

January/February 2007

The Herald

Of Christ's Kingdom



The Seven Deadly Sins

Anger • Lust • Pride • Greed

Sloth • Gluttony • Envy

Contending for the Faith

The Herald

of Christ's Kingdom

This journal brings you 192 pages of spiritual reading material each year on a variety of biblical subjects. Each issue also lists many Bible conventions and conferences where you will find Christian fellowship. Included in every issue is News & Views, four pages of current events, letters to the editor, and information on the operation of the Pastoral Bible Institute. It is published bi-monthly by:

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Editorial Committee

This journal is supervised by an editorial committee of five, at least three of whom have approved for publication each article appearing in these columns. While responsible for articles published, the committee does not endorse every expression herein. The present editors are: Carl Hagensick, Homer Montague, Michael Nekora, James Parkinson, and David Rice.

The committee and the directors agree that the journal's value to its readers is dependent upon contributors being free to present their thoughts, provided such are generally in harmony with our chartered character and purpose for the dissemination of Bible truths. Annual subscription price is \$5.00. This journal will be supplied free upon written request.

This Journal and Its Mission

Chartered in 1918, the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc. was formed for the promotion of Christian knowledge. Its journal, The Herald of Christ's Kingdom, stands firmly for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian's hope now being so generally repudiated—redemption through the precious blood (1 Peter 1:19) of “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all” (1 Timothy 2:6). Building upon this sure foundation the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Peter 1:5-11), its further mission is “to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which ... has been hid in God ... to the intent that now ... might be [made] known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”—“which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed” (Ephesians 3:5-10).

It stands free from all parties, sects, and creeds of men, while it seeks more and more to bring its every utterance into fullest subjection to the will of God in Christ, as expressed in the holy Scriptures. It is thus free to declare boldly whatsoever the Lord hath spoken—according to the Divine wisdom granted unto us to understand. Its attitude is not dogmatic, but confident; for we know whereof we affirm, treading with implicit faith upon the sure promises of God. It is held as a trust to be used in his service; hence our decisions relative to what may or may not appear in its columns must be according to our judgment of his good pleasure, the teaching of his Word, for the upbuilding of his people in grace and knowledge. We not only invite, we urge our readers to prove all its utterances by the infallible Word, to which reference is constantly made to facilitate such testing.

To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach

- ◆ That the Church is the “temple of the living God”—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God's blessings shall come “to all people” and they find access to him (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; Ephesians 2:20-22; Genesis 28:14; Galatians 3:29).
- ◆ That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin progresses and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium (1 Peter 2:4-9; Revelation 15:5-8).
- ◆ That the basis of hope for the Church and the world lies in the fact that “Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” “in due time” (Hebrews 2:9; John 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5,6).
- ◆ That the hope of the Church is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be “a partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir (1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4).
- ◆ That the present mission of the Church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age (Ephesians 4:12; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 1:6, 20:6).
- ◆ That the hope for the world lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed (Acts 3:19-23; Isaiah 35).



In the Beginning

People like numbered lists. The world of the ancients didn't just have "wonders," they had **seven** wonders. God didn't number the commandments but we always say there are **ten**.

Early in the Christian dispensation a list called the Seven Deadly Sins was produced and circulated. It has remained remarkably stable, though sometimes a descriptive word like *acedia* was replaced with the equivalent *sloth*. Today it would be clearer if we substituted the word *laziness* for *sloth*.

These sins are all self-inflicted unlike the seven in Proverbs 6:16-19; those are mostly directed against others. When the "deadly sins" are not controlled, the one committing the sin suffers. Someone once described the indulgence of envy as drinking poison then waiting for the other person to die. Pride is the only sin that appears on the "deadly sins" list and also the Proverbs 6:16-19 list.

"If one wanted to find a germinal word to link all sins, perhaps **hate** would do it. In terms of action, however, the long-term consequences of hate are self-destruction. Thus the wages of sin really are death."—Dr. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?*, p. 172

Although there is no single text which collectively names the Seven Deadly Sins, all are universally condemned in Scripture.

We begin with the article *Anger* where we see how injurious this sin is to one's self as well as to others. As early as Genesis 3 the sin of *Lust* is displayed when Eve wanted something so badly she disobeyed God's law to get it.

In the article *Pride* we learn one's self-importance makes this sin hard to see in one's self. *Greed* explains that this sin is idolatry masquerading as something else. The study on *Sloth* shows us that although people rationalize why they do so little, it remains an abomination to God.

Gluttony reveals this sin is not confined to food. It is an insatiable appetite for whatever it wants. Finally, *Envy* might be called the primordial sin which occurred when Satan said in

his heart he would become as great as the Most High.

Contending for the Faith concludes this issue. It is a verse-by-verse examination of the book of Jude where so many of these "deadly sins" are described as besetments for the church in these last days.

May we all fight these deadly sins when we see them in our lives.

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Anger

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.—Psalms 37:8

Homer Montague

“Of all the emotions, anger is one of the most common and most powerful. It assumes various forms designated by terms such as fury, wrath, ire, rage, resentment, vengeance, and indignation. Hardly a day goes by without most of us experiencing some measure of anger—either our own or that of someone with whom we interact, often a family member. The news regularly reports acts of violence unleashed by long-festering anger, a hidden desire for revenge, or a sudden, impetuous fit of rage. Anger plays a central role in assault, child abuse, murder and many rapes, and in interethnic and international violent conflict. Of the seven deadly sins, anger is the most pervasive, injurious to self and others, and most responsible for unhappiness and psychopathological behavior.”—Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 83.

Emotional anger can be a destructive force that produces numerous harmful consequences to self and others. Manifestations of its existence and effects go back to early biblical times. Following the expulsion from the Garden of Eden because of disobedience, Adam still worshipped God and taught Cain and Abel to offer sacrifices that would manifest their devotion. On one such occasion the brothers were working in the field. Abel made an offering of a fine lamb and gave grateful thanks to God for all his mercies, and this pleased the heavenly Father. Cain made an offering of grains and produce from the field, but God did not find that offering pleasing. Cain then became angry and jealous. He subsequently quarreled with his brother and finally struck and killed him. This uncontrolled rage in Cain led him to commit the unspeakable act of murder.

The following are two other instances where the Bible records unjustified anger:

“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the

name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper” (2 Kings 5:11). Naaman was afflicted with pride because Elisha did not greet him personally. He protested in a rage at what he was told to do, to wash in the Jordan River seven times to cure his leprosy. It was only after his servants persuaded him to heed the prophet’s instruction that he was healed.

“And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam’s anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff” (Numbers 22:27). Balaam was angry because he could not control his donkey to travel through a narrow pass so he could curse Israel at King Balak’s request. The animal could see the angel of the Lord holding a sword to slay Balaam if he proceeded further so it refused to move forward. After the donkey was given the power to speak words of rebuke to Balaam for beatings it received at his hands, Balaam was allowed to see the angel with a sword drawn to kill him if he continued in his act of unrighteousness.

In today’s society, unjustifiable anger is found in schools, the workplace, at home, and other social relationships. This has resulted in the creation of a huge array of services that deal with anger management and counseling. Anger, as well as all destructive behaviors and habits, is a byproduct of sin; but the various emotional health practitioners would have no clients if they espoused such a philosophy. In suggesting possible causes of anger in clients, a therapist might suggest low self-esteem, misreading the meaning of various events in one’s life and becoming offended, rejection, physical or biological disorders, poor social relationships, and false accusations of wrongdoing.

Among consecrated believers, faithfulness in walking as the Master walked will result in a life that is totally opposed to sinful practices because of the indwelling power of the holy spirit. The change that comes upon us once we

devote ourselves to the doing of the heavenly Father's will is remarkable. It is described as being transformed, which, when fully carried out, will not only result in our change from sinfulness to righteousness in thought and conduct, but ultimately we will be changed from the human to the divine nature if we are faithful unto death (Romans 6:3-6; 12:1,2).

The Bible indicates it is God's will for Christians to overcome anger and other sinful traits: "But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful" (Colossians 3:8-15, RSV).

Those who have devoted their lives to following the Master will find that, because of human frailties, it will be impossible to consistently perform every aspect of these requirements. Nevertheless, it is possible for us to manifest perfection of intention and be acceptable to the Father: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

How is this accomplished? God has given us the holy spirit that enables us to overcome the inclinations of the old nature. He has given Scriptures for us to study and to understand what his desire is for us. His providence shapes our affairs through needed disciplines and encouragements. We have a family of brethren with whom we can share our experiences and learn from each other. He has given us the privilege and responsibility of prayer to succor and sustain us. He has provided precious promises and the assurance that he will never leave us or forsake us. When we are faint, we receive strength from our Advocate who stands

with us in our difficulties. Our forgiveness is promised when we repent of our trespasses and strive to be more watchful of our actions.

Cain's anger led to the murder of Abel. Could those who are spirit-begotten ever have angry or murderous thoughts in their hearts against others, because they had a different way of viewing things? Jesus gave a definition of adultery which was independent of the physical act; it involved having lust in one's heart for another (Matthew 5:28). Likewise the spirit of murder could be found within believers if they are not diligent in maintaining heart purity: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abided in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:14-16).

If we harbor feelings of animosity toward anyone, we must wage an aggressive warfare against such a disposition lest it consume us: "Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21, NRSV). That warning is addressed to new creatures in Christ and demonstrates that all those works of the flesh, literal or symbolic, including anger, must be eliminated because the continuation in such an evil course would bar us from attaining the kingdom.

"We are to remember, as the Apostle suggests, that we have this new nature in an earthen vessel and that the earthen vessel has practically all of its original blemishes and fallen tendencies still as powerful as ever, except as the new mind has these under its mastery and control; but if that mastery or control should be released even for a moment the result would be the awakening, the reviving of the old nature. And we may be sure that our Adversary is alert and fully realizes the situation and will do all in his power to put us off guard, even to the extent of endeavoring to make white appear black and black appear white

*Whosoever
hateth his
brother is a
murderer.*

before our judgment. The Lord very graciously shields us from temptations more than we are able to bear. Hence it is possible for us at all times to be overcome, not only in the infancy of our new nature, but also in its further development; but the testings permitted grow more severe, more crucial, as we near our spiritual graduation time. Nor can we object to this; it is exactly what we should expect.

“The Apostle, following this line of thought, declares, ‘I keep my body under;’ and again he says, ‘Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth’—your earthly ambitions, will, etc., everything in yourself that would tend toward envy, hatred, anger and strife—put these to death. Allow the new nature to have full sway and control in every thought, in every word, in every deed. And watch to this end; watch your thoughts, watch your words, watch your conduct. Many can watch their conduct who find it difficult to scrutinize and properly weigh their thoughts and their words. Truly the Apostle intimates that out of the heart proceeds envy, bitterness, evil speaking, back-biting and strife; unless they are in the heart the mouth cannot utter them, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh.”—*Reprints*, p. 4217

The matter of not reacting in anger provides a severe test to believers when unjustifiably they are treated in an evil manner: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11,12).

All of us occasionally receive ill-treatment at the hands of others. When we do what is right and are slandered because of it, how do we feel: blessed and joyful, or angry? If ever there was an individual on earth who not even once was deserving of an unkind word or action, it was Jesus Christ. Yet, he never responded in a manner demonstrating personal anger against those who hated him without a cause. He suffered for righteousness’ sake and left an example for all believers to follow: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For

what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”—1 Peter 2:19-23

Righteous indignation should be exhibited by believers when it is appropriate. When we hear false doctrine or God’s name or character blasphemed, we should express our displeasure that such utterances were made in our presence. For example, if someone were to speak of God’s intention to burn the wicked eternally, in conscious torment in hell fire, we should correct that thought by citing a Scripture demonstrating God’s love for humanity in sending Jesus to die on Adam’s behalf, so that all might have an opportunity for life in the kingdom for which we pray. To remain silent might imply assent, and would not be expressing righteous indignation. But if we became angry because someone spoke evil of us, that would be simply a fleshly reaction on our part.

Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the sabbath and the pharisees condemned him for that: “And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Matthew 12:11,12).

This same event is described by Mark in these words: “And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other” (Mark 3:4,5).

The look of anger on the Master’s face was an act of righteous indignation because the scribes and pharisees were hypocrites whose hearts Jesus read. The spirit of the Law does not prevent the doing of good deeds on the sabbath.

Not reacting in anger is a severe test to believers when they are treated in an evil manner.

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11). Many fail to understand that the meaning of “angry” in this text refers to God’s righteous indignation; they visualize him as a vengeful being intent upon destroying much of the human family whose evil ways warrant such punishment. Throughout the Bible there are so many references to God’s love (John 3:16), holiness (Leviticus 20:26), unchangeableness (James 1:17), and justice (Psalm 89:14).

Our heavenly Father perfectly balances his attributes and is always in control. We could never imagine him saying after having formulated his plan, “The Adversary makes me so angry with all of the wickedness that he’s doing, I am going to destroy him right now.” In God’s own due time and according to his perfect judgment, however, he will do exactly that. He manifests righteous indignation through his unerring justice, such as when he condemned Adam because of disobedience. Nevertheless, love found a way to provide an opportunity for man’s recovery through the sending of Jesus as a ransom for all. Loving righteousness and hating iniquity is an integral part of our grand Creator’s being, and these exist in perfect harmony. The permission of evil was provided to instruct the human family as to the real consequences of sin and disobedience; it also develops the church under adverse circumstances. During Christ’s kingdom the Adversary is to be bound for a thousand years, after which he will be released to test mankind and determine whether they have internalized the principles of righteousness, or if they will follow Satan and reap destruction with him. When all creation has been fully restored and God is all in all, his righteous indignation will not need to be further manifested, because all will come to him in loving obedience and iniquity will be a thing of the past. How blessed we are in having such a wise and merciful God.

As new creatures in Christ, we must rid ourselves of the works of the flesh if we are to be more than overcomers and associates of the Master in his kingdom. Our serious endeavors to identify our weaknesses and rectify them should be of paramount importance in our lives: “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away

from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:30, 31).

Here are some of the ways we can take to control anger in our lives:

1. Overlook minor offenses. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Proverbs 19:11).
2. Accept personal responsibility for one’s own errors. “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5).
3. Intensify our prayer life. “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8).
4. Be just and merciful. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8).
5. Be open to reconciliation. “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).
6. Exercise care in our deliberations with others. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:19,20).
7. Meditate upon the wholesome and the good. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).
8. Be receptive to godly counsel in addressing matters that have the propensity for strife. “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14).

May God’s holy spirit enable us to overcome unrighteous anger in our lives.

“Consider how much more you suffer from your anger than for those very things for which you are angry.”

*—Marcus Antonius,
Roman politician
and general
(c. 83 B.C.–30 B.C.)*

Lust

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.—Galatians 5:17

Donald Holliday

“**A**nd they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Malachi 3:17).

“My Jewels” (Hebrew: *segullah*, treasured possession). Six times in Scripture the word gives a most precious glimpse of the Lord’s relationship with his people Israel.

It is Peter who shares with us the joyous realization that the church is also so described. If the earthly is glorious, more glorious still the heavenly; the sons of God from ignorance and night transformed; from weakness and corruption each will rise, reflecting evermore the glory of the One Who dwells in Light: “My Jewels” (see Matthew 13:43).

When Peter heard the Master’s call, and in that holy face beheld expressed such flawless purity of mind, his uncouth lips, through consciousness of shameful life, brought forth the plea, “You know not what I am. Depart from me” (Luke 5:8). So vast a gap that Peter knew not how to bridge it exists between such holy life and that of carnal man (Romans 8:7).

Many saints long since have known and understood the feelings of beggars on the dung-hill when confronted with that challenge, “Come up higher. With princes sit ye down.” From the miry pit the Lord delights to find and lift to his own glory throne the miracles of his grace. In lowest parts of earth the work takes place, with pressures from without and fears within, where holiness is struggling over sin to realize the victory of his love (1 Samuel 2:8).

Once dead in sin, prone to the whims and lusts of fallen flesh, each saint-to-be must personally experience the greatness of the power that raised the Savior from the grave.

Under enormous pressures is a diamond formed. From conflict great, and battle-bruised, do the victors rise. And herein lies the story of each jewel brought forth.

What Manner of Man Am I?

It is no easy process to assess with true objectiveness our inmost heart. Too harsh a judgment leaves us feeling low and makes us prey to Satan’s jibes: “The good you seek you never will obtain.” Yet denying our faults no purpose serves, for we must recognize the enemy within, acknowledge where our weakness lies, and know our faults.

“Search me, O God” (Psalm 139:23). Not to dishearten do we plead with One Who Knows, for when we dare to let the Word of truth probe deep and thus discover motives and the intents of our thoughts, it is because we trust the Father’s blest design to chasten that we may be made partakers of his holiness.

In Eden was the human creature formed to share so much of the Creator’s mind. The family on earth was yet to bond with family in heaven. And God alone, before the work began, knew all that the task would cost, the sighs, the groans, the countless tears, through misdirection of those senses set in man essential to the divine purpose. The ways that may seem right to man and every whim he seeks to feed lead but to disappointing ends.

In Adam was released the fire of passion, zeal, and strong desire. One day will see the harnessing of these in full devotion to his Maker’s ways. Then will the deep desire of nations and of every living thing be satisfied.

What is Lust?

Lust is misplaced desire based on uneducated appetite. Today’s child demands a diet of sugared things, or salted to extreme, and will refuse to eat unless such whims are satisfied. So man is prone to instincts and desires inhibited alone by social standards set by his fellows. Where standards fail, as in our present age, indulgence takes its course without restraint toward a dark abyss.

The greatest blessing God bequeathed—that sweet companion for man—so soon displayed the weakness in that human pair. She saw the fruit and lusting for it failed to sense the trap the serpent laid. When Adam knew what she had done, he followed too, though not deceived, except perhaps by the thought of the loss of Eve (Genesis 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:14).

Thus bestial lust began, and there too did the struggle start between the appetite for sensual things and for things of God.

Are Saints Immune?

Desire for things that gratify the flesh: how hard it is so often to discern between the multitude of human wants and human needs. So many temporal blessings now surround us in easy reach. And in the world we breathe each day polluted air, a fog of impure thought, while, subtler still, the serpent would entice from seeking only what will please our Head.

How searching is the account of David's life as we perceive the lessons there for saints. His life was a battle from the start, and even brief respite brought a snare. So graphically in that life the Lord illustrates the fight between the right way of life and all its foes.

We glimpse this in the Psalms. They consist not of "arm-chair" poetry, composed in the warmth and comfort of the home. David was on the run. Three thousand men were on his heels with one intent: to take his life. "My soul is in the midst of lions ... They breath fire ... Their teeth are sharp" (Psalm 57:4). Thus were the spears and arrows of an entire army searching for one man. Yet in the midst of such a scene his cry ascends: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed" (v. 7). Not in David's own strength lay the trust that fostered a sense of immunity from every threat. He knew the Lord was on his side and greater far than all that were against him (Psalm 27:1-3).

Our foes are mainly those within. Perhaps, like David, we have moments too when sense of triumph fills the heart with gratitude to one above, who worketh all things to his blessed design. Do we now cry, "O God, my heart is fixed"? The battle is not over yet (1 Kings 20:11).

Edom, the old Edom, or old Adam, the fleshly mind, is ever here, and ever alien to the ways of God. Never can it be left unwatched. How readily will it take advantage of any

opportunity for self-gratification, even while in the elation of spiritual satisfaction.

We have the account in down-to-earth terms in 2 Samuel. At first the battles go so well. One foe after another is defeated. Then in chapter 11, David takes a little time off from the fight. He goes up onto the rooftop, enjoying, as it were, a spiritual "high." Then it happens! Off-guard, his natural eye sees something demanding gratification, and "Edom" has taken the land. Once again the old Adam is in control.

Oh, how deceitful is the heart! With Bathsheba in his arms David had become blind to all else. What a strong citadel guards from all interference the natural will. The cities of Edom, how impregnable they seemed. The strong fortress of Petra is built into rock, deep hidden and protected by an almost impassable approach down a precipitous narrow gorge. It was hewn out of the over-hanging crags of the steep mountainside. To subdue that city seemed impossible. Indeed, it was a proverb, a byword among men, the strength of Edom: "Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?" (Psalm 60:9). It is as though those words resounded in his mind as Paul wrote, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24, *margin*).

Salvation lies alone in the one whose favor now seems forfeited by our carnality. Yet suffering the consequences of his fall, David acknowledges, as do we, the disciplining of the Lord that stirs within new depths of that desire for peace with God: "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts ... Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:6,11). The chastening broke David's heart, yet it was the correction of a son whom the Father loved. And at that time the son of David—Jesus Christ—would pay the price of sin in death. Later the son of David would make atonement and gain the heavenly throne.

The Spirit Lusteth

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17).

What is this lusting of the spirit that must triumph over the lusting of the flesh? While **lust** is a word now chiefly used with evil import, its basic thought was of strong desire and intense longing. It was in this purest sense that

How deceitful is the heart! With Bathsheba in his arms David had become blind to all else.

the new mind is infused, and here the conflict forms (Genesis 25:22-26).

Within Rebekah's womb there fought two boys. Alarmed and puzzled she besought the Lord, and he portrayed two manner of people that would emerge. Yet at the end the elder was to serve the younger. Thus was Esau (Edom) born from the same womb as Jacob. Of Jacob it was written, "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God" (Hosea 12:3). Was this in the mind of Paul when he spoke of the conflict deep within each saint? Do we take our old "Adam" by the heel, with firm resolve?

The battle is not yet over. It took five hundred years for Edom to at last submit, and that in David's reign. What hope have we in this brief life to conquer all of "Edom's" ways, the carnal lusts? In Romans 7 Paul described the conflict that ensued once he perceived the perfect ways of God. Alone in battle Paul was helpless, the good he would he could not do. Did he then find a conquering "David" too?

In Romans 8, a new hope springs from God's own spirit shared with man, a new life full of power is there released. Without that power of God Paul knew he could never rise beyond his fallen state: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:25).

In Christ's own triumph over sin and death we even now may joy, as taking his achievement as our own. With what fresh hope we now renew the struggle there within. With the captain of salvation at our side together we will now the victory win (Hebrews 2:10).

The battle sets in full array. On one side countless alien hosts defy the Savior's work. Great obstacles arise between us and the goal. And Edom's forces muster to deter the march of glory in the King's Highway. And do we cry, "Where are those chariots of the Lord?" Yes, they are there, nor will all enemies combined divert us from the shining way while the light of his own presence is our stay (Numbers 20:17-21; Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 4:16-18).

With youthful zeal young "Timothys" may flee from youthful lusts. To run through hosts, and jump the walls, may challenge aging frames. But spiritual strength renewed is there for young and old, and we shall not grow weary if the way we tread, yes, every step, we share with the ones we love (Psalm 18:17,29-39; Isaiah 40:28-31; 26:4, margin).

Then sweet release from this frail flesh, the body humbling to those high desires that form our goal. Then shall we see what he has wrought, and realize the need we had to fight the lusts of flesh, our many faults, and every weakness known. For there beside our Captain do we gain in battle those rich spoils he waits to share with those whose strength lies ever in their Rock (Philippians 3:21; Isaiah 53:12).

The Merging of Desire

"They may be one" (John 17:22). What speechless joy the Master's words bring to us. Jesus also has intense desire, and the same Hebrew word describing 'lust' is used of him in Psalm 45:11. So shall the king for thine own beauty yearn with deep desire, the beauty of a heart made truly his, where out-poured adoration bathe his brow, and tears of gratitude his feet (John 14:23; Song of Solomon 5:1).

And is there even more? Has our dear Father such longing too? What untold depths of yearning does this same word speak in melody divine: "For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psalm 132:13,14). Here glimpsed is glory that exceeds by far each transient joy this life could ever know. Against its brightness things of earth grow dim, nor can we cling or yearn for anything below. The spirit's 'lusts' are as a holy fire, consuming all unworthy of the place wherein he dwells who is our heart's desire (Psalm 84:1,2). With conscience free may we indulge these holy lusts: "Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:4,5).

And what of all mankind? "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures" (Psalm 36:7,8). There from life's fountain man will draw and find complete fulfillment evermore (Revelation 22:1-5).

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

*With the captain
of salvation at
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victory win.*

Pride



Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.—Proverbs 16:18

Adam Kopczyk

The dictionary defines pride as self-esteem, arrogance, high opinion of one's own importance or worth, undue sense of superiority, consciousness of power, pomp, glory, exalted or elevated feeling. Pride is the exaltation of self over others and has been recognized since ancient times as a root cause of cruelty and evil.

“Pride is unique among the so-called ‘seven deadly sins’ in that we are often unaware of our arrogance, though we readily know when we are angry, greedy, gluttonous, etc. Unlike the other sins, when pride is pointed out to us, we do not even realize that it is there. This is because it is difficult for us to admit that we are of less worth than we imagine ourselves to be.”—Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 36.

Pride can be a poisonous manifestation of selfishness. Someone has well said it is selfishness gone to seed. Inappropriate pride can cause considerable emotional distress.

The Lord's hatred of evil is intense and far-reaching. In Proverbs 8:13 we read that the fear [reverence] of the Lord is shown by our hatred of evil. That verse continues by mentioning pride, arrogance, and evil-speaking as specific things the Lord hates.

We have learned something of God's character, and to love the things he loves—righteousness, truth, equity, etc. But we are also expected to hate the things he hates.

According to Proverbs 6:17, the first thing the Lord hates is a proud look (“Haughty eyes” is the literal rendering of the Hebrew). It refers largely to self-exaltation, to those who boast themselves above others. These individuals not only pride themselves upon their own advantages, but also look down on others. In some it is pride of wealth, in others the spirit may be that of sectarian pride, the pride of belonging to something; and to others it may be family, cultural, or personal pride.

Contrasting examples

In the Bible we have two dramatic and contrasting examples. The first example of pride was Lucifer, the “son of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12). He was one of the most beautiful heavenly creatures and was “lifted up” because of his beauty: “Thine heart was lifted up.” A sudden rise to power and position without a legitimate right to it generally results in pride of heart: “Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezekiel 28:17). Lucifer exalted himself: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). No person on earth, not even a king, would use such words. Lucifer aspired to be equal in position and power to the creator of all things, ignoring the fact he owed his life and all that he had to that creator. There is such a vivid contrast between this overwhelming pride and ambition and the attitude of the faithful Logos. The Logos found no greater aspiration than to be loyal to the Father's will.

Paul's language in Philippians 2:6-9 suggests a direct contrast between the course of the one who sought to exalt himself by saying he would be as the most high, and the other who willingly moved to a lower, human plane of existence to accomplish obediently the will of God.

Pride was Satan's choice; humility was the choice of the Logos who was the beginning of the creation of God. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). God highly exalted our Lord Jesus, and gave him a name which is above every name because he rightly used what he had in harmony with God's will. Jesus did receive the high exaltation to be as the most high. God says of Satan that destruction will be his reward because pride goeth before destruction.

Jesus never aspired to be like God; he humbled himself to assist in the implementation of God's plan.

Another contrast between the humble and the arrogant is found in the self-righteous pharisee and the poor publican. With a proud look, the pharisee thanked God that he had not fallen as low as others; the publican, conscious of his guilt, cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:10-14).

Pride in the Disciples

Pride raised its ugly head when the disciples began to discuss which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. "When Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child, and set him by his side" (Luke 9:47,48, ASV). This would be a child not yet old enough to have been contaminated by the pride of those who were older. Our Lord then taught a lesson of humility, a lesson needed by every Christian throughout this age: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child [thus taking an active part himself in cultivating this virtue, not leaving it entirely to the Lord or circumstances], the same is the greatest in the kingdom" (Matthew 18:4).

Our Lord's lesson on humility was given shortly after Peter, James, and John had been with Jesus in the Mount of Transfiguration. This and other similar favors shown to them could easily have caused those three to succumb to the temptation of pride. The words of Micah would have been more helpful: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ... do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). All who would enter into his presence must be humble.

The one who is humble is inured to pomp, to foolish show, and is safe from the danger of pride caused by whatever honors the world wants to grant. One who is humble is without malice, without rivalry or competitiveness.

Can we honestly say that it gives us greater pleasure to see others taking a higher place than we are granted in the Lord's service? If we can, we are reaching maturity in our Christian development (Philippians 2:3).

Humility is Essential

Pride takes pleasure in the weaknesses of others. Humility rejoices in covering "all sins" with the mantle of love, absolutely essential if profitable fellowship is to be enjoyed with our

brethren. Peter points out that humility is the quality essential for all, not pride: "Be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5). Outside of every other adornment of character, and covering all the others, we should have this robe of humble-mindedness, the opposite disposition of pride.

All who are actuated by pride may be sure that the Lord will not lead them or bless them; he will resist and reject them. And if resisted by the Lord, such as come under the influence of a spirit of pride and ambition will be led further and further away from developing the fruits and graces of the spirit. Peter counsels the brethren to cultivate this humility which the Lord so greatly loves, appreciates, and promises to reward. He writes: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).

Humble yourself, become like a little child devoid of self-ambition. Be actuated by a desire to serve the Lord and his flock; serve his cause, the truth, and forget yourself completely.

Of the four sins of Sodom described in Ezekiel 16:49, pride is mentioned first. Perhaps prosperity affected her pride; arrogance and injustice followed. The cities of the plain were destroyed by fire from heaven, a picture of the destruction of the wicked. "Pride goeth before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18).

The rebellion of **Korah** described in Numbers 16 describes the consequences of exalting one's self; it resulted in the destruction of him and his followers (Numbers 16:49).

Nebuchadnezzar became swollen with pride at his own achievements, both militarily and in the magnificence of the city he built. Egypt could have been his final victory, making him master of the middle-eastern world. This is what caused his inordinate pride which in turn led to his punishment. While boasting of his achievements, he was seized with a mental malady that today is called lycanthropy, a condition in which a person imagines he is a wild animal. Daniel's account shows clearly that for a time the king was unfit to rule; he roamed the area, eating grass and sleeping in dens at night. He remained completely irrational until the punishment was lifted. Eventually the king's reason returned and he was restored to his

Of the sins of Sodom, pride is mentioned first. Perhaps prosperity affected her pride.

position. He had learned his lesson: "I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

Then there was **Herod Agrippa**. A vast multitude assembled to see the festive games. Before the assembled throng, the king, in all pride of high state, appeared in a robe containing silver threads. According to Josephus the time of his appearance in the early morning hours was carefully chosen so the silver in his garment was illuminated by the first of the sun's rays. We read: "And the people gave a shout saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man" (Acts 12:22, ASV). Instead of rebuking such words the king enjoyed this newly-declared status. It was short lived because an angel of the Lord smote him and he was eaten of worms (verse 23).

Pride a Cause of Much Irritability

Pride is connected with nearly everything that is injurious to the people of God. Where pride exists, a person is susceptible to evil influences from every quarter. Pride manifests itself in many ways. Sometimes it manifests itself as self-esteem, leading one to think too highly of himself and too lightly of others, even to the extent of imagining one's self to be superior. A conceited person has just one ardent admirer: himself. The folly of this is concisely described in the proverb: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 26:12). Humility leads people to serve others; conceit leads them to serve themselves. Sometimes pride manifests itself in a love of praise or fame; anything that conflicts with a desire to appear special before others touches a tender spot.

We should not be proud of having the truth or of our ability to serve the truth. All pride is objectionable in the sight of God and shows that its possessor has a small mind. Self-laudation and a striving for preeminence are to be thoroughly put away as the greatest enemies to the spirit of the Lord and the blessing of the church. We have nothing of which to be proud, nothing of which to boast. If we have received anything of the Lord, we should be thankful indeed for the favors bestowed upon us, instead of glorying as though we had attained it ourselves (1 Corinthians 4:7).

How to Control Pride

If we have pride or ambition, we must seek to control it with the spirit of love and sympathy for others, instead of letting the wrong spirit control us. The best way to do this is to practice generosity and to provoke others to love and good works and not to anger. Let us remember that humility is one of the greatest and most important lessons to be learned in the school of Christ. Obedience to the instructions of the Teacher along this line has much to do with whether we will attain the kingdom.

One of the best aids to learning this important lesson is to judge ourselves and scrutinize our own motives. If we find we have acted unjustly toward another, we should immediately make amends to the best of our ability. We should properly examine our own minds, and seek to make matters right with the one we have wronged. For a person who is proud or who is insensitive to the good opinion of others, it is difficult to apologize. But the best thing to do is to set the matter right as quickly as possible. Thus we may have help along the line where we should have it, by overcoming our pride and vanity.

The members of the body of Christ are all to be copies of God's dear son. This does not mean that God's people will be able always to control their words, looks, and actions. One who has some weakness associated with pride or vanity will apologize for any wrong done; by that act he will show both God and man that his heart recognizes the right principle. A great blessing will come to him because he is strictly following the divine word and thus he will gradually overcome his weakness and strengthen his character.

Pride is absolutely a great enemy of the new creation. It always produces a loss and a disadvantage. It is our heavenly Father's purpose to make this so evident that eventually no creature in heaven or earth will ever allow pride to control him.

Christians should be on the alert to resist pride, for if it is allowed to influence one's thoughts and actions, it will do great damage to the peace and joy one has in the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus gave us a perfect example of humility. Let us all strive to be like him, clothed with humility. May we never allow the seeds of pride to enter into our hearts.

We should not be proud of having the truth or of our ability to serve the truth.



Greed

In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.—2 Corinthians 8:2

Robert Brand

Greed can be defined as “an inordinate desire to acquire and possess.” While envy and covetousness involve an improper desire to possess what someone else has, greed focuses more on endeavoring to satisfy self without a comparison to others. Another definition might be “an inappropriate attitude towards things of value in the mistaken judgment that one’s well-being is tied to one’s possessions.” Whatever the precise definition, greed is scripturally ranked amongst the most grievous of sins.

“Greed” is translated in the Old and New Testaments from various Greek and Hebrew words. Actually, the specific word “greed” does not appear in the King James translation of the Bible. That translation does contain three verses with “greedily” and six with “greedy.” The generic definition of the words as excessive desire indicates the need for context to understand this subject.

When most people think about greed, they probably think about money, and an inappropriate desire for great amounts of it. Today’s newspapers are full of stories of corporate titans and their fall from positions of power and money through scandals involving greed. Some may even think that greed for money is the cause of every type of evil because 1 Timothy 6:10 seems to say so: “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” The *New International Version*, as well as many other Bible versions, clears up any misconception: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” The remainder of verse 10, not quoted as often as the first part, lends additional insight: “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” Then, in verse 11, Paul provides the necessary counsel and correct perspective for the Christian when he states: “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentle-

ness.” Greed is therefore seen as a root cause of sin, with many allied forms of unrighteousness manifesting from it.

An effective character development strategy is to focus on root causes of sin and endeavor to overcome them. Once victory is obtained, by the Lord’s grace and our efforts, we will find the challenging task of overcoming to be less strenuous. For example, exaggeration and cheating are different sins, but they come from the same root transgression: dishonesty. Focusing our energies on overcoming the core wrong of dishonesty helps greatly in gaining a victory over its allied sins.

A distinction must be drawn between greed and the legitimate pursuit of money and other temporal necessities: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10, *NIV*). Paul admonishes us to “work with [our] own hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11) and make an honest living, providing for ourselves and those for whom we are responsible. Paul’s familiar words could not be stronger: “If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8, *RSV*). Rather than “an inordinate desire to acquire and possess,” providing the necessities of life is a Christian responsibility.

Students of the Scriptures might be surprised to discover how serious greed is as a sin. Greed’s allied sin of covetousness is actually linked with idolatry: “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5, *ASV*; see also Ephesians 5:5). Greed is a form of idolatry because it places something, or someone, before one’s allegiance to the Lord. Christians are even warned to not associate with those who are greedy: “But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality

or greed ... —not even to eat with such a one” (1 Corinthians 5:11, RSV). In fact, willful and continuing persistence in the sin of greed will disqualify someone from eternal life in God’s kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). It is not surprising then to see a lack of greed as one of the qualifications for servants within the church (1 Timothy 3:3,8).

An unfortunate reality of the fallen human nature is that its appetites are insatiable. Rather than simply wanting enough, we tend to want more. After we get more, we desire more still. All must guard against this tendency. “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Philippians 4:5) is the Bible’s prescription and antidote. Whether it is the Israelites wanting manna, then not being satisfied with it, or a modern-day couple wanting a needlessly larger and more expensive home, this tendency to want more has a long, albeit ignoble, history in mankind’s existence. By contrast, contentment is a godly virtue. In fact, in many ways, contentment is the opposite of greed: “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). “Be content with such things as ye have” (Hebrews 13:5). Paul framed his efforts to be content as part of the Christian learning experience: “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Contentment is a character trait that must be developed in the narrow way.

A wonderful example of the opposite of greed in action is found in the early church’s response to the temporal deprivation of the brethren in Jerusalem. Paul speaks of this experience in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. We might think that temporal giving was challenging for most in the church at that time, and it evidently was. God tends to not call the privileged of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26). A wonderful lesson can be gained by a careful reading of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, RSV. First, Paul credits their generosity and subsequent actions to “the grace of God” (verse 1). This reminds us of the words of James: “Every good and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). Then Paul provides a fascinating formula for our consideration and admonition; in what was to be a severe test upon the brethren, a combination of their joy in the Lord coupled with the reality of their own “extreme poverty” resulted

not in minimal giving, but in “a wealth of liberality” on their part. Paul goes on to say in verse 4 that the Macedonian brethren not only gave beyond their means of their own free will, but they literally begged for the privilege of doing so!

He says this generous effort was made by body members, those who gave themselves first to the Lord (v. 5), and then committed their means to the welfare of the saints. In verse 7 he combines the two main aspects of faith: belief and action. After mentioning some Christian virtues, he does not forget the physical aspect when he says, “See that you excel in this gracious work also” (v. 7, RSV). Such action proves that our love is genuine (v. 8). Paul caps off this passage by calling to mind our sovereign, our Lord Jesus Christ, “That though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (v. 9, RSV) in spiritual blessings.

Yes, the Lord disdains greed but “loves a cheerful giver” (vs. 7). What a lesson is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. There are so many familiar verses, but hopefully not so familiar that we overlook what they teach us: “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (vs. 6). “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye ... may abound to every good work” (vs. 8). So many wonderful things came from this one act of generosity:

1. The impoverished Jerusalem brethren were assisted temporally.
2. These brethren were assured of their fellow saints’ fervent Christian love for them.
3. The brethren who assisted were enriched by the experience of giving.

Greed continues to manifest today in many forms, including an increasingly popular phenomenon found in some religious movements known as “prosperity theology.” This is the belief that God will materially bless Christians to demonstrate his favor in their lives, often in response to a believer’s tithes and offerings. Summed up, this increasingly popular view states that the more you give (often to the religious organization espousing the philosophy), the more the Lord will bless you materially. Conversely, a lack of material riches is an indication of a lack of faithfulness to God.

“Prosperity theology” claims the more you give, the more the Lord will bless you materially.

Such a teaching is an example of greed in the extreme. It is an old sin cloaked in religiosity and disguised to suit our present-day material world. There is no doubt that it also financially enriches the religious leaders who preach this idea.

Drawing from the actual Old Testament teaching that God did indeed favor his chosen people with material blessings, Scriptures such as Malachi 3:10 are cited: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Another oft-quoted passage is at the end of the book of Job: “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and ... seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42:12,13).

Because there is a complete absence of such passages in the New Testament, proponents of this doctrine misapply and redirect God’s promises to faithful Israel to the New Creation of the Gospel age. The “riches” promised for the Christian are spiritual, not material, in nature. One verse in 1 Corinthians 16:2 may seem to indicate that the Lord promises us material wealth: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as

God hath prospered him.” The *Revised Standard Version* clears up the possible confusion with the phrase “as he may prosper” rather than indicating that God himself has materially blessed believers.

The Lord’s people are graciously promised the basic necessities of life: “Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, ... [or] what you shall put on ... will he [God] not much more clothe you?” (Matthew 6:25-30, RSV). That agrees with 1 Timothy 6:8, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” Indeed, rejoicing in the Lord’s bountiful provisions for us, temporal and spiritual, is a sign of mature Christian character.

Let us realize that obedience to the Lord and his standard of righteousness will bring what we need to make our calling and election sure: an overabundance of the best kind of blessings, the fruits and graces of the spirit.

Contrary to a popular line in today’s avaricious culture which claims “Greed is good,” greed is a grievous core sin. It is contrary to the will of God; it is the foundation of many human ills, destruction, and heartache. As Christians, we are to strive for joy and satisfaction in that with which the Lord has blessed us. And we know that such striving is well worth the effort, for “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).

Greed is a grievous core sin. It is contrary to the will of God.

“If you love money and wealth, you will never be satisfied with what you have. ... The more you have, the more everyone expects from you. Your money won’t do you any good—others will just spend it for you. If you have to work hard for a living, you can rest well at night, even if you don’t have much to eat. But if you are rich, you can’t even sleep. ... People get rich, but it does them no good. Suddenly they lose everything in a bad business deal, then have nothing to leave for their children. They came into this world naked, and when they die, they will be just as naked. They can’t take anything with them, and they won’t have anything to show for all their work. ... They leave the world just as they came into it. They gained nothing from running after the wind.”

—Ecclesiastes 5:10-16, Contemporary English Version

Sloth



*By slothfulness the building decays; and through lowering of the hands the house leaks.—
Ecclesiastes 10:18, Modern KJV*

Régis Liberda

In the parable of the talents the Lord admonishes his disciples by describing a terrible punishment for an unprofitable servant. Knowing this judgment of the Lord toward someone who is basically lazy, we should define with some precision the sin that leads to such an end and, of course, define sloth in general. When we consider the severity of the punishment of this servant, we know there are good reasons why the Lord taught this lesson.

Sloth is always easier to recognize in others than in ourselves. It is a subjective sin. We can say a person is slothful (lazy) if we have known the person a long time and can compare his or her activity with prior activity in the past, or when compared to others.

Although each of us is able to think, to work, or to suffer, there are great differences among us. Some have greater physical capability to perform a task, others less. Some can tolerate considerable pain, others not. There is a tendency to judge the “strength” or “weakness” of another in terms of ourselves.

Thus it is with what can be observed. In the parable the Lord gave five talents, two talents, and one talent to his servants based on his knowledge of their capabilities. So the limit of our zeal is something only God can appreciate in comparison with our capacities. We need to consider how sloth appears to God when we attempt to “do our duty” as Christians.

Sloth can result from many causes, one of which is physical. An illness affects our ability to work and serve. Here’s one example from the apostle Paul whose prayer to God is well known: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is

made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Many explanations have been suggested for Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,” but it is unimportant to know what it was. Paul considered that infirmity, whatever it was, as preventing him from serving the Lord as he wanted. Because God did not remove this “thorn,” we know he did not want Paul serving him without it.

So was Paul slothful? Certainly not! Paul may have thought his service for the Lord was not what he thought it could be because of that infirmity, and so from one point of view, he may have considered himself guilty of sloth. Others around him might notice if he stopped working when they wanted to continue.

We might feel the same if we planned a special work, then found we did not have the energy to carry it out. Instead of anticipating that task with pleasure, it instead became something tiring or painful.

Sloth can be the result of mental processes that reduce our zeal. Generally the lack of a goal produces discouragement in anyone. Suppose our job requires us to produce a report which must be submitted next week. We must write a few pages describing a manufacturing process and how to improve it. Some parts of the report we find easy to write. Other parts may be less so because the process is complicated, and we are unable to organize the ideas clearly or find good answers to the problem.

If we consider this assignment as tiring and which we think might not even be well-received by our boss, we will, when we encounter the first difficulty, find reasons to do something else. If discouragement is allowed to possess us, we will soon become “unprofitable.” But if we are motivated to do a good job, we will keep at the task we are expected to accomplish.

Some suppose that sloth is less disgraceful than incompetence.

Some people appear to be lazy when that is not their problem. Fear may keep them from doing something even though they know others may judge them as lazy. That, in their minds, is preferable to being judged incompetent. They do this because they suppose sloth is less disgraceful than incompetence. Presumably sloth can be overcome while incompetence is permanent. Voluntary sloth can also be exhibited by someone who is able to do the work, but just doesn't want to do it. He willingly accepts the risk of being considered lazy because he finds it preferable to actually doing work.

Whether we avoid work because of this reason or some other, God, who knows all our abilities and shortcomings, will make the final judgment about the service we render to him when the time comes.

Motivation Is Key

If a task is to be correctly done, we need to be motivated. Money is considered an effective motivator by many. We can imagine some as excessively busy every waking hour to accumulate the most money possible. This perspective can be so attractive that it overcomes fatigue and discouragement.

Students may find some of their subjects boring. At the end of the semester, with the prospect of a pass/fail examination, such students must suddenly find the motivation. It could be the realization that whether they like the subject or not, graduation is a necessary first step to a future career.

More commonly, most recognize that to survive, they need money for the necessities of life, and so, although sloth may appear to have its allurements, good sense triumphs as work is done to acquire money.

The stronger the motivation, the more zeal will be exhibited in comparison with the difficulties of the work. Employers can use this phenomenon to increase the production efficiency of a factory. This works better than threatening some punishment, because positive incentives are usually better than negative threats for both employee and employer. There are exceptions, of course. There are those who will not change their behavior no matter what kind of incentive is used, even punishment. But for most, good motivation usually overcomes sloth.

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise” (Proverbs 6:6). These

words strongly imply that God wants us to be busy, that he considers sloth a sin. After our first parents disobeyed the direct command of God in the garden, he spoke to them and said, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19). God considered hard work to obtain one's daily food as the expected behavior for everyone.

Throughout Old Testament history we see that work, even hard work, was the normal state for mankind. God promised that he would reward hard work with blessings if that work was accompanied with obedience to him. Otherwise, there would be punishment, including meager results from the work done.

In the New Testament we see Jesus who gave so much of his time and strength, and who finally gave his life for us and all mankind! Due to his personal experience and his motivation he was in a position to speak about punishment for inactivity in the parable of the talents.

The apostle Paul, who was concerned about how his infirmity limited his service, writes: “Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:8-10). Paul considered sloth as unacceptable for Christians and used his own experience as an example.

This text speaks especially of the work Paul had to do to live; he needed money to provide his food and shelter. The implication is that some did not do this. In the first Christian community in Jerusalem money was gathered among the brethren for those who were in need: “[They] sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:45). Such community life might have tempted some to accept the assistance of others without the need for them to work at all.

We do not know if that was the case in Thessalonica. Paul seems to have chosen an independent course rather than to rely on the largesse of others. In any event he condemns sloth on the part of those who refuse to provide for themselves through their own labor. Con-

cerning his own motivation, he says simply that he did not want to “be chargeable to any of you.”

What about spiritual sloth? We already know what Jesus thought about this subject in the parable of the talents, and the work or lack of it done by the servants during the absence of their lord. When that lord reckoned with his servants, their efforts affected the outcome. At the beginning of the parable the lord did not say to the servants, “Work hard and you will get a percent of what I have entrusted to you.” He did not say, “If you do not work hard, you will be punished.” We know only that the parable ends with both reward and punishment for the servants depending upon how well they served. Jesus in this example given just before his crucifixion, gives us motivation in his call to serve him.

The apostle Paul explains the need to work for God and to be motivated by how he wrote his letters. He used phrases like “fight of faith” or “run the race” which include constant effort and dedication for the work that must be done. He refers to a “crown of glory” as the great reward that soldiers and athletes expected at the conclusion of their hard work. And so it must be for every Christian who has made the decision to serve the Lord.

One danger concerning zeal can be temporary relaxation. When we have worked hard for the Lord and his service, and when our efforts have been appreciated by others, we may feel we are entitled to a little rest. The famous general Hannibal of Carthage successfully attacked the Roman empire in 218 B.C.; he defeated the Roman legions in three different battles. When he was in position to take Rome, he instead “rested on his laurels” in

Capua, Italy. That allowed Rome to gather new legions and finally defeat him.

“Resting on our laurels” can also be a trap for us. If our zeal has been allowed to flag, if we have stopped to rest as we run this race to attain the prize of the high calling, we are in great danger. The moments of relaxation provide a good opportunity for the adversary to tell us about all the other interesting things there are for us, in addition to activity in the Lord’s service.

Final Victory

Sloth differs from the sin of murder or robbery which might be done just once then regretted immediately after, though whose consequences may be great through a Christian’s life. Sloth is insidious: it can start small, be just a slight tendency at the beginning, not even visible to others. Then, if persisted in, it gradually takes over one’s life to the point where inactivity is considered normal, even something good.

Let each of us ask ourselves these questions: “Could I do more for the Lord and the brethren, and less for myself?” “When, at the end of my life, I look at what I did for God, will I be satisfied or will I regret all my missed opportunities?” If we feel our life could be judged as unprofitable to God, that thought should provide the motivation we need to increase our zeal in the Master’s service. Let us take as our role models those who are continuously active in serving the Lord, who never relax their efforts to please God.

The level of our zeal is something God himself will someday recognize. Let us renew each day our efforts to serve him, knowing how greatly he will reward those who truly love and serve him.

Let us take as our role models those who are continuously active in serving the Lord.

“I once walked by the field and the vineyard of a lazy fool. Thorns and weeds were everywhere, and the stone wall had fallen down. When I saw this, it taught me a lesson: Sleep a little. Doze a little. Fold your hands and twiddle your thumbs. Suddenly poverty hits you and everything is gone!”

—Proverbs 24:30-34, Contemporary English Version

Gluttony

These men are heading for utter destruction—their god is their own appetite; their pride is in what they should be ashamed of; and this world is the limit of their horizon.—Philippians 3:19, Phillips

Wade Austin

“Which came first, lust or gluttony?” That question comes to mind when reading the view of others on this subject. Some describe gluttony as the mother of lust while others describe lust as the forerunner of gluttony. Does it really matter? Perhaps. An understanding of the origin of sin helps us know more about the nature of sin and how to combat it. On the other hand, when the sinner blames the cause and asserts that it is beyond his control to do differently, then the origin of the sin matters not from a helpful perspective but from a purely religious, philosophical discussion of the responsibility for overcoming sin. To overcome sin, one must accept personal responsibility for the choices made.

The root cause of sin does seem to matter. If one can eradicate the cause, then perhaps one can eradicate the sin. If one is convinced the cause is beyond control, then one might say, “Is it really a sin if I cannot control myself?”

The Israelites asked the same question of God when they prayed, “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people” (Isaiah 64:8,9). In essence, they blamed God for making them as they were. How could they behave any other way? This then leads to a larger discussion of sin and responsibility relevant to the topic of gluttony or any other sin.

What is the nature of gluttony? Why should it be included on the list of the deadly sins?

Gluttony is primarily associated with overeating, but it can manifest itself in other ways. Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Gluttony is sheer defiance of reasonable and balanced behavior.” The use of the word “glutton” in such phrases as “a glutton for punishment” reveals

that people often overindulge themselves in ways that are not healthy spiritually, physically, and/or emotionally. “Too much,” identified by symptoms of “too soon,” “too eagerly,” “too delicately,” “too greedily,” “too ___ (fill in the blank),” describes a glutton’s insatiable appetite for the object or objects of his desire. While the consummation of desire need not be gluttonous, the resultant sin of unrestrained desire will probably nourish the lust for more, more, and more. This obsessive compulsive behavior will result in spiritual death, physical death, or both.

The apostle James describes this destructive behavior within the context of temptation: “No, a man’s temptation is due to the pull of his own inward desires, which greatly attract him. It is his own desire which conceives and gives birth to sin. And sin when fully grown produces death” (James 1:14,15, *Phillips*).

The crux of the apostle’s argument identifies a man’s freedom to choose his behavior as more important than his environment. It is not the temptation that causes us to sin, but our desire seizes upon the opportunity afforded by temptation and we sin. If we keep on sinning, we will die. If we control the desire and remain obedient to the law of God, we will live. Paul told us this when he wrote, “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God” (Romans 8:5-8, *NIV*).

A person “controlled” by an insatiable desire cannot be controlled by the law of the spirit. The desire of the flesh wars against the

spirit of holiness. Because the desire controls the person, it chokes off the spirit of God, the spirit of holiness, and the spiritual mind will die. Jesus taught this lesson in the parable of the sower: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

In his book *The Seven Deadly Sins* Solomon Schimmel writes: "We must become aware of our gluttony in order to learn to overcome it. Patients of mine who have a problem with excessive eating are usually surprised, and often shocked, when they calculate the time they invest each week in food-related activities. It has ranged from 40 to 85 percent of their waking hours."

Awareness of a problem and knowledge of what is right is only a beginning. One of the interesting characteristics of a controlling desire such as gluttony is that people may understand that yielding to the desire is harmful but they lack the self-control to resist.

When Jesus said "he that heareth the word" in Matthew 13:22, he meant more than merely "hearing" the gospel message and the invitation of God to dedicate one's life to doing the will of God. Jesus was speaking of an understanding of the word of God that compels a person to consecrate his life to God. At the same time fleshly desires cut off spiritual growth by "choking" the influence of God's word in one's life. The glutton knows it is spiritually, emotionally, and physically unhealthy to overeat or overindulge in any passion, but he refuses to control himself. The fruit of the spirit that overcomes gluttony is temperance (self-control) of which the apostle Paul says, "against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:23).

The Consequences

Studies of the bio-chemical aspects of obesity as well as the psychological pathology suggest that overeating is not the same as the sin of gluttony. Modern man asserts that overeating is more the result of environmental and physiological factors than a lack of self-control or inordinate desire. Few indeed would say overeating is a "deadly sin" in the spiritual sense of deadly, but most all agree that it is a prob-

lem that will lead to poor health and a variety of deadly diseases as a side effect of obesity. These diseases include high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.

In many ways, overeating is a cultural phenomenon and is nowhere more manifest than in America. Americans obsess about food and the food industry literally feeds that obsession. The media bombards us with enticements to eat too much or too fancifully, while inundating us with advertisements for the latest diet fads. Modern supermarkets provide an abundance of food unlike any time in the history of the world. Magazines, newspapers, and television programming that airs twenty-four hours a day not only encourage us to visit the supermarket but show us the best ways to prepare food and present it elegantly.

At any given time, 35 to 40 percent of American women and 20 to 24 percent of American men are dieting, and the amount they spend annually reflects the intensity and the cost of their efforts (quoted figures range from \$33 to \$55 billion). According to the National Institutes of Health the total direct and indirect cost of overweight and obesity in the U.S. is \$117 billion. This figure exceeds the entire federal education, training, employment, and social services budgets which as of February 2005 came to \$92.5 billion.¹

Francine Prose, in her book *Gluttony*, claims a study of Optifast dieters put the cost per pound lost at \$180.

The problem becomes worse each year due to the high percentage of obese children continuing their struggle with weight into adulthood. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, "Results from the 1999-2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), using measured heights and weights, indicate that an estimated 16 percent of children and adolescents ages 6-19 years are overweight. This represents a 45 percent increase from the overweight estimates of 11 percent obtained from NHANES III (1988-94)."

Francine Prose concludes: "It seems clear that of all the seven deadly sins, gluttony—with the exception, one assumes of greed—has become the most closely associated with large

The fruit of the spirit that overcomes gluttony is temperance.

1. National Institutes of Health web site <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/statistics/index.htm#econ> and Congressional Budget Office web site <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=6075&sequence=11>

quantities of money, the most lucrative, the most profitable, the easiest to market.”

Addiction

Not all overeaters are gluttonous and not all obese people become obese because of the sin of gluttony. Indeed, not all gluttons are obese. If we expand the definition to include excessive, repeated overindulgence in behavior that harms our physical, emotional and/or spiritual health, then all individuals may be guilty of this sin at one time or another in their lives. This describes virtually any addictive behavior.

The words of the apostle Paul apply to addictions of all sorts: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. ... Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:12,13,16). When we allow ourselves to be enslaved by any person or behavior, we sin, and we inhibit and ultimately eliminate our service to God and righteousness.

The Scriptures identified gluttony as a sin long before Pope Gregory included it on his list of The Seven Deadly Sins or the National Institutes of Health identified obesity as a national problem. In Deuteronomy 21:18-20 the law of God gave this instruction to the Israelites: “If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.” In these verses gluttony is associated with stubbornness, rebellion, and drunkenness. The word glutton is translated from a Hebrew word that means, “to squander; hence one who is prodigal, who wastes his means by indulgence.”

King Solomon had several observations about gluttony: “For the drunkard and the glutton

shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:21). “Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous [gluttonous] men shameth his father” (Proverbs 28:7). He alludes to the consequences of gluttony when he advises, “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat” (Proverbs 23:1-3). Consuming too much food dulls the senses and makes us susceptible to poor decisions or even possibly indebted to our host. Solomon’s life testifies to the fact that an awareness and understanding of a problem doesn’t automatically solve the problem. His acquisition of wives and concubines could certainly be described as “gluttonous” in the sense of excessive and “beyond reasonable and balanced behavior,” and it contributed to his downfall.

The apostle Paul counseled against excessive behavior that could be described as gluttonous without actually using the word. In his letters he counsels against fornication, covetousness, idolatry, riotous living, drunkenness, and extortion (1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21). He exhorts us to not keep company with those who do these things: “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:19).

Responsibility

How can we overcome enslavement to gluttony or any other sin that enslaves us? Awareness and confession of the sin is a first step. Knowledge of the virtues needed to live righteously is a second step. Solomon Schimmel says as much from a secular perspective when he writes, “We need moral guidelines for the consumption of food and strategies for implementing them if we are to assert control over this important area of our lives. Otherwise we succumb to our hedonistic impulses and to their manipulation by those interested only in marketing their wares but not in our physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare.”

Certainly for the child of God, the Scriptures provide our moral guidelines. Admonitions to emulate the apostle Paul and “keep our bodies under,” to be “temperate in all things,” abound in the Scriptures. But what

Awareness and confession of any sin is a necessary first step to doing something about it.

are the “strategies” that successfully enable us to do these things?

First and foremost the child of God must “die to sin.” Paul writes, “He that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7). Paul’s words speak to the need to consecrate ourselves unto death. We vow to die to the “old nature” and “walk in newness of life.” Such a vow is a one-time act that declares, “not my will, but thine be done.” Dying is daily struggle. We crucify the “old nature” daily by not yielding to its impulses and enslaving temptations. The strategies we use include praying to God the first thing in the morning, throughout the day, the last thing before we fall asleep, and in the middle of the night if we awake. They include reading the word of God, studying the word of God, and discussing the word of God with others. We must fellowship with our brethren,

encourage them, and lean on them for help. All of these strategies help us “sow to the spirit” instead of “sowing to the flesh.”

Finally, to the extent that our environment and physical make-up influence our behavior, once we sow to the spirit, we should apply the wisdom of man to controlling these influences and keeping our bodies as pure as possible. Nothing can possibly succeed more than the Scriptural admonitions for “self-control in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25, ASV), “patient continuance in well doing” (Romans 2:7), and “godliness with contentment” (1 Timothy 6:6). Yet in the end, all efforts to heed these admonitions will fail if we do not “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

Let the love of God and our love for God govern every aspect of our lives.

Free Will

Free Will is bestowed on every human being. If one desires to turn towards the good way and be righteous, he has the power to do so. If one wishes to turn towards the evil way and be wicked, he is at liberty to do so. ... Man, of himself and by the exercise of his own intelligence and reason, knows what is good and what is evil, and there is none who can prevent him from doing that which is good or that which is evil. ... Accordingly it follows that it is the sinner who has inflicted injury on himself; and he should weep for, and bewail what he has done to his soul—how he has mistreated it.

If God had decreed that a person should be either righteous or wicked, ... or if there were some force inherent in his nature which irresistibly drew him to a particular course, ... how could the Almighty have charged us through the prophets: “Do this and do not do that, improve your ways, do not follow your wicked impulses,” when, from the beginning of his existence his destiny had already been decreed, or his innate constitution irresistibly drew him to that from which he could not set himself free? ... By what right or justice could God punish the wicked or reward the righteous?

—Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance*

(Maimonides: Originally Moses Ben Maimon. 1135-1204. Spanish-born Jewish philosopher and physician. The greatest Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages.—*American Heritage Electronic Dictionary*)

Envy

Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?—Proverbs 27:4

Brent Hislop

Envy is a feeling of resentment and jealousy towards others because of their possessions, attainments, or good qualities. Christians are warned throughout Scripture to guard against the sin of envy and its bitter fruits. Peter writes: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:1,2). Paul says, “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying” (Romans 13:13).

James warns of envy and strife between Christians in strong terms. He says envy and strife are earthly, not of God, sensual or natural, not of the spirit, and are of the devil (James 3:14-16). He says the consequences of these things are dire. We read in verse 16, translating more nearly to the meaning of the Greek text, “For where envying and strife are, there is anarchy and every evil work” (James 3:16).

James is telling us that envy, an improper self-centered attitude, leads to strife and a tearing down of Christian fellowship and support rather than building one another up. It is especially noteworthy that James tells us envy is of the devil. Isaiah says it was Lucifer’s original sin: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [*Sheol*], to the sides of the pit.” (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Lucifer deceived himself through envy and it was through envy that he sought to deceive and tempt Eve: “Now the serpent was more subtil

than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”—Genesis 3:1-6

The enticement was to be envious of the knowledge God possessed and desirous of having that knowledge for herself. Paul says Eve was indeed deceived and, though he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). And so it is that the biblical record informs us that it was through envy that man fell from favor with God, and through envy the human race has been plunged into sin, sickness, and death.

The remarkable association of envy with death is given many times throughout the Bible. This includes the account of Cain’s envy of Abel in Genesis 4 to the chief priests delivering Jesus up to death because of their envy of him (Mark 15:10). Paraphrasing James’ words, envy is encouraged by the spirit of the world, it is natural to fallen man, it is of the devil, and the Christian is often tempted to envy by the devil (James 3:14-16).

The Christian experience is unique. We have the treasure of God’s holy spirit in the earthen vessel of the old fallen human nature (2 Corinthians 4:7). The Christian is defined

as a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), a new man (Ephesians 4:24) who is to put off the conduct of the old man (Ephesians 4:22). Envy is of the old man, the old fallen human nature with its frailties of pride and insecurity.

The Fall of Saul

One account in the Old Testament tells a sad tale of envy and its destructive effects. It concerns Saul, the first king of Israel. When first chosen king of Israel, Saul was a humble man, "little in [his] own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17). But Saul became proud and defied the instruction of the Lord. In a conflict with the Amalekites, a nation which ambushed Israel during the exodus, Saul was told to slay everyone and everything including the animals. But Saul spared the Amalekite King Agag and took the animals under the pretext of offering them to the Lord and as a feast for the people. For this rebellion Saul was rejected. Samuel said to him, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22,23)

Samuel's words were clear. Saul had been rejected because of his pride. And it was this pride that led to his crazed envy of David. After David slew the giant Goliath he was widely celebrated by the people, and the women sang of his acclaim: "And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?" (1 Samuel 18:7,8).

Saul's pride was hurt and he became so angry and envious of David he sought repeatedly to kill him: "And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 18:12). It was both his pride and his insecurities that caused Saul's pathological envy of David. Saul failed to maintain his relationship with God and could not tolerate seeing David's prosperity, for David excelled in the favor of the Lord.

There is a most remarkable further aspect to this story. As Saul's son and heir to the throne, Jonathan had more to lose than anyone by the failure of his father and the accession of David. But in David, Jonathan saw no threat; rather he found a kindred spirit who shared his love for the Lord. And they became close friends: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). Perhaps as clearly as any biblical account this story shows that the antidote for envy is love. Jonathan did not seek his own advancement and he was not envious of David's acclaim. Love, not envy, influenced his perspective; he loved David and loved the Lord, for he knew David was favored by God.

Jonathan's love of the Lord is eloquently expressed when he and his armor bearer went up against the Philistine army: "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). Through his love and faith in the Lord Jonathan and his armor bearer confronted the Philistines and through the Lord's providence the Philistine army was routed. Jonathan truly was a kindred spirit with David who had expressed his love and faith in the Lord in his confrontation of Goliath: "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee."— 1 Samuel 17:36,37

David and Jonathan's love of one another was based on their mutual love for the Lord. One of the most beautiful expressions of love in Scripture is found in David's words as he laments the death of Jonathan: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26).

One observer has said that between a man and a woman there is a union of the flesh, but between David and Jonathan there was a union of heart and mind.

*The antidote
for envy
is love.*

Love Triumphs over Envy

Love is clearly the antidote to envy; the two cannot coexist. Paul said that love does not envy (1 Corinthians 13:4). For Christians love must ascend if we would be perfected in love. The new man must not merely subdue the old man but triumph over him. Perhaps a lesson of the old fallen human nature can be drawn from King Saul's pride and insecurities. Love is the antidote, and not just the love of others. One must first love God with heart, soul, and mind. Then, as Jesus said, we are to love others as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus' words indicate if God comes first, there is an allowance for self love, a love and self esteem that precludes pride and vexing insecurities, because the focus is God-centered not self-centered.

Because Saul did not put God first in his love, he rebelled against him; he loved and esteemed himself more than the Lord and this led to his demise. A proper love of God, our neighbors, and ourselves will allow us to look upon the prosperity of others with joy for them and not pain for ourselves.

For Christians loving God first and foremost means a vital and living relationship with God. This brings to Christians the peace of God that passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7). This allows one not only to be not envious of others, but to rejoice with the good fortune of others. It also allows Christians to look beyond themselves, to look out for the interests of others, to love and support others in their needs.

The apostle Paul said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). The context of this verse is wonderful. Paul encouraged the brethren to be like minded, to have the same love towards one another, not to oppose but to support. And then he says a remarkable thing: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."—Philippians 2:3-5, NAS

Paul goes on to say Jesus did not envy God (as did Lucifer) but in humility was obedient even to the death of the cross. His love was so great he gave his life for others and thus dem-

onstrated for all mankind the depth of his love for God (John 14:31).

Looking to Jesus as an example Christians are inspired to follow in his footsteps and to put off envy and all the works of the old man. Knowing we have this treasure in an earthen vessel we are inspired to "fight the good fight of faith" as a "good soldier of Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3).

Jesus prayed for his disciples (John 17:21) that they might be one even as he and the father were one. He gave them a new commandment: "That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." And then he added: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35). Such a love cannot envy a fellow soldier but must ever labor "to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12,13, NAS).

Nor can a Christian envy the unbeliever: "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in fear of the LORD always" (Proverbs 23:17, NAS). If the heart is not thoroughly cleansed and still desires any of the ways of the old nature if only they were not forbidden, that one must take the burden to the Lord and redouble his efforts not only to love righteousness but to truly hate iniquity.

"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy [envy]. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."—Romans 13:8-14, NAS

A proper love will allow us to look upon the prosperity of others with joy for them.

Contending for the Faith

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.—Acts 20:29

A verse-by-verse study of the book of Jude

What Paul predicted Jude saw as a reality. In the strongest possible terms, he denounced the heresies of belief and practice that had invaded the early Christian church. Some years later, the apostle John wrote of the rapidity of the spread of these heresies: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18). This is the situation in the church of which Jude speaks.

Introduction—Jude 1,2

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

There is much debate as to whether the author of this epistle is the apostle Jude or the half-brother of Jesus, both of whom had brothers named James. Others claim these are the same. However, as T. E. Stracy writes in his exegesis of this epistle, “Not the author, but his inspired message, is the thing that is important.”

The author limits the ones to whom he is writing to those who possess three qualifications: 1) sanctified by God; 2) preserved, or kept, by Jesus; and 3) the called, or ones invited to run for the heavenly call. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, notes that the word “called,” grammatically, should head the list, and suggests the translation, “to them, who, being called are therefore sanctified by God and preserved in Jesus Christ.” In any case, the intended audience is not those who only claim to be Christians, but those who are deeply committed to the understanding of, and obedience to, the word of God and its precepts.

To these Jude expresses three desires: 1) God’s **mercy** to cover their transgressions resulting from original sin; 2) the **peace** and harmony with God which this would afford; and 3) the continuing **love** of God to protect them from the seriousness of the dangers that lie ahead. Not only does he seek these gifts for them but, in view of the severity of the perils, that they be multiplied unto them.

Contending for the Faith—Jude 3,4

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not that Jude had written an earlier letter, but that he had set his mind to the writing of an epistle on the common salvation, that is, the salvation held in common with other like-minded Christians (see Titus 1:4). The word “common” here (Greek: *koinos*) is not used with the thought of “ordinary,” but with the thought of “shared.”

However, Jude seems to have changed his mind before putting pen to ink and, instead of writing an informatory epistle on salvation, he considered it essential to write a cautionary letter warning his readers of false teachers in the church.

The phrase, “who were before of old ordained to this condemnation” in the *King James Version* incorrectly gives the thought of predestination. The Greek word translated “ordination,” *prographo*, Strong’s #4270, is more literally translated “written of beforehand” in the *American Standard Version*. It is probably an allusion to the prophecy of Enoch quoted in verses 14 and 15.

While the word translated “lasciviousness,” Strong’s #766, implies sexual excess, Professor Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, remarks, “the fundamental thought is the acknowledging of no restraints, the insolent doing of whatever one’s caprice may suggest.”

The danger of which Jude warns his readers is that they are being falsely taught to take the grace of God offered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as an excuse for profligate living.

Old Testament Examples—Jude 5-7

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jude elicits three examples from the Old Testament on which to base his warning:

Israel in the wilderness: Despite voluntarily binding themselves to God’s law given at Sinai, they failed to live up to its restrictions (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-13).

The angels before the flood: Giving in to their attraction for the “daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2), they chose to abandon their heavenly home and divine instruction to satisfy their desires.

Sodom and Gomorrah: Yielding to the triple temptations of “pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness” (Ezekiel 16:49), they not only lived a sensual life style, but sought to cohabit with the “strange flesh” of their two angelic messengers (Genesis 19:1,4,5).

That the “eternal fire” which they suffered was not eternal torment is adequately refuted by the mention of their eventual redemption (Ezekiel 16:55; Mark 6:11). The Greek word *aionia*, Strong’s #166, is often translated “age-lasting”; it is translated “age-abiding” by Rotherham and “age-during” in *Young’s Literal Translation*. Phillips perhaps captures the thought of Jude when he renders the final clause of verse 7, “stand in their punishment, as a permanent warning.”

Avoid Two Extremes—Jude 8-10

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

Jude’s description of these teachers as “dreamers” may be a reference to Deuteronomy 13:1-3: “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Pastor Russell suggests that the dignities to which Jude refers are “those whom God has honored and ‘set’ in the body” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 6, p. 166). Thus he suggests that these are not those who are in civil authority, but those whom God has placed in positions of responsibility in the church. These are those Paul speaks of in Romans 1:28 as those who “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.”

Of these Jude says that they speak evil of things “which they know not [spiritually],” but are motivated by their natural mind, “as brute beasts.”

Nevertheless, Jude cautions his readers not to take judgment into their own hands. To support this thought he cites a vision of Zechariah where the angel of the Lord, identified as Michael in our text, resists Satan, yet he does not personally condemn him, but merely says, “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan” (Zechariah 3:2).

In like manner, true believers, while not following the counsel of false and self-indulging leaders, are not to bring against them a “railing accusation,” but to leave the final judgment to Jehovah.

Three Primary Sins—Jude 11-13

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam

The final judgment of false and self-indulging leaders is to be left to Jehovah.

for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Three primary sins are highlighted in the epistle, highlighted because each of them is a root cause for the headlong pursuit of intemperate selfishness.

The Way of Cain: Jealousy—The illicit desire to have the position of approval, and the resultant anger when that approval is denied.

The Error of Balaam: Greed—The inordinate desire for possessions is another fruitful cause of excess. Indeed, “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

The Gainsaying of Core: Ambition—The desire for prominence and power is the third root of the indulgent spirit Jude saw creeping into the Christian church.

Waxing poetic, the writer likens those who possess such desires to four phenomena of nature:

To wind-driven, waterless clouds—Lacking purpose in life, they have only the form of good without its substance, driven by spontaneous desire to satisfy their lusts.

To barren fruit trees—Withered and dead, then made doubly dead by being plucked up; thus dead in original sin and again dead by apostasy of character.

To foaming wild waves—As such waves cast up a deposit of seaweed, sand, dirt, and flotsam on the shore, so these teachers bring every vile imagination to the minds of men with their words.

To wandering stars—Instead of bringing light to the church, their hedonistic teachings without fixed principles go farther and farther into outer space, into the darkness of a spiritual “black hole.”

The Prophecy of Enoch—Jude 14,15

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their

hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

The source of Jude’s quote is highly debated. There is a Book of Enoch, the composition of which is thought to date to the third century before Christ. Although it is extensively quoted by such early church fathers as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, there is no evidence that the church of the apostles’ day considered it authentic, and some of its narrative seems bizarre and fanciful. While Enoch 1:9 does contain a prophecy similar to the one quoted by Jude, it seems more likely that he derived it from the large body of Jewish tradition.

Since Enoch lived about a thousand years before the flood, he may have understood it as predicting the end of the antediluvian world. This may provide insight into the naming of his son Methuselah, whose name means, “after he dies, may it come.” In light of these facts, it is interesting to note that Methuselah died the same year as the flood of Noah’s day.

However, the larger fulfillment of this prophecy is at the second advent of Christ, when he returns “**with** his saints” (as distinct from his return “**for** his saints”) to commence his thousand-year judgment of all mankind. This judgment (Greek: *krisis*, Strong’s #2920) is not a mere rendering of a summary sentence, but a full period of trial with an opportunity to correct and instruct mankind in righteousness. Pastor Russell expresses it well: “The work of that thousand-year judgment day will show men to what extent they are out of harmony with God, and will show them how to come into harmony with him” (*Reprints*, p. 5442).

A Predicted Apostasy—Jude 16-19

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

The character of these false teachers presents an interesting dichotomy. On the one hand, they murmur and complain, and on the other hand, they are pompous, speaking boast-

Earth’s judgment day will be a time when all will be instructed in righteousness.

ful words. The *New King James* captures this last thought well: “flattering people to gain advantage.” But whether they complain and whine or whether they flatter, it is all for one purpose—to do what they want to do with no regard for God’s will or his commands.

This, however, should not take the church by surprise because the apostles had predicted it. Paul wrote, “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). John spoke of many deceivers entering the church in 2 John 7. Peter and James sounded similar alerts.

These do not, unfortunately, separate **themselves**, but rather, as the *American Standard Version* phrases it, “these are they who **make** separations.” This is the same danger of which the apostle Paul writes in Romans 16:17, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

The word translated “sensual” in Jude 19 would be better rendered “natural” and is the antonym for “spiritual.” Because their mind is attuned to natural things, they desire the things of the flesh, thus separating the spiritually-minded ones who desire the things of the spirit.

Christian Responsibility—Jude 20-23

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Jude concludes his warning by instructing his readers how to handle this sad development in the church. He gives them responsibilities toward each other, specifying three groups within the church: the spiritually-minded, the tempted, and the deluded.

For those who seek the spiritual things he recommends a four-step program. First, they are to establish a strong and sure foundation. The *Twentieth Century New Testament* paraphrases the thought: “build up your characters on the foundation of your most holy faith.” This involves not only personal study, but also employing the modifying influence of discussing your faith with other spiritually-minded Christians.

Step two is frequent, thoughtful, sincere prayer, asking for both guidance and the cour-

age to apply that guidance in the Christian walk. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

The third step is keeping one’s self in the love of God. Writing on this text, Pastor Russell penned these words: “The keeping is with **you**. God will never force your will. God is not now seeking those who need to be compelled” (*Reprints*, p. 5725). We maintain this relationship with Him by humbly obeying His will.

Finally, there is the step of waiting. This is not an idle wait, but an anticipatory expectation for the Lord to accept our intentions and best efforts for the deed, and thus in mercy rewarding our imperfect attempts with everlasting life.

But there is a second group within the church. These are likewise spiritually-minded, but through the weakness of their flesh are tempted by the “do it your own way” suggestions of false teachers. These must be dealt with compassionately and, by a non-judgmental approach, assisting them to follow the course of sacrifice. The *American Standard* translates this verse, “And on some have mercy, who are in doubt.” It is those with doubts, torn between the Bible path and the easier road suggested by the apostates that need strengthening.

The last group is the backsliders who are succumbing to temptation. These are not to be rejected but pulled, as it were, “out of the fire.” The fire here is the purging temptation to which they have yielded. These need a firmer warning of the disastrous course they are taking. And, while we abhor the spots on their robes of Christ’s righteousness, we do not hate the one wearing the robe. We are to hate the sin, but not the sinner.

Benediction—Jude 24,25

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

After writing such a strong warning of those who are diluting and distorting the gospel, Jude concludes with this graceful benediction, thus assuring both the ones to whom he wrote and us today that, if we keep entrusting ourselves to God’s care, we can and will come out more than conquerors through him who loves us.

*We can and will
come out more
than conquerors
through him
who loves us.*

News & Views

World News



Religious

Despite their packed megachurches, their political clout and their increasing visibility on the national stage, evangelical Christian leaders are warning one another that their teenagers are abandoning the faith in droves. Their alarm has been stoked by a highly suspect claim that if current trends continue, only 4 percent of teenagers will be “Bible-believing Christians” as adults. That would be a sharp decline compared with 35 percent of the current generation of baby boomers, and before that, 65 percent of the World War II generation. The phenomenon may not be that young evangelicals are abandoning their faith, but that they are abandoning the institutional church, said Lauren Sandler, author of “Righteous: Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement” (Viking, 2006).

—*New York Times*, 10/7/2006

An Indonesian firing squad executed three Christian men who had been convicted in connection with the violence that has wracked the province of Central Sulawesi. The government ignored a last-minute appeal from the European Union to declare a moratorium on the death penalty. No evidence directly linked any of the condemned to killings, but two were found to be ringleaders of a Christian militia that killed 200 Muslims in 2000, and the third to have instructed Christians in the use of arrows, according to trial observers.

—*New York Times*, 9/22/2006

Muslim religious leaders in Gaza warned Pope Benedict 16th that he must “accept” Islam if he wants to live in peace. A previously unknown group, calling itself the Huda Army Organization, has threatened to kill all Christians in the Gaza Strip. Huda means “guidance.” The group also threatened to attack churches and Christian-owned institutions and homes. An estimated 4,500 Christians live among more than 1.3 million Muslims in the Gaza Strip.

—*Bridges For Peace News*, 9/20/2006

The Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into approximately 2,300 languages or dialects, with at least that many remaining.

—*Biblical Archaeology Review*, Nov./Dec. 2006

Rabbis were ordained in Germany for the first time since World War II. Three graduates of the Abraham Geiger training college in Berlin, which opened in 2000, received ordination at a ceremony in Dresden. Germany’s Jewish population has quadrupled to about 100,000 since 1990, mostly because of immigration from the former Soviet Union.

—*The Week*, 9/22/2006

The leaders of three Jerusalem-based Christian evangelical organizations voiced distress over a recent proclamation by the Latin Patriarch and the heads of three other churches in Jerusalem issuing a stinging and virtually unprecedented public criticism of Christian Zionism and their unflinching support for the State of Israel. The declaration lambasted Christian Zionism as a “false teaching” that “condemn[s] the world to the doom of Armageddon.”

—*Jerusalem Post*, 9/5/2006



Social

Eating vegetables appears to help keep the brain young and may slow the mental decline sometimes associated with growing old. On measures of mental sharpness, older people who ate more than two servings of vegetables daily appeared about five years younger at the end of the six-year study than those who ate few or no vegetables. The research in almost 2,000 Chicago-area men and women doesn’t prove that vegetables reduce mental decline, but it adds to mounting evidence pointing in that direction. The study was published in the journal *Neurology* and funded with grants from the National Institute on Aging.

—*Associated Press*, 10/24/2006

Americans are watching more television than ever, according to a report released by Nielsen Media Research. The average amount of television watched by an individual viewer was a record four hours and 35 minutes a day [during the yearlong 2005-06 TV season that ended last week]. The average amount of time that U.S. households had a television set on each day was eight hours and 14 minutes.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 9/22/2006

In a recent survey, over four in five global executives said they're always connected to their jobs through mobile devices—all day, every day. Thirty-eight percent of those polled believe they're spending too much time on their cell phones, laptop computers, PDAs and pagers. In addition, 27% more say they don't think they have a problem, but that others may disagree. An informal survey by the Impact Group, a team of psychologists who consult on business management, showed that high-level executive clients spent more than three hours per day on e-mail tasks, yet less than 20% of those emails offered any real business or social value.

—*Investor's Business Daily*, 10/23/2006

The Josephson Institute's new national Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth [found] nearly one in three admitted they stole from a store during the past year ... and 61 percent confessed they had cheated on a test. ... 97% agreed that "It's important to me that people trust me." (36,000 teens participated in the biennial report.)

—*Josephson Institute of Ethics*, October 2006

Russia is rapidly losing population. Its people are succumbing to one of the world's fastest-growing AIDS epidemics, resurgent tuberculosis, rampant cardiovascular disease, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, suicide and the lethal effects of unchecked industrial pollution. Abortions outpaced births last year by more than 100,000. An estimated 10 million Russians of reproductive age are sterile because of botched abortions or poor health. The public healthcare system is collapsing. "Russia has a huge territory, the largest territory in the world," [President Vladimir] Putin said. "If the situation remains unchanged, there will simply be no one to protect it."

—*Los Angeles Times*, 10/8/2006

Jesse Sullivan has two prosthetic arms, but he can climb a ladder at his house and roll on a fresh coat of paint. The motions are coordinated and smooth because his left arm is a bionic device controlled by his brain, making him the first person to be fitted with a thought-controlled artificial arm. Electrical signals sent through surgically re-routed nerves make it happen.

—*Associated Press*, 9/14/2006

On October 17, 2006, at the Census Bureau headquarters in Suitland, Md., a crowd broke into cheers at 7:46 when the digital population clock—calculating that an American is born every 7 seconds, one dies every 13 seconds and the nation gains an immigrant from abroad every 31 seconds

—flashed 300,000,000. The United States is now one of three countries with more than 300 million people, ranking behind China and India. In contrast to most other industrialized nations, America has a population that is still growing, propelled by immigration and higher fertility rates.

—*The New York Times*, 10/18/2006

Political

North Korea may be a starving, friendless, authoritarian nation of 23 million people, but its apparently successful explosion of a small nuclear device in the mountains above the town of Kilju on Monday represents a defiant bid for survival and respect. North Korea is more than just another nation joining the nuclear club. It has never developed a weapons system it did not ultimately sell on the world market, and it has periodically threatened to sell its nuclear technology.

—*New York Times*, 10/9/2006

China executes more prisoners than any other country in the world. In 2005, at least 1,770 people were executed, although true figures were believed to be much higher, a report by human rights group Amnesty International said. Organs from death row inmates are sold to foreigners who need transplants. Spokesman Qin Gang said that the organs were not taken forcibly, but only with the express permission of the convict. The No 1 Central Hospital in Tianjin carried out 600 liver transplants last year, [BBC's Rupert Wingfield-Hayes] says, and the organ transplant industry has become big business.

—*BBC News*, 9/27/2006

Bulgaria and Romania were cleared to join the European Union on January 1, 2007 but only under the toughest conditions ever imposed and amid signs that this could be the EU's last expansion for many years. It is unlikely the EU will handle future membership negotiations in the way it dealt with Bulgaria and Romania: the two countries were guaranteed an entry date of 2007 or 2008 regardless of whether they completed reforms.

—*Financial Times*, 9/27/2006

Saudi Arabia disclosed plans to build a multi-billion-dollar electrified fence along its 560-mile border with Iraq. The move angered U.S. and Iraqi officials, but Saudi officials said Iraq's instability left them little choice. They said they were concerned about militants infiltrating from Iraq to carry out attacks aimed at either toppling the ruling family or inciting Saudi Arabia's restive Shiite minority to seek independence.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 9/13/2006

The U.S. is taking another step in security. By the end of October, travelers entering the U.S. from a number of countries will, for the first time, be required to have electronic passports. The global move toward ePassports has been underway since 9/11. EPassports feature embedded RFID—radio frequency identification—chips that carry the holder's personal data and a digital photo. U.S. residents traveling outside the country could be required to have ePassports by the end of 2007. Passport readers already are being used in many foreign airports. Since January 2004, they have processed more than 62 million visitors.

—*Investor's Business Daily*, 10/20/2006

Hezbollah workers in Iran carry black plastic shopping bags stuffed with bundles of new \$100 bills with which to pay registered war victims. Even before the fighting in Lebanon ended, Iran committed to fund Hezbollah's relief effort, says Nehme Tohme, Lebanon's minister for the displaced. Tohme says Hezbollah officials told him that Iran would provide Hezbollah with an "unlimited budget" for reconstruction once the shooting stopped. All told, Hezbollah may pay out as much as \$180 million in cash for rent and furnishings for people made homeless after the group's July 12 kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers incited 33 days of Israeli bombing. The U.S. Treasury estimates that Iran gives \$200 million in U.S. dollars each year to Hezbollah.

—*Bloomberg Markets magazine*, November 2006

The demand for soldiers to man peacekeeping and other stabilization operations has multiplied in recent years at a pace that has left many of the world's most capable military forces struggling to meet it. In United Nations operations alone, the number of military and police peacekeepers has trebled in 10 years to almost 75,000 at the end of August. Additionally a lack of assets such as transport aircraft and helicopters to get troops into the right places is "the single greatest problem we face," according to Bruce Jones, co-director of the Center on International Cooperation at New York University. He says that governments will be pushed to reshape their militaries as they come to see stabilization missions central to their security.

—*Financial Times*, 9/28/2006

Financial

China is grappling with how best to deploy its foreign exchange riches of over \$1 trillion. The country's swelling trade surpluses and large capital inflows have deluged the country with dollars. The huge value of the reserves has created an intense

debate within China about how the country should manage or spend the funds. Roubini Global Economics calculates that about 70 percent of the reserves are in dollars, mainly US Treasury bills. The current structure of these assets produces an excess of 3 percentage points more interest than China's domestic bills and bonds cost that government. Any substantial change in US interest rates could produce a huge capital loss for China.

—*Financial Times*, 9/25/2006

Economic fundamentals across Eastern Europe are increasingly shaky, two years after Hungary and seven other European nations joined the European Union. Slovakia and Croatia have big budget deficits that are getting worse. Several nations, including Hungary, have foreign-currency debt coming due that exceed their reserves of hard currency.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 9/21/2006

Thanks to four straight years of robust earnings growth, corporate America is awash in cash like never before. Industrial companies included in the Standard & Poor's 500 index held a record \$633 billion in cash as of June 30, according to S&P. That's up from \$500 billion in 2003, and just \$155 billion a decade ago. Money is piling up faster than companies can spend it on acquisitions, expansion, stock buybacks and dividends.

—*Institutional Investor*, September 2006

Israel

According to Central Bureau of Statistics data published September 19, the population of the State of Israel at the end of 2005 was comprised of 6,990,700 people, of which 5,313,800 were Jewish (76% of the entire population), and 1,377,100 were Arab (19.7%). The data also showed that since 2000, the Jewish population has decreased by 1.8%, while the Muslim population has increased during the past five years by 1.1% to 1,140,600.

—*Ynetnews.com*, 9/19/2006

An Israeli biotech company has developed banana plants that are completely resistant to pathogenic nematodes, which are parasitic organisms that normally damage the plants and their fruit. Nematodes, commonly called roundworms, are some of the most destructive pathogens damaging banana and plantain crops across the globe. Chemical nematocides have been banned in most of the world due to their dangerous toxic and carcinogenic nature. Israel's Rahan Meristem biotechnology company has now developed banana plants resistant to nematodes, a development that will save banana growers the world over millions of dollars in lost crops.

—*Arutz Sheva*, 9/7/2006

“The Evangelical Christian community is a major pillar of the tourism industry in Israel, and they are true friends of Israel wherever they are,” [said Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog]. Nearly 5,000 Evangelical Christian supporters of Israel from around the world were in Jerusalem for the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebrations in what has been billed as the single largest tourism event of the year. Herzog said American Jews make up about 40% of the United States tourism market, with Evangelical Christians a close second. During the peak of tourism in 2000, when 2.7 million people visited the country, two-thirds of the tourists were non-Jewish, he said.

—*Jerusalem Post*, 10/9/2006

Knesset member Uri Ariel is drawing up plans to construct a synagogue on the Temple Mount, Judaism’s holiest site. Jordan’s king plans to build a fifth minaret on the site as well. The synagogue would be built upon the Temple Mount, but in an area that is indisputably not within the areas that require immersion and other preparations according to Jewish law. Ariel says that the synagogue would not change the Muslim status quo on the mount, which is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Ariel points out that every ruling by Israel’s Supreme Court regarding the matter of the Temple Mount has recognized the right of every Jew to pray on the Temple Mount.

—*Arutz Sheva*, 10/10/2006

A growing number of Palestinians are openly saying they’d like to leave the West Bank and Gaza if given the chance, yet another indication of the deepening despair since Hamas was elected to run the government. Birzeit University pollster Nader Said, who has monitored emigration attitudes for 12 years, says the percentage of Palestinians willing to relocate once hovered just below 20%. That figure jumped to 32% in a September survey, surging to 44% among Palestinians in their 20s and 30s, and beyond 50% among young men.

—*Daily Alert*, 10/24/2006

In the last 50 years, the Jordan River’s annual flow has dropped from more than 1.3 billion cubic meters per year to less than 100 million cubic meters. The gradual disappearance of the mighty and wide river is a cause for major concern. Adding to the mounting crisis is a plan for a new dam on the Syrian side of the border. Already Syria has built reservoirs that catch the waters of the Yarmouk, which normally feeds the Jordan with a steady flow. The

reservoirs have reduced that flow to a trickle. The damage is already done. Environmentalists warn it will take decades to recover the river.

—*Israel Mosaic Radio*, 10/26/2006

Imagine an entire city getting lost in translation. That’s what happened to Jerusalem in an English-language version of a sightseeing brochure originally printed in Hebrew. The published translation proudly exclaimed, “Jerusalem. There is no such city!” The correct translation: “Jerusalem. There is no city like it!”

—*New York Post*, 9/21/2006

Book Review

The Seven Deadly Sins, Solomon Schimmel, Oxford University Press, 1997. 298 pages.

The seven deadly sins were first popularized by the Christian church a long time ago. Dante enshrined them in his poetic work *The Divine Comedy*. Ten years ago many were made aware of them in the 1995 film *Se7en*, the story of a serial killer whose successive victims each exemplified one of the sins.

These seven sins are as pernicious today as they ever were in the past, as witnessed by widespread depression over things that cannot be controlled, tempers run amuck, greed that knows no bounds, and a general feeling that we are **not** living in the best of all possible worlds. Schimmel says this is because we refuse to master our physical and psychological impulses. Indulging our anger, gluttony, arrogance, envy, and the like may not make us criminals, but it often makes us and those who must live with us miserable.

What few seem to understand is that in the long run those who are moral and ethical are also the happiest. Today many are engaged in the pursuit of pleasure rather than the pursuit of happiness—and they attain neither. According to Schimmel modern psychology considers the notions of sin, vice, and virtue to be relics of antiquated theological and philosophical traditions, which it has superseded. He considers this intellectual hubris.

Schimmel is a professor of Jewish education and psychology at Hebrew College in Brookline, Massachusetts. His insights on what we need to do to master our passions rather than be enslaved by them start with an acknowledgment that there is such a thing as sin and that it must be confronted if it is to be defeated.

—*Michael Nekora*

News & Views is edited by Len Griehs. Items of interest may be sent to him at 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades CA 90272, or via e-mail (Griehs@comcast.net).

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Convention Announcements

Inquiries should be sent to the individuals listed below.

Dec. 30–Jan. 1—Chicago IL.
Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove IL.
Julie Vasilevich 312.391.4376.
✉ secretary@chicagobible.org

Dec. 30–Jan. 1—Phoenix AZ.
La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix AZ. Janell Porcolab 602.363.2612.
✉ alexjanell@hotmail.com

Jan. 28—Los Angeles CA.
Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank. Richard Bieniak 949.457.0894.
✉ Rjbieniak@aol.com

Feb. 16–18—Sacramento CA.
Clarion Hotel, 2600 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento CA. Kome Ajise 916.756.4954.
✉ kadansar@comcast.net

Feb. 17, 18—Phoenix AZ
Sunnyslope High School, 35 West Dunlap Ave., Phoenix AZ. April Mengos 480.390.3767.
✉ samengos@yahoo.com

Feb. 25—Rockland NY.
Comfort Inn and Suites, Nanuet NY. Dawn Shallieu 908.756.4954.
✉ DShallieu@aol.com

Mar. 3–5—Orlando FL.
Hilton Hotel, 350 So. Northlake Blvd., Altamonte Springs FL.

Ernie Kuenzli 407.831.2098.
✉ ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

Mar. 10, 11—Baton Rouge LA.
Hilton Garden Inn, 3300 Harding Blvd., Baton Rouge LA. Michael Costelli 228.861.2822.
✉ michael@simpkins-costelli.com

Mar. 11—New York NY.
Wellesley Inn, Fairfield NJ [may be renamed to La Quinta Inn by March]. Debra Szybinski 212.998.2095.
✉ Debra.Szybinski@nyu.edu

Mar. 16–18—Fresno CA.
Best Western Garden Court Inn, 2141 No. Parkway, Fresno CA. Bob Wilson 559.255.2241.
✉ bobjinny@sbcglobal.net

Mar. 18—New London CT.
Bayview Lodge, Society Rd., East Lyme CT. Mark Grillo 860.887.0706.
✉ millennialview@sbcglobal.net

Mar. 23–25—Detroit MI.
Macomb Community College, 14500 12-Mile Road, Warren MI. Frank Nemesh 248.649.6588.
✉ NemeshF@aol.com

✠ **Apr. 1 [Sunday]—Memorial**

July 14–19—Gen. Convention
Univ. of Pittsburgh, Johnstown PA. Michael Nekora 310.454.5248.
✉ nekora@aol.com

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And finally...

Free Will

Free Will is bestowed on every human being. If one desires to turn towards the good way and be righteous, he has the power to do so. If one wishes to turn towards the evil way and be wicked, he is at liberty to do so. And thus is it written in the Torah, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22)—which means that the human species had become unique in the world—there being no other species like it in the following respect, namely, that man, of himself and by the exercise of his own intelligence and reason, knows what is good and what is evil, and there is none who can prevent him from doing that which is good or that which is evil.

—Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance*



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