

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

VOLUME XX

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POTPOURRI OF PROBLEMS AND PRINCIPLES

Eugene Britnell

P.O. Box 5624
Little Rock, Arkansas 72215



"THE WORD IS OUT"

While preaching in a gospel meeting in the Los Angeles area in October of last year, I happened to watch part of a television talk show on channel 9 where a lady with the television station was interviewing two lesbians. They were discussing a new book called "The Word is Out". After discussing the rights and demands of homosexuals and lesbians and the right and wrong of the practice, the lady asked the women why so many religions condemned homosexuality as being a sin and contrary to the teaching of the Bible. One replied that the Bible was often used "as bigotry" and that it did not condemn homosexuality. Then the real shocker came when one of them said: "After all, Jesus never married. He traveled throughout the land with twelve men, and taught them to love one another."

Think of the implications of those statements! Their arguments are as sorry as they are. In fact the arguments are worse, for they are blasphemy and the lesbians are just plain rotten! Why say that Jesus never married? What did they want the audience to infer from that statement? Do they believe that Jesus Christ was homosexual?

It is regrettable that two of the most beautiful words in our language — gay and love — now have such sinful connotations. When the homosexuals and television personalities talk about "making love" they mean sexual relations. So, when they suggested that Jesus taught his apostles to "love one another," they implied that he was teaching them to practice homosexuality. What a lie!

WHO WILL SACRIFICE?

One of the most uncommon things in Washington,

D. C. is common sense. It is amazing how our public officials can be so out of touch with the public and reality. They are calling upon Americans to conserve gasoline and other forms of energy. If they think that this generation of Americans, reared in affluence, pleasure and selfishness, will give up anything they want and can get — be it alcohol, nicotine, gasoline or whatever — they are unrealistic and in for a big surprise!

Now if they want a little common sense advice, we can give it. They could save millions of gallons of gas by stopping the idiotic bussing of little children across the country which parents don't want in the first place. A lot of jet fuel could be saved if the president would spend a few weekends at home. Then they could encourage parents to keep millions of teenagers off the streets and highway day and night. Besides saving gas, that would make the roads much safer and quieter. Young people might even study, read some good books, and learn to read the Bible.

TOO MANY ARE OUT OF PLACE

Since man left his God-ordained place in Eden, it has been next to impossible to keep him in his place. It is a troublesome problem.

One reason why Gideon was able to overcome thousands of Midianites with only three hundred men was that "they stood every man in his place" (Judges 7:21).

The pope is an overgrown elder — at least the first one was. Sponsoring church elders are out of their God-appointed place. Preachers are often out of place. The modern trend is toward taking women out of their proper place.

Nowhere is this displacement more evident than with the presidents of this nation and the nation itself in recent years. For the past few years, the president seems to feel that he was elected president of the world! He must mediate all world problems, and tell all nations how to govern themselves and conduct their affairs. Our president has just obligated some \$10 billion of our tax money to pay Egypt and Israel not to fight. But that's all right, for we are only \$800 billion in debt! He assured Israel a ten-year supply of oil, something which he can't even do for America. And good old Uncle Sam is supposed to settle the problems and pay the bills of all the world, including those nations we have had to whip and that plan to whip us.

Incidentally, according to the Jews and premillennialists, God is supposed to take care of Israel regardless of what happens. That may be all right for theological argument, but when it comes to the pragmatic approach, Israel must have God and America in order to survive.

Yes, many things and many people are out of place. You may feel that an article like this is out of place in this paper. The editor may agree. If he does, you'll never know that I wrote this.

I HEARD ROY E. COGDILL

On the evening of May 14th, it was my privilege to hear Roy E. Cogdill present a lesson in a series delivered at Pangburn, Arkansas. He spoke on the organization and government of the church. The lesson was typical of the thousands presented by him for more than fifty years — eloquent, plain, powerful and scriptural. No one could misunderstand what he believes about the church and the sinfulness of all human religious organizations. I am thankful that he has the strength of body and mind to continue his proclamation and defense of the truth. If and when you have opportunity, I urge you to hear him preach the gospel.

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

P. O. Box 68
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WHERE IS "HOME"?

In the May 10, 1979 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, editor Ira North wrote an article entitled "our 'Anti-Co-operation' Brethren Should Come Back Home." He told of a visit he and his family made some twelve to fifteen years ago to an "anti" congregation in Florida which had a lovely building and where the parking lot was full of cars. He said the people were cold and formal. More recently he went through the same town and noted only three cars in the parking lot near time for Bible study to begin. From this incident he generalized to reach the conclusion that the so-called "anti" brethren are "drying up and withering away" and admonished all in that category to "come home."

While we have no personal knowledge of the congregation to which he referred, we certainly are not in favor of brethren being cold and formal and regret hearing of congregations drying up and withering away. If his assessment of the situation is correct, it does not justify him in writing: "If the past has proven anything, it has proven the 'anti' doctrine cannot build great churches, inspire missionaries, and encourage pure and undefiled religion." With that observation we take strong exception. It is not an accurate representation of what he calls "anti" doctrine. Further, the matter of what constitutes a "great" church leaves room for dispute as to what standard determines greatness.

What Is a Great Church?

Is greatness in a congregation determined by how many sponsoring church projects are in the budget? Is it reckoned on the basis of how many benevolent and educational institutions are in the budget? Shall it be decided by how large a fleet of buses the church owns? Is it figured by the size of the building and the numbers who gather? Does it depend on puppet shows, attendance drives with governors present, and entertainment from Grand Ole Opry celebrities? Is it measured by such activities as I witnessed on one segment of the *Amazing Grace* TV show filmed at Madison, Tennessee where brother North stopped everything to have the audience engage in a "love feast" wherein everybody stood, shook hands with those beside, behind and in front and told them all "I love you"? Is greatness calculated in terms of award presentations from the editor of a denominational magazine such as the one Norman Vincent Peale presented to Ira North at Madison along with appropriate entertainment and fanfare? Does greatness involve building "Family Life Centers" with facilities for great banquets and gymnasiums in which to play, such as Madison has? Do great churches grow in

climates where their preachers join ranks with Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis and Protestant leaders to fly off to Texas to learn how to build "Inter-Faith" centers? This is the "greatness" which has grown up around the doctrine for which Ira North stands.

Editor Misinformed

We are convinced that brother North is misinformed about those he calls "anti" brethren. Some of this is understandable. Communication has been lost for many years. Some of the leaders among those with whom brother North stands identified have been so caught up in their great schemes and projects that they have really not kept up with the rest of us. His estimate that perhaps only 5% went off with the "anti" movement amounts to whistling past the graveyard. Brethren who have resisted the institutional tide have been busy building congregations. The number grows with each passing week. Many of these are substantial churches with excellent elders, faithful deacons, able preachers and aggressive but scriptural programs of work. Brother North might be greatly surprised if he could find the time to visit what he considers "anti" churches in Birmingham, Louisville, Chicago, Indianapolis, Akron, Houston, Los Angeles and many other places we could name. He might even be surprised right in Nashville to find the number, size and work programs of such churches growing. We have spent nearly a decade in Louisville where within twenty-five miles of downtown Louisville there are at least 24 congregations contending for the old paths and at work for the Lord. Among these churches there are scores of gospel preachers being supported all over the world. Local radio programs have resulted in many conversions over the past few years. Several congregations have been heavily involved in developing and training young preachers. These churches are not drying up and withering. They are not even seriously sick. Every church at times has problems peculiar to itself, including those with whom brother North associates. If he does not know this, then he should exchange papers with Ira Y. Rice, Jr. and he will have a running account of such problems.

Brother North might have benefited from hearing what some of his fellow-lecturers said at Freed-Hardeman College earlier this year, when both Roy Deaver and Rubel Shelly advised a standing room-only crowd that the "anti" movement was alive and growing not only in this country but in other countries as well. Why it has not been long since Ira Rice said in *Contending For The Faith* that he felt more comfortable with some of "us" than with some of those with whom he had stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the past.

Is the Quarantine Over?

It has been a quarter of a century since the *Gospel Advocate* editorially placed the "yellow tag of quarantine" on all those who took a stand against sponsoring churches and church supported human institutions. It was in the wake of that warning that meetings began to be cancelled, pulpits closed, preachers boycotted, feelings and brotherly relations strained. Does brother North no longer fear having us "back home"? Has he found the needed cure? What many of us have asked for all along has been

scriptural authority for what more and more churches were beginning to practice. There have been numerous debates and exchanges in periodicals. In all of these some of us have demanded a "thus saith the Lord" in either general or specific terms, expressed in divine precept, approved apostolic example or necessary inference. Instead of that, we have been treated to emotional appeals, philosophical meanderings, misrepresentations, and insults. Oh yes, there is a balm in Gilead. The salve needed to treat the disease is what the Lord and his inspired apostles taught. If they have not found that yet and we should decide to "come home", what assurance is there that we shall not wither and die from a worse disease that the *Advocate* editor imagines us to have? Those who go onward and "abide not in the doctrine of Christ" have not God (2 Jno. 9-11). Brother North may think our infection of such minor importance as to risk having us "home" but some of us are convinced yet that we cannot afford to risk his infection.

Just Where Is Home?

For the moment, forgetting the *Advocate's* own imposed quarantine, suppose some of us decided to "come home." Just exactly, where is home? Is it with Reuel Lemmons, Roy Lanier, Sr. and others west of the Mississippi River who insist that orphan homes under boards other than the elders of a local church are unscriptural? Or is "home" with Guy N. Woods, and others who insist that they must be under boards? Is "home" with those who yet support Herald of Truth, or is it with Ira Rice, Alan Highers, E.R. Harper and others who have exposed grievous errors in the Highland staff? Is "home" with those who want the college in the church budget, or with those who argue that it is unscriptural? Is "home" with those who think they should join the ministerial associations around the country (as some so-called gospel preachers have done) and who participate in inter-denominational services? Is "home" where churches freely use the college choruses in their great campaigns, and where many churches now have their own special singing groups? Is "home" where free helicopter rides, lucky seats and McDonald Sundays are offered as prizes to lure children to ride "joy" buses? Is "home" where athletes give gymnastic exhibitions on the pulpit in the name of Christ? Is "home" where "junior church" is provided so unruly children can "play" church while "real" church holds forth? Is "home" where there is a proliferation of functionaries besides elders, deacons, preachers, teachers and members, such as "youth ministers", "educational directors", "ministers of finance", and "bus captains"?

This **editor Is At Home** among people who believe the Bible to be the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, that the church is the Lord's grandest work, that it is fully equipped as he arranged it to evangelize, edify itself in love and relieve those who are her charge. He is at home among those who yet believe that the gospel is God's power to save the lost (Rom. 1:16). He is at home among those who believe that the church of the Lord is unique and that it should remain free from entangling and corrupting alliances with purveyors of error. The whole issue, brother North, is where home really is, and who it is that is wasting the Lord's substance in the far

country. Home is where the truth is, where the authority of God and Christ are respected and where the word of God is the last word. A genuine homecoming, where all meet on the sure foundation and everyone takes heed how he builds thereon, would dry many tears, mend multitudes of broken hearts, rejoin estranged comrades-in-arms, cause the Devil and his forces to retreat and advance the cause of truth and righteousness throughout the earth. For that day we earnestly sigh. But brother North and others like him will have to move away from where they now dwell before we can call it "home".

A STUDY OF I CORINTHIANS 7:1-15 —

Part 2 —

In our previous article we considered the nature of the charge, "Do not depart" (verse 10), and found it to be absolute and imperative. We begin a consideration of five different interpretations of the following verse.

1. Active, Future, **Permissive**: "If she separates herself in the future, (this is permitted) but let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband."
2. Active, Future, **Non-Permissive**: "If she separates herself in the future, (contrary to Christ's command), let her remain unmarried and seek to be reconciled to her husband."
3. Past Tense, Active, **Non-Permissive**: "If she has already separated herself, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband."
4. Passive, Future, **Non-Permissive**: "If she is left sometime in the future, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband."
5. Passive, Past Tense, **Non-Permissive**: "If she has already been left, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband."

When we appreciate the obligation to establish authority for our action, we realize that the burden of proof resides with position number one. A claim that permission to act is granted brings with it the obligation to establish authority for that action. All that is necessary to overthrow that claim is to demonstrate one non-permissive possibility. At that point, authority is not established. Doubt is established. The action would, therefore, be sinful (Col. 3:16; Rom. 14:23). In this article we will consider the first two of four non-permissive possibilities.

First Non-Permissive Possibility ACTIVE, FUTURE

Consider the position of some of the leading commentators emphasizing the non-permissiveness of the passage.

Barnes Notes on the New Testament, I Cor., p. 115. "If she have withdrawn by a

rash and foolish act she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled Paul tells them that if they had separated from their husbands, the pure law of Christianity did not recognize this right."

Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, p. 240. "But as to his commanding the wife who is separated from her husband, to remain unmarried, he does not mean by this that separation is allowable nor does he give permission to the wife to live apart from her husband. . . . He does not therefore give permission to the wives to withdraw of their own accord, from their husbands, or to live away from their husband's establishment, as if they were in a state of widowhood."

Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 538. "They are bound to each other for life. The divine law allows no exception."

Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 825. "Paul is not allowing exception to the law of Christ."

Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 523. "It supposes a case of actual separation, contrary of course to Christ's command."

Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 126. "If in spite of Christ's clear prohibition, she gets separated. . . ."

International Critical Commentary, p. 140. "But if (in spite of Christ's command) she goes so far as to separate herself. . . ."

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1240. "For the believer the rule is no separation. . . . In the case of unapproved separation. . . ."

Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 202. "In this, Paul is not granting something in the way of exception but supposes a future case, which will possibly arise, not withstanding the commandment of the Lord just adduced." *'Lang's Commentary*, *Corinthians*, p. 143. "The words point to some possible case of divorce occurring hereafter contrary to the command of Christ. . . ."

New Testament Commentary, by John Wesley, Adam Clark, Matthew Henry, and others. "**But if she depart**" — contrary to this express prohibition:" (Wesley)

John Murray, *Divorce*, p. 60, 61. "The parenthetical clauses — "**But if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband**" — do not relax the stringency of the injunction; they do not have the effect of according any right or liberty to separate oneself or to put away. In other words, the parenthesis does not express an exception to the law enunciated in the prohibition itself. . . .; in

I Corinthians 7:11 no right of separation or dismissal is propounded. Hence any appeal to I Corinthians 7; 11 to defend the right of separation without the right of dissolution is a distortion of the apostle's teaching."

We can appreciate the strong stand taken by these scholars when we look carefully at the context and see that it is non-permissive.

v. 5 "defraud ye not"

v. 10 "Charge . . . that the wife depart not"

v. 11 "that the husband leave not"

v. 12 "let him not leave her"

v. 13 "Let her not leave her husband" Since these verses are plainly prohibitive, there must be a clear indication of permission to justify a position so different from the context. However, instead of permission, we have instructions in case she does leave. Instructions given to one who has done something forbidden do not imply permission to do that thing.

Consider the following parallel:

I Cor. 7:10, 11	I John 2:1
The Lord gives command	I write unto you
that the wife depart	that ye sin not
not from her husband	and
but and	if any man sin,
if she depart	we have an advocate
let her remain unmarried	with the Father,
or be reconciled to her husband.	Jesus Christ the righteous.
Neither Passage is Permissive Neither Gives Approval of the Thing Forbidden Additional Instructions in the Event of Disobedience Do Not Imply Permission!	

One might argue that, while it is true that additional instructions do not imply permission to do something forbidden; still, complying with those instructions would produce an approved condition. In other words, if one complies with the instruction, "remain unmarried," approval would necessarily be implied though reconciliation is not sought. This argument may sound reasonable on the surface; however, it makes unwarranted assumptions.

This position **presumes** that one may choose between two equal alternatives (remain unmarried or be reconciled). The passage does not say that one may choose and the Greek adversative "**de**", translated "or", **does not** necessarily distinguish between two equal alternatives. The **context must** determine the issue.

This context forbids separating; yet, one of the alternatives is to live in a separated condition. The context does not indicate alternatives of equal standing. It stands diametrically opposed to one of them. Therefore free choice between two equal alternatives is not indicated. The absolute command "Depart not," plus the **definition of repentance** demonstrate that an about face (reconciliation) is required if possible. The alternative "remain unmarried" simply anticipates the possible unwillingness of the other spouse.

Consider the position of leading commentators on the obligation to be reconciled.

Barnes on the New Testament, I Cor. p. 115. "Or be reconciled to her husband. Let this be done if possible. If it cannot be, let her remain unmarried. It was a duty to be reconciled if it was possible."

The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 825. "Let her get herself reconciled. . . . If the husband disallows her return, she must remain agamos."

New International Commentary on the New Testament, Corinthians, p. 163, Grosheide. "Reconciliation should be undertaken by the wife with whom the divorce started. Paul mentions two possibilities since it may be that the husband refuses to be reconciled."

John Murray, *Divorce*, p. 62. "He is saying in effect, 'If separation has actually taken place, then certain provisions must be adhered to. Let the breach be healed. Failing that, under no conditions may another marriage be undertaken.' In other words, the parenthesis simply regulates the wrong when it has taken place but does not in the least legitimate the separation itself."

Matthew Henry's view seems to fit best. He put it this way.

"She should continue unmarried AND seek reconciliation with her husband. . . ." (emphasis mine). Vol. 6, p. 538.

This is completely consistent with the meaning of the word "de". Thayer says it may be translated by "but", or "Moreover." Arndt and Gingrich say this: "Most common translations: but, when a contrast is clearly implied; and, when a simple connective is desired. . . ." (p. 170). if the term is translated "and" or "moreover" we could see the reasonableness of placing "remain unmarried" first in order. At the same time, the obligation to seek reconciliation would be maintained. It is in addition to the first obligation. In other words, "First, make sure you do not remarry and/moreover do your best to be reconciled." The following factors should be considered:

1. The prohibitive context.
2. The absence of a clear statement of permission.
3. The denial of permission by leading commentators.
4. Passage of parallel construction (obviously non-permissive).
5. "De" may be additional rather than optional. When these factors are considered, it becomes obvious that it is impossible to establish permission to desert one's spouse from this passage.

Second Non-Permissive Possibility ACTIVE, PAST

The verb translated "should she depart" is aorist subjunctive. If it had been aorist indicative, past tense would definitely be indicated. While the subjunctive does not carry that necessary implication,

the idea of past action is a definite possibility. The context is the determining factor.

A. T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 831. "It is true that in the expression past time in the indicative and with all other moods, the aorist is the tense used as a matter of course."

Rather than labor the point with quotations from Greek grammars, allow me to illustrate the point by quoting from a significant number of competent scholars who affirm that the action of the passage should be viewed in the past tense.

The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 825. "But if indeed she have separated . . . Paul is . . . advising in case where the mischief was done; the aorist sub. **choristhe** is timeless, **taking its occasion from the context.**" (emphasis mine)

W. J. Conybeare, *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*. "To the married, not I, but the Lord give commandment, that the wife part not from her husband; (but if she be already parted. . . .)"

Barnes Notes on' the New Testament, I Cor. pp. 114, 115. "But and if she depart. . . ." If she have withdrawn by a rash and foolish act; This may, I suppose, refer to instances where wives ignorant of the rule of Christ and supposing that they had a right to separate themselves from their husbands, had rashly left them. . . . Paul tells them . . . that if they had so separated themselves from their husbands, the pure laws of Christianity did not recognize this right."

Cambridge Greek Testament, p. 111. "If she has in fact been separated. . . ."

Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 523. "If such have really taken place. . . ."

Matthew Henry, Vol. 6, p. 538. "And therefore the apostle advises that if any woman had been separated. . . ."

Gromacki, *Called to be Saints: An Exposition of I Corinthians*, p. 90. "Second, if the departure has already taken place. . . ."

Ellicotts Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 7, p. 309. "**But and if she depart** — Better, 'but if she have actually departed,' The apostle, in case such a separation should have already taken place. . . ."

The Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 1180. "If separation has actually taken place. . . ."

International Commentary on the New Testament, Grosheide, p. 163. "Such a

divorce might be past being recalled so that it would be impossible for the wife to return. . . ."

Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 10, pp. 78, 79. ". in the case of those already separated. . . ."

New Testament Commentary, Moffatt, p. 78. "If she has separated. . . ."

A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Conzelman, p. 120. "Does not mean the conceding of exceptions (if she separates herself after all), but refers to an already existing situation: 'if she has separated herself.'

Twentieth Century New Testament. "If she has done so. . . ."

E. W. Grant, Vol. 7, p. 483. ". . . if the wife has been separated. . . ."

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Vol. 6, p. 301. "If the sin of separation has been committed. . . ."

If this passage deals with a separation that had already occurred in the past, then, obviously, it is not speaking about and would not authorize future purposeful action. Permission would not be granted. The prohibition would stand.

In our next article, we will consider two more non-permissive possibilities.

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August, 1979

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EARMARKING CONTRIBUTIONS

QUESTION: May an individual "earmark" his contribution to a congregation? In other words, may one give to a local church on the condition that the receiving church use it to support a gospel preacher there or elsewhere? — J.S.

ANSWER: Every worthwhile relationship in life necessarily involves responsibilities. Membership in a local church is no exception. If after fulfilling his obligation to the local church of which he is a member one desires to give more to some individual or another church as opportunity affords, such would be his prerogative. However, for one to make such contribution conditionally, as stated in the question above, would be to use the receiving church as an agent — In the sense of acting for or by the authority of another. This would as surely violate the principle of congregational autonomy as in the instance of acting as a sponsoring church — An agent of another or other churches.

Elders are to exercise oversight of the local church where they are (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). This involves freedom from outside control and authority. In the light of this principle, it should be obvious that for a church to receive a contribution conditionally — "earmarked," as stated in the question under study, would be to surrender congregational autonomy in the matter.

If one desired to have fellowship with a church in the support of a gospel preacher elsewhere, this would be his prerogative. However, it should be observed that such support should be solely the decision of the church free of outside control or authority.

Sometimes an arrangement like that proposed in the question under study is made for income tax purposes. The IRS allows tax deduction for contributions to non-profit organizations, but not to individuals. If tax deduction be the motivation for contributing to the church conditionally instead of directly to the individual, it would seem to me to be fraudulent, and, therefore, unscriptural on two counts — a violation of congregational autonomy and fraudulence.

I must confess that I am not familiar with the rules of the IRS to the extent of knowing whether or not such can be extended to include as a tax deduction contributions to support the preaching of the gospel via direct support to a gospel preacher. As stated above, I understand that such cannot be done.

Fairness may seem to dictate otherwise, but fairness of the rules is not the issue here. The issue is one of legality or freedom from fraud and congregational autonomy. Christians must provide things honest in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21).

Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God

Gary P. Henry

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FINISHING OUR WORK

Joy at the completion of a task. It is commonplace. And it is also one of the deepest and most enduring satisfactions of life. No doubt that is because we, in contrast to the animals, share our capacity for that kind of pleasure with God Himself. It was He originally who "saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" and who "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Gen. 1:31ff). Man's undeniable taste for harmony, symmetry, and the "finishedness" of a worthy job completed is no coincidence of nature. It is a part of man's God-given nature.

The small affairs of daily living often provide chances for every person to taste the sheer joy of coming to the end of a thing. And then, more rarely, most of us get to experience the thrill of bringing to completion an undertaking which has taken up years. But it is doubtful that the joy of fulfillment is ever felt more keenly than in the case of a Christian who has come to the end of a work for the Lord which has occupied his complete life.

We read in the Scriptures, for example, about John the Baptist, a man with a very specific job to do, being in the midst of "completing his course" (Ac. 13:25). After his task was done and he was able to say about Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30), he sounded very much like a man with a feeling of accomplishment. As for the Lord Himself and His own work, He could, with evident gratification, pray to His father, "I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). And the Lord never spoke any more eloquent words than His last: "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30).

There have been few men and women in the history of the church who have been possessed of any stronger commitment to finishing their individual work for the Lord than Paul the apostle. For Paul there was nothing, not even his own life, so important that it could not be sacrificed in order to accomplish the work Christ had laid out for him to do. As he prepared to take his leave of the elders of the church in Ephesus, he told them, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus" (Ac. 20:24). It is not difficult to see the intense, bittersweet joy of accomplishment in Paul's words as the aged apostle

sent his last letter to Timothy. He wrote, "I have finished the course," and we are not surprised when we find among Paul's closing instructions to Timothy himself: "Fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5,7). It is as if Paul were saying to Timothy, "Through God's grace I have been able to complete my work. You, too, have your own work. See that you finish it."

Every Christian needs to have a sense of the value of his own work in the Lord. He needs to take it seriously, execute it diligently, and be able later to feel the satisfaction Paul felt. Preachers especially need that awareness, if for no other reason than that much will be required of those to whom much has been given. In regard to finishing our work, all of us need to be doing at least two things.

First, we need to be learning what our work is. With no goals other than the abstract notion of "doing the Lord's work," most of us tend to drift along aimlessly and arrive in old age without being able to pray even partially as Jesus did, "I have accomplished the work Thou has given me to do." This does not mean we wait for a vision in which the Lord gives us individual instructions. It means we read the Bible, survey the opportunities that are available to us personally, stake out our territory, and dig in with the eager anticipation of completing a work which is in a unique sense ours to do.

Paul, to be sure, had grand dreams about teaching as many persons as possible for as long as possible. But he also had some quite definite ideas about the nature and extent of his particular work. He could write to the Roman Christians, "I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions. . . . I hope to see you" (Rom. 15:22-24). Very few preachers since Paul have known so clearly what they were trying to do in a given place that, at some point, they could say as he did, "I have finished my work here." Most base their decision to go or stay on little more than whether they are happy where they are. But give a man a clear idea of what he has come to accomplish and inspire him with the commitment that attaches to a work that is peculiarly his, and his constant prayer will be for strength to stay on the scene long enough to finish it.

Second, we need to be praying that the Lord will help us finish our work. It is, after all, His work, Our ability to complete it will have to come from Him. And we should be conscious that we have an Adversary whose malignant intent is to stop us short of the fulfillment of our work. Paul often spoke about being "hindered". Sometime the Lord hindered him because He had other plans for Paul. But on at least one occasion Paul wrote, "We wanted to come to you — I, Paul more than once — and yet Satan thwarted us" (1 Thess. 2:18). That possibility ought to keep us alert. And prayerful.

If we should live a thousand years, there likely would yet be work to do for the Lord. But let us not excuse ourselves from the tasks at hand, the tasks that are our own, with the vague assumption that the Lord's work can be done anywhere at anytime. Each of us has work that belongs only to us and can only be done where we are right now. "O Lord, grant us the wisdom, the health, and the time to finish the work that is ours, individually, to do."

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

Rodney Miller
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HAGGAI — GOD'S PREACHER & GOD'S MESSAGE Part II

Having followed Haggai's content in outlining his 4 major messages in the last lesson, we will now turn to the glorious lesson we can glean from his inspired preaching. What a shame that the richest section of scripture on preaching is so often neglected by those that observe it.

The next great lesson of Haggai is Discouragement, **No Matter How Profound, Is No Reason For Neglecting OUR DUTIES.** Many times the Lord gives us duties which are encompassed with great difficulty but when we become discouraged it is NO EXCUSE for neglect. Yes, Israel had encountered difficulties in rebuilding the temple, but they was no excuse to lay aside the TOOLS of labor and do what they wanted to do, build their own houses.

How many good programs of work have encountered opposition and the opposition won, God's people lost, and God's work was destroyed. We all become discouraged but there is a cure for discouragement that Haggai makes very clear — WORK! If work is not pursued when discouragement sets in, the disease feeds on itself and it gets worse and worse until one is truly convinced that things are hopeless. This keeps individuals from reaching for the only source of help available. If one believes there is NO hope, then in reality for that person there is no hope.

Haggai shows us that God will help us, that He will reach down through the vastness of eternity and place His hand on our hand, thus holding us up to work. "BE STRONG AND WORK" roars the prophet while urging the people, and "I WILL BE WITH YOU".

Another great lesson of Haggai is **The Time For A Good Work Is Now, and the Danger of Procrastination!** These two points go hand in hand — discouragement and procrastination. The poet said it this way: "On the banks of hesitation lay the blacken bones of millions,

who at the dawn of victory,
sat down to rest, and
resting died."

Brethren, talk is cheap! Can you imagine how many business meetings Israel held to discuss the temple building program? Which do you think came first the procrastination or the discouragement? Somehow I can hear the men meeting to discuss the building. They weren't really interested in rebuilding

the temple or they would have been working rather than meeting to talk about it. When you don't want to work it is much easier to call a business meeting to talk about it rather than to do it. Besides, it soothes the conscience. So they come together and each tells of his problems and his excuses why he can't show up and work. They talk about who got mad because the temple wasn't shaping up exactly like they thought it ought to. They tell about how difficult it had become to work on the temple because they had so little time after building on their houses all day every day. While the meetings were held one right after the other and each was an "instant replay" of the last, and eventually they even began to meet less and less, finally there was no thought at all given to the building of the temple. Why? Because both DISCOURAGEMENT and PROCRASTINATION are infectious, contagious, and multiply, spreading to all those concerned. Dangerous? Yes, some of the most dangerous diseases known to man. The negativism seen in so many places is of the DEVIL. He is the author and he is the captain of the hosts who put off, put off, and put off, until they are so discouraged that they quit.

Haggai's next lesson is the **Danger of Materialism.** If is a wonderful thing that the Kingdom of God is so different from Israel of old who put off and got discouraged. Because if we were liken to them our punishment would be just as sure as was theirs. The church today faces the danger of materialism. Just as the two previous sins have the ability to cripple and destroy the body, so does materialism.

We see our Lord go the way of the cross, leaving heaven, becoming a servant, making Himself of no reputation, obeying unto death, and finally the most shameful death possible, that of the cross. Then we see the early church which sold their possessions, who marched into the arenas, who saw their little ones eaten alive by wild beasts, who literally gave their bodies to be burned on Nero's crosses for light during his garden parties, **BECAUSE THEIR PASSION WAS TO TEACH GOD'S TRUTH.** Then I look at myself, — 2 cars, beautiful home, fine clothes, and I say NO way! No way am I what they were. My only pattern is not the New Testament Church, but Old Testament Israel who turned from God's work to build their houses as idols for their pleasure, comfort, security and status. The fact that they built and owned homes was not wrong in itself, but that they had left God's work to do so was sin. Brethren, God's work is standing waist high in the weeds of neglect because we made a start, but our hearts were not in it, so it was easy to neglect and turn to where our hearts really are. We work overtime, we play overtime, we seek our will and pleasures overtime — **WHILE GOD'S WORK STANDS IN THE WEEDS.** Why is His work like the eye-sore of a building that was started but never finished? Simply because our hearts are on the material and not the spiritual. We are more concerned about our jobs, our money, our success, our pleasures than we are about His job of teaching, about the use of His money in support of teaching, about the success of His Kingdom and what brings pleasure to

His throne.

Concern in the time of Noah was that they were eating, drinking, marrying and living normal everyday lives. There was nothing wrong with any of these things if we view the drinking as in the normal function as is eating, marrying and giving in marriage. The only problem was that they had not left time for the Lord in their schedules. Their total dedication was themselves. We see it hundreds of years later in the lives of God's people in Haggai's day, and we see it in the present age. God's people have never been free of materialism.

This materialism does two things: first, it destroys our time, and we have none left to give to the Lord; secondly, it destroys our finances and we therefore have nothing financially to give to the Lord. We need preachers and support to teach the gospel, but while we heap unto ourselves the pleasures of a plastic and polyester age, there is little left to use in the Lord's work. The Jew gave a great portion of his income. We try to measure our giving by that and it is well within the limited scope. But brethren, why not measure by our LOVE for the spiritual as opposed to our love for the material?

The three dangers that will destroy any congregation are materialism, discouragement and procrastination.

This was Haggai's Message. In the next issue we will look at Haggai's Method.

ARROWS of
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Ward Hogland

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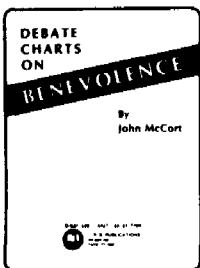
"A FAST GROWING CHURCH"

Brethren through the years have concocted all kinds of schemes to make the church grow. Well, I have found a way. Of all places, part of it came out of the Wall Street Journal. As a matter of fact, it is so successful, people will stand in line to become a member. And as if that is not enough, they are very liberal with their contribution, giving \$500.00 on their first day as a member. Furthermore, they get there so early, a line is formed and it takes police action to keep order. They are unified in purpose and chant their dreams in unison. How does this sound so far? Well, I know we work our fingers to the bone and sometimes come up with very little if any visible results. Here is a church that people will fight to join, so let us see the secret of success.

The church is located in Oakland, California. This church is the creation of a man called the "Rev." Hakeem Abdul Rasheed, also known as Clifford Jones, a flamboyant thirty year old black who bills himself as a master teacher and maker of millionaires. He has a bachelor of science degree in Psychology from Purdue University and got his religious credentials from the Universal Life Church, an organization that sells "Doctor of Divinity" degrees to all comers for \$10 each. I am somewhat reluctant at making this known for fear some of my preaching brethren might be tempted to buy one. According to law enforcement officers, the scheme works something like this: Outsiders pay the church \$500.00 apiece to become members. They are then called "Ministers of Increase." These people are then encouraged to make contributions to the church. After 70 to 90 days, many of the donors are rewarded with "Increases" up to 400 percent! How is that for reward motivation? I have read where some of my liberal brethren put a measly \$5.00 under a bus seat to entice little children to ride their bus to church. That is "chicken feed" compared to Hakeem's church. He gives incentive! The way I see it, if we are going into these unscriptural schemes let us go into it enough for it to pay off. Some members of his church claim they are millionaires and others say they have retired in luxury. Not too bad as far as this life is concerned; but what about eternity? I found no indication that these people were interested in death or life after death. According to reports given me, people have emptied their saving accounts, borrowed money from relatives and taken second mortgages on their homes to rake up enough money to join this church. When they get inside, they chant ritualistically, "Richer Faster, Richer Faster."

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Hakeem claims the increase comes from God. The church is made up of black and white, young and old. A middle-aged hairdresser named Rita, said, "I wanted to get in before it was too late." Another person named Bob, said he had never attended church before but he had joined with the hope he might become rich.

Their preacher, Mr. Hakeem, dresses very sharp. As a matter of fact, he has a 102 foot yacht, a Rolls-Royce, a Cadillac, a mink coat and lots of jewelry. It is true, the Internal Revenue Service seized his yacht about the middle of January, 1979. However, he still owns his cars, coat and jewelry. The Internal Revenue Service claims he owes more than \$1.5 million in personal taxes. Now, that is more than some preachers make in a life time isn't it? Mr. Hakeem is able to dazzle his audience by mounting the pulpit and exhorting his followers to banish all negative thinking. Then he will call about a dozen people on to the stage and give them envelopes containing large sums of money. The crowd cheers and Hakeem says, "Let me hear you say amen." The crowd will roar and he will say, amen. Skeptics are labeled "Prophets of doom". So the story goes on with religious racketeers. Why are people so gullible? I am not sure I have the answer.

I have said all of this to point out one stubborn fact. The gospel of Christ is still God's power to save the souls of men (Rom 1:16). When we leave the Bible in order to convert people, we get into all kinds of problems. No one wants the church of the Lord to grow more than I. However, there are some rules by which the church must grow. Gentle friend, any motivation other than the gospel of Christ is diabolical and will lead to destruction. This fellow Hakeem came up with an incredible scheme which worked as far as outward appearance was concerned but was repugnant in the eyes of God. If we use the gospel of Christ, we will not need police action to keep people away from the church but will receive the approbation of God.

Sometimes pressure is brought on preachers to make a church grow. It is "grow or go". This leads some into the temptation of unscriptural gimmicks.

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Using the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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\$ MORE THAN STARS \$

For the past couple of years I've laid plans to purchase the tabloids which carry prophesies "for the new year" the first week of each January. Such periodicals as *National Enquirer* and *The Star* are the major outlets for alleged psychics Jeane Dixon, Sibil Leek, Uri Geller, John Manolesco (author of fifteen astrology books), Robert A. Ferguson (a famous California psychic), Anthony Norvell (Hollywood's most famous psychic), and others of this breed.

Though I've picked up an occasional such publication as I've gone through the checkout counter, I've never gotten around to the organized effort which I have considered. I'm happy to find, however, that someone has. An extremely informative and interesting article appeared in the April, 1979 *Eternity*. Ralph Blodgett entitles his article, "Cracking the Crystal Ball Caper," and says, "Those supermarket psychics have more than stars in their eyes."

How often do these modern seers accurately predict the future? Blodgett and his colleagues purchased copies of three leading tabloids at the beginning of 1978. From these they compiled a list of 250 specific predictions for the year. Excluded were such all-encompassing predictions as Clara Schuffs "The quality of life in America is about to take a real turn for the better," and Edie Zucherman's "1978 will be very rough on the Carter family."

Mr. Blodgett reports that less than three percent (i.e., six) of the prophesies could be listed as reasonably fulfilled. Ninety-seven percent (244) completely missed the mark.

Here are a few of the predictions which were made for 1978: Another major power failure to hit New York City; a fire ravages the White House; the price of gas to reach \$1.50 a gallon in U.S.; Quebec to split from rest of Canada; U.S. space shuttle disaster sets program back 10 years; Carter to impose mandatory nationwide four-day work week in January; Cuba to apply to become fifty-first state; Carter to reintroduce the draft in September; discovery of a cancer cure; Red China and the Soviet Union to go to war; remains of Atlantis discovered in Mediterranean off Turkey; Idi Amin to be assassinated in October; Billy Carter to be converted to Christianity and will quit drinking; Bigfoot to be captured; and the Vatican to announce approval of ordination for female priests.

The six predictions that did come to pass were of such a nature that one of the thirty psychics examined would have surely guessed such. Two involved activities of celebrities; a record snowfall for

the northeast was accurately predicted; another scandal in Washington involving sex and improper spending was partially fulfilled since the GSA fraud involved money kickbacks, but not sex; and two weddings were accurately prophesied out of about forty such predictions which did not materialize.

But then take a look at 1978 news events which none of the thirty psychics foresaw: the August earthquake in Iran which killed 25,000 and destroyed 40 cities and towns; the worst airline disaster in U.S. history, the head-on crash of a Boeing 727 with a Cessna 172 near San Diego, killing 150; monsoon floods and tidal waves killing about 2,000 in India; the mass suicide of 912 Americans in Guyana; the deaths of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul; the world's first "test tube" baby; the sharpest stock market drop in more than 80 years.

The *Eternity* article is concluded with the words, "Scripture declares, 'There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known. . . what shall be in the latter days' (Dan. 1:28). Unfortunately, these thirty psychics can't seem to tune in on his broadcasts.

"Prior to my six-year research into psychic predictions I used to think psychics had to be led by either God or the devil. Now I'm convinced that they are being led most of the time by no one at all."

As it was in the days of Ezekiel, "Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" (Ezekiel 13:3).

TAKE A CLOSE LOOK

We hear more and more of the International Year of the Child (IYC). The curse of child abuse is being used as a tool to promote things that no Christian or stable thinking person desires. It's our prayer that these proposals will be analyzed carefully by one and all.

For example, we are told that there should be opportunities and facilities to help a child develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially. What this means, of course, is that the government should supply such opportunities and facilities and take over child-rearing responsibilities.

Since I'm not overly enthused with the job the state is doing with my children in the public schools, you may understand my reluctance to turn the job completely over to them from the moment of birth or shortly thereafter.

I recently read of one case in Sweden in which a 21-year-old girl told of having been spanked (not abused) by her father when she was 12. In rebellion, she reported this to the authorities and was subsequently removed from her family and placed in a child-care center until she was 18.

While we deplore child abuse (and we know a sure way of putting an end to the child abuse cycle too!), we likewise deplore the humanistic concept of liberation which means the liberation of our society from traditional morals, values, and authority. The admonition to "tell it to the generation following" (Psalm 48:13) was not addressed to the government!

I'm growing weary of such things as IWY (International Women's Year), and IYC. Why not an Executive Order to establish a IYE (International

Year of the Family), Mr. President? Such would be a bit more in harmony with your "born again" semblance.

COME HOME?

In the May 10, 1979 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, Ira North editorialized on the pitiful state of affairs among his "anti brethren." The extent of his evidence seems to be a local church in Florida with which he assembled a few years ago. At that time, the building was filled and things appeared to be in good shape. More recently he passed the building on a Sunday morning just a few minutes before the Bible study hour and saw only three cars in the parking lot. "There must be a better way!" Brother North intones.

I know nothing about the congregation of which he wrote, and neither does our Brother North. Yet, upon this basis, he pleads with his "anti brethren" to "come home." Men such as James Cope and Homer Hailey can preach the same thing in any church of Christ that they preached twenty-five years ago, we are told. The implication is that our opposition to church support of such things as human institutions, secular education, and recreation, has arisen only recently.

Those who know the score are aware that B.C. Goodpasture, long time editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, were he yet alive, could not preach in liberal churches of Christ what he taught a few years ago regarding church-sponsored entertainment and recreation. Guy N. Woods, Associate Editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, could not preach in these churches what he once taught regarding institutionalism. In fact, we wonder when Editor North will invite Associate Editor Woods to preach his convictions on church support of Bible colleges at the Madison Church of Christ.

Many of us are wondering just where on the liberal road is supposed to be "home"! After all, Brother Ira Rice editor of *Contending for The Faith*, wrote in the August, 1978 issue of that journal that he now feels closer to "the Anti-Cooperation" brethren than "toward many with whom I have stood shoulder to shoulder for all these years."

Bro. Rice went on to say, ". . . when I see possibly the majority of our so-called Christian college administrators as well as the editors of some of our supposed-to-be gospel papers headed pell-mell after Liberalism, I think the time has come to call a halt and take a new look." Strong words, those!

Brother North, we appreciate your invitation. But you brethren have a mobile home. It would be hard for us to catch up. Besides, we are looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

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Perhaps nothing has permeated the American entertainment scene on a more rapid and grand scale than the rise of disco. Second only to organized sports in the entertainment field, the disco movement continues to gain velocity with over \$5,000,000,000 in revenues for the last year alone. The number of discos have recently multiplied from 10,000 to 18,000 and an estimated 50 million Americans have visited a disco and some 17 to 19 million do so regularly. The recording industry, Hollywood, and the fashion designers have all jumped on the bandwagon. Over the past year it was rare that a non-disco record made it to the top spot on the music charts and on the average six of the top ten popular songs had a disco flavor. The disco movie Saturday Night Fever grossed over \$130 million making it one of the biggest box office hits ever. The sound-track from the movie has sold over 15 million copies surpassing The Sound of Music as the highest grossing album in history! The fashion trends of the day are obviously turning to the disco look with most department stores offering whole sections of disco clothes. One fashion designer remarked, "the young and exciting fashions of the discos are the only clothes for today." And even if you do not attend discos (let us hope that you know better) and wish to have no part in the disco industry it is in all probability that it still touches your life in some way. Whether through television, radio, skating rinks (really disco rinks), the teenagers playing disco records, or through just shopping our favorite mall via disco music which is piped into the stores — most all of us are coming into contact with the disco craze. So it's high time Christians begin to wake up and begin to see disco for what it really is and start to help steer the young people away from this alluring temptation of the devil.

What Is Disco?

Disco is really short for "discotheque." It is defined as:

"a small intimate nightclub for dancing to live or recorded music; a nightclub featuring psychedelic and mixed-media attractions such as slides, movies, special lighting effects and kinetic sound" (Webster).

Yet, disco is much more! It involves not only a specific place for dancing (discotheque), it also refers to a distinctive type of music designed for dancing. Disco music is distinctive for it's heavy bass beat which throbs constantly at 4/4 time at about 120 beats per minute. The music has a "lyrical hook" effect as words such as "I love you" or "More More

More" are repeated over and over. All of this plus flashing colored lights, electric images, reflecting mirrored walls, and sparkling ceilings are employed to literally make one feel the driving beat of the music and to bring about a "high" of excitement and passion. One disco patron summed it up by stating:

Disco music is not meant to be confronted head on as something you sit and listen to. Disco is meant to be experienced subliminally, not so much in the mind as in the body, which it exhorts ceaselessly to dance, dance, dance. The disco music says nothing but suggests a great deal (EMP. MINE — DWA).

What it does suggest pure and simple is sexuality as we will notice later.

Where Did It Originate?

There is no denying that the disco scene has homosexual connections. The Detroit Free Press noted, "Disco probably will be remembered as the first cultural happening where gay participation was openly publicized." Yet, the Bible is plain concerning God's attitude toward homosexuality, (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). However, disco can be traced back farther than that. Remember, the basis of the disco music is the pulsating beat. Such did not originate with any one performer or song but has as it's "roots" the ancient tribal chants and dances of the voodoo worshipers, primitive tribesmen, and African bushmen. It has been noted that if you strip away all modern accessories you will probably be moving to the same beat as the ancestors of Kunta Kinte. Although the African origin does not necessarily make it objectionable (any more than from any other country) — the thing to be considered is that this type of music was used for dancing to exorcise demons, to arouse sexual fertility, to prepare for sacrificial death to the gods, and in general used to appease the gods. Such was and is pagan to the inth degree! God never approved of the ancients dancing before the idols of man, nor has He ever looked with approval upon dancing that was designed to arouse sexual passions (1 Kg. 14:23-24; Isa. 57:5-8). And all the modern day disco beat is nothing more than a gift-wrapped version of ancient pagan tribal chants that did that very thing!

Disco Dangers

The discotheques, disco music, and disco fashions have but one thing in mind — an exhibition of sexuality! Listen to the words of some who frequent New York's famous disco — Studio 54:

There's no sense sitting at home and starring at four walls. Discos are where it's **at It's flaunting your sexuality. . . People are getting their sensuality up front, out in the open. . . Kids need a release, and the music gives it to them. . . Discos are fast, fast, fast. Here they can move, move, move. They can fly!** (EMP — MINE — DWA)

Free liberated sexual expression — abandonment of restraints — that is the essence, the soul of disco. Call it what you like but the Bible says such is LASCIVIOUSNESS (sensuality — NASV) and those

involved in such "SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (Gal. 5:19-21). Lasciviousness is defined as, "that which is tending to produce lewd emotions, characterized by or expressing lust or lewdness, tending to excite lustful desire" (World Book). Perhaps lasciviousness could better be defined as: "disco!" The child of God should have no part of it!

Dear Christian friend, let me appeal to you to stay away from the disco scene (2 Tim. 2:22). Everything about it, from it's pagan and homosexual origin to it's modern twisting and turning, is displeasing to God (1 Thess. 5:22). It is a movement that places emphasis only on self-gratification through sexualism with not a care as to what God has spoken. It will damage your influence with others (Matt. 5:13-16), have a bad (perhaps lasting) effect upon you, and will cause uncontrollable lust and passion to arise in the heart of another (Matt. 5:28). Yes, everyone else may play those records, everyone else may wear those clothes, and everyone else may go there and dance to the disco beat, but just remember that everyone else is going to be lost (Matt. 7:13-14). Don't let the Saturday Night Fever give you an eternal heartburn!

SOME ADMONITIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

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When writing to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul admonished, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6). This text sets forth at least three lessons which are very basic to the life of the Christian.

1. Christians are admonished not to ". . .sleep, as do others . . ." The word "sleep" in this text does not refer to physical slumber but rather has a figurative meaning of ". . .carnal indifference to spiritual things on the part of believers . . ." a condition of insensibility to Divine things involving conformity to the world" (EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS, W.E. Vine).

There are those described in the Bible who, by their conformity to this world, have indeed been lulled into carnal indifference and have been made insensible to the things of God. A classic illustration would be the Old Testament example of Jonah. While in the act of rising up to "flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord," it is said that Jonah went ". . . down into the sides of the ship: and he lay, and was fast asleep" (Jonah 1:3-5). The physical act of slumber in this case was the manifestation of the far more serious condition: his attitude of rebellion at what God had required of him. Hence, the appropriateness of the shipmaster's question: ". . . What meanest thou, O sleeper?" (Jonah 1:6).

Other examples of "insensibility to Divine things involving conformity to the world" would include the rich fool who was blinded by his materialism to the fact of God and the needs of his own soul (Luke

12:13-21). Then there were the Laodiceans who were "neither cold or hot" and hence were offensive to God (Rev.3:15-16). These people were beyond question "conformed to this world" and were indeed "insensible to Divine things." The Lord said of them, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev.3:17).

Rather than allowing such spiritual slumber, Paul exhorted Christians elsewhere through a quotation of Isaiah 60:1, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5:14).

2. In the text, Paul admonished, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but *let us watch*, and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6). The word "watch" is used here to denote spiritual alertness. It is so used in the familiar admonition of 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." The same word is translated "vigilant" in the King James Version rendering of 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Christians must constantly be alert in their growth and development (1 Pet. 2:1-2, Heb. 5:12-14), in their responsibilities as members of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:15-16) and in the manner in which they deal with the temptation of sin (1 Cor. 10:12-13).

3. The final admonition of 1 Thessalonians 5:6 is, ". . .be sober." The idea conveyed by "sober" is: "Free from mental and spiritual drunkenness, well-balanced, self-controlled." The word in the original text of the New Testament, translated "sober" in 1 Thess. 5:6, is rendered by the word "watch" in Paul's admonition to Timothy, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). The same idea was expressed by Peter, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). Peter said again, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). With the issues of time and eternity, death and judgment taken into consideration, the life of the Christian is far too serious to be regarded with any degree of frivolity. We must, indeed, ". . .Watch, and be sober!"

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Order From: Religious Supply Center

Restoration Footnotes

Earl Kimbrough
2212 Malibu Drive
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"THEN I WISHED FOR A BEAR"

The best of men are beset at times with uncertainty regarding the course of their lives. The good men of the past century who labored to plant the seed of New Testament Christianity upon American soil were no exception. They were men of faith, but they were also men of flesh. Their personal problems sometimes weighed so heavily upon them that they considered giving up the struggle required to preach the gospel. Perhaps few, if any, of us living in these more prosperous times can truly appreciate the anguish of spirit under which many of the pioneer preachers worked. The grinding hardship of their lives and the bitter opposition they encountered from spiritual enemies would have felled lesser men, and no doubt did. But those who persevered did so because their moments of doubt yielded to abundant faith.

Joseph H. Halbrook, one of the most dedicated evangelists of the post-Civil War Southland, was not unlike many of his comrades in the service of the Lord. He never rose much above the level of "hand to mouth" living until near the end of his life. What little he did accumulate was due to hard work rather than the generosity of the brethren among whom he labored. He eked out a livelihood from a one-horse farm in the red clay hills of Northwest Alabama until poor health prompted him to move to Florida in the 1890's. His evangelistic tours and regular preaching appointments seldom provided much "take home pay" and, perhaps as often as not, failed to provide his meager expenses.

In a reflective and despondent mood following a typical preaching trip in 1890, "Uncle Joe" shared his thoughts in a personal letter to a fellow preacher who thought the letter should be made public. This particular trip was to North Mississippi and lasted about three weeks. During this time Halbrook preached in five communities to "large and attentive congregations" and "made the acquaintance of many good brethren and sisters." The Christians where he preached showed their appreciation for his labors "by opening their hearts and pockets-books" sufficiently to pay his traveling expenses plus "twenty cents" per day to take home with him.

This disheartening turn of events was compounded by the fact that things had not gone well at home during his absence. "But I was just in time when I reached home yesterday," he wrote, "my wife had just fed away the last feed of corn. Then I sat down and thought, and thought, and thought. . . . I thought of my family, and about dying and leaving them, and how they would make out after my death.

And then I thought of the value of souls, and of my duty, and of the shortness of time; and of the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell, and then of the rich man and Lazarus. And then I thought of what I saw while I was gone, at the same place where I preached, and where I had preached several times before. While I was there the same people gave more to see a man wrestle with a bear than I had received for preaching in five months. And then how they insisted on my coming back, and then I thought I would go on and preach the gospel and try to save my soul. Then I wished for a bear so I could make something for my family. And then I thought I would write you and tell you what I thought, and what my wife thought, and how she wanted me to go on and preach, and promised never to complain, and how it encouraged me." (Gospel Advocate, May 14, 1890.)

Halbrook did go on and preach. Through the comfort and support of his good wife and his own sense of duty, he continued to preach the gospel until the Lord claimed his spirit in 1906. His ashes rest in a peaceful little country cemetery near Chiefland, Florida, awaiting the resurrection at the coming of Christ.

What a debt we owe such men!

EXCELLENT COUPLES

NEED ADVICE

Irven Lee

P.O. Box 866
Hartselle, Ala. 35640



Before and after the wedding day the very finest young people need the right kind of advice on the art of home making. They may reach many proper conclusions on their own based on their knowledge of right and wrong, but they face situations and needs which are new to them. There is not much to say to the modern rebellious type because they are not listening. They must make their own mistakes and reap for their own sowing. We need to do our best to help the most devout young couples who have earnest desires to please God and find happiness in marriage.

Many marry during every month of the year, but there are many marriages after the end of the spring term of school. Let us hope that they are not so often "forced" marriages, but rather that they are big events that come as the culmination of many happy plans and dreams. Marriage is honorable and highly recommended in the Bible, so it is in order that we all rejoice to see happy and wholesome plans of worthy people come to the great day of HOLY matrimony. Remember that heaven is involved, and it is God who joins the two together through His revelation and even through the very laws of nature that are written into the make up of each normal individual. Let us all gladly encourage a proper marriage. Let not man put asunder that which God has joined together.

What shall we say? How shall we advise? The whole law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is needed by those who would please God. Homes of the ideal type are made of faithful Christians who worship God faithfully and regularly, and who aim at the mark of the high calling of God. Briefly, but with great emphasis we recommend the whole counsel of God. Every husband and every wife is made better by fearing God and keeping His commandments. His commandments are for our good always. In showing such faith in and reverence for God one is preparing for heaven. Is it then appropriate advice for young couples who seek happiness in marriage? Yes, indeed, for the best way for them to find the most in this life is for them to live as they should to please God and to inherit heaven by His grace. Such people have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. They sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting. This is far better than to sow to the flesh and reap corruption.

As good friends we may advise concerning the little things of life. Is this a waste of their time and ours? Not necessarily, for life is made up of little things. If some suggestion can make the home happier and more stable it is not wasted effort.

Sometimes young couples need to be told to use their money for the things NEEDED and not for baubles. They cannot buy everything the world has to offer. Much that is for sale is of little or no value. They need many things. Let the money be spent wisely for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical care, and the Lord's service. If this is done by the young couple there will not likely be much to spend for things of no use. Things that are not worth bringing home should not be bought by one who has a limited income, and who has taken on the task of providing for his own family. He is foolish if he acts as one who has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. We all might be amazed if we knew how many homes are cheated out of a normal measure of happiness in our generation by husbands who have plenty of money to buy useless things, but very little money to buy the essentials. A wise and righteous use of money is a good thing to suggest.

Learning to be content with such things as we can have is a great lesson to learn. Be content as you struggle for a better day. The young husband may not be able to provide as much as his parents have now. The earning power is likely to increase with time, and some things purchased at first may be used many years while other things are being accumulated. The young bride or groom who is selfish in demanding more than his or her share of the funds is threatening the stability of the home.

The ears of the Lord are open to the righteous. Work and pray rather than murmur and complain. Sacrifice for the work of the Lord while you are gradually accumulating things for personal use. After all, every good and perfect gift is from above. What do you have that you could have received without His provision? He is able to bless you so that you may always have all sufficiency in all things. His hand is not short. He is able to do abundantly more than you can ask or think. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If you are channels of

blessings to your fellows, and if you please God, happiness will come as a by-product.

Seeking happiness as the primary end in life is like struggling to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Seek the proper things, and fulfill life's responsibilities, and happiness will walk up beside you and go along with you. Recreation, entertainment, excitement, spending money, dissipation, and sin are not synonyms for happiness. We are getting closer to it by far when we find the peace that passes understanding which the Bible mentions. This would, of course, include a good conscience, trust in one's companion and in God, and the right to have a feeling of being useful and needed in the home. When a lack of concern for others, selfishness, and laziness abounds, happiness hides in some dark underground cave. It cannot be found by such people. You cannot make others happy without being happy. If you are unwilling to share you are the loser.

Summers are hot and winters are cold for even the very best people. Sickness and disappointments come to all. You did promise faithfulness in sickness or in health, did you not? Loving hands are especially for tender care in the trying times. Always remember that you need each other. Be ready when special need arises. God saw that it was not good that man should be alone so He gave him a worthy helper. She needs him just as he needs her. It takes the two to make the one good home.

Children are an heritage of the Lord. Their little steps and words, their laughs and tears, and their needs add to the problems, joys, and hopes of the happily married. These little ones cost much time and money, and they test the patience and skill of training of their parents, but they repay one hundred fold. It is not out of order to suggest the need for little ones to love, teach, discipline, and train. People are at their best when they are training people like Ruth and Timothy for the next generation.

Filthy speech, impure lives, and dishonesty are among the things that destroy the peace, stability, and joy for every member of the family. It is not just the innocent who suffer. None suffers more than the guilty. God will see that he reaps the corruption due such people. They destroy the home here and forfeit the home in heaven. Flee youthful lusts. No man or woman has ever been too pure or too innocent. The beauty of holiness is its own excuse for being. Avoid the companions that would make a mock of sin.

There have been many beautiful marriages because many wonderful people have married, but there are no marriages that ever reach a level beyond which improvement is impossible because there are no husbands or wives but that could go on toward perfection. They can and should grow. There will be times for love and forgiveness to work together in mending some scar or some hurt. Love, mercy, humility, and forgiveness can work wonders when there is some special need for them. They may remove the scar and leave more beauty than ever in its place. They may place joy, a kiss, and even hearty laughter in place of the hurt. Take time for patience to have her perfect work. Harsh words and ugly deeds never help any person in any way.

Marriage is a partnership. Plans are made together. If a telephone call could remove anxiety it should be made. If a worthy task calls for the skills and special efforts of both, let there be no shirker. If it takes two to bring some event of great joy, let there be no kill-joy. The two are one and each must work for and share the joys of the other. Make a success of marriage because failure here has the power to destroy that which is pleasant in this life, and to destroy even the hope of the pleasant life beyond.

HOLDING THE MIND

H. L. Bruce
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Amarillo, Texas 79108

Even though Abraham Lincoln was a great man, his method of operation was so simple, practical and concise that we can all grasp, retain and profit from it at will. Here is Lincoln's principle, as given by Russell H. Conwell: "Whatsoever he had to do at all, he put his whole mind into it and held it all there until that was all done." See the principle! Lincoln could control his mind. He could direct his mind along certain channels and keep it there as long as it was necessary for the completion of the job at hand.

Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809. In the first century, A.D.64, 1745 years before Lincoln, the apostle Paul employed the "mind holding principle" as being quite practical. To the church at Philippi, he wrote, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14-15). According to this, the apostle fixed his mind on his course and refused to become distracted. This is the way that it should be for us today. We should clearly keep our mind held on it without distraction.

But how easy it is for our mental train to be distracted! We are to pursue unity, for instance (Jno. 17:20-21). Unity is worth our while. How sad it is when brethren lay aside the word of God, initiate carnal objectives and bog down in the quagmire and

devices of their own ingenuity. We need to hold our minds on the fact that we share a personal responsibility to labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (see Eph. 4:1-7). This is a responsibility that we must all work toward. As the Psalmist said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1).

As we outline our objectives one-by-one, we must, absolutely must, every step of the way, demonstrate a profound respect for divine authority. Otherwise, we will be laboring in vain. The apostle Paul wrote, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). Jesus Christ is the one that we are to heed, or hear in all things. Moses said, with regard to Christ, "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23).

In reference to his own message, Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jno. 12:48). In holding our mind upon our eternal objective, we must realize that we will be judged by Christ and his word. In order for us to finally go to heaven we are to respect the authority of the one who now has all preeminence in heaven and earth. Why not read your Bible now! Respect it! Obey it!

Hailey at Bowling Green, KY

Homer Hailey will teach two courses for credit or audit on the campus of Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green, Kentucky the week of Sept. 24-28, 1979. At 8 A.M. he will teach Daniel and Zechariah. At 2 P.M. he will teach Revelation. Homer Hailey has taught courses in the prophets for many years and also in the book of Revelation and has recently published a commentary on that book. Write Fla. College for further details.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them..."—Acts 14:27

TOPES RETURNING TO SOUTH AFRICA

GENE TOPE, 1603 Lauderdale Dr., Richmond, VA 23233 — In December of this year my wife, Betty, and I, and our four youngest children will be returning to South Africa. This will be our fifth tour of labor since our entering into that field twenty-two years ago. So far as I know, we are both in good health and ready to do whatever work the Lord may yet have in store for us there. We earnestly ask for your prayers on our behalf.

South Africa continues to have peace, and the cause is prospering there. Letters, almost weekly, tell us of new opportunities and new areas (especially among the non-Europeans) that are opening up to the presentation of the gospel. Laborers are few; the need is great. The challenge of lost souls confronts us, and we cannot tarry here at home any longer! There is no assurance how long evangelists will be allowed into South Africa.

I am again calling on brethren to help us. As has been true for the past twenty years: we cannot go if you do not send us. We need the aid and fellowship of good and sacrificing brethren. The promise of monthly support by a number of good churches is needed. Travel fund must be raised to ship goods and necessary supplies, and one-way fares for six people. Costs are high and inflation is rampant. But, surely the gospel cause is worth it. If you are interested in helping us again to carry out this small part of the Lord's commission, won't you contact me as soon as possible by phone or mail? You may reach us at the above address. Phone is (804) 740-0848.

(Editor's note: No better family could be sent to any field than the Topes. They have already spent a total of 18 years in South Africa and the work in that country is deeply imbedded in their hearts. While Gene has been preaching for the West End church in Richmond, Virginia, he has also served as one of the elders. Surely, there should be no delay in securing the necessary funds to send this experienced family to such a needy field. — CWA)

THAYER STREET LECTURES

JEFFREY KINGRY, 641 Elma St., Akron, Ohio 44310 — After attending our previous gospel meetings, you requested that we let you know when we plan our next one. We wanted to contact you and let you know that our 1979 Fall meeting will be September 17-20. The speakers and topics are set.

We have always enjoyed having visitors from other places attend our meetings, and if you are planning on coming this year why don't you drop us a note? The brethren get a kick out of the opportunity to keep and visit with "strangers." It makes it easier that week for some families to plan ahead and get prepared when they know whom to expect and how many.

Also, in times past many brethren have come and left their families at home. I understand that this is during the school session, and sometimes it is difficult for both husband and wife to get out. but we want you to know that everyone is welcome. The lessons are designed for the needs of the church here and are presented for their edification, and as such we feel that the material will benefit all brethren. We are looking forward to hearing from you, and maybe seeing you this September for a spiritual feast. Please pass the word. Phone (216) 535-4626 for more information.

CLARENCE R. JOHNSON, P.O. Box 625, La Porte, Texas 77571 — After working with the Lord's church in La Porte, Texas for three years and nine months, I am pleased to report that both our attendance and contribution are the best they have been during that time. Attitudes are generally good, and there is a spirit of togetherness among the brethren that is lacking in many areas. Twenty-two have been baptized into Christ here during this time and a number of others have been restored to their first love. Some have moved away; some have fallen away; some have moved in. Attendance has averaged over 100 on Sunday mornings for the past two months. The congregation helps to support two other preachers. There are several good prospects for future conversion. Brethren, pray for us that our efforts may continue to be successful.

NEW CONGREGATION

JACK L. HOWELL, 1032 Par Ave., Paso Robles, California 93446 — There is a new congregation in Paso Robles, California endeavoring to do the Lord's work. The group is small at this time and meeting in my home at the above address. We are in

need of a full time preacher to work with us and can provide \$400 a month at this time. Paso Robles is located on Highway 101 about midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Anyone interested may contact me at the above address or call (805) 238-0173.

EDWARD A. BROUILLETTE, P.O. Box 3747, Fullerton, California 92634 — I will soon be moving to Fullerton, California to work with the church there. Greg Sterling has been selected by the elders to preach in Carmichael, California where I formerly preached.

NEW CONGREGATION

CARROLL FINK, Box 161, Crystal Lakes Estates, Livingston, Texas 77351 — Please let your readers know of the new work which began June 3 in Livingston. This work has been in the minds of conservative brethren for sometime now. After six years at Clute, Texas I have moved to help this new work. We will have about twenty members to begin this work but anticipate steady growth as the word gets around. All of my support is being supplied by six Texas churches. Pray for this new effort and may God continue to bless you as you teach his word through the printed page. We appreciate your stand on the marriage question. Phone for the new work is (713) 327-3293.

UNITY EFFECTED

GILES M. PAINTER, 403 Holly Dr., Albany, Georgia 31705 — Brethren, it is with joy I report to you the progress made in the Lord's work in Albany, Georgia. On April 13, 1979, brethren from Dougherty and South Street churches came together to discuss and resolve all existing differences which had kept the two churches from recognizing each other as faithful brethren in Christ. As an outgrowth of this meeting, fellowship and unity has been restored and the two are now worshipping and working together. When in the area, worship with the South Street church. From U.S. 19 Expressway, exit on 133, go right 3 blocks to South St., then one block on the left.

PREACHERS NEEDED

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA — Dennis C. Abernathy is leaving the work with the Central church in Moultrie, after two years, to work with the North Main and Gay St. church in Gladewater, Texas. In August the Central church in Moultrie will be in need of a preacher to move here and work with them at that time. A small amount of needed wages can be supplied by the church, here with the rest having to come from elsewhere. If interested, contact H. H. Hudgins, P.O. Box 202, Moultrie, GA 31768. Phone (912) 985-6891.

TYNGSBORO, MASSACHUSETTS — The church of Christ of Greater Lowell, Tyngsboro, Massachusetts is in need of a full time preacher to locate and work with this congregation starting in June of this year. Present planning calls for our new building to be completed by then. We are interested in a man who is willing to work with this congregation is doing personal work. Partial support can be provided. Attendance is between 30-35. The town of Tyngsboro has a population of 6,000 and is near a larger city of Lowell with population 94,000. There are only two sound churches in the whole state that we know about, so the need is great in this area. Anyone available and interested may call or write: Bill Krause, 16 State St., Chelmsford, MA 01824. (Phone 617-256-8414); or Mauro Accomazzo, Old Dunstable Rd., Groton, MA 01450 (phone 617-448-5434).