

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

# OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 6

## LEGALIZING SIN - ACTS 5:24-29

By *RONNY F. WADE*

When government or its agents overstep the authority or right that God gave them, they sin. If a Christian receives a command or is required by law to engage in that which is prohibited by God, the Christian would have to disobey the civil authority, since it is better to obey God than man. The civil ruler does not have a right to justify or grant participation in an activity that is condemned by the scriptures. Civil authorities do not have the right or power to permit one to violate the laws of God. Hence a thing may be legal but wrong.

In our text the apostles had been put in prison (v. 18) as a result of their preaching and the results that came from it. We are told in v. 19 that the angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors permitting them to escape, commanding them to go and preach in the temple, this they did. When the officers found them not in prison, they could not explain their escape since the guards were all there and the doors securely locked, but no prisoners. The high priest and all the officers were concerned about how this would be interpreted by the people. Perhaps it would lend credibility to the apostles' claim. The apostles did not run and hide, but rather returned to the temple and continued to preach Jesus. At any rate the officials re-arrested the apostles, and set them before the council. “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in his name? and behold you have filled Jerusalem with this doctrine.” The apostles were guilty of breaking the law. They did the very thing the council told them not to do. Hence the statement, which even the Jewish council recognized as being true, “it is better to obey God than man.” We cannot disobey God, even if the law of the land commands it. So also, neither can we do what the law of the land permits, if it violates a law of God. Our lesson deals with a situation that is sanctioned by today's laws, but is in violation of bible teaching, the subject of Gambling. Gambling is

legal in America. But can a Christian gamble? What is gambling? Is it wrong? Can we actually prove from the bible that it is a sin? How could it possibly be wrong to bet a small sum on a horse race but all right to lose \$1000.00 in the stock market? Can we justify gambling on the basis that revenues generated by it go for good causes such as education? All the above questions have troubled many people, and they remain, demanding answers from people who strive to serve God.

Gambling is a problem of great proportions today. John R. Hill in his book “Theft by Consent” claims that “lotteries are the most-played form of legalized gambling in the U. S.” In 1997 Americans wagered over 35 billion dollars on lotteries. That amounts to \$135 for every man, woman, and child in our country. The amount gambled yearly in the US is estimated at more than 500 billion dollars. We are told that at least 75% of all high school students have gambled. Such numbers make the practice appear respectable. Seventy-two percent of Florida's seniors calling a hotline for problem gamblers identify the lottery as the source of their problem.

### What Is Gambling?

The dictionaries and encyclopedias define gambling as: “to bet money on the outcome of a game, contest, or other event” (American Heritage Dictionary, 546).

“Gambling is the wagering of money or other valuables on the outcome of a game or other event” (Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia). “Gambling is betting on the outcome of a future event. Gamblers usually bet money or something else of value as a stake on the outcome they predict. When the outcome is settled, the winner collects the loser's stakes” (World Book Encyclopedia, 1979).

From above definitions we can see that there are three elements involved in gambling: 1. There is an uncertain event that is arbitrarily determined. 2. There is a bet or

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**Editorial**

**ARE WE GROWING?**

*By DON L. KING*

One of the greatest concerns today is growth. Growth, as individual Christians, and growth as congregations. We hear of it in conversations with others and often hear it spoken of by our preachers. Peter wrote: "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. Peter again spoke of our growth in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." Obviously, the things he mentioned in 1 Peter 2: 1,2, are prime reasons for a lack of growth. A Christian who allows malice, guile, (craftiness and deceitful speech) hypocrisies, envy and evil speaking to become a part of everyday life cannot expect to grow as a follower of Jesus. These things simply kill our growth. The sad thing is that such things are not so uncommon among church members considered as pious by some. Are you acquainted with those who harbor malice toward others? We often try to excuse such sins by simply passing it off as someone who has a hard time getting over their hard feelings after a problem with someone. However, this "problem" is a sin. In fact, all of the things mentioned by Peter in the above passages are sinful, and we need to seriously work to eliminate such from our hearts and lives. If I cannot forgive a Brother who hurts me in some way, I have a very serious spiritual problem; and I must work to solve it.

However, there are other situations that may also be harmful to us and actually stunt our growth as Christians and congregations. We may become so serious minded that we fail to enjoy the association of other Christians in some instances. Some of us grew up in congregations where brethren loved each other and happily greeted each other upon arriving at services. It was obvious that much love was there in that place. Still others were serious and so sober upon seeing one another that the atmosphere was almost sad. I have often thought of the saying used by Fred Kirbo that "one doesn't have to have a face long enough to eat oats out of a churn to be a good Christian." God's people ought to be glad to see one another, and it would appear obvious their affection

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## QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: What specific experiences may produce sexual and gender confusion in a person, and how should parents go about guarding their children from these experiences?

Response: Children are born internally, morally, and spiritually pure, thus something external must later spark immoral desires with which we all struggle as adults. Solomon said, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him." (Proverbs 22:15) Again, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell" (Proverbs 23:13-14) And, "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." (Proverbs 13:24) These passages do not condone child abuse, but they extol the wisdom and virtue of discipline. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, not immorality or wickedness, but a lack of understanding and a lack of maturity. If parents do not teach and discipline, which sometimes means corporal punishment and sometimes gentle instruction, that foolishness will eventually grow into immorality and the immature child will become a malicious adult.

A young boy who is allowed to disrespect his mother, will not develop the proper attitude toward women and is more likely to be an abusive husband in adulthood. A young girl who is constantly doted on and admired will likely grow into a woman who thinks her whiles and good looks will get her through life. A child who is given everything he or she wants will likely grow into an adult who is selfish and ill mannered. Notice that I say "likely" that is because, like the proverbial Wisdom of Solomon, these are general truths - there are certainly exceptions. And we must understand that when we talk about experiences that contribute to sexual and gender confusion. Some children go through these experiences and never struggle. Others may seem to defy all models, but every child deserves parental guidance and protection in order to give them the best possible hope.

The information I offer here comes from the most accepted psychological research and from the personal testimonies of men and women who've struggled with

sexual and gender confusion, but were able to discern the probable sources of their struggles.

Psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi attributes most struggles relating to gender and sexuality to unstable homes and poor examples from mothers and fathers. For a young man, an overbearing mother and distant father can cause him to relate more to femininity and less to masculinity, or if he does not find love and affirmation from his father, to seek it from others of the same gender in the future, but in a sexual way as his strong relational impulse becomes sexual at puberty. In many cases, female homosexuals had mothers who taught them to hate men by constantly demeaning their fathers, or fathers who abused them.

The Bible offers a solution to this problem. The Apostle Paul describes God's intention for the relationship between husbands and wives: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord .... [And] Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church..." (Eph. 5:22-25) Fathers and mothers are to show forth a pattern of self-sacrifice, care, and respect that teaches by example what sanctified love looks like. Parents are also instructed by God to "love their children" (Titus 2.4) and fathers are particularly told, "do not provoke your children to wrath (don't make them resent marriage, men, women, or authority), but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)

It seems beyond dispute that social trends discounting the distinction between men and women are also to blame. For decades, American households have raised up girls who dress like boys, cut their hair short like boys, and pursue boyish activities. Equally so, boys who dress like girls, grow their hair long like girls, and pursue girlish activities. When God our creator designed that men and women should be different in their appearance, behavior, and role (1 Cor. 11.1-16; Deut. 22.5), and we ignore those differences, we should not be surprised when people grow up confused about gender.

Another factor in sexual and gender confusion is premature and traumatic exposure to sexuality, especially through sexual abuse and pornography. In recent years, parents have become more aware of the danger of adult sexual predators, but sexual abuse comes in another, more subtle form, which is equally dangerous: namely, peer-to-peer sexual experimentation at a very young age. Many times, friends from school

or even church, who may be innocent themselves, have been exposed, through an adult, or pornography, to sexual perversion that they do not understand and they share it with other young peers when left unsupervised. Remember that children are foolish, and they do not grasp the long-term consequences of their actions. Protect your children. In my estimation, there is no good that will come from sending little children to sleep over at another family's house, or allowing other little children to sleep over in an unsupervised setting. It is asking for trouble. Allowing a child, even an early teenager to have unsupervised access to the Internet is completely irresponsible. Some parents say, "I can't shield them forever!" That is true, but for heaven's sake, shield them until they have developed the moral fortitude to make wise decisions themselves!

Instruct your children. Teach them what kinds of behavior are inappropriate, but cultivate a climate of concern and mercy so that your children feel comfortable sharing with you if something has happened to them, no matter the source.

Raising a child without sleepovers and uninhibited Internet access may seem archaic, but Christian parents have a solemn charge to guard their homes. In Deuteronomy 22.8, God commanded the Israelites, "When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet [or a railing] for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it." The same God, who wanted his people to guard against guests falling off the roof, wants to ensure that children don't fall through the cracks. There are so many variables in this wicked world, it is impossible to shield yourself or your children from all evil, but if you give them a Christian home in which to grow and learn, you give them hope for the future. Our love and prayers are for those, who for whatever reason, struggle with sexual and gender confusion; that they might receive the clarity and salvation offered by Jesus Christ.

### **GROWING A CONGREGATION**

*By DUANE PERMENTER*

What did Jesus mean when he told his apostles to go, in Matthew 28:19? We know that a person can go to his neighbor or even to a foreign land. The early church started in Jerusalem and preached locally for many years. The preaching and work involved the training

of men like Philip the evangelist who went out and established many congregations to the honor of Jesus Christ. Philip was not the only one who went out from Jerusalem preaching. Acts 8:1-4, vividly describes how that many disciples left Jerusalem and flooded the areas of Judea and Samaria with preaching. Within that first generation the known world was filled with preaching. Guess what? The church grew in great number. Brethren, we can still grow when we are all working as they did. I know that some continue working, however, as a group we are not all working like they did.

#### **The Church of the First Generation**

I have often wondered how far we have come since that first generation. The question is: Are we following the pattern for evangelism? What is it that the early church Acts 8 did before this explosive evangelistic effort? The early followers of Jesus Christ understood the need of doing the work of evangelism. While the primary function of an evangelist is to preach to the lost, his work includes much more.

Jesus told his apostles that in addition to making disciples and baptizing them, they also must teach them all things, Matthew 28:20. This means more than just a gospel meeting or even just a few studies. Listen to Paul when he wrote Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (NKJV)

Paul, a first-generation Christian is writing to a second-generation Christian who in turn was to train a third-generation Christian. This is the way God intended the church to promote His cause. Often, rather than being trained or training someone, we are busy in many things of our own interest. Each local congregation should be a college for learning the work of the Lord. Sometimes it appears that being a school of higher learning, it is the last thing we are thinking about when we teach. In fact, far too often our teaching is to fill a time slot we have been given. More about this in the future...

#### **Purpose for Church Leaders**

The apostle of the Ephesians said in 4:11,12; "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," (NKJV)

These verses teach us that leadership is put in the church

for a reason. The evangelists, elders, or teachers were put in a local church from the beginning with purpose. The Lord Jesus clearly stated that He put leaders in the church with the goal of equipping or training of the members. Like we were told in 2 Timothy 2:2 every congregation should have trained men who are able to train others. The problem is many faceted and the issue cannot be fixed with one article in the Old Paths Advocate. However, it is time for us to grow up and mature as the people of God.

We need elders, deacons, and evangelists in the church as much as we have ever needed them. What we are talking about is how God wanted the church to produce and promote the leadership in the church. Being a teacher in a local church is serious business (James 3:1). If we want to promote the future of the church, then we need to make changes. As someone said; "if we always do what we have always done, then we will always get what we have always got."

#### The Church in America is Dying

Some are saying that the church in America is dying. Friend, it does not have to be. We need to go back to the first century church and practice what they did. Yes, we can still grow in America. There are congregations around the country that are growing, and we praise God for this. Regretfully, there are many others that have died or are dying. The problem is leadership and our failure to do what was done in the first century.

The church in Jerusalem died. The church in Antioch died. Why is this? The answer is simple, they stopped doing what they were doing and as a result the congregation died. No church dies without a reason, In fact, this is true today. Far to frequent a church leader who is doing the work and building the church, is not able to pass it on or promote it into another generation. When the church leader dies often a congregation dies. However, as one looks at this spiritual death, it is a necessity to comprehend that the leadership must carry the burden of responsibility. There was a break down In leadership both past and present. One might argue that it was the leaders who followed. I believe the leaders who died did not complete their responsibility as leaders leaving spiritual posterity. If you learn nothing else from this writing, please remember this: "EVERYTHING RISES AND FALLS ON LEADERSHIP."

#### The First Century Church

What the church in Jerusalem did in the beginning was

prepare the people to promote the cause. When the time came for the persecution, they were spread and went everywhere preaching. Teddy Roosevelt once said; "A champion is not made in the ring." Nor is an elder one because we ordain him. One cannot work into the position after the ceremony. One is appointed because he has been trained and prepared and is ALREADY doing the work. The fact is, when an individual is recognized by the church as an elder he is already in the work performing as God's steward in this capacity. We cannot appoint a man and then he works into the position. We appoint him because he is already in works and life an elder.

The apostles were given the ability miraculously to train people to function in the church. Notice, that even in the age of miracles elders and evangelists were not developed over night. The disciples remained in Jerusalem for several years before elders and evangelists were developed. The training started at day one and developed daily as John Maxwell says; "Not in a day." After months and even some years of training and teaching the disciples went out. What is the point of all this? The point is, we need to be training people in our local congregations to fill these leadership roles.

How can we do that? First, learn to do the work well yourself. Second, take someone along who is willing and ready to learn. Third, let that person do it with you and further train them. Forth, send them out on their own and trust them to do the work. Fifth, the trained should train others taking someone else with them. This is a complete cycle, and this is exactly what Jesus in Matthew 28 and Paul in 2 Timothy 2 meant.

#### Every Congregation Will Grow

If we do this, what can happen? The church will grow, and it will be here tomorrow. Qualified leadership is the answer and every church should do whatever it takes to improve leadership for the Lord. John Maxwell says that everything rises and falls on leadership and the Lord Jesus Christ knew this. He put evangelists, elders, and teachers in the church with the intent of training and developing leaders. Those leaders have the obligation of training others to replace them. Let us rise and build! pdpermenter@outlook.com



## A DAY OF GOOD TIDINGS

*By RICK MARTIN*

Every day we hear about all kinds of negative things happening in our world. There are all kinds of negative things happening everywhere, in our communities, in our neighborhoods, and around the world; the injustices and the abuse; the crimes, and the murders, and the immorality. On and on we can go talking about the negative things of this world. We don't like to do that do we! We want something that is good and something that is positive. We want to think about and hear stories that lift our spirits, something that brings a smile to our face, inspiration to our hearts, and also gives us some hope for the future. Yes, we need some good news! In 2 Kings 7:9, we hear of some good news.

There is a valuable lesson we can learn from the four lepers found in the story. Especially when they said, "This is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace."

The four lepers, after finding their bounty, knew what was right and they did it. They knew it would be wrong to keep silent and realized they would be punished if they kept the good tidings to themselves. So, they went back to the city and told the good news.

Many Christians are unlike these lepers. Despite it being a day of "good news", they hold their peace. They feast on the gospel, while others die of spiritual salvation.

As Christians, we are to have the mind of Christ, Phil. 2:5. His mindset was that of seeking and saving the lost, Lk. 19:10. People who have no concern for the lost do not have the attitude of Christ. The major effort of His life and death was that of bringing people to salvation.

The church is a divine missionary enterprise. The church is to make increase of herself through the part of every member, Eph. 4:16. Each congregation has a duty and responsibility to spread the gospel of Christ. It is by the church that manifold wisdom of God is made known, Eph. 3:10.

The spread of the gospel is contingent upon faithful preaching of the word, 1 Cor. 1:21; Romans 10:14-15. If there is no preaching, there will be no conversion. Followers of Jesus Christ are to make disciples of others. We are to preach and teach the gospel with its facts, commands, and promises. Those who hear and believe will become disciples.

Benevolence, edification, fellowship, and worship are all important functions of the church, but the reason for the church existing is to save the lost.

The founder of the church wants the church to grow. He was not pleased with fishing without catching fish, Lk 5:4-11. He was not pleased with an "empty banquet table", Lk 14:15-23. He was not pleased with "sowing without reaping" Matt. 13:3-9. He was not pleased with a "fig tree without figs" Lk 13:6-9. He was not pleased with a "sheep still lost" Matt 18:11-14, "a lost coin not found", Lk 15:8-10, or "a proclamation without a response", Matt 10:14.

Because we believe Christ is the only hope for a lost and hurting world, we go into the world. The world cannot expect to gain heaven in worldly matters, promises of men, in pleasures or riches. Therefore, Christians must take the hope of the world to everyone.

Why are many not seeking the lost as they should? Why in a time of good tidings are many holding their peace?

1) For some it may be they are starving themselves. Many have experienced the joy of salvation for themselves, but because of negligence they have failed to grow and have forgotten the blessings of salvation. In a real sense, they have returned to a state of spiritual famine and have little or nothing to share with others. They are not prepared and have not spent enough time in the Word to know enough to teach. When you "get in the word, the word gets in you". Some lack the knowledge because the world has choked out the word, Matt. 13:22. Many will say they are too busy because they are more concerned with other things. Some may act so much like the world and their worldly friends that they are ashamed to mention Christ and the church.

2) Some hold their peace because of fear. Maybe they are afraid they will be asked a question they cannot answer. Maybe they are afraid that a person might get mad at them should they mention Christ. Maybe they are afraid they will be criticized or made fun of. Some are unwilling to suffer shame for the name of Christ and the cross.

3) Some may keep their peace because of indifference. Many simply do not care. They do not realize how great our salvation is, Heb. 2: 3. They are not concerned about taking the Gospel where it has not been preached.

4) Probably the major reason why many hold their

peace is because Jesus has not become their role model in conviction, love, compassion, and service. If we are going to grow up to Christ likeness, seeking the lost must be an important part of our lives. Jesus has pointed the way to usefulness for all Christians.

The lost will remain lost unless we seek them. The church will not grow unless we go. We can, and we must do something in soul-winning.

This is a day of good tidings, and we cannot hold our peace. No fake news here! We got some good news, and everybody wants to hear good news!

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wager that is deliberately chanced. 3. There is a winner and a loser. The winner gains at the expense of the loser. Anytime these three elements are present, there is gambling. On the other hand, gambling is not taking a risk. Life has risks at every turn. In fact life is full of risks. Merely crossing the street has some risk. Driving a car, participating in a sports event, all have risks. However none of them are gambling. Why? Because taking a risk does not have the three elements we have already mentioned. Buying a single stock may be risky. If the business in which I invest does well, no one loses. Furthermore there is no wager involved. Something of value is bought that may go up or down in value. Buying insurance is not gambling. In this instance something of value is purchased i.e. financial protection. The buyer and the insurance company both stand to gain. The risk is not created by buying the policy. Prizes such as winning a sweepstakes is not gambling. There is no risk created when one registers to win a prize. There is no bet or wager involved. The three elements are not present, hence no gambling. Gambling is not determined by degree or size. It is a matter of what action is taken, and not the degree. A bet can involve 50 cents or \$500 dollars. Gambler's Anonymous define gambling for the compulsive gambler as "Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or 'skill' constitutes gambling." This would include little things such as flipping for who would buy a cup of coffee. Gambling takes many forms. Some bet on horse races or dog races, others play poker, roulette or slot machines, still others play the lottery.

#### Why Gambling Is Wrong

Some might argue that since the bible does not

specifically mention or condemn gambling by name and therefore there is nothing wrong with it. The bible does not always state the conclusion that we are to draw. However God often gives us the evidence from which to draw that conclusion. An example of this is found in Luke 17: 19-22. John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not answer with a specific "yes" or "no." Instead, he worked miracles in their presence and told them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard." Based upon the evidence of His miracles it was evident that he was the Coming One. The same point can be made about gambling. There is no passage that says "thou shalt not gamble." However there are biblical principles that are violated in gambling. Hence there is sufficient evidence given to prove gambling is wrong.

#### A. Gambling is addictive.

The enslaving nature of gambling is seen in the necessity of such organizations as "Gambler's Anonymous. The crimes bred by gambling suggests that it is an addiction. From the Alabama Family Alliance, we have the following quote: "For many of these problem gamblers the source of their trouble is the lottery. Of the 40,000 calls to the Council on Compulsive Gambling national hotline in 1966, fully 52% were from adults addicted to playing the lottery." Paul said "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" 1 Cor. 6:12. Paul affirms in this passage that even a thing right within itself becomes wrong when it reaches the point of addiction. In such situations we are not in control of ourselves.

#### 2. Gambling is Covetousness.

In gambling one has the desire to gain what is not rightfully his. He seeks to win at the expense of others. Such is covetousness which, Paul says is idolatry Col. 3:5. The same apostle further declared "For the love of money is the root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" 1 Tim. 6:10.

#### 3. Gambling violates the principle of love and the golden rule.

The gambler cannot love his neighbor and practice the golden rule, while striving to take all at the loser's expense. Gambling is essentially stealing by consent just as dueling is murder by consent. In gambling one beats another out of what he does not want to give. We are taught to love our neighbor Mt. 22:39; and do unto

others as we would want them to do to us Mt. 7:12.

4. Gambling violates the principle of stewardship. We are obligated to God to be good stewards of the blessings he gives us. This is a solemn responsibility, and cannot be taken lightly. We must be diligent in handling what belongs to our master 1 Cor. 4:2. "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." In gambling the odds are against winning. In fact it is estimated that in the typical state lottery, the odds of picking the right numbers are one in 12 to 14 million. Not very good odds. Certainly not a good investment. 1 Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

5. Gambling violates the legitimate means of transfer of money or property.

There are three legitimate ways in which the transfer of money or goods takes place.

(a) Labor involves money earned and paid for effort or work that has been given.

(b) Exchange is where a commodity is exchanged for something of value. This could consist of money or other goods. Buying and selling involves exchange.

(c) A gift may be money or something of value that is given without any expectation of return. Gifts come in the form of an inheritance, prize, etc. Gambling does not involve a gift, exchange or labor, hence cannot qualify as a legitimate way to transfer money or property.

Gambling may be legal, but it is wrong. It creates untold misery and problems and in no way can be considered a boon to society.

#### 1. Crime To Support The Addiction.

Many gamblers who never thought of committing a crime have turned to all types of criminal activity to support their addiction to gambling.

According to research by the Compulsive Gambling Center in Baltimore, at least two-thirds of compulsive gamblers engage in criminal activity to finance their addiction, including check forgery, tax evasion, embezzlement, bookmaking, prostitution, selling drugs, and fencing stolen goods. (Theft by Consent by John R. Hill)

#### 2. Suicide.

The probability of attempting suicide is far greater among gamblers than the general population.

General--1.1, Gamblers 13 percent.

3. The general crime rate is up in gambling areas.

Las Vegas had the highest crime rate per capita in the nation in a recent year. In 1994 it had five times the violent crimes as it was able to solve.

Atlantic City officials claim that two-thirds of all its crimes are gambling related.

In Mississippi bank robberies have increased fourfold along the river since 1992.

Tunica has reported a 500 percent increase in drunk driving.

With the knowledge of what gambling is and the principles that it violates, it is easy to see why it is wrong.

*ARE WE GROWING .... continued from page two*

would show when they chanced to meet where ever that might be.

Recently, I happened to be reading an article by the well-known N.B. Hardeman, born in 1874. He was writing about the incident in the boyhood life of Jesus told by Luke in Luke 2: 42- 52. Toward the end of the writing he mentioned the danger of our becoming too conscious of styles and customs of the day. He pointed out that just as the mother of Jesus did when she finally noticed that her 12-year-old boy was not with them on the journey home from Jerusalem, she went back to Jerusalem to find him since that is where she had last seen him. We should do the same. I was impressed by a point he made in that regard. He said, "Friends, if you and I get to heaven, let me tell you one thing. It will not be by virtue of the fact that we catered to the world, it will not be because we have our garments cut according to certain fashion plates, it will not be because of the fact that we are drilled and tutored in all manner of conduct and social demands; but it will be because of the fact that we love the Lord Jesus Christ to that extent that we are interested enough and are nonpartisan enough and unbiased and unprejudiced enough to cut loose from all things characteristic of humanity's doings and just simply fall down humbly at the feet of the Savior and say, 'Lord speak; let me hear; command, I will obey;' and we must put our hand in the palm of His, and regardless of what the world says with the Bible as our guide and Christ as our leader,



we must commence to practice and live the principles of old-time religion. If we will do that and be faithful unto death, God Almighty will touch us gently at last and call us into Joys supreme and mansions sublime in fairer fields and brighter climes.”

He later pointed out that we need to cut loose from and get rid of all our cold formalities and stop looking for Christ among worldly customs because that is not where we can find Him. The worldly show of modern religion, with its pomp and ceremony must be put away.

What to do? Leave all of the things that appeal to the pride of life, etc. and as Mary did, go back to Jerusalem, so to speak. It is this humble people we need to be in our modern times. Our only concern should be to follow that which is written in the Book. We must not be embarrassed to simply be followers of Christ, no more and no less. It is no wonder congregations cease to grow when their concern for what is written begins to be eclipsed by modern expectations of those in the world. Some of us can recall the country people who came to services in overalls and plain dresses but who sang their hearts out in the worship. Nothing came before the church in their hearts and lives.

Think on these things. DLK

## Our Departed

CRYER - Bennie Truman Cryer was born in Milam County, Texas, September 12, 1931 to Luther T. and Stella Cryer. He was baptized in 1943 during a meeting conducted by Paul Nichols. Brother Edwin Morris performed the wedding for Bennie and Joann, his loving wife of 65 years, in a double wedding with Joann's sister and her husband. Bennie is survived by Joann, their son Jeff (Stacy) of Yuba City, daughter Calisse of Denver, Colorado, four grandchildren, one great-grandchild, nieces, nephews, and is remembered fondly by a host of friends around the world. Bennie departed this life April 10, 2018 at the age of 86.

Bennie's life in service to God was honored with last month's issue of the Old Paths Advocate, but I wanted to say a few words about his memorial.

Approximately 300 gathered for a standing-room only service in his honor on April 17, 2018 at the Ullrey Funeral Home in Yuba City. This is a familiar place

for all in the area and where Bennie has preached and attended countless services in the 60 years he has been in the area. Brian Elliott, a great-nephew, led the group in songs, How Great Thou Art, Some Day, and I'm One Day Nearer Home. Greg Cardoza from Manteca read the obituary and shared some memories of their many hours together as Greg studied with Bennie. Don King of Livermore recounted their travels to many places in the world as very special memories and also offered a prayer. I read a tribute from Alan Bonifay who was in Africa at the time of the funeral. Jerry Cutter, from Oklahoma City shared his love for the family at the graveside that is in Sutter, CA, in the shadow of the Sutter Buttes. Such beautiful surroundings are a reminder to look to God. As the Psalmist said: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalms 121:1-2). I was very honored to be asked to conduct the service for Bennie, a dear friend and brother. - Greg Gay

BALDWIN - Ruthie (Nell) Finto Baldwin, 87, of Blum, Texas, passed away April 15, 2018. Nell was born in Lamesa, Texas, on December 2, 1930, to Orbra James and Mary Myrtle Finto. At 16, she married Emmett Olen ('Jay') Baldwin on September 6, 1947 (Jim Crouch, who presided over Nell's funeral, was the grandson of Melvin Crouch, best man at Nell and Jay's wedding). Less than six years later, she was the mother of three. Over the years, she and Jay adopted three brothers and fostered 12 children, most of them deaf and/or blind, and some with additional special needs.

Nell's myriad interests included sewing (she began sewing at age 4!), genealogy, sign language, healthy cooking, and quilting (she was a member of the nowdefunct Blum quilting group formed during WWII).

Besides taking care of her family, Nell's primary focus was studying the Bible. She was baptized at 15 in the river in San Antonio by Fred Kirbo; because of a small technicality (not detailed in her genealogy records), she was baptized again a few years later in San Pablo Bay in California by Bennie Cryer. She was always eager - and well-prepared! - for a discussion of anything related to the Bible. She and Jay welcomed all to their home-based church of Christ.

Nell is survived by a daughter, Cheri Conner, sons Randell (Helen) Baldwin, William Baldwin (Jana), Brent Baldwin (Pam), and Nathan (Sonia) Herndon; 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren; daughters-in-law, Cindy Dreiling and Kathi Baldwin; sisters,

Betty Bentsch and Lyn Carter; sisters-in-law, Barbara Baldwin and Gladys Finto. Nell is preceded in death by her husband, Emmett ('Jay') Baldwin; son, Steven Baldwin; son-in-law, Larry Conner; grandson, Jeffrey Baldwin; brother, James Finto; and brothers-in-law, Leo Baldwin and George Bentsch.

OWENS - Our dear sister in Christ, Lucy "Sis" Owens of West Chester, Ohio passed from this life March 22, 2018 surrounded by her loving family. Sis leaves a void in their lives and the lives of many after a lifetime of service. She was born in Lockland, OH and her family soon moved to a rural farming community in Rockcastle, Kentucky. Because her mother was sickly, it fell to her to care for the other children and became known as "Sis," a name carried throughout her life, the only name by which many people in and out of the church knew her. Sister Owens was reared in an old time Baptist Church. She was courted by and married Russell Owens. About three years later, she heard the gospel and was baptized into Christ (the congregation at Chestnut Ridge near Mr. Vernon, KY). Early in the fifties the family sought work in Cincinnati (there was no loyal church there). Sister Owens was instrumental in helping to plant the church in the Cincinnati area. She heard that a brother Flem Parriot was going to have a service on Friday night in a little barn behind his house in the Woodlawn community. She took her children, visiting mother-in-law and assembled with brother Parriot and Orville Barnes. Her husband Russell worked the evening shift, so on the Lord's Day he, along with some others met and confessed faults to one another. (Later E. H. Miller was called to set things in order). The life of Sister Owens speaks for itself. Until her grievous sickness, you could easily count the times she missed services on one hand. Her dedication to God and His word stand as an example to all. Even lying in the hospital during her last days, she asked, "Is this Sunday?" When told it was not, she said, "Good, I didn't want to miss church." Sister Owens was of the most hospitable people the world has known. There is no telling how many preachers and their families she kept during gospel meetings that last 10, 12 or even 15 days. I was often refreshed in their home and others of my family as well. I miss our early morning phone calls when she would talk of the church, her children and family, and offer words of encouragement. She was to me and others, one of the kind mothers Jesus said we would gain in this life. Her sweet smile and the sound of her voice still linger. She has lodged strangers and relieved the saints. Sister Owens was a well kept person, yet modest in every way. If a visitor came by surprise, she did not need to change clothes to be modest. Surely she will be missed by her neighbors and members of the

church; but most of all by her family. Sis Owens was a loving wife, a devoted mother, a caring grandmother, a dear friend and above all a servant of Jesus Christ - a faithful Christian. She is the cherished mother of Barney Owens (his wife - Bea) and Glenda Owens, her sister Clara Jones, as well as her siblings who have passed on - Earnest Price, Harold Price, Shannon Meece and Betsy Blanton. She is grandmother of six, great-grandmother to twelve, and great-great grandmother to three. Her seat is empty and she will be sorely missed. Her remains have been tenderly lain by those of her dear husband Russell; but, we do not grieve as others, for we hope to see them again on the farther shore. May our heavenly Father comfort and keep the many who mourn and grieve through His precious word. - William St. John

## Field Reports

Greg Gay, 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628, 916-804-3787, gregorypgay@gmail.com, May 12, 2018.

Since last report we have continued our work at 64th St., Sacramento in addition to preaching appointments in California in Oakdale, Redding, Stockton, and Yuba City.

In March I was honored to be part of the Mid-MO Study hosted by the Rice Road, Columbia, MO congregation and to stay after the study to preach for them on Sunday as well. The congregation does a great job hosting the study. Many help out with meals and providing places to stay even with busy work schedules and having young children in school. I very much enjoyed the hospitality of Mahlon and Lydia Miller while there.

In April, Cassie and I were in Kauai for a couple of weeks and island-hopped to Oahu to worship with the Waipahu, Hawaii congregation. I was honored to be asked to preach for them on the Sundays we were there plus one Saturday night. The congregation's efforts brought six visitors to the service Saturday night with some attending again the next day. We always enjoy our time with the congregation and appreciate all the fine work being done there. We were glad to stay with Philip and Amie Permenter. I am sorry we were not able to spend time with Duane and Laurie since they were on the mainland while we were in Hawaii.

We were at Placerville, California on November 12 to assist the congregation in ordaining Darrell Newman and Don Davis as Elders. I was honored to be asked

to be a part of the process. As we know, this wonderful part of God's plan for the church happens far too rarely. I was in Spokane, Washington November 22 – 25 for the 65th annual Northwest Thanksgiving Meeting. I appreciate all the work that the Juergen Deutsch (JD) and the rest of the congregation did in preparing for and hosting the meeting. I enjoyed spending time with Michael Bolton and family who made the 2 plus hour one way drive from Kennewick three days of the meeting. Area preaching appointments this month include Clovis, Yuba City, and Redding, plus our work continues at 64th. St. in Sacramento, for which we are thankful.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, May 2 - Besides laboring with the Jamesville congregation, I have been preaching at various places as opportunity affords itself. I've preached at Joplin (Leawood Village), Columbia (the annual preacher's study), Montreal, all of which are in Missouri, and also Cleburne, TX. With a long and hard winter behind us, we are now looking forward to springtime and summer. I am scheduled to conduct the following meetings - July 11-15 at Claxton, MO, Aug. 5-12 at Hoyte, TX (along with my brother, Jerry), Sept. 19-23 at Grapevine, TX, and Oct. 5-7 at Edmond, OK. If you live near any of these congregations, please come and help support the preaching of the gospel. It would be wonderful to have you with us! It's hard to believe, but we moved to the Springfield area 20 years ago this July, with 15 of those years being at Jamesville, and we have never regretted our move to this beautiful part of the country. After all, the church in this area is strong with several nearby congregations. Incidentally, the annual 4th of July meeting here in Springfield will soon occur, hosted by the Mission Hills congregation, and many brethren from different parts of our nation (and perhaps other countries) will be in attendance. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you there. On a personal note, I was saddened to hear of Bennie Cryer's death, a man I greatly admired for his devotion throughout the years to evangelism, and I would like to send my condolences to his family. Brethren, time is moving on for all of us. Let's work harder than ever before to save lost souls.

Don L King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, May 8, old paths@juno.com - As you all have noticed, the last issue was a special one in honor of our beloved Brother Bennie Cryer, an editor of this journal for many years. We hope it was appreciated by all. We look forward to the Summer time and several meetings we have booked. If I am not mistaken we are to be in

Weatherford, TX, Ozark, MO, and Early Town, AL soon. My problems with speech have gone, we hope for good, and we look forward to preaching again. Also look forward to a few days at the Springfield, MO 4th of July meeting as well. The church at home is doing well. We are at peace, sweet peace! This past year has seen a number of baptisms here for which we give thanks to God the Father. Our teachers are improving and what a joy to see their improvement almost every time. We appreciate visitors from the community from time to time and pray that may continue. Preachers, we need your reports and articles each month by the 15th at the latest. May I say just a word regarding reports, please? A field report is just that. It is brief and the purpose is to tell only where you have been recently, where you go next and perhaps even later. You really don't have the room to delve into Bible teaching, particularly. Save that for an article, please. Plan your report to require only about 2 to 3 inches of space in the paper. People will be much more likely to read your entire report if it is kept brief. If it is long, it may not be read at all by many. It takes only a very few minutes to send a report and try to do so every month. That will help you keep them brief. Lord bless us all.

Frank Brancato 12718 Larkin Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93312, May 9, 2018 email: frankbrancato@sbcglobal.net - Since last reporting, and after returning from the Philippines, had the pleasure of holding the annual Young People's Meeting in OKC with Cullen Smith. Cullen is one of my dearest friends, and I appreciate all that he does for the cause of Christ. We enjoyed large crowds at the meeting, and we pray that we were able to accomplish some lasting good. I also had the privilege of holding a meeting at the Leawood Village Congregation in Joplin MO. The meeting was well attended by local congregations, preachers, and visitors from the community. We did not see any visible results, but we pray that the Gospel was planted in some good and honest hearts, and that all were edified and encouraged. I am also happy to report that the work here locally in Bakersfield continues to move in a positive direction. Over the last 3 months, we have had 2 more baptisms and we give God the glory. We are still getting some leads from the TV program, but the majority of our visitors are from personal contacts. I continue to have weekly private bible studies with new prospects, and pray that in the near future they will obey the gospel. If the Lord wills my upcoming meeting schedule will be as follows: Brookhaven MS (July 15-22), Strong AR (August 1-5), Kansas City MO (October 31 - November 4), and Arlington Texas (November 14-18). May God continue to bless His faithful everywhere!

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## WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

## THE POSITIVE POWER OF THE WORD "NO!"

By JERRY DICKINSON

Back in the 1980's First Lady Nancy Reagan started an initiative to stop drug use, especially among young people, she called, "Just say no!" Many pundits scoffed at her program suggesting that it is ridiculous to think that just by telling young people to say no the drug problem would be solved. At the time, I even believed it preposterous that such a simple plan as just saying no could help some young person resist the temptation of going along with their friends and trying drugs. The older I get, however, the more I realize the positive power of the word "No". The word "no" by definition, of course, is negative, but there is real positive power in just saying no. The problem is you have to say no and really mean it! Joseph is a superb example of the power of saying no. His refusal demonstrates how to say no and really mean it and also the positive power that results from persistent resistance to temptation.

"But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' So it was that she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her." (Genesis 39:8-10) Please note six ways in which Joseph was able to say no and really mean it.

1. This is not right! Joseph simply tells her she is another man's wife. Everything in the house had been put under his control by Potiphar except her! It is just not right for me to be with another man's wife. There is positive power in recognizing that some things are just not right. In spite of our culture that declares nothing right, or wrong, and everything is contingent on circumstances (situation ethics) there are some things that are still not right to people who recognize God's unchangeable standard.

2. It would be sin! Joseph goes a step further than declaring her proposition is not right - it would also be sin. "There is not just you and me involved," he tells her, "There is also God and His law to be considered." Sin? Yes, we still believe that sin is a transgression of God's law just as Joseph did thousands of years ago.

3. It is wickedness! Notice Joseph characterizes her proposal as not only sin, but wickedness. Joseph was looking at the situation from God's perspective. Sometimes we are so close to sin and so inundated by immorality in our culture that even though we know intellectually that something is sinful and violates God's law we are desensitized to the fact that in God's eyes it is evil and in Joseph's words, "wickedness". Joseph had the power to resist her advances because he could see things from God's perspective, or if you will, through God's eyes.

4. He refused - again and again! Notice that the Bible says she spoke to Joseph, "day by day" indicating that she did not give up after his first refusal. She kept tempting him over and over, but Joseph said no as many times as she propositioned him. The Devil doesn't give up! After Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, the Bible says Satan departed from him, "for a season". Even our Savior was tempted over and over again by Satan, but he resisted every time. After you have said no to the Devil and the world, get ready to say no again and again. There is power in the word "no", but we have to be prepared to say no with persistence and constancy.

5. He avoided her! The record says that not only did Joseph say no but he avoided being with her. If she was in the living room, Joseph went into the kitchen. If she came into the kitchen he would move to another room in the house to do his work. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 6:18, "Flee fornication". Then to young Timothy he wrote, "Flee youthful lusts which war against the soul." (2 Timothy 2:22) Sometimes young folks tell me that it is their friends that get them into trouble by pestering them until they give in and do something they know is wrong. This may be a bitter pill to swallow, but if your friends are the problem - run from them! They are not really your friends anyway if they are trying to get you to violate your conscience. Do not think you are strong enough to just stand there and resist friends and temptation. Joseph knew he was not - he avoided her.

6. Run! As just emphasized you and I are not as strong as we think we are. Flee the scene and situation! One day Potiphar's wife caught Joseph all alone in the house, hemmed him in, grabbed his coat and would not let go, and repeated her wicked proposal. Somehow Joseph wriggled out of his coat and her grasp and ran for his life. Of course, there is nothing more dangerous than a woman spurned, so when Potiphar came home she accused Joseph of attacking her and showed him the coat to prove it. Now Potiphar knew the character of Joseph - and he undoubtedly knew the character of his wife. He may have even seen his wife casting longing eyes for Joseph. Potiphar knew what was going on. However, he felt compelled to take the side of his wife over his slave and Joseph is thrown in jail. But watch! Joseph blooms and blossoms where he lands and eventually becomes the head trustee in the jail. Finally, he interprets Pharaoh's dreams and becomes Prime Minister of Egypt. God was with Joseph through all his trials and because Joseph said "no" to temptation after temptation, God used him to save his family and preserve a line for the coming of the Messiah. Oh, the positive power of the word "No!"

You're starting my boy on life's journey, Along the grand highway of life.

You'll meet with a thousand temptations - Each city with evil is rife.

This world is a stage of excitement - There's danger wherever you go;

But if you are tempted in weakness, Have courage, my boy, to say NO!

And when by false friends you are tempted, The taste of the wine cup to know,

With firmness, with patience, and kindness,

Have courage, my boy, to say No! No! A thousand times No!