. Some carry a rabbit’s foot, hang a horseshoe above the barn door, cross their fingers when making a decision, or spit when a black cat crosses their path. Believers who have to trust in *luck*, instead of consulting God in *prayer*, are guilty of minding the things of the flesh.

The popular Harry Potter books place an emphasis on witchcraft. A letter recorded in the August 19, 2000, issue of the *World* magazine expresses dismay at the content of the Potter books. The writer says, “*Witchcraft was a part of my life before Christ stepped into my life. [Witchcraft] is not a laughing matter, nor is it child’s play.*” We are not to dabble with occult practices—including fortune-telling and witchcraft.

3. Sins of Hostility

There is a third category of *works of the flesh*, which we have labeled “sins of hostility.” Many of the sins of hostility are closely related, and so there will be only a brief description of each expression of animosity.

Hatred is a strong dislike (a feeling of ill will) toward another person. The Apostle John declares, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). For some, hatred is a way of life. Such persons are essentially murderers even though they may never have committed the overt act of murder. We must always be careful to use the word *hatred*

only for hating a *wrong cause* (like intolerance and injustice), not for hating *individual persons*.

Variance speaks of disputes and quarrels that cause discord among brethren. There are too many church members who are simply not easy to get along with. Many are *dreadfully touchy* and *easily offended*. Some are stubborn and bull-headed, and just plain contrary. May the Lord deliver all of us from these carnal and wicked characteristics!

Emulations is a term that speaks of those who desire to surpass others. The Greek word, *zelos*, can denote both good and bad qualities. It is used sometimes to mean zeal and enthusiasm in pursuing a noble task, but here it speaks primarily of a begrudging resentment which envies the good fortune of others.

Wrath speaks of violent forms of anger. It represents storms of uncontrolled temper. It pictures the person who loses control when the car won't start or the fish won't bite or the calf won't drink or the meals aren't ready on time. The husband who steps out of the room and slams the door behind him because something doesn't suit him—is displaying such fits of temper. Such conduct indicates that he is still under the grip of the lower nature.

Strife is translated from a Greek word which means “office seeking” or “canvassing for an office.” It describes those who would like to be elevated to a place of responsibility in the church, not so much for the *service* they can render, as for the *prestige* it might bring. The woman described as “the mother of Zebedee’s children” (Matthew 20:20) manifested this spirit when she requested that her sons would be granted a position on either side of the Lord in His kingdom. Some will even manipulate events for their own personal gain.

Seditions speak of divisions. The Greek word refers to any kind of commotion within the church that causes what is commonly known as “church splits.” There may be times when separation from an

apostate group has a place, but in most cases, the primary duty of every Christian is to witness faithfully *right where he is*. The most deplorable splits are those resulting from personality conflicts within the church. When there are *seditions*, the unity and fellowship of the local body of Christ is fractured, and the testimony of the congregation in the community is marred. The divisive tendency (evident in many congregations) is the result of choosing to walk in the way of envy and bickering, rather than in the royal road of love, forgiveness, and magnanimity.

Heresies are ideas (schools of thought) that are contrary to the accepted fundamental historic doctrines of the Christian faith. It seems like some theologians are always trying to dream up something new. All Christians, when listening to teaching and preaching, need to take a lesson from the Bereans, who “searched the scriptures daily, [to find out] whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Envyings speaks of a resentful desire for another’s possessions or advantages. It is closely related to the word *emulations* named earlier in the text (verse 20). One major difference between the two words is that envy is always bad, whereas emulations are not. The word translated *envyings* (used here in verse 21) is a totally evil concept and has no possibilities for good. The earlier word (emulations) may resent the good fortune of others, but the word (envy) being considered here *is so resentful* that it may plot to destroy the other person.

Murders is a reminder that snuffing out a human life involves more than sticking a knife into another person. It is possible *to cast looks* that are filled with murder, and *to speak words* that are intended to slay. Many a husband has brought his wife to an early death by his lack of love, his mean, unappreciative spirit toward her, and his unfaithfulness to her.

The evils labeled as *hatred* and *wrath* and *strife* and *envyings* and *seditions* are sins of hostility. The ultimate corrective for

strife and hatred and violence is respect for human beings, and a genuine love for fellow Christians. We need to join Alexander Whyte in a prayer that he often prayed: “O God, let it not be ill with me when it’s well with others. Let me have the Holy Spirit, a fresh anointing of His presence and power, to promote my brother’s good!”

4. Sins of Intemperance

The final category in the list of the “works of the flesh” is what we choose to call sins of intemperance. The two terms in this category have obvious meanings.

Drunkness is a condition caused by drinking alcoholic beverages. The reference is to being intoxicated with strong drink. In the United States of America there are more than ten million confirmed alcoholics. Nearly four out of five high school seniors have drunk alcohol within any given month. Drunkness is not a disease; it is, instead, a devastating sin.

When the Judgment Day comes, the lame excuse which says that alcoholism is a disease will not pass. The drunkard is listed in Scripture along with thieves, extortioners, and sodomites, as those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

Drunkness has killed more persons than all the wars of history put together. During the Vietnam War, 50,000 American soldiers were killed. During that same period, five times that number (250,000 people) were killed in our own country—by automobile accidents caused by drunken drivers. Drinking alcohol has drained more blood, broken more homes, and brought more misery than any other scourge that has ever cursed the human race. Drunkness is a shameful and degrading work of the flesh, and obviously has no place in the life of a Christian.

Revellings is a term associated with carousing and debauchery. The Greek word also indicates “wild parties” and “horsing around.” Revellings refers to disorderly merrymaking, including celebrations that are typical at wild parties. The

term speaks of engaging in loose, loud, frivolous, and boisterous behavior. The practice of serenading a newly married couple as carried out in some communities (locally known as a “rattle band” or “shivaree”)—relates closely to what is described by the Greek word *komoi*. Revellings are common (in the world about us) when celebrating weddings, anniversaries, and holidays. The Bible says that our conduct as believers, by way of contrast, should portray *a gentle and quiet spirit*, which is very precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4b).

Paul concludes the list with the words “and such like.” This is an indication that the list is not exhaustive. There are many other works of the flesh similar to those given in verses 19-21a that are just as nefarious as the seventeen sins listed in the text. God surely would include evils such as lying, slander, flattery, murmuring, complaining, covetousness, suspicion, smoking, impatience, rebellion, and injustice.

The tense of the verb translated “do” means “to habitually continue” in the fleshly sins (verse 21b), rather than an isolated falling into the evil. Those who keep practicing such sins are not being led by God’s Spirit, and are warned that they shall not inherit God’s kingdom. There is a difference between falling into sin (through carelessness), and living in sin (as a settled choice of life). True children of God hate these sins and shrink from them—and if they *do* yield to temptation, they are in misery until they have confessed the sin and cried to God for mercy.

The way to gain increasing victory over the works of the flesh is found in verses 16 and 18 of Galatians 5, where we are admonished to “walk in the Spirit,” and to be “led of the Spirit.” To be “led” of the Spirit means more than to be *guided* by Him; it means to be *controlled* by Him. ■

—Copies of this article sent free on request from BIBLE HELPS, P. O. Box 391, Hanover, PA 17331 U.S.A.

His Work— Our Generation

by Mark D. Avery

Difficult times have often seemed the norm for the Church. Old Testament Israel struggled with opposition. The New Testament Church faced near constant pressure and persecution from her enemies. The history of the Christian Church is full of accounts of struggle, oppression, and martyrdom.

Interestingly, challenges often brought about good. Israel's history could be described as a series of highs and lows. God would demonstrate His patience and forgiveness, come to their rescue, and miraculously deliver them. They would serve Him for a while before forgetting and repeating the cycle.

It was different for New Testament believers. Abuse came to them, not as a result of sin, but because of their faithfulness to God. He worked through them, and lives were changed. For reasons we cannot fully explain, sinners were angered and took it out on those who were a credit to their society. The Church in New Testament times produced many converts and many martyrs. The Book of Acts recounts the story. The Church would minister effectively, enemies of the Church would react, the Church would pray, and God would give a renewed filling with the Spirit. In response the Church would boldly and effectively proclaim the gospel, and the Church would be encouraged, edified, and enlarged. A powerful force this gospel, especially when proclaimed and practiced by Spirit-filled believers.

The Church today certainly labors under

harsh conditions. Scholars suggest that the Church had more martyrs in the twentieth century than in any previous century. The world still is no friend to grace. The whole world system hates the Church.

Christians living in America are spared much of the physical persecution suffered by fellow believers around the world. Yet in the midst of this supposed benefit, the Church languishes, while our counterparts around the world experience grace and growth far beyond our expectations.

The stock market has declined; recession blankets the world; prognosticators agree only that they know neither how deep nor how long these present difficulties will be.

Negativism and fear dominate the daily news. Yet all is not lost. The gospel always has a positive message in the face of fear. Study the New Testament. Note the number of times phrases like "fear not" or "let not your heart be troubled" are used, even in the worst of times—especially in the worst of times.

I do not propose that these are the worst of times. I do propose that we are placed in these times on purpose, and that God wants to reach the world through us.

How can it be done? God can reach the world through us if we allow Him to fill us with His Spirit, thus enabling us to do His work in our generation. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Church Herald and Holiness Banner*, March 2009.

Great Music Emanates From Greatness of God

by Haven Bradford Gow

Protestant scholar James Sire, co-author of *Deepest Differences: A Christian-Atheist Dialogue* (Intervarsity), says the great music of Mozart and Bach is a sign that God really does exist. In this regard, he echoes the sentiments of Boston College scholars Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli who tell us in their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Intervarsity) that “There is the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Therefore there must be a God. You either see this one or you don’t.”

According to music critic Jane Smith and social critic Betty Carlson, co-authors of *The Gift of Music* (Crossway), music “comes from our being made in the image of God, and we know God is for the arts and has relegated to men and women wonderful gifts of creativity. Often these gifts have not been used for God’s glory, however, nor do all artists acknowledge where their skills have come from. . . . Nevertheless, we can delight in great paintings, architecture, literature, music, etc. . . . We do need to ask for discernment, though, so we will seek that which is wholesome and beautiful.”

George Frederick Handel (1685-1759) once remarked: “It [my music] pleased the Almighty, to whose great Holy will I submit myself with Christian submis-

sion,” while Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) once said: “Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with His gracious presence.”

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809) once declared: “Since God has given me a cheerful heart, He will forgive me for serving Him cheerfully,” while Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) once affirmed: “God is ever before my eyes, I realize His omnipotence and I fear His anger; but I also recognize His love, His compassion, and His tremendous tenderness toward His creatures.”

Certainly the great music of Vivaldi, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Handel was motivated and inspired by a religious worldview, vision, and faith; and it has stood the test of time. Generations have recognized the enduring worth, beauty, and quality of great music, and its wholesome and beneficial effect, while heavy metal and Satanic music continue to have deleterious personal and social consequences.

Clearly, we must help young people develop the moral, spiritual, and intellectual discernment to say yes to the great music of our truly great composers and say no to music that degrades human beings and promotes and glamorizes anti-social thinking and conduct. ■



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Holy, Holy, Holy



by Heber/Dykes

Lyrics: The threefold “Holy” that makes up the backbone of this hymn is found twice in the Bible, in two separate but similar circumstances. The first occurrence of this particular repetition is found in Isaiah 6, which chronicles Isaiah’s call to be a prophet. In a vision, Isaiah sees the Lord “. . . sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (verse 1). The other beings in his vision were the seraphim, for which no description is offered other than the description of the six wings that each possessed. As they flew around the throne, they called out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”

A similar scenario is described in Revelation 4, where the Apostle John is taken up to Heaven in a vision. The first thing he sees is the throne room, and the description has some striking similarities to the vision of Isaiah. The “four creatures” are described in much greater detail than the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision, but they have six wings, and their message is almost the same: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!”

In addition to the threefold “holy” and some of his own thoughts, Reginald Heber (1783-1826) pulled much of the wording for this hymn straight from the Revelation passage, and borrowed some of the ideas from Isaiah. The first verse

cites the phrase that is the same in both passages, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” The second verse draws mainly from Revelation, and describes the twenty-four elders who “cast their crowns before the throne” (Revelation 4:10). It also uses the second part of the “Holy” statement, “Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.” “Tho’ the darkness hide Thee” in verse 3 takes us back to Isaiah. Although not a direct quote, it seems to reference the smoke that filled the temple during Isaiah’s vision. Isaiah’s response to the vision was “Woe is me . . . for mine eyes have seen the King,” which Heber captures as “Tho’ the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see.” The second part of the “Holy” statement in Isaiah is “The whole earth is filled with Thy glory.” The final verse translates this into, “All Thy works shall praise Thy name.”

Music: After earning a degree from Cambridge University, John B. Dykes (1823-1876) was active in the Anglican church for the rest of his life. Although Dykes wrote many sermons and other articles, he is remembered primarily for his hymn tunes, many of which are still used regularly. Some of his other hymns are “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” “Eternal Father, Strong to Save,” and “O Perfect Love.” ■

Holy, Holy, Holy

They rest not day and night saying Holy, holy, holy. – REV. 4:8

REGINALD HEBER, 1783-1826

12. 13. 12. 10. P. M.

J. B. DYKES

1. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, Lord God Al-might - y! Ear - ly in the
2. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, all the saints a - dore Thee, Cast - ing down their
3. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, tho' the dark-ness hide Thee, Tho' the eye of
4. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, Lord God Al-might - y! All Thy works shall

morn - ing our song shall rise to Thee; Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly,
gold-en crowns a-round the glass - y sea; Cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim,
sin - ful man Thy glo - ry may not see; On - ly Thou art ho - ly!
praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea; Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly,

mer - ci - ful and might - y, God in Three Per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!
fall - ing down be - fore Thee, Which wert, and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.
there is none be - side Thee, Per - fect in pow'r, in love, in pu - ri - ty.
mer - ci - ful and might - y, God in Three Per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!

A Guarantee for Child Training? . . . cont'd from page 22

Christian discipleship *in spite of* failures, not because of parental perfection. All of us and our children are saved by the grace of God. At the same time, it is recognized that parents exert a powerful influence Godward or worldward.

3. Parental influence is only part of the total influence on a child. Perhaps we could picture the human influences on a child as a pie cut in three pieces of approximately the same size, with the pieces labeled "parents," "other people," and "own way."

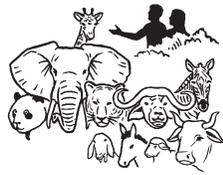
4. Parental influence is significant and long-lasting. Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the

importance of training or its lack. There is sometimes a traceable relationship between wayward children and weak or inconsistent parents. Conversely, faithful children often point to the firm, loving, consistent training and example of their parents as being highly significant in their lives.

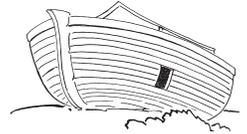
Parents, train up your child. Know the way he should go: teach it. Show the way he should go: practice it. Your influence is great.

P. S. In my opinion, Proverbs 22:6 is stating a generalization not a guarantee. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries newsletter*, March/April 2009.



Beginning Issues



Blind Faith or Logical Faith?

by John Mullett

When we understand how our axioms or presuppositions determine how we interpret evidence it becomes clear (in spite of the claims of many) the debate of creationism vs. evolution is not a faith vs. science argument. An evolutionary interpretation of our world requires faith just as any other belief system does. *There are no exceptions.* The test to validate a belief system lies in the reliability of its historical accounts or documentation and how logically the interpretation works out in light of experimentation. The problem with faith in an evolutionary interpretation compared to faith in a creator is how illogical it actually is. To believe in evolution would actually require me to go against what good operational science demonstrates. For example, nowhere in nature has science ever observed even one process that can generate new information. There are processes that affect change in populations by acting on existing information, but never has a process been observed to create new information. For evolution to be true that has to happen!

Natural selection and genetic mutations are championed as the primary mechanisms of evolution, but those processes *always* represent either a loss of information, or in the case of natural selection, sometimes a rearranging of existing information in the genetic pool represented. While beneficial traits can emerge as a result of these processes they cannot account for entirely new features that were not previously coded for in the gene pool. In everything science has ever observed information always comes from a greater source of information and the only logical answer for that is an original infinite source of information—God. Therefore, evolution not only requires faith, it is a blind faith.

Unfortunately faith is often seen as a blind belief of something I cannot prove. While faith cannot be proven, as demonstrated in the first paragraph, it can be and should be of sound logic. This does not mean we will always understand or figure out every mystery. We must remember we are finite beings with limited knowledge. Sadly it is not only the

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

unbeliever who lives out of blind faith, but far too many of us as Christians are doing likewise. I believe a good measure of responsibility for the status of our culture lies with the Church and our inability to provide sound logical reasons for our faith. When our faith provides answers and lasting solutions for real world problems those around us take notice. A logical faith not only provides real solutions, but in doing so provides hope. To say there are many around us looking for hope is an understatement and especially so in the midst of the current economic crisis.

Let us live our lives as prescribed in 1 Peter 3:15, *“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”* (ESV). The Greek word translated as *defense* here (*answer* in the KJV) is *apologia* from which we get our English word *apologetic/s*. This verse is literally commanding us to give an *apologetic* for the reason or word of hope within us. To give a good *apologetic* we must have a logical faith. ■



Who Can Stand Before Envy?

by Jason H. Martin

The Bible asks this question: *“Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?”* (Proverbs 27:4). Envy is harder to root out in our lives than many other evil passions. We cringe when someone has a fit of anger, or run and hide when they give vent to their wrath, but who can stand before envy? Envy is very deeply rooted and subtle. It seeks to kill. *Webster’s* says envy is a feeling of antagonism toward someone because of some good he is enjoying but which one does not have oneself.

According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, there is a difference between jealousy and envy. The distinction lies in this, that *jealousy* desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself, whereas *envy* desires to deprive another of what he has. Covetousness is simply a desire for more. So we see that envy is different in that it

seeks to take away the good that another is experiencing.

May God help us not to get tangled in this sin. Saul had the problem of envy. *“And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?”* (1 Samuel 18:8). We know that many times Saul tried to deprive David of what he had. We see it so clearly in Saul but maybe not in our own lives.

God has a place for each of us to fill in the church; why should we waste time envying the role someone else is called to fill? Have we learned like Paul to be content in whatever state we are in? Yes, we must learn it and learn it again sometimes.

“Does the place you’re called to labor seem too small and little known? It is

great if God is in it and He'll not forget His own. Little is much when God is in it. Labor not for wealth or fame; There's a crown and you can win it, if you go in Jesus' name" (Kittie L. Suffield).

Envy nailed Jesus to the cross. They sought to deprive Jesus of what He had. Even Pilate "knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matthew 27:18).

Nations have fallen before envy. One has to wonder how many church problems today would be fixed if all envy was removed? "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Corinthians 3:3-8). Too many times we are as naive as the people of Lystra who thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods who came down in the likeness of men. They even named Paul and Barnabas after their gods. But they were just men ministering the gospel. He that plants and he that waters are one. We are thankful for the teaching of equality in the church. Never should we exalt one office above another; we are all laborers together with God.

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30). A person filled with envy will lack in strength. Envy fills our life with bitterness. We become upset and miserable and do not know why. It appears that envy can even sap us of physical strength.

The prodigal son's elder brother said to his father, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my

friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (Luke 15:29, 30). The elder brother was so caught up in adding up all his faithful years of service, he overlooked mercy and forgiveness. His father reminded him that "all that I have is thine." So we see that he was more upset over his younger brother's acceptance than over something he himself was being deprived of.

"And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day" (Matthew 20:11, 12). Here it is again. They were more upset over the last receiving just as much as they, than about themselves receiving what they had formerly agreed upon. May God help us to never wish evil on anyone, but rather rejoice with them that do rejoice.

The struggle in the Middle East has to do with envy. It appears that before the Jews became prosperous in the land of Israel, the neighboring countries were not so driven to take over the land. It could also be that they are envious of the covenants that God made with Israel.

How to overcome envy: Rejoice with them that do rejoice. God is good to all of us. Be content with your lot in life. Why do we want to appear big and important anyway? The Lord takes delight in small insignificant things. Who cares if others are way ahead of us?

Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). He said take heed **and** beware; a double warning. *Take heed* means "to stare at; to discern clearly." *Beware* means "to watch and be on guard."

Let us ever watch unto prayer that we might be kept from secret sin. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Watchword Messenger*, 2007.

I SHALL NOT WANT

by Jason Padgett



Some passages of Scripture become so familiar to us that they can lose their impact on us. This loss is terrible when it happens because some of the most precious promises are the ones we end up either taking for granted or forgetting when we need them most; or worse, we fail to believe these promises apply to our circumstances! One of those familiar passages is the opening verse of the Twenty-third Psalm: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” We know the words well. We even claim to love them, but do we really grasp the reality of this great truth: The faithful child of God never lacks the bountiful supply of God?

As simple and encouraging as this verse sounds, do we really believe it in a change-your-life kind of way? I am convinced that if this truth that the Lord cares for His child in a real and tangible way penetrated our careworn and furrowed brows, we might just live, love, and give differently from the way we do now.

Knowing that as a child of God I never lack God’s supply could be very liberating. Instead of living as if my survival in this world depends upon my own resourcefulness, skill, and drive, I can shift my focus from fleeting ideas of success by the world’s standards to something more eternal. I can more easily distinguish between my selfish desires and my genuine needs and still find sat-

isfaction. Don’t be confused by the phrase, “I shall not want.” There will be plenty of things in life I “want,” but my Shepherd ensures I’ll never lack anything when I’m following Him faithfully. As the storekeeper in Maine who refused to buy a salesman’s wares said: “You must remember, young fellow, that in this part of the country every want ain’t a need.”

Living that way can also change the way we love and give. With God as our Source we don’t have to search our own reserves before we can commit to helping others or to giving to God’s work. “I shall not want” goes beyond my own needs to my ability to minister to others on the Lord’s behalf. This truth is well-known to those in full-time Christian service. As the great missionary statesman Hudson Taylor noted in his journal:

“Our heavenly Father is a very experienced One. He knows very well that His children wake up with a good appetite every morning. . . . He sustained three million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. We do not expect He will send three million missionaries to China; but if He did, He would have ample means to sustain them all. . . . Depend on it, God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Bible Broadcasting Network International newsletter*.

Teaching Honesty and Truthfulness

by Wilmer Ebersole

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Honesty is the best policy." I once saw a sign that stated, "There is no legacy so great as honesty." We do not teach honesty because man says it is best but, rather, because God insists on it. God is truth; indeed, God hates lying. A fearful, eternal end awaits all liars (Revelation 21:8).

The flowerpot was lying on the floor when Mother entered the room. Four children are gathered around. How will Mother find out which one spilled it? She asks, "Who spilled the plant?" Each child answers, "Not I."

With Mother's question comes a test to the child who spilled the flower. He can think quite rapidly. He has a choice to make. If he says the truth, he may be punished, and that hurts. The other choice is to lie. He may escape punishment.

Mother knows one has lied. Now what? Through a little time and individual counsel Mother found it to be four-year-old David.

Now two people become accountable. David had been accountable to give the right answer. He has lied and experiences guilt. How weighty it is! The pain of guilt is greater than the feared punishment. Mother has also now become accountable to remove the guilt. David may not need to be punished for spilling the flower, but will need to be punished for lying.

Parents should encourage their children to acknowledge their mistakes before a confrontation is needed. We need to be careful about our approach to draw out the truth. The way we word our questions can

actually encourage or discourage honesty. Carefully watching expression and action usually reveals guilt sooner or later.

Why do honesty and truthfulness need to be taught? Man's depravity naturally prompts him to pursue whatever pleases self or maintains his reputation. Lying comes so easily. This nature that all are born with militates against being truthful. Therefore, honesty needs to be taught.

What needs to be taught? Children need to be taught that lying is wrong and will be punished. Many people believe that a "white" lie is necessary at times and is not wrong. Lies are never white and are always wrong. Children also need to be taught that the rewards of honesty are greater than any pain or humiliation it may bring. Honesty lifts one's character, while lying lowers it.

Sometimes the three-year-old tells a cute story. Parents are amazed at the ability of his imagination. Children may need guidance to outgrow their fantasy world.

Sometimes a child has accidentally damaged property. We know that it should be made right. The manner and method with which a parent rectifies the damage will communicate to the child. He needs a "restore him fourfold" example to follow.

Allowing a child to use the teacher's guide to fill out the Sunday school lesson is encouraging dishonesty.

When is the prime time to teach children honesty? The sooner the better! Children are accountable to parents until they become accountable to God. It is during these young years that a child's character