

VOLUME 6

A WORD IN
SEASON

DAILY MESSAGES ON THE
FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

R. J. RUSHDOONY

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Faith

Last week, I was one of eight scholars from the United States and Britain who lectured at a Midwestern college. One of the Americans was an economist who has served under presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt through Johnson, and has also been an ambassador. This learned professor, in the course of an amazing defense of federal interference and control over our lives, came out strongly for wage and price controls as greatly needed for our future welfare. We can give up certain freedoms, he felt, and be the better for it, because the federal government would then have the freedom to act for our interests. He summed up his position in these words: “We can eat our cake and have it too.”

It takes a great deal of faith to believe in that. When someone told me recently that it took “a lot of faith to believe the Bible,” more faith than he could muster, I remarked that, where politics were concerned, he had far more faith than the Bible called for!

To believe that our politicians are actually going to deliver on their promises requires a very great faith. In fact, ours is a great age of faith, but not in Christ.

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Dr. A., in asking us to believe that “We can eat our cake and have it too,” was asking for more faith in himself and in the federal government than I can ever muster. Since I believe that this is God’s world, I cannot believe that I can eat my cake and still have it intact and uneaten.

Dr. A. does not believe in Scripture nor in Christ. I do. Dr. A. is a man of great faith, although a very false faith.

He believes that he and other intellectual bureaucrats can, through the federal government, perform amazing miracles. Many people agree with him.

Faith in itself is not enough. It must be in Christ. All men have faith in something, and usually the amount and intensity of their faith is staggering, as with Dr. A. If I have faith that the moon is made of green cheese, or that I can eat my cake and have it too, my faith is false and therefore dangerous. It is insane. I can then spend all my money and believe that I will still have it, or take poison and believe it will help me.

Our problem is not a lack of faith, but too much false faith. True faith is to believe in Jesus Christ; it is to believe that God is, “and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). It means believing that God’s world is a law order, and that God does not bless the kind of muddled thinking Dr. A. represents. If

our faith rests on any other foundation than the triune God and His redeeming power through Christ, it is false. What are your foundations? 



The Great Subversion

In Rome, during the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.), a secret and very powerful movement was accidentally discovered just in time to save Rome from a violent revolution and destruction. Most of Rome's leadership had been marked for death. This cult or revolutionary movement, Bacchanalia, had a simple creed: "The holiest article of their faith was to think nothing a crime." Members proved their faith by committing all kinds of sexual crimes.

Similar movements have appeared over and over again in history, and many that are centuries apart are still closely connected. Many such movements were student movements. During the later Middle Ages, wandering students, who went from university to university without ever really graduating, were known as goliards. These goliards were what we would call folksingers, and their music had a continual hostility to Christian morality and law. These students were more interested in destroying civilization than in studying, and many rarely saw a classroom.


In nineteenth-century Russia, the Nihilists, who believed in nothing but revolutionary socialism, were the radical students of the day. The men wore their hair very long, and the women cut their hair very short. Blue spectacles were often worn as a kind of badge. Everything about their appearance and conduct was calculated to be offensive and to show their contempt for and indifference to Christian faith and morality. The intellectuals of the day were very much in sympathy with these students.

We have such students with us again. But, more than that, we now have universities dedicated to creating such students. In early May 1965, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions held a conference for 1400 college presidents, deans, professors, and trustees in Los Angeles. The speakers included Robert M. Hutchins, Walter Lippmann, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and U.C. President Clark Kerr. The feeling of the conference was that the university should spend less time on research and more on influencing voters and remaking the country. And English educator Sir Eric Ashby emphasized as the first purpose of any university revolution: “The true function of a university is not to preserve and consolidate the social status quo but to

If there is no law, then there is no crime, and anything goes. This is the simple foundation of all these movements: no God means no law and no crime; therefore, everything goes!



question and disrupt it.” The real purpose of education is thus continual revolution!

The roots of this movement go back to Eden. Satan’s temptation was, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). In other words, every man shall be his own god and his own law, knowing or deciding for himself what is good and evil. If there is no sovereign God over all creation, then there is no absolute law over all. If there is no law, then there is no crime, and anything goes. This is the simple foundation of all these movements: no God means no law and no crime; therefore, everything goes! All these movements have a grimly uniform history: they destroy themselves, and whoever stands with them. For the world is under God’s law, and St. Paul’s warning still stands: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). 



Anarchy

The theme of the Book of Judges, regularly repeated, declares, “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). It is a reasonable mistake, which many may make, to read “king” in terms of a man on the throne. The King referred to was God, whose throne was in the Holy of Holies. When Israel turned to a man for a king, God told Samuel it was a rejection of the divine kingship: “They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). The kingship of God meant that the commonwealth of Israel was governed by God’s law, recognized His sovereign lordship and power, and subjected itself to God’s purposes. In the days referred to by Judges, moral anarchy prevailed. Men took the law into their own hands; lawless men ruled, and the land fell into captivity to tyrants.

In our day also, God the King is not recognized as Lord over our land, and most men do that which is right in their own eyes. A student rebel remarked recently, justifying his lawless course, that he could obey no law that he had not given his approval to, that the only

laws he could obey were laws he recognized as valid. This kind of thinking is extremely common today.

The logic of it means the end of all law and order, the end of civilization. The “law” of this student, that every man is his own law, is widely held today. It means, practically, that a murderer is not guilty of murder if he denies the validity of the law “Thou shalt not kill.” It means too that adultery is no crime if we hold it to be a virtue. It means also that stealing is a virtue if we say it is, if we deny the law “Thou shalt not steal,” and so on. This philosophy, whether it is called anarchism, existentialism, egoism, or anything else, is rooted in the same sin: the rejection of God as King and the belief that every man is free to do that which is right in his own eyes.


The result of this faith, this belief that man is his own law, and his only law, is also described by Judges: captivity. Over and over again, as Israel succumbed to the existentialism of its day, the result was captivity, spiritual bondage to a false religion, moral captivity to sin, and a national captivity to a foreign power.

One of the most moving episodes in the life of King David occurred after the nation rebelled under Absalom. As the defeated and repentant nation debated its course,

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the cry went up, “Why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” (2 Sam. 19:10). This is the necessary word today: bring back God the King, restoring this people to righteousness, and bringing back men and nations under God’s law.

Or will someone someday write our finish, stating, “In those days God was not King over America, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes”? 



None Other Gods

A very thoughtful young man asked me recently, “Is it wrong to purchase goods made by slave labor in communist countries?” This is a very important question, and it raised basic issues which need to be understood.

On no scriptural basis can we condemn the purchase of goods made in communist countries as immoral. There is no ground anywhere in Scripture for such a moral judgment. Many of the products marketed in Jerusalem in Biblical days came from Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and other enemy countries where very often slave labor was used, but there is never any condemnation of goods made by an enemy or by slave labor.

We have no Biblical ground for making our country and its interests the test of faith and morals. To do so is in fact to sin seriously and grievously. Many people do get very angry at the idea of communist goods being sold in America, and they do insist that their purchase is immoral, but they cannot do so on Biblical grounds. These same people think nothing of taking the name of the Lord in vain, bearing false witness, or committing

adultery or fornication (or associating with people who do). Obviously, they have another standard than a Biblical one.

However, while we cannot say that it is morally wrong to buy communist goods, neither can we insist that there is a moral wrong in refusing to do so. The question is one of personal choice and individual freedom. I myself will not buy such goods, but I cannot bind the conscience of other men by my private judgment. I cannot say that my course is a more moral one than theirs,


nor a wiser one. It represents a personal judgment, a very strong one perhaps, and one that I may feel intensely about, but this is between God and me. Where God's Word is silent, I must be silent. Man is not God. No man has the moral right to impose his private judgments on others. Only the Word of God can bind the conscience of man.

If I concede that a strong opinion by myself and others can bind men's consciences where God is silent, then I must logically concede that the state or church can bind my conscience where God has not spoken. This I cannot do.

The situation of the peoples in communist countries is a very hard one. They are in effect all slaves, in that an anti-God social order assumes the role of God and

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orders men and society in contempt and violation of God's Word. If I take a similar course, and bind a man's conscience where God is silent, I have taken the same road that Marxism has: I have made man's word a moral principle. I have then violated God's first and basic law: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (Deut. 5:7). 



Love and Hate

In these days, when men are making a cure-all of love and demand total love of all things, the words of Scripture are a refreshing and healthy antidote. Jesus Christ, in speaking to the church of Ephesus, commended them because they hated what He hated: “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6). There are many such declarations in Scripture: all assume the necessity for hating as a part of the privilege of love. If we love that which is good, we will hate that which is evil. If we love and honor the joys and sanctity of marriage and family life, we will hate everything that works to destroy it. If we love our Christian faith and heritage, we will hate the anti-Christian forces that wage war against us. And if we love our country, we will hate those who subvert it, wage war against it, or seek to destroy it.

Love and hate are different sides of the same coin. Those who claim to be above hate are also beyond love. They do not feel strongly enough about anything to love it and hate its opposite. Such people are emotionally and intellectually sterile.

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The love-mongers, who preach endlessly about loving everything and “love” as a way of salvation, are really not talking about love. They are asking for the toleration of evil. Anyone who asks us to love unrepentant criminals, subversives, hoodlums, rioters, and ungodly and anti-Christian persons is asking us to tolerate these people and to allow them to have their way. They are asking us to tolerate evil, to give it freedom to destroy us, and to destroy our Christian law and order. Anyone who asks us to tolerate evil is actually asking us to love evil and to hate good, but they are not honest enough to say so. For example, one writer who recently wrote a book pleading for love and

toleration for homosexuals, child molesters, and every other kind of pervert, spoke of the Bible and Christianity with savage hatred, and said, of Christian morality, “To be chaste is no longer praiseworthy; rather, it is something unnatural, and therefore almost intolerable.”

Such people pretend to be against hate, but they are simply preaching the love of evil, and the hatred of all that which is holy and good. Their purpose is to convert you from the love of God to the love of evil. 🖋️



Hate Conquers All


Two incidents have come to my attention today. Both happened this week. An attempt by someone, who has a large and urgently needed sales check due from a federal agency, to ask why payment was delayed week after week, was met with almost snarling irritability.

In the second incident, a young working mother had another employee explode in a tantrum which disrupted work and left her greatly upset. The disrupting young woman just returned after a long sick leave for mental problems; she was sent home to “recuperate” after her outburst, but those who suffered from her wild tantrum had to go on working. They were told to overlook the “sick” woman’s conduct because she has “mental problems.” More accurately, she has sinful problems.

In these and other cases, people who complain are told that they are unloving, and that where people have personality problems, love conquers all. In practice, what this love religion adds up to is a very different conclusion: hate conquers all. The unlimited tolerance and indulgence given by unions, employers, and federal agencies to hateful and incompetent people is not love

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affirm humanistic love, we are denying God's salvation and offering a man-made plan of salvation which only gives a seal of approval to hate. Godly love does not condone or coddle evil; humanistic love does. As a result, wherever humanism talks about love, the end result is that hate conquers all. 

but hate. When the young woman was sent home after her outrageous behavior, foul language, and refusal to work, the only love shown was for her; in practice, management was showing hatred for all the faithful employees. They received no time off, no sick leave for being nasty, and no consideration.

“Love conquers all” is a disguised way of saying instead that hate must triumph and must conquer. The Bible tells us that “God is love,” and this means that it is the love and grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and His atonement which alone saves us. Humanistic love can save no man, change no sinner, nor alter any man's status before God. When we



How to Love Your Neighbor

A great many preachers have been working a Bible verse overtime these days, as they plead for the grape “strikers” in Delano, the people of Africa, India, Watts, and other points to the left. This much-abused text is Leviticus 19:18: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” If these men are right in their interpretation of the Bible, we had better line up with them. If not, they should be put in their place, as perverters of Scripture.

Now, what does the Bible say about loving our neighbor? First of all, Moses made it clear that it included all men, foreigners, and enemies, and he made it clear that it included any visiting Egyptians in Palestine, even though they were the Israelites’ recent oppressors (Lev. 19:33–34). We are therefore duty-bound to love our enemies; but what does it mean to love them?

Jesus Christ, and Saint Paul as well, both defined the meaning of love in the Biblical sense: it is the keeping of the second table of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 19:18–19; Rom. 13:8–10). Let us analyze what this

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means. *First*, “Thou shalt not kill”: my neighbor’s life is God-given, and it cannot be taken apart from God’s law; for capital crimes and in lawful warfare I must therefore respect every man’s right to life. *Second*, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”: I must respect the God-given sanctity of my neighbor’s home. *Third*, “Thou shalt not steal”: I must respect property as a God-given condition of human life, and I must not violate this right. *Fourth*, “Thou shalt not bear false witness”:

I must respect my neighbor’s and enemy’s God-given rights not only in word and deed, but in thought as well. In short, as Paul said, “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). If we respect all men’s rights to life, home, property, and reputation in word, deed, and thought, we keep this law. We may dislike some men, but if we respect these God-given rights, we keep the law.

This verse, then, is no justification for socialism, for any violation of property rights, for enforced sharing, or for welfarism. Instead, it is the only sound foundation for social order and for civil liberties.

The false preaching of this verse, and others as well, has led to the disintegration of Christian standards and of social order. It has been used to justify all kinds of civil disorder and revolutionary activity. But the Bible

is emphatic: “Love is the fulfilling of the law,” God’s law, and godly obedience to human authorities, not disobedience and lawlessness. Our answer to such men should be blunt: “I love my neighbor; I respect his right to life, home, property, and reputation in word, thought, and deed. Why don’t you?” If the subversion of our country is an important matter, and treason a capital offense, what shall we call subversion of God’s Word and treason to His holy order? 



Debt

It is amazing how casual many people are about what God says. For example, we read in Romans 13:8, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.” This means that debt-free living should be the believer’s way of life. Of course, at times necessity leads to debt, but we are not to go into long-term debt. Debts are to be for no more than a six-year span (Deut. 15:1). Before World War

II, in many parts of the United States, mortgages were for five years only.


What would obedience to this law or commandment do? For one thing, together with a debased currency or money, long-term debt is the key cause of inflation. It means we are spending future income today, and we are paying a heavy rate of interest for it. Homebuyers today are commonly paying \$10 in interest for each dollar paid

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on the principal.

Debt living is closely tied to covetousness, whereas we are told that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Too many young couples are not content unless they start life with a better house and better furnishings than their parents ever had.

We are to live, our Lord makes clear, “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). God’s “every word” has something to say about your use of money. 



God and Taxes

Very little is said nowadays about the Biblical teaching on property and taxation, and with reason: we are so far from the Biblical way of life.

There was no property tax in the Bible. As H. B. Rand, in his *Digest of the Divine Law*, pointed out, “It was impossible to dispossess men of their inheritance under the law of the Lord as no taxes were levied against land. Regardless of a man’s personal commitments he could not disinherit his family by being dispossessed of his land forever.”¹ Over and over again, the Bible declares, “The earth is the LORD’s” (Exod. 9:29; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26, etc.), and only God can exact a tax for it. The tithe is God’s tax for the use of the earth; it is not a gift to God but a required tax, and only giving over the ten percent is a gift to God. Such gifts are called “freewill offerings” (Deut. 16:10–11; Exod. 36:7; Lev. 22:21, etc.), because they depend on man’s free will, whereas the tithe is required.

Civil government of the state could not tax the land, because the land is not the property of the state but of God, and no state has a right to levy taxes against God’s possessions. The support of civil government was

through an increase tax, that is, a production tax.

H. B. Clark, in *Biblical Law*, pointed out that Samuel declared it to be a sign of tyranny and evil when civil government required as much for its support as God does in His tithe.² Samuel said, of the tyrant, “He will, besides, take a tenth of your grain crop and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants ... He will appropriate a tenth of your flocks, too, and you yourselves will become his servants” (1 Sam. 8:15, 17, Berkeley Version). Today civil government takes more than a tithe of our income: it takes about 45 percent!

America was settled by Christian men who established their colonies on these Biblical laws: they made property exempt from taxation to protect men in their liberty. In its first session, in 1774, the Continental Congress denied that Parliament could tax real property. As Gottfried Dietz has stated, “As to property, the delegates felt it should be free from seizure and taxation.”

The idea of a property tax came in very slowly, and such a tax appeared first of all in New England. The old Biblical standard gave way as Deism, Unitarianism, and


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atheism spread. Such unbelievers saw the state as man's savior, and therefore they favored placing more and more power in the hands of the state.

The property tax was resisted in many areas, especially in the South, where post-Civil War "Reconstruction" made it a weapon for destroying the old order.

Today, the Lordship of the triune God is being denied; the tithe is neglected; the power of statism is increasing, and taxation is compelling men to pay a rent for their property. Property was ordained by God to establish men in liberty; it is now being taken from man, and liberty is waning.

If men could acknowledge the sovereignty of God, render to truly Christian causes God's tithe, and then work to free the land from the tyranny of taxation, a great rebirth of liberty would be forthcoming. This is a cause to work for. Begin with yourself. 

1. Howard B. Rand, *Digest of the Divine Law* (Merrimac, MA: Destiny, 1943).

2. H. B. Clark, *Biblical Law*, no. 128, second edition. (Portland, OR: Binfords and Mort, 1944).



Telling the Time

For us, an hour is sixty minutes long, and a minute is sixty seconds; come rain or shine, winter or summer, an hour is always the same.

But it was not always so. The Romans, for example, had the most advanced culture of their time, but for them the length of the hour varied throughout the year. It was determined by the seasons. Daylight was always divided into twelve hours, but since the days are shorter in winter, each of the twelve hours was shorter in winter. The hour thus varied during the year from about forty-five to seventy-five of our minutes.

All this seems strange to us, but it had its logic. Time was governed by man's convenience, not by objective facts.

The sixty-minute hour thus reminds us of God's unchanging order. We are told that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).



Christianity slowly changed all this. It saw the universe as an ordered realm made by an unchanging God: “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6).

The sixty-minute hour thus reminds us of God’s unchanging order. We are told that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

We might at times prefer shorter hours, or wish we could reorder the world to suit ourselves. The Romans tried it in a number of ways besides the reckoning of time. They had a rubber yardstick in law, morality, and other things. This is one reason why the Romans are gone and we are here. 🖋️

II



Proverbs

I am sorry that proverbs are no longer as commonly used as when I was a boy. Then, having proverbs thrown at us was an important part of our education. We were told to avoid evil companions: “He who lies down with dogs will rise up with fleas.”

Where fools were concerned, old American proverbs had much to say: “If you want to make a fool of yourself, you’ll find a lot of people ready to help you.” Another said, “There is no fool like an educated fool.” An Armenian proverb put it this

way: “You can give a jackass ten university degrees, but it still won’t make a horse out of him.” The Russians said: “Make a fool the tsar, and he is still a fool.”


The Bible has the best, of course. One of the things

I believe that we need to read Proverbs, preach it, and use it. The Book of Proverbs was designed and written to teach the young and remind the old of the practicality of godly living.



it says about fools is this blunt judgment: “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly” (Prov. 26:11). In other words, the fool loves his folly and prefers it. He will fight for it: “Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly” (Prov. 17:12). Thus, the fool is a menace. “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool” (or, “A rebuke enters deeper into a discerning man than a hundred stripes into a fool”) (Prov. 17:10).

At one time, our schoolbooks were full of proverbs; our mothers and our fathers summed up the wisdom of the past in proverbs we never forget.

I believe that we need to read Proverbs, preach it, and use it. The Book of Proverbs was designed and written to teach the young and remind the old of the practicality of godly living. This we now need more than ever. 



Birth of Christ Our King

The prophecies of Christ's coming include a very striking one in Ezekiel 21:26–27: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

God here declares that the world's crowns of authority will be removed and destroyed. Things “shall not be the same,” or, it can be translated, “change is in process,” because Christ shall be born. With His birth, this change will mean exalting the blessed meek of the earth and casting down the mighty. God declares that He will “overturn” or ruin all the world's sinful powers and turn the world over to Christ.

Between Ezekiel's day and the birth of our Lord, all the great empires of the ancient world were overturned and ruined. Jesus Christ, worshipped as God and King, and by the wise men, declared that His Kingdom is not of this world, but from Heaven, and therefore over all the

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world, over men and angels. After Christ’s ascension, St. Paul declared that another great overturning would shortly begin, a shaking of the whole world of human powers, so that only “those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb. 12:27).

Knowing these things, the Virgin Mary, in the Magnificat, saw in prophetic joy the meaning of Christ’s coming: it was God’s glorious salvation, the redemption of His people, and the putting down of the proud and mighty, and the scattering of “the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (Luke 1:46–55). When the aged Simeon took the infant

Jesus in his arms, he rejoiced, saying, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou has prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29–32).

To celebrate truly the birth of our Lord, we must see Him in His glory, as Savior, Redeemer, and King. We must see Him as the great overturner, who shall cast down the proud and the mighty to give the earth to His blessed meek. We must see Him as He who came

to redeem us from our burden of sin and guilt by His atoning blood, and as our abiding Lord and Governor. We must see His coming as the beginning of His assured victory, and we must echo by faith the heavenly chorus, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Then truly the joy of Christmas is our joy, and His birth is our assurance of victory. 🖋️



The Pharisees

Some years ago, a two-volume study of the Pharisees was written. The author believed that Jesus was wrong in condemning them because they were actually closer to Him in their beliefs than any other group. Much that the writer said was true, but his perspective and conclusions were false.

Our Lord indeed was harshest towards the Pharisees, whom He called whited sepulchres, serpents, vipers, blind guides, hypocrites, and more (Matt. 23:23–33). The Pharisees came to hear Jesus, at first hoping to hear Him damn everyone else, only to hear Him damn them. They did believe in the Word of God, but they believed it was good for everyone other than themselves.

Jesus shocked the Pharisees by condemning them most, and the people who professed most to be God's people ended up crucifying the Lord of Glory. Their faith had at last shown its evil fruits.



The Pharisees were the strictest believers in all Judea; they were also the most moral. They were proud of their superiority, and they took credit for it. As a result, their pride in the purity of their faith led them to censoriousness, to a contempt for others, and to a belief that others were standing in the need for prayer rather than they themselves.

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In Praise of Strong Language

A very unpleasant and ungodly woman once told me, “A Christian must be nice to everybody.” What she meant was that I had to take her nasty criticisms and yet be sweet to her. Was she right? A minister tried to tell me, within the past week, that we should all be like Jesus, who, according to this minister, loved everybody and never had an unkind word for anyone or ever indulged in name-calling. Was he right?

Not according to my Bible. Jesus called Herod “that fox” (Luke 13:32); He called the Pharisees “hypocrites”; “blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”; “whited sepulchres”; “serpents”; a “generation of vipers” (Matt. 23:23–33); and much more. On one occasion, He even called Peter “Satan” (Matt. 16:23) for counseling a wrong course of action.

Nor is strong, blunt language lacking in the prophets and apostles. The Bible rings out with strong condemnation of a great many persons as well as nations, and sins as well as sinners. Neither Jesus Christ nor the Bible is “nice to everybody,” nor can we be,

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without sin.

The Bible's strong language does not represent sin or weakness on the part of the prophets, apostles, or Jesus Christ. Their anger is righteous anger, and their plain, blunt language is godly indignation and righteous judgment.

One of the sins of our age is the lack of strong language where evil is concerned. Nothing seems to be called by its right name these days. Murderers are called "freedom fighters," and revolutionary mobs are called deprived and underprivileged people whom we must subsidize. Hoodlums are called victims of their environment, and so on.

Because of the inability of many to face facts plainly, they are easily imposed on by knaves and fools. Evil and foolish persons are tolerated, allowed to take up time and attention and to hamper godly men and women.

We cannot deal with evil unless we first of all face up to it for what it is and call it by its right name. We have had too much nicey-nice from politicians and preachers. It is high time to use some blunt, plain, and strong language, and then, by the grace of God, to take steps against the powers of evil. We cannot win a battle until we first of all recognize that we are at war.

We need more strong language, strong deeds, and strong men. God give us such men! 



Spiritual Arson

One of the Bible's strongest statements has to do with speech, with the tongue. Our Lord's brother, James, tells us that speech is a killing power like fire, and the tongue "is set on fire of [or by] hell." The tongue of fallen man communicates "a world [or, literally, in Greek, a *kosmos*] of iniquity." While men can tame wild animals, "the tongue can no man tame." It is "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:3–12).

The old saying "Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but angry words can never" is not true. More people are hurt by words than by sticks and stones.


Too many people who are said to be converted have unconverted tongues. Major and chronic problems in churches arise from hurtful things said. It is the God-ordained duty of pastors to confront sinners, to hear

Gossiping can be a form of spiritual arson. An arsonist destroys something he has no right to destroy. Instead of being a builder, he is a destroyer.



their confessions, and to correct and guide them. This sometimes requires blunt words. The pastor does this with authority. The congregation does not have an authority to talk, pass judgment, gossip, and generally manifest an untamed tongue. Its speech must be governed by the Holy Spirit.

James said of speech, “The tongue is a little member ... Behold, how great a matter [or wood] a little fire kindleth!”

James is saying that gossiping can be a form of spiritual arson. An arsonist destroys something he has no right to destroy. Instead of being a builder, he is a destroyer. The last thing churches need are arsonists. Don't be one. 



Confession

I felt heartsick the other day when I heard that a husband had confessed his sins, to everyone's great joy except his wife's. It was a general confession. Now, a general confession is legitimate, but by an individual, a specific confession is necessary.

People often say, "I'm sorry," because they are caught, or in deep trouble, but only because they regret the results of their sins. A true confession of sins is specific.

All of us are sinners in one way or another. To say that we are sorry for our sins does not mean much unless we specify the sin which is the present problem. This means confronting our actual sin and our guilt: it means dealing with the facts, not vague generalizations.

There is no genuine repentance apart from a specific confession of sin. A general confession of sin by an individual is simply admitting one's status as a human being. A specific confession is a recognition of one's own transgressions against the Lord, and against various people, and without this, there is not true repentance.

Thus, when someone, whether a child or an adult, says, "I'm sorry," we need to ask, "Sorry for what?" Until we get a specific answer, the confession is worthless. 🖋️



Cowardly Church Members

It happened again. A pastor, more than a thousand miles away, is a good friend whom I see once or twice a year. His congregation knows of our friendship. A few people in the church are unhappy over a trifling matter involving the way this pastor does certain things.

What do they do? They have two honest choices. *First*, they can speak to him about it, graciously and kindly. *Second*, they can look at the total picture and recognize that their pastor is one of the best anywhere, and a minor fault is worth overlooking.

However, both of these choices require character, and also grace. Instead, they take a third choice. They

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telephone someone, who is in a neighboring state where I am speaking, and ask him to speak to the man who will meet me at the airport, and ask him to ask me to speak to their pastor!

It sounds crazy, and it is. It is also sinful. It is a demand for a perfection which these people themselves lack. It is a violation of God's law against tale-bearing (Lev. 19:16), and it is a request that I join them in their cowardice and sin.

With members like this, is it any wonder that the church is weak? Who but a fool will criticize a sergeant on a battlefield for not wearing a tie? We are at war with humanism, against God's enemies; stop fighting with God's soldiers and officers, or the Lord God will declare war on you. 🖊️



About Pastors

Earlier this year, a friend of our small but active Christian foundation donated his 1974 Mark IV Continental to us for our work. He had kept it in superb condition, almost show-room polish, added new Michelin tires all around, and had it thoroughly checked. Naturally, it is a pleasure to drive.

The car is also an interesting religious barometer. From time to time, as I travel up and down the state, someone will comment about the car and its condition, and ask about me and my work. Sometimes, I tell them I am a writer, which I am, and the author of twenty-five to thirty books, all currently in print. They are impressed. Some will tell me about foreign cars, very expensive ones I have rarely seen, which they think I should be interested in!

At other times, I tell them that I am a minister, which I am, still preaching and speaking all over the country. This answer makes some of them unpleasant and even angry! Some, who call themselves “good Christians,” talk resentfully of “rich preachers”!

Now the Bible tells us that “the labourer is worthy of his reward,” and that those who labor well in the


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ministry of the Word and doctrine are “worthy of double honour,” which means double pay (1 Tim. 5:17–18). Too many church members act as though God never said that. A very fine pastor went to a small, struggling church here in California at a cut in salary because he felt much could be done there. His wife went to work; he put in long hours as a pastor, building up the membership, and as a carpenter, doing the finishing work on the new building. Then, after several years, he asked for a salary he felt he was earning, and which the

church could pay. Board members opposed it on the grounds that he would make more than they did!

All too many church members act as though poverty is a virtue in pastors, missionaries, and Christian schoolteachers. They dishonor the Lord by dishonoring His servants.

Take a good look at yourself. Would you be resentful if your pastor could live better than you do? If so, don't call your attitude anything other than what it is, sin and envy, and it does not commend you to the Lord. 



The Departing Pastor


A pastor telephoned recently, not to ask for counsel, but simply to have someone to talk to. He is leaving his pastoral charge after six very successful years. A moderate church in size when he arrived, it has grown substantially. Visitors come from miles away to hear him, and the church, while having new buildings, must now plan on much larger facilities. The congregation loves him and is proud of their church.

But he is leaving to start a mission work in a small community in another state. Why? I could not take it any longer, he told me; they want to be big, important, and successful, not useful to the Lord. When the pastor, soon after arriving asked for a Christian school, the church voted it down, then and each year since. When he suggested organizing the women for a ministry of help, one day a month for each volunteer, to the many elderly shut-ins, they told him that, with their present growth, after their new building project, they could add someone to the staff for that purpose.

All they want, said the pastor, is good preaching, no application; a good center for the families of the church, no concern beyond themselves. What we have, he told

me, is an important Bible-believing community center, not an army for Jesus Christ, and they will not change.

As a result, he is leaving, to start a new work, and a Christian school as a part of it. I am sure the congregation will be bewildered. They will offer him more, not stopping to think that he is leaving to take much less.

They will never understand until they face up to the key question: Is the church there to serve me and my family, or my community, or to serve the Lord Jesus Christ?" 

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Double Honor

Already this year I have made several trips back and forth across the country, and I am still continually amazed at how indulgent church members are of ungodly and unbelieving pastors, and how heartless so often towards godly and able pastors.

In one church, for example, a board member, an envious, incompetent man, blocked a raise for the pastor on the ground that the minister would then make more than he did. He actually believed this was a good argument. Yet this sanctimonious reprobate professed to believe the Bible from cover to cover.

St. Paul says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:17–18).

What this means is simply that it is the law of God that muzzling an ox is wrong. The worker deserves a fair return for his work. Those who labor faithfully and effectually in the ministry of the Word and doctrine deserve double honor or pay.

Not too many years ago, a church manse was

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furnished with discarded furniture from the homes of members, and the pastor's family was given hand-me-down clothes. People sanctimoniously felt virtuous being stingy towards God.

Things have improved some since then, but not much. Most people still give the leftovers of their lives to God and to the church. Yet

they wonder why the church declines and the country disintegrates.

How would you like it if you were paid with leftovers? And how do you think God views the leftovers of your life? If you expect God to appreciate you, you are not only a sinner but a fool.

If we deny God, He denies us joy in all that we keep. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:6).

If we do not honor God's faithful servants, it is because we do not first of all honor God. 



Blindness

I remember, back in Depression years, a pastor who was an incredibly bad preacher. He was successful only because he was an exceptionally good money-raiser, and there are too many churches always that prefer money to grace, because money spells beautiful buildings and facilities.

One elderly pastor once observed that the worst punishment in hell for this money-raising pastor would be an eternity spent listening to his own sermons. Well, he was wrong. About ten years or so later this incompetent preacher bought a tape recorder and began to tape his own preaching as some kind of self-test. I was told that he listened to his own sermons and voice with rapture and delight!

When men are stone blind, turning up the lights will not help them. When men are cold dead in their sins and trespasses, medicine will not revive them. They need the regenerating power of God in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah describes the blindness of his generation, and of all godless men, in these words: "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we have no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in

desolate places as dead men” (Isa. 59:10). The blindness of Isaiah’s day preceded judgment.

That successful pastor was a blind man, and there are many like him in every walk of life. They have no awareness of their condition, nor any knowledge of their destiny of death. Many things displease them, but not their blindness. In such a society, Isaiah tells us, “Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey” (Isa. 59:15).

But it does not end there. The spiritually blind have no future. The righteous do suffer, but they triumph also, because “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). To be blind at the edge of a cliff means no fear as we walk, but it also means no life. 🦋

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The Test of Preaching

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is commonly recognized as one of the great preachers of all time. It is important to remember that, in his own day (the nineteenth century), many people disliked and resented his plainspoken preaching. Spurgeon never soft-pedaled anything God's Word declared, and this, to many, was offensive. They felt that a preacher should only "inspire and uplift" people, never shake them up, as Spurgeon did.

Spurgeon did have a knack for timely and hard-hitting sentences, as, for example, his statement that many church members reminded him of his neighbor's pigs, "all grunt and no bacon."


A pastor once invited Spurgeon to preach for him during his absence one Sunday. The congregation was very upset over this. When Spurgeon arrived, no one greeted him or opened up the pastor's study. Spurgeon placed his hat and coat on the pulpit chair. Since the offering that day was to go to Spurgeon, the offering plates had been hidden by the deacons. For the offertory, Spurgeon handed his hat to the ushers. No one placed even a halfpenny into the hat. When the smirking

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ushers returned the hat to Spurgeon for offertory prayer, Spurgeon's prayer was a very simple one: "Lord, I thank Thee that these tightwads gave me back my hat." Then he preached the Word of God to them.

Then, as now, there are many who say to the Lord's servants, "Speak unto us smooth things" (Isa. 30:10). They want all preaching to please them, when it should rather be pleasing to the Lord.

The test of good preaching is very simply: Is God pleased with it, or is man? 



Mummified Christians

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was a remarkable man with a devastating way of saying things. He believed emphatically that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

He regarded churches that did not produce working Christians as mortuaries. In fact, he said, all too many church members are “mummy Christians.” They are mummified, and mummies are incapable of action. Except for occupying space in a church, such members do little to apply the faith.

Hard language? Well, Charles Spurgeon said too many church members reminded him of his neighbor’s pigs, “all grunt and no bacon.” Some other great


We all love the word of praise, but perhaps what we need is the word of judgment to wake us up out of our indifference and laziness.



Christian leaders have used equally strong language.

Are such judgments true? And if they are, can we not believe that our Lord will use even harsher language on the Day of Judgment?

About fifty years ago, a Bible school teacher made his class spend several days listing all the words of our Lord in two categories: (1) words of love and encouragement, and (2) words of wrath and judgment. To the class's surprise, the second list was far longer.

Our Lord, who knows what is in man, knows what is in us. We all love the word of praise, but perhaps what we need is the word of judgment to wake us up out of our indifference and laziness. 



Is the Church Obsolete?

Is the church obsolete? The answer, clearly, is that many churches are. The basic definition of the word “obsolete” is “gone out of use.” Not too many years ago, a horse and buggy were necessary on most farms; today, they are obsolete, and, for much farming, even a barn is obsolete also. They have no real function or purpose in terms of the necessities of farm life today.

Is the same true of the church? The church is, by the definition of the Bible, the body of Christ, made up of His members, governed by His Word and ordained officers, and called together for worship by the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments. According to the Bible, the church does not belong to man but to Jesus Christ: it is His possession, called to serve Him and fulfill His purposes.

The church is obsolete when it fails to do that. In fact, the church is not a church when it fails to fulfill Christ’s purpose. When the church becomes an agency for propagating unbelief, when it denies the basic doctrines of the faith, it is obsolete. When a church

They use the form of the church to promote the substance of a socialist revolution. They use the form of the preaching of God's Word to issue propaganda for political and economic causes that are hostile to Biblical faith.



joins forces with social revolution, when it champions lawlessness, rioting, and the organized assault on the property rights of farmers and businessmen, the church is obsolete. Of every false church, Jesus Christ says, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). His promise to false churches is one of sharp judgment (Rev. 2:23). In Christ's eyes, false churches are obsolete, of no use to Him, and therefore to be destroyed.

If Christ, according to His Word, regards false churches as obsolete, as useless to Him, we have no right to treat them

differently. We cannot stand with a church that has abandoned Jesus Christ and expect Him to bless and defend us.

Even a prominent leftist, Michael Harrington, recently protested against the church's position today. While agreeing with their revolutionary political ideas, he declared that "they still have an obligation to talk about their old theological hero, God. If they are unwilling to do that, they should take off their robes and discard the ceremonial paraphernalia and come out into the secular cold with the rest of us. Otherwise, the

crosses ... are so much costume jewelry.” Harrington concluded, “And so, my radical advice to these radical religionists is: God should go to church. And maybe He shouldn’t hang around the bars so much.”

Not only the cross but the entire form of the church is simply “so much costume jewelry” for most clergymen today. They use the form of the church to promote the substance of a socialist revolution. They use the form of the preaching of God’s Word to issue propaganda for political and economic causes that are hostile to Biblical faith.

St. Paul describes these infiltrators into the church as “traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; [h]aving a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:4–5).

As far as Christ is concerned, such a church, and such a clergy, is obsolete: it has lost its usefulness to Him. But a church that is useless, and yet is still thriving, must then have some great use for someone else. Although it is obsolete for Christ, the church is obviously useful to Christ’s enemies. ✍



Belonging

Dr. Wayne A. Meeks, in discussing the early church, says of the language of the New Testament and the early church, that it is “the language of belonging.”

The early Christians are told by Paul of their obligation and privilege of being members one of another (Eph. 4:25). He tells them that they are the elect of God; they have a calling in Him; they are loved by God, and they are “known” by Him: He does not forget them. They belong to Jesus Christ, and to one another in Him. This Paul states as a fact.

He also states that the Christians of his day were given to disagreeing with each other, sometimes intensely. Some were involved in very serious sins. Others proved to be false believers and left the fellowship. Some were loose-tongued and backbiting, even about Paul himself. Paul does not spare the church. He gives us a very blunt and honest picture of it, as James does.

Which of Paul’s pictures of the church is the true one? The answer is that both are. Christians are saved sinners, but sinners still. Their behavior is sometimes disgraceful and even evil.

At the same time, the Christian community is used by God to bring His saving truth to all men. It is thus a great and powerful instrument of divine grace.

We can, by seeing only the human side of the church, grow weary of all the bickering and sin and separate ourselves from it. In doing so, we separate ourselves from God's appointed community; we cease to be members of one another, and we strain our membership in Him.

We are never told that church membership is sweetness and light, problem-free, or smooth sailing, simply that, in spite of all these things, it is a blessed fact. 📖

We are never told that church membership is sweetness and light, problem-free, or smooth sailing, simply that, in spite of all these things, it is a blessed fact.





Laymen

Laymen have not had a good time of it in the church. It has at times been their fault, and, at other times, the fault of the clergy. Sometimes, laymen have been indifferent to their Christian responsibilities, and, in other cases, the clergy has been unwilling to allow any responsibility to the laymen.

The very words for “laymen” have undergone change indicating some disrespect. The word “lewd” originally meant “laymen” in Old English; at first, it meant, “not of the church, a layman”; then “ignorant or rude”; then, “of the lowest orders in the church”; and then finally “base or vile.” Our present word “lay” means “of the people,” in origin, so that the layman was seen as someone representing the people rather than the Lord. All in all, the English language shows a history of disrespect for laymen!

The Bible gives us a very different picture. We are members of Christ’s body, whatever our calling. We are living stones in His spiritual house, all of us a dedicated priesthood called to offer spiritual sacrifices through Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). It is neither pastor nor layman who is central but Christ and His Kingdom.

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To depreciate the calling of laymen is wrong. It is wrong if it is done by pastors, and equally wrong when it is done by laymen. Some laymen want to leave all the responsibilities of the church in the hands of the pastor, and then sit back and criticize! Others delegate all concern for the life of the

church to their wives. God holds us responsible for the authority He gives us, whether in our calling, home, or church. We cannot delegate our accountability to the Lord. When God surveys the plight of His church, He holds all of us, pastors and laymen, accountable for its condition. And with God, no excuse works. 📖



Stumblebums

In Jude 24, we are told that our Lord “is able to keep you from falling.” The word “falling” can be better translated as “stumbling.” In other words, our Lord is able to keep us from being stumblebums!


Between forty and forty-five years ago, I knew an ex-boxer who was physically a healthy-looking man. A gracious and kindly man, he had been in a few too many fights, and, as a result, he at times was mentally or physically tangled. The unkind term “stumblebum” was applied by some to him.

Well, there are spiritual stumblebums in the church, and they cannot blame too many fights for their problem! They stumble morally and religiously because they refuse to submit to the discipline of God’s Word and His Spirit.

But our Lord is able to keep us from stumbling and falling. Do we want to walk in strength? Or do we prefer to be stumblebums in the church?



A pastor I know has a chronic problem with a man well into his forties who gets into temptation faster than a jackrabbit can race across the road. He is a spiritual stumblebum who would trip over a grain of sand. He regularly confesses to his pastor, bewailing his sins, and as regularly is in trouble again. He uses his pastor as a crutch, and he is “too busy” to submit to the disciplines of the Word and the Spirit. He is a stumblebum who has no desire to grow strong.

But our Lord is able to keep us from stumbling and falling. Do we want to walk in strength? Or do we prefer to be stumblebums in the church? 



Junk Preaching

The apostle Paul was a blunt and plainspoken man. He did not spare his hearers or readers. His language is thus often colorful. We read in 2 Timothy 4:3–4, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Paul says that the church will turn to men who court popularity, men who know how to please the crowd. The demand for such men will be so great that Paul compares it to piling up goods.

That is not all. When Paul says men will not endure “sound doctrine,” he is saying, literally, “healthful teaching.” To put it in modern terms, Paul compares crowd-pleasing preaching to junk food. They, the people, will not “endure” sound or healthful teaching; the word “endure” means “to hold to or have.” It will be intolerable to them, as spinach is to some children. A spoiled child wants candy and cookies, not healthy food, and Paul says this will mark the wayward church.

Such people, he says, will have “itching ears.” This

can be rendered that they will seek teachers who will “tickle their ears.”

They will be crowd-pleasers and entertainers, not teachers. People will go to church to be entertained and pleased, not to learn.

Such people will have no appetite for the truth but will prefer fluff and nonsense; their appetite will be for fables and myths.

We are now in such a time, and we see it in every sphere. In politics, the crowd-pleasers win; men do not want the truth, and they turn to men who will tell them what they want to hear. In the church, congregations do not gravitate to the man whose teaching concentrates on sound doctrine but rather to those who peddle man-pleasing ideas.

A diet of junk food takes its toll on us. Even more so, junk preaching can kill you. 🍴

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pleasing ideas.*





Soured Cream

The state of California has its own foreign aid program. About 3,300 foreign students are sent through California colleges and universities each year at the taxpayers' expense. The average minimum cost is \$1510 per student per year.

These students are the elite, the cream of their countries, but most of them return home as soured cream, and as a problem to their countries because of their radicalism.

Recently, about 150 Iranian students went to Sacramento to create a major disturbance at a legislative hearing which proposed raising the tuition for out-of-state and foreign students. Surprised senators asked, "Why are you concerned? Your tuition is paid for." The answers were absurd, "My cousin may want to come at his expense." Basically, as Senator Bill Richardson pointed out, their position was that any foreigner has a right to an education in California. These Iranian students shouted, "Filthy Capitalist Pig," at the senators, called the liberal legislators "fascists," and threatened that blood would flow on campuses if their demands were not met. They were not met; in fact, their demonstration

Many of these foreign students are not Christian; they think in terms of different moral foundations than we do. We have brought them over on a moral premise, moreover, which is alien to Christianity, namely that dollars and education can save the world.



helped speed the measure.

These foreign students come from the privileged classes of their country. They receive the most considerate attention from Californians. Their thanks has been to damn us all as “exploiters.” If we have more than they do, it is a sign of evil on our part and it belongs to them therefore by right.

We should not be surprised at this. Many of these foreign students are not Christian; they think in terms of different moral foundations than we do. We have brought them over on a moral premise, moreover, which is alien to Christianity, namely that dollars and education can save the world. Can we expect sound moral returns from this faith?

The shah of Iran is said to be disturbed at the way students return home changed. The senators and assemblymen of California have seen the sorry developments in these students.

Isn't it about time we returned to a Christian faith in our missionary program? The only successful foreign aid program the world has seen has been Christian missions. 🖋️



Prayer as Insult

I owe this title, “Prayer as Insult,” to Derek Kidner, an English commentator on the Bible. He was referring to Proverbs 28:9, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.”

I thought of this text as I learned that an evil man asked a pastor for forgiveness but had no interest nor concern about undoing his evil remarks and deeds. He was, in fact, continuing in them. And yet he believed that a few words and a prayer would set things right. His prayers are an insult to God. Why should God feel other than offended when this man continues to treat the Ten Commandments as though they were made to be broken? Why should anyone contemptuous of God’s Word expect to be respected and rewarded by Him?

Professor Kidner was right: Proverbs 28:9 tells us that prayer is an insult to God where men despise and break His law. We cannot fool God by mumbling a few words.


Another pastor, in a like situation, asked the man, “So you’re sorry. What about?” The man refused to admit to any specific sin, and his offense was ugly and disgusting; he simply wanted a blanket forgiveness. He had not confessed to his sin. His answer to “sorry about what?”

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as the pastor questioned him, was this: “Whatever you think I did wrong.” He was really sorry that the pastor knew of his sin; he refused to admit to any specific guilt. “Can’t we even pray together?” he asked the pastor, who refused, saying it would be a mockery, unless he prayed for God to judge the impenitent man.

Be sure to pray in conformity to God’s Word: hear Him, obey Him, rejoice in Him. 



Christ and Delano

A variety of persons have been appearing before various groups in Southern California, and no doubt elsewhere, to “give the word” concerning Christ and Delano. If we are to believe them, Christ is on the side of the marchers in Delano. These marchers are wrongly called “strikers.” These pickets are almost all anything but grape-pickers. They are a variety of professional agitators, college students, members of CORE, SNCC, SCAL, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, pro-communistic and Communistic agitators, and some clergymen. These agitators despise and hate Biblical Christianity; these marching clergymen do not believe that the Bible is God’s infallible Word; they do not believe that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, or that His atoning sacrifice is our only ground of salvation. It is ironic to have these deniers of Christ claim to speak in the name of Christ!

But, in spite of these agitators and their unbelief, is it possible that there is justice in their cause? Are we, as one minister has said, in a period of transition to a different kind of social order? And is the picture of the rich, greedy farmer crowding the poor picker out of a living,

The only kind of social order which a man can live under in any age is a world under God's law; a change to anything else is a change to evil.



an honest one? Is it true?

Much closer to the truth is the story of Naboth and Ahab (1 Kings 21). The farmer Naboth had the power of the king, Ahab, and all the forces of the civil government, working to confiscate his land. Today, the farmer has the federal government and its subsidies to agitators, a vast array of powerful "civil" rights organizations, and subversive forces, working together to confiscate his self-government and ultimately his property. A

man has a property right in his liberty as well as his land. Any infringement on man's God-given liberties as well as on his land is a violation of God's law "Thou shalt not steal." The only kind of social order which a man can live under in any age is a world under God's law; a change to anything else is a change to evil.

Do the farmers represent an "inhuman order"? As one who grew up in the San Joaquin Valley, I know that almost all the farmers began as very poor men, many as immigrants, who picked fruit; whole families worked in the canneries and sacrificed to buy their farms. The foundations of their present prosperity have been godliness and hard work. The new way to social progress which these unbelieving preachers proclaim is anything but hard work; it is the way of theft, and today stealing is made into a new gospel and a new way of life. Force is being used, physical force, federal force, the force of

organized labor, to break the farmers. The atheists are parading in the name of Christ, and the thieves are shouting “Stop thief!” at the man they propose to rob!

Christ at Delano? Not with these revolutionists and false preachers, certainly. Christ is present wherever His Word is faithfully preached, and His justice and discipline duly administered. Men who will not accept Christ as their Lord will face Him as their Judge. These hypocrites at Delano are headed for judgment. ✍



A Cheap God

I wish people would stop treating God as though He were a “cheapskate.” They remind me of the peddler in a Jewish fable. The angels in heaven felt sorry for the poor peddler and begged God to do something for him. “There he is,” they said, “working in the ice and snow of a Warsaw winter, in rags and barely able to make ends meet.” God gave in to their pleading, and the peddler was suddenly transported to heaven. God will help you, the peddler was told; what do you want? The peddler blinked at the lights, thought for a time, and then answered, “Please, a cup of hot coffee and a doughnut.” And all the angels were ashamed: the man’s request was small, because his soul was also a small, petty soul.

Many people pray like that peddler. They come before the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and their prayers reveal their small souls. They treat God as a cheap God who will only give them the barest necessities in times of greatest need.

In 1779, John Newton wrote a great hymn to answer such people. “Come, my soul, thy suit prepare, Jesus loves to answer prayer.” In some of the finest lines ever written


Are you asking too little, or nothing at all? Treat God with respect: approach Him with gratitude, and with real petitions, “large” ones, about yourself and the work around you.



by any hymn writer, Newton declared, “Thou art coming to a King, Large petitions with thee bring; For His grace and power are such, None can ever ask too much.”

Are you asking too little, or nothing at all? Treat God with respect: approach Him with gratitude, and with real petitions, “large” ones, about yourself and the work around you. Make all your wants and wishes known. Remember the needy, the troubled in heart. Pray for the persecuted believers under Communist rule. Have something to say

and say it; that’s what prayer is about.

Remember too that Newton also wrote: “Show me what I have to do, Every hour my strength renew.” This continual renewing is a basic aspect of true prayer. This renewing also makes clear that our God is not cheap: He is a wellspring of strength, blessing, and prosperity to His people. 



The Everyday Sin

An everyday sin that few any longer regard as evil is gossip, or talebearing. According to Leviticus 19:16, “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour; I am the LORD.” The second half of this verse tells us how God views the matter: it is a form of murder.

A good many years ago, in a valley town, an elderly pastor had a problem. His wife became ill and bedridden. It was June, and he hired a fine Christian high school girl to come in and look after his wife and the house from nine to five daily. Since she lived out a ways, he picked her up in the morning and drove her home in the evening. The girl was a blessing and much loved by the sick woman. However, one neighbor thought it was “unseemly” for the pastor and the girl to be alone in the automobile daily and talked about it. The story grew worse, until an affair was suspected. An investigation proved the falsity of the talk, but the sick woman was heartbroken, the girl outraged, and the pastor lost his pulpit. The church board felt, with all that talk, he should move on. Nothing was done to the evil-tongued

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neighbor; she continued in the church with all respectability!

I could repeat this kind of story over and over again, in cases all over the country. Nothing is ever done to the gossip, while the innocent suffer. I heard again a few days ago of a pastor who was wrongly accused of the misuse of funds by a board member. Although he was cleared, and the board member shown to be a malicious liar, the pastor

had to leave, while the board member continues in office.

The Lord sees gossip as a serious offense, similar to forging a charge of murder against our neighbor, because it is a way of killing him. If we do not take God's Word here seriously, we will face His anger and judgment. 🖋️



The Living God


In our day we read a great deal of nonsense about all religions leading to the same goal and having the same meaning. Such nonsense is especially popular among American sentimentalists and modernists. It was thus refreshing to read a book this week by a Hindu anthropologist-monk who quietly set aside that idea.

Hinduism de-emphasizes the personal and stresses the abstract, in regard to God and man as well as the universe. Moreover, says Dr. A. Bharati, because of the different castes, “There are no ‘universal rights,’” because a person’s rights depend upon his caste. Without going any further, it is already clear that a vast gulf separates Biblical faith from Hinduism (and also from other religions).

We believe in a personal God and in a personal Savior, Jesus Christ. There is nothing abstract or impersonal about our faith: we pray to the personal God about our most personal needs. He who gave His only begotten Son to die for us is by His sovereign grace also always mindful of us. Having already accomplished the great act of redeeming love on the cross, He finds our day-by-day needs and cares little things to handle by comparison.

In an impersonal universe, we are very much alone, but with the personal God, we have His Word as a reminder of His concern, “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5–6).

For this reason the early Christians declared: He is the living God.

Are you alive to Him? 

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Joy to the World

One of the most interesting facts about the history of Christianity is often overlooked. No other faith has ever produced more music, or more joyful music. Perhaps the greatest expression of this joy has been the Christmas carol. Great numbers of them have come down to us, and all tell us of the magnificent victory inaugurated by our Lord, and the coming glory. The “January Carol” begins:


Earth today rejoices,
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya,
Death can hurt no more;
And celestial voices,
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya,
Tell that sin is o'er.
David's sling destroys the foe:
Samson lays the temple low:
War and strife are done;
God and man are one.

The carols tell us that Jesus Christ is our victory. He is the destroyer of sin and death and the giver of

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grace, life, and righteousness. For the world to be in peace and prosperity means to be in Christ: He is the only way (John 14:6). Hence the carols sing of “reconciliation ... gladness and salvation,” because Christ has come. Their message therefore is “Joy to the World,” because Jesus Christ was born.

If He has not come into your life, you are not in that joy. 



Taking Up the Cross

An often-misunderstood verse of Scripture is Matthew 16:24, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” This does not mean any necessary persecution or suffering for following Christ. It means denying ourselves, our egocentricity, and becoming Christ-centered instead of self-centered. It means that our will and word cannot govern us, but instead God’s Word and will.

This is what St. Paul means when he declares that all who are Christ’s have crucified their flesh, or their human nature, in order to be governed by the Spirit rather than by their own will (Gal. 5:22–24).


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Paul is reminding us, to put it baldly, that we are all, in and of ourselves, stinkers—egocentric, wanting our own way, and demanding that God ratify our will by answering our prayers and giving us what we want. Since World War II, families have often been child-centered, and we have seen spoiled brats making demands of their parents and having their own way.

People approach God the same way, as spoiled brats. They treat God and His Word casually; they do not tithe. They act as though they have done God a favor by going to church.

One saddened old pastor told me once that if God ever gave some people what they deserved, they would be shocked into heart attacks.

This is what taking up our cross means: denying ourselves. We begin to see our responsibilities to the Lord and His Kingdom, what we owe to God, our life and salvation, not what we imagine God owes to us. 



Listening

In Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19, God declares through Moses that, in due time, He will send the great Prophet (Jesus Christ), and then declares, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” These words are repeated in Acts 3:22–23.

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Whenever the Bible uses the word “listen,” “hear,” or “hearken,” we need to remember an important meaning of the word in Hebrews. It means “obey.”

Our mothers often used the word “listen” in the same sense, saying, “Now, you listen to me,” meaning, “Obey me or get spanked!”

The Bible uses the word in that same sense. When we hear God’s Word, we are not allowed merely to sit and decide whether or not we agree, or whether or not we choose to obey God. God requires us to listen, meaning

to go forth and obey Him.

The preaching of God's Word is thus intended to be preaching for action, for results in our lives. If our mothers sometimes twisted our ear for not minding, what makes us think God will be indulgent when we are heedless of His command Word, the Bible?

We are commanded to listen to God's Word and to obey it; we are not given a choice. The Father declares of Christ the Son, "This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Luke 9:35). Are you listening? 📖



Contentment

We are all very prone to complain about many little things. If the weather is too hot, we long for winter. When it is winter, we long for summer. In either case, we complain. We want the weather to be exactly right, by which we mean right for ourselves, right for our crops, right in terms of our standards.

We make like demands on everything. We who will not be perfect want perfection. We who complain resent complaints in others.

Paul speaks to this disposition, declaring that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Contentment makes us richer than getting our own way.

At this point, however, we must make an important distinction. God does not permit us to be content with evil. Those who use this verse to promote a moral pacifism are perverting Scripture.


Like Elijah, we must challenge the Baals of our day. With Joshua, we must say, in the face of all compromise, “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). We must witness against evil in high places and low, and we must always act from the fear of God, not

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the fear of man.

Godly contentment always goes hand in hand with moral obedience. We can never isolate contentment from righteousness or justice. Contentment makes us richer than getting our own way, because true contentment comes only when we obey God's way. It means recognizing that the Lord gives us better weather than we deserve, and that gratitude is

a prerequisite to understanding and growth. Therefore, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). 



Covetousness

Paul says some surprising things we too often ignore. Thus, in Ephesians 5:3, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you,” that is, spoken of as an existing problem. The covetous or envious man is placed in the same class as sexual libertines. Paul makes the same equation in Ephesians 5:5, “No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” In 1 Corinthians 6:10, Paul equates the covetous man with thieves and drunkards. In fact, he tells us not to keep company with a covetous man, nor even to eat with him (1 Cor. 5:11).

Covetousness is envy in action. Today we do not condemn envy very often; instead, we have created a politics and religion of envy. We approve of envy directed at the rich or successful, those who are better than we are. We use taxes to punish those whom we envy, and to rob them. Modern man is trying to make covetousness into a virtue, and our advertising is directed to stirring up envy in us.

The Bible, however, uniformly condemns envy and


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covetousness, and Paul tells us that it marks the reprobate mind. It is a form of idolatry, because the covetous man says, my will be done; what I want, I must have; I deserve only the very best!

Paul, however, sees covetousness as such a threat that he warns us against associating with, or having dinner with, anyone who is called a Christian but is marked by a covetous

character. It is a threat, because it poisons the heart of man and turns him against those who are his superiors. The covetous heart incites us to resentment and hatred and makes us disturbers of the peace of the church. We become thieves of the unity and peace of the family of faith, and, instead of brotherly love, we manifest envy and unrest. Covetousness is a sin, but remember it is a sin which is most troublesome in us rather than in others. 



Thou Shalt Not Steal

The commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” is given lip service in the churches and in Christian schools and organizations, but it is widely disobeyed. There are more ways of stealing than simply holding a gun to a man’s head. Whenever and wherever by fraud, deception, or coercion we take from anyone what is rightfully their own, and which they have no desire to surrender, we have robbed them.

A church which normally had a paid organist called a man as pastor whose wife was an accomplished organist. After his arrival, he was told that his wife was expected to be the organist for free. They had added an expensive wing to the church buildings, and they needed to economize, and this was how they did it. The pastor was in a vulnerable and helpless position. It was a step up for him, and he was in a number of ways in no position to resist them.

A Christian school regularly expects its teachers to work for a very low pay. It asks the teachers to make “sacrifices,” because “this is the Lord’s work.” But why should teachers sacrifice at their expense for the parents? Why should the teachers live meagerly, so that the

We cannot call ourselves righteous when we take advantage of a pastor, a teacher, or a neighbor. We cannot be justified if we steal “for a good cause.” It is only righteousness which exalts a nation, church, school, or people.



parents can live well and still have good schooling for their children? Such a policy is simply theft, and a school that does this is no more justified in God’s sight than a thief from the slums, and even less so. God, who forbids us from robbing the ox which treads out the corn by muzzling him, will certainly not take it kindly when we rob His servants (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18).


But some people argue, this is for a good cause. Does a good cause ever justify theft? Do I have the right to rob you in order to help my neighbor? What right do I have to

require someone else to “sacrifice” for my welfare? A Christian school which underpays its teachers is asking the teachers to sacrifice so that the parents can live without sacrifice, and this is immoral. It is a violation of God’s law “Thou shalt not steal.”

Among other things, the Westminster Larger Catechism says of this law, “The duties required in the eighth commandment are truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due ... and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our

own.” How many churches and Christian schools abide by that?

Can we be surprised if there are thieves in our streets when there are thieves governing our churches and Christian schools? “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). It is not law officers and their work, nor the proclamations of presidents and officers of state, nor the professions of churches, which exalt a nation, but righteousness. Righteousness means faith, and obedience to the law of God.

We cannot call ourselves righteous when we take advantage of a pastor, a teacher, or a neighbor. We cannot be justified if we steal “for a good cause.” It is only righteousness which exalts a nation, church, school, or people. 



Self-Sufficiency

Sometimes words translated in our English Bible change their meaning, and we then misunderstand a text. At other times, the translation may not be the clearest. One such text is 1 Timothy 6:6–8, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” The usual interpretation of the word “contentment” contradicts James 2:15–17, where we are told it is wrong to tell someone who is our brother or sister in Christ, and is “naked and destitute of daily food,” to be contented and to “depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled” with faith only.

The word “contentment” is *autarkeia* in the Greek; in 2 Corinthians 9:8, it is translated more accurately as “sufficiency.” *Autarkeia* comes from *autos*, self, and *arkein*, to suffice. What Paul is actually saying is that if we have godliness together with the necessities of life to make us self-sufficient, we have “great gain,” that is, the best kind of provision. The word translated as “gain” is *porismos*, a providing, a word we see also in 1 Timothy 6:5, where Paul says that some men regard gain or

provision as godliness.

Thus, what Paul is saying contradicts the false spirituality of some today who want us to despise material things. What Paul holds to be the great provision for life is godliness combined with sufficient material things to live independently, in *autarkeia*, with self-sufficiency. It is this combination of godliness and economic self-sufficiency that we should seek to attain. It is the Christian standard. 📖

What Paul holds to be the great provision for life is godliness combined with sufficient material things to live independently, in autarkeia, with self-sufficiency.





Problems

About two months ago, someone asked me a very interesting question. In your experience, what are the main problems people have? he asked. He was not asking about open and obvious ones, but the subtle problems we as sinners create for ourselves. It was an easy question for me to answer, because the problem areas are such common and obvious ones.

First, there is self-pity, the worst and most cancerous problem of man. We are all prone to it. In self-pity, we read all situations in terms of ourselves. We are the slighted, hurt, offended ones. Self-pity destroys our sense of reality: we make ourselves the center, not God, not other and more important people, nor life's realities as such. Self-pity rests on an enormous and inflated egoism which demands so much of God and man that we are bound to feel hurt, because there can be no delivery on our expectations.


Second (and this surprised the questioner), there is a very serious and common failing: giving unasked for advice. We tell our friends, relatives, and almost anybody handy how to run their lives, rear their children, vote, think, dress, talk, live, and whatever else we can think of.

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We are always full of advice for others, but unwilling to hear any ourselves or to put it into practice. We act as though we are God's generous right hand, ladling out advice with a flow of self-righteousness and then wondering why people are offended! Advice is only good when asked for, and then sparingly, and in very small doses. Moreover, we had better not give advice unless we ourselves can take it and act on it.

Third, there is the common problem of handling money. It is not money itself which is the problem: we are, in our attitude towards it and our handling of it. Money tests us: are we responsible or irresponsible? Do we use money in a godly manner, or do we use it as a means of power, of buying friendship, showing off, and so on?

These three things are basic to most of the troubles people have, but people rarely face up to these problems. They prefer to blame someone or something else. Almost all our problems are of our own making. If we as sinners coddle our problems, we are in trouble with God and man. 



Keep Yourself in the Boat

One of our most popular sins is to be fretful and to worry. We justify our anxiety by listing all kinds of reasons why we have a good cause to worry and will not face up to the fact that it is a sin. Worry means distrusting God, who promises that He makes all things work together for good to them who love Him and are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Remember the storm on the Sea of Galilee? The disciples were badly frightened, and they turned on Jesus in their terror, crying, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Jesus stopped the wind and the storm, saying to the elements, “Peace, be still,” and to His disciples, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:38–40). Our Lord described their fears and worries as “no faith.” The same is true of us.

Our Lord has already done the greatest of all things for us: He has given His life for our redemption. It is a small thing for Him now to care for us.

Worrying means “no faith.” Faith means trusting in Him, and obeying Him.

Now, the next time you start to worry, close your eyes, and think. Remember, Jesus took you on board. Why jump overboard? Stop and think, and keep yourself in that boat on the Sea of Galilee. You are, after all, in the ark of salvation. Is there any safer place to be than with Him, and in His care? Can there be any question that to worry in those circumstances is to sin fearfully?

The greater fact is not your problem but the Lord and His care. The ark of salvation is an unsinkable ship. Keep yourself in the boat, and stay there always. 📖

The greater fact is not your problem but the Lord and His care. The ark of salvation is an unsinkable ship. Keep yourself in the boat, and stay there always.






The Birth of Our Lord

The accounts of our Lord's birth give us the story of the world's most glorious event and its greatest invasion. People today are ready to hear all kinds of nonsense about visitors from outer space and "star wars," but the greatest invasion imaginable is a matter of indifference to them!

On that day, God the Son entered the world. He came as King to reconquer it for God the Father and to restore it to God's original purpose, to be God's Kingdom. He came with grace and healing to all who received Him by faith, and with judgment for those who seek to wrest the Kingdom from its rightful Lord.

Our Lord's coming tells us of His great salvation, and it makes clear that life is only a tragedy or a disaster if we reject the King. Stop looking at the world with the eyes of dead men, who see nothing except wars and rumors of war, griefs, disasters, and the emptiness of sin. To see the world with dead men's eyes is to be dead ourselves to the Prince of Peace and of life. Let the Christmas carols

resound in your heart with the joy of the King: “God rest you merry, gentlemen. Let nothing you dismay, Remember, Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day.” There is joy in the world among those for whom the Lord has come.

Therefore, let the joy of the Lord be your strength (Neh. 8:10). We are not alone. Our King has come, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa. 9:6–7). This year, the next, and all the years to come are the years of our Lord, years of His reign. He shall judge all workers of iniquity in His own wise time, and His name is Jesus, Jehovah saves, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Therefore, this is our day, our time, and our world, because we are the people of the King. Rejoice! 

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Happiness

The word “blessed” in the Bible is a translation of a Greek word meaning “very happy.” Our Lord, in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–12), tells us what true and great happiness means.

Although He spells it out plainly, people still have problems and will then insist that they are not blessed if they mourn, are persecuted, if they hunger and thirst after righteousness, or have like trials.

Our problem is simply this: we believe that we are blessed or very happy only if we get what we want, and what we want is to be indulged, to have things made easier for us. This, obviously, is not our Lord’s view of blessedness. In fact, what we call happiness can be a curse at times. Thus, the Psalmist in Psalm 106:15, in describing the condemnation of the older generation in the wilderness journey, declares of God, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

We need to assess our idea of happiness. Is it humanistic? Does it simply involve getting what we want, with little or no thought of God? But we are God’s property, and we cannot live as though His total claim upon us were nonexistent. Our God is Lord, the absolute

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owner of all things, and all things must serve and obey Him. For us to seek happiness, or blessedness, apart from the Lord and His purposes is to deny Him and to claim a nonexistent independence from God.

To deny God is finally to deny life and happiness and to choose death (Prov. 8:36).

Moreover, happiness on our Lord's terms is more than simply problems and battles; it is also victories, as the Beatitudes make clear: theirs is

the Kingdom of Heaven; the meek shall inherit the earth; they shall be filled and comforted, and so on.

Are you seeking happiness on your terms, or the Lord's? 



Pleasures of Hatred


It may seem strange to talk about the pleasures of hatred, but there must be some pleasure to it, because so many people are prone to hatred! They hate the rich, the middle classes, or the poor, the blacks, whites, Asiatics, and peoples of various races, their family, neighbors, and so on and on.

We live in a world of hatred. A woman told me of her amazement at the fact that a total stranger hated her. She had just moved into the neighborhood, had not met this woman, and learned that she had spoken viciously of her. Why? Another neighbor told her the reason: the cute little car you drive, which your husband gave you, is good-looking, and so are you, and she resents it. Envy is at the root of much hatred.

But not all hatred is envy. The root is an evil heart. Our Lord says, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19). An evil heart delights in evil thoughts and hatred.

Our world today offers a good market for evil hearts. Our films, novels, and everyday life feed the appetite for evil thoughts, envy, and malice. Paul catalogs the sins of

the reprobate and concludes by stating that all such, “knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). In other words, our pleasures identify us. If we enjoy being malicious and hateful, we clearly have an evil heart. If we are happier at hearing some evil gossip about someone than at hearing good, we had better be concerned about our heart.

Look at your heart and ask yourself, What do I take pleasure in? Remember, you may fool men, but the Lord sees the heart. 

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How to Be a Socialist Without Knowing It

At the Berkeley “Vietnam Day” Protest in 1965, one of the radical speakers told his listeners that a revolution with machine guns was “the least important” kind of revolution. “The revolutions that are really important go on in people’s minds and in the way they think and feel.” The opposition has cause for rejoicing; this revolution has largely been won. People think and feel like socialists and communists.

An important test of this is the question of guilt. From the Biblical perspective, a man is responsible for his thoughts and actions and is guilty if he transgresses the law. It is therefore a necessary act of maturity and of grace to confess our responsibility, to own up to our acts. A beautiful old prayer reads: “I confess to God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and before all the company of heaven, that I have sinned, in thought, word and deed, through my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray Almighty God to have mercy upon me, to forgive me all my sins, and to

The basic revolution for Marx was to subvert men's trust in Christian faith and character as the force for true social change by substituting a belief that, not man but his environment, is to blame when man sins.



make clean my heart within me.” Godly faith and character are the necessary ingredients for a good social order.

From the socialist perspective, man is not at fault. It is the environment. Lincoln Steffens said it was not Satan nor Adam and Eve who were to blame for the fall of man: it was the apple! He meant this seriously; it is economic determinism. Man is seen as the creature, not of God, but of his environment. Man is therefore not a sinner; he is a victim. The criminal's problem is not bad character; rather, it is a bad environment, a poor home, and the like.


As a result, we cannot blame

the delinquent, or the criminal; we must blame their home, school, and employers. One lonely and protesting psychiatrist wrote recently that it is becoming dangerous nowadays to be related to anyone who is “mentally sick”; you, not the person, will be blamed for it! Parents are blamed for their children's sins, and no doubt soon children will be blamed if their parents go wrong!

When confronted by a man's crime, breakdown, or failure, do you blame circumstances, the family, other people, the economic system, or anything else other than the guilty individual? If so, congratulations! You have

passed the first and basic test of socialism: thou shalt not blame the man or call him a sinner, but thou shalt excuse him by blaming his environment.

All that socialism needs to succeed is for people to believe this. If you believe that the Bible is right, and that man is responsible, then you will try to change men, to bring them to Christ and to godly faith and character. If you believe it is not man but the environment which is to blame, then you will work to change man by changing the environment, by laws or revolution. Your hope for man will be in acts of Congress and in social revolution.

Remember: “The revolutions that are really important go on in people’s minds.” The basic revolution for Marx was to subvert men’s trust in Christian faith and character as the force for true social change by substituting a belief that, not man but his environment, is to blame when man sins. Have you joined the revolution? 



Thou Shalt Not Covet

A very dear friend, Bertha Shelton, a patient and thoughtful person, was visited not too long ago by an acquaintance who had become a religious fanatic. This visitor deliberately broke some of Mrs. Shelton's finest dishes, declaring that they represented sinful possessions and were a violation of the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet."

The sinner in this case was very clearly this fanatical woman. The Hebrew word translated as "covet" means to seize immorally by force. Thus, what Exodus 20:17 means is simply this: "Thou shalt not seize or take possession of, in violation of God's law, thy neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's." In laying hands on and destroying what was not hers, this fanatical woman had herself broken the law, and she had further sinned by misrepresenting God's law.

The Bible never tells us that lovely things, a good home, or money are evil. What 1 Timothy 6:10 does tell

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us is “the love of money is the root of all evil.” The word St. Paul here used for love means tender affections, as between persons. It is used for the love of God the Father for the Son, Jesus Christ (John 5:20), and of the love of God for us (John 16:27). It is used for the love of friends and families. It is that devotion and affection which belongs to persons, not to things.

Money itself is not the root of all evil. It can be used to accomplish a great deal of good, and it is a prudent man's course, Proverbs makes clear, to leave an inheritance for his children and grandchildren (Prov. 13:22). It is the love of

money rather than persons which is the root of all evil.


Moreover, the Bible does not say it is wrong to have and to enjoy lovely things. Misguided people have tried to tell me more than once that 1 Peter 3:3–4 forbids such things. This is not true. What Peter condemns is the undue trust in material adornment. The godly woman, he says, makes her true beauty a godly character, not “that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.” Peter does not say that it is wrong to have an attractive hairdo, or to wear clothes (St. Peter was certainly not a nudist), but

simply that the best “adornment” of a wife is a godly character.

These killjoys misrepresent the Bible, and they pervert it. They are false teachers, and as in the case of that fanatical woman, they are ungodly, and they are lawbreakers.

Remember, it is God’s Word through Solomon (as translated by Moffatt) that we should rejoice in the good things He gives us:

Here is what I find now to be right and good for man—to eat and drink and to be happy as he toils on at his task under the sun, during the few days that God gives him to live. Such is his lot; yea, it is God’s own gift when a man is made rich and wealthy and able to enjoy it all, to partake of what may be allotted him and to enjoy himself as he toils. Then he will never brood over the fewness of his days, for God is giving him his heart’s delight. (Eccles. 5:18–20)

When Proverbs 10:22 says that “the blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it,” it means by the word “rich,” material possessions. Material possessions are a gift from God. They are to be enjoyed under Him, and He is to be thanked for them. They are neither to be loved in the place of persons, nor despised as worthless. They are a blessing, and they are to be respected and used under God. 



Calling Good Evil

This past Sunday, a young mother approached me to report a shocking incident. She had taken her seven-year-old son to a skating rink, a school outing. Her baby was with her, and, as usual, she breastfed it, as always modestly covered and not in the slightest exposed. The rink manager, in a city rink where vulgar display and sexual play are commonplace, ordered her to stop or get out. Surprising? Well, I find that a major amusement park in southern California, where rock concerts are common, has a similar rule!

When I was a boy, and when I started my ministry, breastfeeding during the services was commonplace. No one thought anything of it. I do not think we are a better people now!

Now, in our “enlightened” days of the sexual revolution, the drug culture, “gay” or homosexual rights, and so on, it seems that normal motherhood is intolerable. Every kind of immodesty and immorality is permitted and defended, but a normal act of motherhood leads to a threat, an inference that the police might have to be called.

The Lord God has a Word for all such: “Woe unto

them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20).

Wherever we reverse the moral order, whether in things small or great, we involve ourselves in a moral revolution. We call evil good, and good evil. To do so puts us at war with God’s purposes, and it means that we want the world to meet our terms rather than the Lord’s.

We have a world today much concerned about the “rights” of a homosexual, but not concerned about a nursing mother’s rights, nor the rights of aborted babies. The word “rights” is fast becoming a name for legitimized evil.

But perhaps the worst evil is indifference. None of the spectators, including other school mothers, opened their mouths to protest when the rink manager threatened the young mother. 🍷

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Following the Leader

About twenty years ago, an analysis was made of “the changing American character.” This study by David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denny, titled *The Lonely Crowd*, described the departure of Americans from their old Protestant Christian standards to humanistic ones. Under the old morality, they reported, Americans were inner-directed; that is, they were governed by their conscience as informed and guided by Scripture. Now they are other-directed, that is, governed by the crowd, by what people think, say, and do. Previously, Americans were also work-oriented; that is, a man was judged by his ability to work responsibly, successfully, and productively. Now, they stated, Americans are consumption-directed; a man is a man by the way he lives it up, enjoys life, and uses up capital.

Is this description accurate? Every week I hear of parents who are permitting their children all kinds of immoral license. The children are allowed to become hippies and are generously supported. They are given birth control pills when they demand them. They are allowed to go to pornographic plays without protest. And why? The answer is always the same. “I don’t want

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my child to be isolated from the group,” or, “I don’t want my child to feel left out of the crowd,” or, “All the other children are doing it, and it would warp my child if I said no.”

In all this, there is no thought of God’s law. Like silly sheep, parents and children play the game of “follow the leader” to moral and spiritual destruction. The Law declares, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exod. 23:2), but the modern belief is,

Thou shalt follow a multitude to do anything as long as you are not left out of the crowd. Nine-tenths or more of our student “rebels” are student sheep, following a leader.

The requirement of Scripture is clear-cut: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:17). Neither faith nor character is revealed by any man until he stands separately from the crowd and from evil in terms of his faith and the truth. Our entire Christian civilization, and our own country, came into existence precisely because men stood in terms of their faith. Luther declared, at the critical testing time, in the face of death, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.” Without a like willingness to stand, we shall soon follow the leader to the graveyard of civilizations. 🦋



Sex Education

A serious mistake made by many people is to assume that Christians are against sex education. Another very bad mistake is to assume that only the public school teachers can teach it.

The basic question to ask about any educational program, whether it deals with sex, history, or science, is simply this: what kind of standard does the teaching represent? Every course without exception represents a philosophy or perspective, and sex education is certainly no exception.

A Christian must promote sex education which begins with the Ten Commandments and the law “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” which affirms the Biblical standard that marriage alone is the God-ordained area for sexual activity, and which upholds Biblical sexual morality.

The biological facts about sex can be learned in a short time, in an hour or so if a person is a slow learner, but the basic inner attitude takes years of faith and living. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the


Lord” (Eph. 5:22). The love, mutual service, and ability to work together—which makes a couple truly one and “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7)—does not come from any course taught during a semester but out of a life of faith and growth.

The objection to the sex education taught in the school is that it is anti-Christian. It is hostile to Biblical faith and law and is openly so. It claims to be interested only in the biology of sex, but it is in fact a presentation of humanistic religious faith and morality. Dr. Mary Calderone, executive director of SIECUS (Sex Information and Education Council of the United States), has stated this new religion and new morality honestly and plainly: “We need new values to establish when and how we should have sexual experience. You are moving beyond your parents. But you can’t just move economically or educationally. You must move sexually as well. You must learn how to use sex. This is it: first, to separate yourselves from your

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parents; second, to establish a male or female role; third, to determine values systems ... Nobody from up on high determines this. You determine it." This is a religious teaching, and it is anti-Christian. Moreover, since this religious principle began to be taught in 1966, it has been successful. Many youths have separated themselves from their parents and are living in terms of the new morality taught by these cultists.

The fact remains that sex education is impossible without moral and religious education. SIECUS and Dr. Calderone recognize this. It is time we did. Christian education, which is radically different, is needed here as elsewhere. 



God with Us

In Isaiah 7:14, in the prophecy of Christ's virgin birth, He is described as "Immanuel." In Matthew 1:23, we are reminded of what Immanuel means: "God with us."

This is the amazing aspect of our faith. Man, having been created by God to serve Him, chose to be his own god and to serve himself, to be his own source of law and truth (Gen.


3:5). Yet God in His mercy sent His only begotten Son to be our new Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), to recreate us to be God's new human race, and to deliver us from our own evil and from the evil one. This is why Christmas is a time of such great joy.

Jesus Christ is "God with us"; He is with us not only because of His incarnation but by His continuing presence and help. Other people may not be with us in any close and sustaining way; our spouse or our children

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may be alien to our life and faith. All this is overridden by the eternally true presence: God is with us in the presence and grace of Jesus Christ. Because of this, “we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

A little while ago I heard from a widow facing her first Christmas alone; she is in faith separated from her children. Yet she knows this: “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). The God who is with us is with her. 



Our Father

Our Lord Himself teaches us to call God “Our Father” (Matt. 6:9). We must not interpret this in terms of much of what passes as fatherhood today.


We are given a very different concept in Hebrews 12:5–11. There, we are told *first* that, “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” God picks us up often to spank us as an aspect of His love. *Second*, if we are not chastised, it means “then are ye bastards, and not sons.” God demonstrates His love by keeping us in line. *Third*, we should revere God for His love manifested in our chastening, for “we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.”

Fourth, the purpose of God’s chastening is “that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Without

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God's compelling hand, we will remain satisfied with ourselves and smug in our sin. *Fifth*, God knows that His chastening of us will be no joy to us but distasteful; "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Take your punishment as God's love for you and as something intended for your training, and you will reap peace and blessings from it. 



Priority

We are told in the Ten Commandments, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). This means no other priorities than the Lord; He must come first in our lives, and He must govern every sphere of life and thought.

Recently, a woman whose children deserved neither support nor anything but being disowned for their sins told her pastor’s wife, “Nothing will ever separate me from the love of my children.” She was determined to love and help them no matter what they were. The pastor’s wife said, “That is idolatry. I’m not going to say any more to you, but God certainly will if you do not repent.”


She was thoroughly right. The sins of the children were very ugly and obvious ones, but the mother’s sin breaks the first and key commandment. She had other

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gods which governed her—the children. For those evil gods, she was surrendering the priority of the Lord.

The worst aspect of this woman's sin was that, in rebelling against the church and her husband in the name of loving her children, she felt that she was the most godly person of all. Because of her false priority, her children, she had ended up at war against God and her duties.

False priorities always lead us astray. What is the priority in your life? 



The Spirit and Life

I spent a week recently at Fairfax Christian School in Fairfax, Virginia. Its lovely grounds and beautiful building house a remarkable school of amazing caliber. Many of its students are of superior intelligence and from outstanding homes. The case of one particular student especially interested me. This boy entered the fourth grade there in September of 1969. The parents had been newly transplanted to Washington, D.C., and they had a problem: the boy was obviously retarded, as public school records for the first three grades indicated. Would the school take him until they could locate a special school at a later date? The school did, and the boy began to develop. At the end of the fourth grade, psychologists tested the boy. His I.Q. was very low, only 67, but he tested at grade level and above in all subjects in terms of a standard achievement test.

Impossible, some tell me. But it happened. Why? A superior curriculum, plus superior and thoroughly Christian teachers, was partly the reason. But St. Paul stated it plainly: "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). The mere form of religion, Paul declared, is dead and kills man's hopes, but the Spirit

The mere form of religion, Paul declared, is dead and kills man's hopes, but the Spirit of God gives life. Man may go through the motions, but without God's Spirit, there is no life nor true power.



of God gives life. Man may go through the motions, but without God's Spirit, there is no life nor true power.

This is our problem in education, politics, and all things else. We try to make some law, curriculum, or manipulated environment do what it cannot do. The boy at Fairfax found life in his classroom: a Christian teacher concerned about him, Christian instruction to which he responded, and a faith which moved his heart and his teachers' to the directions of the Holy Spirit. Instead of being "killed" by the competition of superior students, the boy was given life

and hope by a truly Christian school.

It is high time that we realize that laws, environmental changes, and a variety of helps, however good and often needed, are still not the answer. Of themselves, they can "kill" if they are substituted for the real answer, which is the Lord Himself and His Spirit breathing life, meaning, and power into our activities. 🖋️



John Knox and His Mother-in-Law

John Knox is known to history as the great Scottish reformer. Some have called him the spiritual father of the United States. Greyfriars Church, in Edinburgh, Scotland, has an American flag near the chancel to commemorate that tie, and when the vaulted roof was re-timbered a few years ago, it was done with California redwood, a further witness to the connection with us.


Knox was a strong, vigorous man. Not even a sentence to being a galley slave on a French ship, chained to an oar endlessly, could break his spirit.

There is a side to Knox, over the years, not generally

Because Knox loved his wife, he loved the mother who gave her to him. Knox addressed her as “dear mother,” and she found him to be the finest possible son.



known, and historians “waste” no time writing about it. Knox, in his various travels, some a flight to safety, wrote not only to his wife but to his mother-in-law. Because Knox loved his wife, he loved the mother who gave her to him. Knox addressed her as “dear mother,” and she found him to be the finest possible son.

This gratitude for loved ones and friends always marked Knox. Like St. Paul, his was a temper that could say of all those close to him, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Phil. 1:3). Such thankfulness was very deep and real to Knox. The result? John Knox commanded loyalty as few men have. He gave love and appreciation where it was due, and he required it in return. Knox still has much to teach us. 



Real Wealth

Which is better, one million dollars or one thousand? The answer is an obvious one: if the thousand is real, and the million imaginary, the thousand is clearly better. This seems to be a point so obvious that it is hardly worth making. Unfortunately, however, for most people the imaginary is more important than the real.

I have known women who always thought romantically about a man they perhaps could have married, while looking down on a real and good husband. Then too there are men who see only good in their imaginary and “possible” wife and little in their real one. There are also the people who feel that every job is good, and every house and location a fine one, except for the one they have. They spend their days complaining about and damning the real in favor of the imaginary. They are trading a thousand good dollars for a million dream ones.

Will they ever learn? One wife spent over forty years complaining about her husband, and then, after he died, could only talk about what a fine man he was, how she missed him, and how she had not appreciated

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him properly. Had she learned anything? Not a thing, because at the same time she was failing to appreciate her children and grandchildren!

Genesis 6:5 tells us of fallen man “that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Imagination denies God’s good gifts in favor of a dream world: a dream husband, wife, or children; a dream house or kitchen; a dream workshop, study, or place. But Paul tells us plainly to give “thanks

always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20). To do so means to recognize that all things come from the hand of God, and His reality is good, and our imagination is at best unreal and often rebellious and evil.

Take a good look at what you have, and give thanks. You are far richer with a thousand real dollars than a million imaginary ones. Our wealth is in reality, not in fantasy. Stop complaining and give thanks. God no more loves a complainer and a whiner than you and I do, and far less. Your wealth is in reality, received from God’s hand with thanks. 📖



Music

More than a few people complain, and with good reason, about the influence of bad music on both young and old in our time. Complaining, however, never solves anything. Positive action is always important.


In our day, and for a few generations now, we have neglected the Christian ministry of music. In the Bible, we see that musicians were a part of the Levitical ministry. Not only were they paid out of the tithe, but they were exempt from taxation, and even the Persian king Artaxerxes allowed the temple singers of Jerusalem this tax exemption (Ezra 7:24).

When Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, the musicians shared in the tithes and the first fruits (Neh. 13:5). Our Bible includes a music book—the

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Psalms—and Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, and other verses tell us how important music was to the early church, and why the church has been the world’s most important patron of music. Some churches provide a manse for the pastor, and this was once true for musicians, in terms of Ezra 2:70 and Nehemiah 7:73. One of the greatest Christian musicians was Johann Sebastian Bach.

Now we have bad music, in the church and outside of it. We get what we pay for. Perhaps it is time to sing “a new song” unto the Lord. 



The Resurrection

All preaching is futile and pointless, St. Paul told the Corinthians, if Christ did not actually rise from the dead in the same body which was crucified (1 Cor. 15). The whole point of the good news the apostles proclaimed was that the power of sin and death was forever broken by the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If this teaching be not true, St. Paul added, then “we are found false witnesses of God” (v. 15). However, because Christ is risen from the dead, death and sin are broken in their power, and victory becomes the life of the Christian (v. 54–57).

Take away this doctrine, and you have no Christianity. Those who deny the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, even though they occupy the pulpit, have denied Christianity and are substituting for it another religion, the religion of man, humanism. Instead of seeing sin as man’s basic problem, and death as its consequence, they see man’s basic problem in social terms. They seek to change the environment rather than man.

The whole point of the Bible is that man has sinned, has rebelled against God, and needs to be changed. The

basic revolution of all history is the revolution against God. The principle of that revolution is that every man is his own god, the great satanic temptation (Gen. 3:5). Apart from Christ, men are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1); that is, they are spiritually dead and proclaim the death of God when in reality it is they who are dead, dead to God and to true life.

Apart from Christ, men are by nature members of the party of revolution, whether they admit it or not. They are in revolt against God, and their basic answer to all problems is revolution, destruction.


The Christian answer is regeneration. Men who are dead to God are born again in Him. The old proverb “You can’t make a good omelet out of bad eggs” is a Christian observation. It takes good men to make a good world, and only Christ can make a godly man out of a sinner.

The resurrection testifies to Christ’s power over sin and death. Jesus Christ makes a new creation out of men dead in sins; He resurrects them from sin, and through them, makes a new creation in the world around them,

The resurrection testifies to Christ’s power over sin and death. Jesus Christ makes a new creation out of men dead in sins; He resurrects them from sin, and through them, makes a new creation in the world around them, and at the last, raises them from the dead.



and at the last, raises them from the dead.

Two worlds are at war today. On the one hand, we have the religion and politics of revolution, and, on the other hand, the religion and politics of regeneration. Of the outcome of this war there can be no doubt: “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). 



Pleasing Men Not by Praise but by Prayer

In a very telling passage, our Lord deals with the problem of pleasing men. No matter what He and John the Baptist did, most men were not pleased with them (Matt. 11:16–19). They were always contrary, demanding something contrary to what was set forth.

I was reminded of our Lord's words recently when I heard a statement about the importance of pleasing people. Since people do not want to hear that they are sinners, this writer said to approach them and gain an audience by raising their self-esteem; people listen to someone who praises them.

True enough, but the point of our ministry is not to be heard for what we say but for what God says. Such hearing comes, not by the spirit of compromise or flattery, but by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Paul states it clearly: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).


Remember, if Jesus Christ could not please people, why think that you can, without a surrender of faith and

We cannot please both the holy God and sinful men. To imagine otherwise is dangerous. But if we please God, we will please godly men.



character? If our Lord's basic purpose was at all times to please the Father, how can we be faithful to Him with any other purpose or method?

We cannot please both the holy God and sinful men. To imagine otherwise is dangerous. But if we please God, we will please godly men. Then too our words to the ungodly will go forth with God's power and Spirit, to accomplish His ordained purpose.

If we speak to elevate men's self-esteem, we are then disagreeing with God's judgment on all sin; we are declaring that our spirit of accommodation and compromise is more powerful than the Holy Spirit, and we are denying that there is grace in speaking the truth. The Lord's ways are wiser than man's always. 



Insulting Prayers

A number of new prayers and litanies have been added to various church services and rituals of late. The gist of these prayers is that godly people are asked to pray for forgiveness for being law-abiding, for living in good homes, for disliking crime and criminals, and for having moral standards. These prayers are not so much prayers as revolutionary declarations.

Religiously, they are an insult to God. Solomon made it clear that there is a difference between the worship of the godly and the worship of the reprobate: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight” (Prov. 15:8). Nothing the wicked can do can change that fact: their religious activities are detested by God.

We are plainly told the terms of prayer: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9).

Today many churchmen are leading people into lawlessness; they preside in meetings and activities designed to destroy law and order, openly avowing contempt for laws not to their liking, and counseling lawless behavior. Instead of teaching the Word of God,


they deny it. Instead of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, they preach the socialist gospel.

In terms of Scripture, the prayers of such men are an “abomination” to God. As far as the Bible is concerned, there is no question about it: their prayers are an insult to God and hated by Him.

What God thinks of these prayers is no problem: He declared Himself a long time ago. The real question is this: where do we stand?

Do we oppose such prayers and activities, and do we do more than that? Do we separate ourselves from ministers and churches which engage in anti-Christian activities?

More than that, are our prayers the prayers of the righteous? Do we hear God’s law, and do we obey?

Too many people today indulge in a cheap righteousness; they figure it makes them a good man if they condemn evil. But righteousness is more than word of mouth. It means believing and obeying. Merely to look at the insulting prayers of the profane clergy and to say, “I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as these,” is to turn from sinners only to become a Pharisee. 

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Men of Faith

In Hebrews 11, we have a catalog of Old Testament saints who manifested true faith and were greatly used of God. In Hebrews 11:33–40, we have a summary statement which reminds us that to serve God means also to face the hostility of a fallen world. These men who conquered kingdoms, administered justice, shut the mouths of lions, and routed the enemy (Heb. 11:33–34), also suffered greatly in the process. David did subdue kingdoms, but he was also a hunted man in the mountains. Isaiah was a very great statesman and prophet, but he was sawn asunder. Daniel did stop the mouths of the lions, but he suffered enmity and imprisonment.

These and others illustrate the truth of the old saying, “No cross, no crown.” Our faith at times requires us to stand against hostile forces who want no truth spoken, nor any good done.


Because we live in a fallen world, it is childish thinking to expect our faith to flourish without contradiction. It is fairy tale thinking to believe that wishing will make it so, or that by passing a law we can change men, or usher in a new paradise on earth.

Our faith at times requires us to stand against hostile forces who want no truth spoken, nor any good done.



Men pretend to love justice, and to work for it, when their true dedication is to getting their will done. Remember, the men who fought against David, Daniel, and Isaiah were often men in high places, the important and supposedly “good” men of their day. Few of the people in Scripture had problems with the criminals of their

time. More commonly, their opposition came from “important” people who were supposedly the champions of law and order.

What we have in Hebrews 11 is a list of men of faith, not practical men. Their enemies were people who moved in terms of human realities, not God’s realities. However, as Disraeli once observed, “Practical men are men who practice the blunders of their predecessors.” Men of faith move in terms of the Word of God. 



Work and Progress

Woodrow Wilson said that automobiles were going to ruin America and make socialism inevitable. The automobile, he claimed, was something only the richest would ever be able to own, and farmers almost never, and it would turn the farmer into a socialist. He said, “Nothing has spread socialist feeling in this country more than the use of the automobile. To the countryman [the farmer] they are a picture of arrogance of wealth with all its independence and carelessness.”

Before Wilson died, farmers by the millions were beginning to buy the Model T Ford, and, before long, the higher priced cars. The reason, of course, was twofold: *first*, manufacturers began to produce more cars, and to produce them more cheaply; *second*, farmers were not the hopelessly poor people Wilson regarded them as being, and they were able very quickly to grow in terms of an industrial age.

Wilson’s biggest mistake was a mistake still made by our intellectuals. (Remember, Wilson was an ex-professor and university president.) Wilson believed that most men cannot have progress, nor can they work

successfully, unless someone plans for them and governs them, unless they have a “Big Brother” civil government. This is another way of saying that most men are shiftless and will starve unless the state controls them and gives them a handout.


Moreover, the intellectual believes that physical work is somehow not capable of enriching or of producing a better way of life; his answer is talk, planning. But Solomon long ago pointed out that “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury” (Prov. 14:23).

Moreover, “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase” (Prov. 13:11). The reason? “He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him” (Prov. 16:26); that is, a man who works for himself has his own mouth or interest urging him to better himself.

Wilson could not have been more foolishly wrong. Instead of the farmer being left behind by the automotive age, the farmer is the biggest private owner. He usually owns at least one car, a pickup or truck, a tractor, and sometimes more. Also, he is often able to service much of his equipment himself. If Wilson had known the Bible’s teaching about the value of work, he would not have made so silly a statement.

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Oh yes, one thing more: Wilson was the only American president to have a Rolls Royce! His friends gave it to him as a gift, and he loved it. They knew Wilson better than he knew himself. 



The Living God

Recently, one of my associates described a storm at sea in the north Atlantic during World War II. As he looked at the savage intensity of the storm, he said to himself, “God is no buttercup!”

He was right. Too often men try to remake God in their own image; they want to turn Him into a kindly and sentimental person who will never fail them, as though it is God’s duty to be faithful to us rather than we to Him. His faithfulness has already been demonstrated in Christ. It is now we who must respond with faithfulness.

God tells us plainly, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8–9).

What we do must echo God’s will, purpose, and love. As John tells us, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). It all begins with Him. We cannot govern God by our ideas about Him but must be governed by His law-word.



Thieves' Paradise

Supposing we want to create a social order for the welfare of thieves and for their security, how shall we do it? The world must be made safe for stealing and for thieves, of course. We must therefore create a social order in which the thieves can steal but where no one can rob a thief. Next, we must make stealing respectable. Simple, obvious, and direct theft involves robbing a victim personally. Indirect theft means hiring someone else to do it. Legalized theft is getting civil government to do it for us, and this has the most respectability and prestige, so our thieves' paradise must have it.

To make matters all the better, our legalized theft must have the prestige of approval from economists and experts, and what can better qualify than a managed money which is debased and inflated? Inflation is a simple process: it is what happens when a dishonest farmer adds water to the milk. Past a certain point, it ceases to be even watered milk; it is simply milky water. But, fortunately, the inflation of money is respectable and legal in our thieves' paradise, because the thieves are in charge, not the farmers.


Another highly respectable device in our thieves' paradise is taxation. God, of course, is content with only a tithe, but any self-respecting thief knows that a sucker must be taken all the way. Is taxation past forty percent? Well, the chicken is far from plucked!

In our thieves' paradise, respectability is important, and so the churches, schools, and colleges are important. These institutions can tell the people how moral stealing is, and how welfare must precede property, and human rights are more important than property rights. Is there anything more wonderful for a thief than a world in which the good people are persuaded that it is their duty to be plucked? Moreover, why not add to this new morality of a thieves' paradise the idea of a world union of thieves to avoid wasteful competition? After all, it is the duty of all good thieves to concentrate on plundering the people. This is a common faith all thieves can unite on. Why not unite then into one grand world order dedicated to the promotion of plunder on a world scale?

Of course, one big roadblock remains. God, somehow, has not caught up with the times and is hopelessly out of date. He still insists, "Thou shalt not steal." Such an obsolete and antiquated morality, and this very dated God, must be gently done away with. If we say, "Thou shalt not steal," it applies only to the citizens, who must not steal from the thieves. The thieves' state

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is beyond this law, and, as for God, we can declare Him dead. All problems are now taken care of except one. As Pilate and the Sanhedrin found out once before, God is very uncooperative: He won't stay dead! And He does make trouble for all self-respecting thieves. Times have changed, but God hasn't. It makes for quite a problem (but not for God!). 



Folly on the Bench

The last month of 1974 brought forth an amazing legal decision out of Miami, Florida. A twenty-three-year-old woman, convicted of killing her husband by slashing his throat with a carving knife, was placed on probation by the judge and ordered to teach Sunday school for five years.

A murderess as a Sunday school teacher! Perhaps we should not be surprised. With so many thieves as politicians, and so many unbelievers as pastors and priests, why not a murderess teaching Sunday school?

After all, sin is being made respectable today. At the same time as the Dade County Circuit Court judge was turning a murderess into a Sunday school teacher, the California State Auditor General reported that, of the sixty-two contracts issued during the year by the Department of Parks and Recreation, only two were issued with the competitive bidding required by law. His recommendation was that the law requiring him to review all such contracts be repealed. Apparently he felt that review was futile.

In one area after another, we are told that, because people are going to sin anyway, why not legalize sin? Why

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not, indeed? Why not go all the way and legalize murder and all things else? We will then have a permissive society in totality.

The fact remains, of course, that sin remains sin, and the sinner is an outlaw before God, and the society which builds on sin perishes and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).

The sinner is not converted by being loved or made respectable. A murderess teaching Sunday school is a murderess still. Theft is still theft, even when successful. When crime remains unpunished, then society is punished, and the godly are

penalized. When the sinner is both unpunished and unconverted, the society is converted into hell on earth.

The Dade County judge said of the murderess, “The important thing is trying to reclaim her life by rehabilitation.” Such high moral concern would be something other than hypocrisy only if he had taken her into his own home to rehabilitate, instead of putting her at the head of a Sunday school class. Then it would only have been folly. Now, it is both folly and hypocrisy. 🖋️



Subsidizing Evil

In the name of Christian charity, we are being asked nowadays to subsidize evil. Every time we give in charity to anyone, we are extending a private and personal subsidy to that person. If through our church we help an elderly and needy couple, or if we help a neighboring farmer with his tractor work while he is in the hospital, we are giving them a subsidy because we consider them to be deserving persons. We are helping righteous people to survive, and we are fulfilling our Christian duty of brotherly love and charity.

On the other hand, if we help a burglar buy the tools of his trade, and give him a boost through a neighbor's window, we are criminal accomplices and are guilty before the law. If we buy a murderer a gun, hand it to him and watch him kill, we are again accessories to the fact and are ourselves murderers also.

Whenever as individuals in our charity, or as a nation in that false charity known as foreign aid and welfare, we give a subsidy to any kind of evil, we are guilty before God of that evil, unless we separate ourselves from the subsidy by our protest.

Our Lord said, "For where your treasure is, there

will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). In other words, your loyalties will reveal your nature; you will put your money where your heart is. If a man or a country subsidizes laziness, drunkenness, illegitimacies, socialist states or countries, and revolutionary activities, its action reveals the kind of moral order it prefers and desires. Every act of charity or subsidy is an aid, an encouragement, to someone who is needy and who we believe must survive. To further a criminal in his crime is to say that we believe in crime. It is one thing in mercy to administer emergency help to a wounded criminal; it is another thing to put him on a subsidy. Today, in the name of charity, we are subsidizing evil

on all sides and penalizing godly people to do it. Even to condone something by silence, or without protest, is a sin and involves complicity in the act, according to God: “When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers” (Ps. 50:18).

We need therefore to call most of what passes for charity today exactly what it is. *First*, it is a subsidy for evil. *Second*, it involves a penalizing and taxing of the

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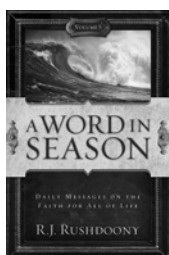
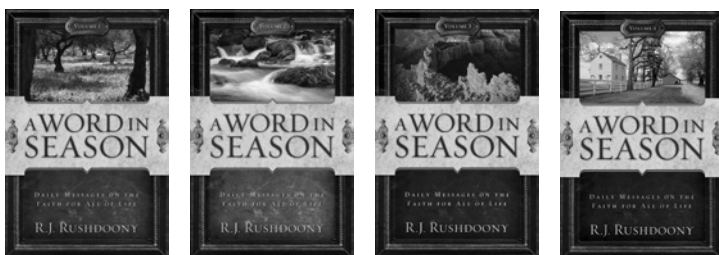
righteous in order to subsidize evil, and this penalizing of the godly is an important part of this false charity. *Third*, basic to this kind of action is a love of evil, a preference for it and a demand that a new world be created in which evil will triumph and prevail.

If this is what you want, then most of the churches of our day and our federal government should be very much to your taste. 🍷

The Author

Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

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