

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. 10

BELIEF AND...

BY GREG GAY

Many denominations believe and practice that faith alone is necessary for salvation.

Martin Luther is given credit for this so-called discovery. Paul F. Pavao writes: “Martin Luther wrote those words [Sola fide (Faith Alone)] in the margin of his Bible as a young Augustinian monk. Later he used those words... in his translation of the New Testament” (<http://www.christian-history.org/sola-fide.htm>).

The passage where he added the word “alone” is in the verse, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). His change was “that a man is justified by faith alone...”

Luther’s view of the passage was not without criticism in his day. He responded to his critics in his 1530 work, *An Open Letter on Translating*: “I know very well that in Romans 3 the word *solum* is not in the Greek or Latin text the papists did not have to teach me that. It is fact that the letters *s-o-l-a* are not there. And these blockheads stare at them like cows at a new gate, while at the same time they do not recognize that it conveys the sense of the text -- if the translation is to be clear and vigorous, it belongs there” (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.htm>).

It appears Luther got caught inserting his own doctrinal bias into what was represented to be an unbiased translation of God’s word. A desire to make a translation “clear and vigorous” is not the same as a desire to make a translation correct.

Lang offers a defense of Luther’s addition to the scriptures: “Luther’s addition of alone... is defended by Tholuck (the Nuremberg edition of the Bible of 1483 also reads, only by faith). Meyer... remarks: It does not belong to the translation, but it is justified by the context as an explanation” (<http://www.>

studylight.org/commentaries/lcc/romans-3.html#21).

Centuries later, the religious world is still dealing with the effects of the mistranslation and misunderstanding of this important topic. As a more modern example, the site Baptist Distinctives records: “Although the Bible uses different word pictures to describe how Jesus provides salvation for lost humanity, in each case the message is clear: Salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Some denominations have included such things as baptism, church membership, good works or sacraments as necessary for salvation. Baptists have insisted that salvation comes only by faith in God’s grace gift of Jesus” (<https://www.baptistdistinctives.org/resources/articles/salvation-by-grace-through-faith-alone/>).

The way most denominations today complete the words of our title, “Belief and...” is to insist that salvation is obtained through faith and by praying the “Sinner’s Prayer.”

In reviewing the origin of the Sinner’s Prayer, Staton reports C.S. Lewis “used the term ‘great cataract of nonsense’ to describe how people use a modern idea to construe Bible theology. One such example, perhaps the best example, is a conversion method called the Sinner’s Prayer. It is more popularly known as the Four Spiritual Laws. Lewis used this term to describe what happens when someone looks backward at the Bible based only on what he or she has known...As it is, a novel technique popularized through recent revivals has replaced the biblically sound practice.”

Staton continues, “Today, hundreds of millions hold to a belief system and salvation practice that no one had ever held until relatively recently. The notion that one can pray Jesus into his or her heart and that baptism is merely an outward sign are actually late developments. The prayer itself dates to the Billy Sunday era; however, the basis for talking in prayer for salvation goes back a few hundred years” (Where Did We Get The Sinner’s Prayer? <http://www.s8int.com/sinnersprayer.html>).

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Editorial

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

By DON L. KING

Let's notice together some thoughts generated by a passage in James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It appears that James could have a hypocritical person in mind here. Could it be that he may have been considering the person who appears to live according to the Bible and does many of those things that would thus identify him, but inwardly is not an undefiled person? That is what a hypocrite is. Such a person appears to be one thing while actually he is quite the opposite. However, James informs God's people that we are to keep ourselves "unspotted" from the world. In plain English, to stay free of sin.

There are many ways to allow oneself to become spotted with the sins of the world. One thing that remains a huge worry to many is that some of the Lord's people are increasingly becoming more like the world around them. It was once unusual to hear of a member of the church who would dabble in gambling, drinking, dancing, or the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians chapter five, but it isn't as rare as it once was. Today, church members do things and go places some never have. Some dress in ways once unheard of among the Lord's people. The language of a few also indicates some soil of the world has spotted us. Whatever you may be thinking right now, it is plain that we have drifted away from some of the things we were once known for. Bible knowledge is less than it should be as well. In short, we were once different, separate, if you please; but frankly, less so in 2016. We ought to be ashamed of that being the case.

We recall Homer A. Gay once remarking that it might not be so difficult to convert the world, if only they could see in us a reason to change their own lives. Wayne McKamie once said he didn't mind the denominations living in bigger houses, driving more expensive cars, making more money than the Lord's people, but he sure hated to realize they were also living better lives than our people. Amen to that! Personal purity from worldliness is absolutely a must. We just have to live better lives than the world around us. Unless we do, we will continue to have a difficult time converting those of the world. People sometimes say, "It's hard to get folks to come to church now days, but what can we do?" One thing we can try is to live better lives than the world.

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QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: What is adultery? Is it a state or an act? What is the difference in committing adultery and living in adultery?

Answer: Thayer defines adultery “to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife, to commit adultery with...” Vine says “unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another.” In Mt. 19:9 the woman divorced for fornication cannot remarry. If she remarries, she commits adultery. Fornication is a broader term than adultery, and may be defined as illicit sexual intercourse in general. Fornication may be committed between two non-married people, or a married person with a non-married person. Hence all adultery is fornication but all fornication is not adultery. Is adultery a state or an act? In John 8:4 “they said unto Him, “Teacher this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.” It is important to note that adultery is something that is committed. In Mt. 5:32 and 19:9 adultery is treated as a marital condition. In this verse Jesus says that one who marries a put away woman commits adultery. The marriage here considered may be legal by the law of the land, but Jesus pronounces it as sinful. In Col. 3:5 we read “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” The idea of these verses is that the people under consideration had actually given themselves over to the conduct condemned to the point that it became a way of life for them. One does not live, in adultery in the sense that the individual is continually engaged in the forbidden action. However since the act continues to reoccur it is here spoken of as living in the sin under consideration. What then is the primary difference in committing and living in adultery? First of all it is possible for a person to commit adultery only one time. Any person who has sexual relations with the spouse of another may realize what they have done is wrong and determine that they will repent of that act and never do it again. On the other hand one may marry when they have no scriptural right to do so. Such a marriage represents an adulterous union. So long as they remain in that union they are guilty of adultery and in the sense in which Paul used the term in Col. 3:5, they are living in adultery i.e. they persist in a state where adultery is being committed.

Question: What is a church divorce?

Answer: Until the recent past most religious organizations have closed their eyes to various types of divorce rituals. Of late, however, the United Methodist Church, among others, (and I quote) “have started experimenting with sensitive divorce services that emphasize a continuance of love and friendship between the divorced couple and their children while recognizing that in the eyes of God neither party need to feel guilt or remorse about their past.” This, of course, is totally without scriptural foundation. The implication is that divorce for any cause is acceptable and there should be no guilt felt by either party. Implied is that the church (denomination) both recognizes and sanctions the divorce. While churches of Christ in general, so far as I now, have never adopted such a practice, there should be grave concern on the part of everyone at the number of divorces occurring today among those who claim to belong to Christ. Mt. 19:9 and 5:32 clearly limit divorce for one cause and one cause only. To stretch or ignore these passages is to tamper with God’s word. (Send all questions to Ronny Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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DANCING

By BRANDON STEPHENS

Each school year, especially during prom and homecoming, school-aged Christians and Christian parents are faced with a decision. While their peers look forward to the prom and homecoming dances with preparation and great anticipation, many Christians wonder, “Should I participate in dancing?”

There was a time when sound preaching on moral issues left young saints and godly parents with a clear answer to this question. However, when is the last time you heard a sermon about dancing? It is no surprise that the silence on this topic has led to many of God’s people questioning the warnings of the past or openly disagreeing with preachers who oppose this activity.

The Bible and Dancing

“Didn’t godly people dance in the bible?” is the question asked by many people, some of whom are entirely sincere. While there are biblical accounts which show godly men and women dancing, the serious and sincere student of God’s word will easily notice the difference between the dancing in these scriptures and modern couples dancing.

In Exodus 15, we see godly women celebrating after Israel crossed the Red Sea. Exodus 15:20 pictures all of the women following Miriam “with timbrels and dances.” In 1 Samuel 18:6, Israelite women came out to meet David and Saul after a victorious battle against the Philistines. The bible says that they came out “with singing and dancing.” In 2 Samuel 6, David rejoiced as the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem. Verse 15 says that in an outward expression of joy David “danced before the Lord with all his might.” 2 Samuel 6:16 pictures David “leaping and whirling.”

It is important to note what we do not see in these passages. We do not see dancing practiced for mere social reasons. We do not see men dancing with women. We do not see dancing laced with sensuality, and lust-provoking movements. Instead, these dances (like the one also mentioned in Luke 15:25) are expressions of exuberance and rejoicing. To attempt to use these biblical accounts in order to justify the dancing practiced at homecoming, the prom or other social events is about as erroneous as to trying to justify social drinking with Paul’s words to Timothy, “Drink a little wine for your stomach’s sake.” It just does not fit.

It is a historical fact that couples dancing did not happen in bible times. Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible says this about Dancing:

While the mode of dancing is not known in detail, it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together; and there is no real evidence that they ever did. Social amusement was hardly a major purpose of dancing, and the modern method of dancing by couples was unknown” (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible, Vol. 2, p. 12).

Hastings Bible Dictionary says:

“Social dancing, as we now understand it, was almost, if not altogether, unknown in ancient times” (Hastings Bible Dictionary, p. 550).

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says this about dancing in bible times:

“Women seemed generally to have danced by themselves... Of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there is no trace” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 1170).

Based on the above quotes, one cannot expect to find an approved example of couples dancing in the scriptures. The only kind of dancing in the bible that is similar to modern dancing is the kind that took place when the young woman, Herodias, danced before King Herod in Matthew 14. That was a lust-producing dance that was abhorred by God and godly people. It was a violation of the scriptures. I believe that one can say the same about modern couples dancing.

Does the Bible Condemn Couples Dancing?

Having noticed that the bible provides no justification for couples dancing, the next question people ask is, “Does the bible condemn it?” In answering this question, we must remember that not all sinful activities are explicitly prohibited. Instead, God gives us principles which allow us to easily conclude that certain activities violate His will. For example, there is no passage that explicitly forbids me from snorting cocaine up my nose or shooting heroine into my veins, but these practices are wrong because they violate God’s general teaching about sobriety and addiction (1 Thessalonians 5:8, 1 Corinthians 6:12).

Likewise, while there is no bible passage explicitly forbidding us from couples dancing, there are divine biblical principles that clearly prohibit the practice. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul lists the “lusts of the flesh.” Among this group of sins he mentions the sin of lewdness or lasciviousness, and says that those who practice this sin—and the others mentioned—“will not inherit the kingdom of God.” So what is lewdness or

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A GENERATION OF JONAH'S (PART ONE)

By BART SHAW

The story of Jonah and his ordeal in the belly of a titanic fish is a childhood favorite. However, sometimes, lost among the cartoons, cloth books, and plush toys is the fact that Jonah's story of unrepentant rebellion ominously foreshadows the foremost event in the history of the world: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and the eventual rejection of the Christ by the Jewish nation.

How do we know this? The Lord Himself clearly and unmistakably stated it was so and uses the story of Jonah as a backdrop for a discussion of the unpardonable sin—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Consider the record of the gospel of Matthew chapter 12. On this day Jesus was approached by a group of skeptical Pharisees who characterized Jesus' ability to perform miracles as the work of devilry:

"Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." (Matt. 12:24).

Jesus then declared to them:

"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come". (Matt. 12:31- 32).

What does this mean? What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? The truth is very simple: The person who rejects the word of God, given by the Holy Spirit, has no other path to salvation. If God speaks a word, and that word is rejected and refused, there is no alternative word to receive. Most importantly, considering the context of this passage of scripture, rejecting Jesus as a devil and continuing to look for another savior is unpardonable. These very Pharisees stood guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit by their rejection of the Christ.

Jesus uses Jonah as context for a probing analysis of the Pharisees' sin. Who ran away from God's presence (in a fit of rage) and was so rash as to advise sailors that they cast him into the sea? Who after 3 days at fathom's depth petulantly and tepidly preached a five word gospel he desperately hoped would not be obeyed? Who at the close of the book tells God that he has a right to be angry, even unto death? That prophet was of course, Jonah.

Although Jonah is admired as a saint by some Christian denominations, he stands as a prime representative of the attitude of spurning God's oracles. Just as the Pharisees decided that the living and breathing Word (personified in Jesus Christ) was anathema and repugnant, so too Jonah decided that God's word was an abomination and repellent.

Jonah embodies the spirit of insurrection. Like Cain before him, Jonah understood the command of the Almighty but found it odious, vile, and offensive. Cain chose to murder his obedient pious brother, and Jonah sought divine genocide to wipe out his repentant Ninevite brethren.

Jesus now points out that a person's words reveal his inner person;

"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things". (Matt 12:34-35).

Jonah is the perfect example of what the Lord is teaching. Jonah's words bear witness against him. How can a man be so brash to tell God that He is wrong? Jonah shakes his pitiful, irate fist in God's face. He persists in contention with His Creator and reveals the 'evil treasure that is in his heart :

"Then God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (Jonah 4:9)

Jonah, the anti-hero, will not take the course charted by other legendary believers. He refuses to be a Noah and patiently preach to an ungodly world, he will not be an Abraham and negotiate with God for deliverance of Sodom, he will not be a Moses and intercede with God for the calf venerating Hebrews, and he will not be a knee-bent Daniel who pleads with God to restore the Jews to their land. Jonah rather seeks the destruction of a people. As Jesus says, the words of the mouth make manifest the heart.

Jonah is the prototype of the first century Pharisee who speaks against the Holy Spirit by rejecting God's chosen Messiah. The Word of God made flesh was standing in front of these brash arrogant Pharisees and yet, they emulate their ancestor Jonah in angrily refusing to hear God.

Confronted with this sobering eternal truth, the Jews change tactics and request a sign:

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BELIEF AND continued from page one

After the era of Billy Sunday, who died in 1935, the enormously popular Billy Graham, preached across all denominational lines to stadium-sized crowds always ending his sermons encouraging all to pray the sinners prayer for salvation. His Association cites the Four Spiritual Laws, mentioned above, for knowledge of how to be saved and is the source of the following sinner's prayer: "Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen" (2016 Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, <http://peacewithgod.net/>).

Even though these were and are sincerely held beliefs, when "faith only" and praying the "sinner's prayer" are compared with the Bible, they fall far short of what God requires all to do to be saved.

It is certainly true that faith is essential to a correct relationship with God. Faith is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The Bible says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

One of the best known and loved verses in the Bible also mentions the importance of belief in God: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Faith is seen by many as a direct action of the Holy Spirit on the heart of selected individuals. This false view comes from a misunderstanding of this and other passages: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Adam Clarke comments on this passage: "But it may be asked: Is not faith the gift of God? Yes, as to the grace by which it is produced; but the grace or power to believe, and the act of believing, are two different things. Without the grace or power to believe no man ever did or can believe; but with that power the act of faith is a man's own. God never believes for any man, no more than he repents for him: the penitent, through this grace enabling him, believes for himself: nor does he believe necessarily, or impulsively when he has

that power; the power to believe may be present long before it is exercised, else, why the solemn warnings with which we meet every where in the word of God, and threatenings against those who do not believe? Is not this a proof that such persons have the power but do not use it? They believe not, and therefore are not established. This, therefore, is the true state of the case: God gives the power, man uses the power thus given, and brings glory to God: without the power no man can believe; with it, any man may" (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/ephesians/2.htm>).

B. W. Johnson comments on the phrase, "It is the gift of God:" "The salvation is not due to ourselves, but is God's gift. The grammatical construction of the Greek does not allow us to make faith the subject of the last clause. It is not faith, but salvation through the faith, which is the gift of God" (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pnt/ephesians/2.htm>).

Since the origin of our faith is not miraculous, how then are we to obtain it? The Bible declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). This means the ability to have faith awaits all who will hear and make the decision to believe the word of God. Since it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6) we can conclude no one who rejects the word of God will ever have the faith that saves their soul.

The issue remains, must faith alone be all by which mankind can be saved? Let us return to our original verse that mentioned belief. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

In Jesus' statement, he used the word, "and" to separate the requirements of belief (or faith), and baptism. An online dictionary describes the word "and" as a conjunction "used to connect words of the same part of speech, clauses, or sentences that are to be taken jointly" with the example of "bread and butter."

If someone asks their restaurant server for "bread and butter," what do they expect? They expect both to be delivered. If a plate with only bread or only butter is served, we would get the attention of our server to correct their error. In such examples, we easily understand the word "and" gives equal weight to both items. Neither would anyone expect a different item to satisfactorily stand in place of something that was requested. A slice of bread and a fork is not the same as bread and butter. Similarly, faith and praying the

sinner's prayer is not at all the same as what Jesus commanded: faith and baptism.

For another example, consider the statement: "If you clear off the table and wash the dishes I will give you a dollar." I doubt that even a child would expect the dollar after only piling the dishes in the sink. They would know there is more required in order to receive the promised reward.

In Jesus' own words, he proclaims faith as essential, but he is not saying that faith alone will save. Whatever is tied to the word faith by the word "and" is equally necessary in order to be saved. There are several such phrases in the New Testament, all of which must be understood so we know how to obey the gospel and be saved.

In future installments, we will examine additional requirements of salvation. Next planned is an article, "Repent and...." 1820 Casterbridge Dr., Roseville, CA 95747 papagreg@aol.com

DANCING continued from page four

lasciviousness? The Free Online Dictionary defines "lasciviousness" as "exciting sexual desires; salacious." Anything which excites unlawful sexual lust is a form of lewdness.

Joseph Thayer defines the Greek word translated lewdness as "indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females (Thayer, p. 80-81)." Parents and young Christians, is this not a clear description of what occurs during modern couples dancing? Can anyone deny that couples dancing involves lewdness—activities that promote lust?

Think about what makes up the normal dance party. You have young men—who are at a stage in life where lust is one of their greatest stumbling blocks—with young girls, who are often dressed provocatively. The lights are turned low. These girls and boys are pressed together in a close embrace, and their bodies are moving together with the music.

Honestly, does that sound chaste? Brothers in Christ, is there any possible way that a man (especially a young teenage man) can be in that kind of situation and not experience impure feelings? We know the answer, so why would we let our sons enter into an atmosphere and engage in an activity that unquestionably tempts them to lust? Furthermore, why on earth would we fathers (or mothers, for that matter) allow our daughters to dance when we know the impure feelings that boys will experience for them?

We must look at this seriously, honestly and consistently. Parents, please consider the following point. If we caught our teenage kids at home with their boyfriends or girlfriends engaging in the touching, embracing and bodily movements involved in dancing, what would we do? We would be outraged. We would put a stop to it. So why would we send our young men and ladies out with our blessings to do the same touching, embracing and bodily movements at a school dance or house party?

Notice what the following reference works say about the correlation between dancing and lust: After making a distinction between dances like the Twist and even older dances like waltzing, the Encyclopedia Britannica stated in 1979, "Fundamentally, both age groups are enjoying the pleasure of dancing in their own way. The end product is doubt-less the same — physical pleasure in the activity of dancing and sexual awareness of a partner, whether embraced or half-consciously observed" (The Art Of Dance, Vol. 5, pp. 455-456).

Collier's Encyclopedia said in 1964, "The social dance has usually been the result of joint physical exuberance and sex stimuli ..." (Dance, Vol. 7, p. 683).

The ultra-liberal and immoral Alex Comfort wrote in 1972, "All ballroom dancing in pairs looks toward intercourse. In this respect the Puritans were dead right." (Comfort, p. 162).

Admittedly, the above quotes are from decades ago. As I developed this article, I considered looking for quotes from more recent times, but then I realized that using these quotes from years ago presents a stronger argument.

Ask yourselves this question: Has dancing become more chaste and less sexual than it was 40-50 years ago? We know the answer to this question. The dancing that goes on at school dances or in clubs today would even outrage those who advocated dancing in the 60's and 70's. If the dancing of decades past constituted lewdness (and it did), then it would be the height of foolishness to claim that modern dancing is not lewd.

Let's conclude this article by looking at a couple of common objections to the notion that couples dancing produces lust, and is therefore sinful.

First of all, people say, "Even if other people lust when they dance, that doesn't mean that I'm guilty of lust while I dance with someone." Let's just give them the benefit of the doubt and say that this one person never lusts when he or she dances with someone. But what about the other person?

Experiencing lust for someone who is not your spouse

is a sin. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." It is clearly wrong to lust for one other than your spouse. Therefore, it is also wrong to arouse lust in another person. To practice an activity that commonly produces lust in someone's heart is to commit the sin of casting a stumbling block before them (Romans 14:13).

Girls must especially consider this with young men. Excuse my sense of candor, but if a normal young man can be pressed against an attractive young woman and dance with her while claiming to have no temptation to lust, then I question his honesty. A girl who dances with a normal young man almost certainly tempts that young man to lust, and she is not guilt-less if and when he does.

Finally, people will often say, "Dancing is about fun and exercise. There's nothing sexual about dancing." Someone who raises this objection closes their eyes to the history of dancing and is denying the obvious.

Consider this. Husbands, would you want your wife to dance with another man? Wives, would you want your husbands to dance with an attractive woman? Why not? We know why and God knows why. It is because dancing is known to produce sexual desire or lust. This fact should spur us to encourage our sons and daughters from engaging in this activity.

1 Peter 2:11 says, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." 2 Timothy 2:22 says to "flee youthful lusts." Fathers and mothers, it is up to us to warn our children about the dangers of lust. You can remember from your own experience how difficult the battle can be. It takes diligence and conviction, and to win this war that has devastated so many in our culture, our children will need our love, patience, support and godly instruction. Their peers may ridicule their so-called out-dated standards of morality, but we need to show them that purity is much more important than popularity. Do not simply forbid them from going to the dance. Instead, arm them with scriptures. Love them enough to let them see for themselves how dancing clearly violates God's word.

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A GENERATION continued from page five

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (Matt. 12:38).

The response from Jesus was at the same time perplexing and revelatory. He says:

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:39-40).

It is not difficult to imagine the Pharisees scratching their heads at this proclamation. All Jews were intimately familiar with the book of Jonah (and his ride down the aquatic elevator), but this application was novel and unexpected. The meaning of Jonah's oracle had been long debated, disputed, and dialogued amongst the Jews, but now this young Galilean upstart prophet brings a new interpretation that none had heard before. Obviously, it is unlikely that prior to the Lord's resurrection any of the Pharisees suspected the truth of Jesus' exegesis of Jonah.

What was the sign of Jonah? Like Isaac, Jonah was figuratively dead for three days. Jonah reclined in a 'fish-hammock' four miles below the ocean surface and survived to once again set foot upon the gravely shore. By the power of God, after three days in the abyss, Jonah Ben Amittai was figuratively resurrected.

Why did this happen to Jonah? Jonah's experience was meant to bear testimony to the greater event yet to come and serve as a sign to the Jews of the first century. Jesus who was the perfect Prophet, the obedient Servant, the sinless Savior, willingly went to the abyss of God's punishment for us. Jesus bore the dark condemnation of sin He did not commit. Jesus, unlike Jonah, literally died and was placed in a lightless tomb where after three days he walked forth.

The difference between Jonah and Jesus is what they did afterward. Jonah balked at Gentile conversion and threw a tantrum which impressed no one (most importantly including God). Jesus, conversely, arose from His grave to send His disciples into ALL the world looking to convert the gentiles. Not just Nineveh, but every nation. Jesus told Paul "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles" (Acts 22: 21).

Who was the intended audience for the book of Jonah? This small book was chiefly targeted at the Jews in the

day of Christ. The Jewish reader was intended to have a disquieting and perturbing epiphany moment where he would suddenly become aware that he sympathizes and commiserates with Jonah and not God. Readers were meant to see themselves in the story as a generation of contrarian Jonahs resisting the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles. They were the disgruntled elder brother standing outside the Father's home protesting the returned prodigal's celebration. They were the vineyard workers who had agreed to one denarius in the morning, then protested the 11th hour workers receiving the same pay.

Jesus concluded His teaching on the sign of Jonah with these words:

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. (Matt 12:41)

Jesus proclaims a warning to the Pharisees—you stand on dangerous ground. Those ancient men of Nineveh listened—will you? Those men attended to a bigoted prophet who spoke only a five word Hebrew sermon: “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed!”

These admirable Gentiles of Nineveh listened to a flawed imperfect man who had no love for them. Jonah held no personal Bible studies with the men of Nineveh, did not ask for the little children to come unto him, did not heal their sick, nor did he raise their dead. Jonah did not weep and beseech Nineveh as a hen would gather its chicks under her wings. He did none of these things but even so the earnest crowds gathered. The word spread like wildfire. Soon even the King's heart was broken and (smearing ashes on his head) he humbled himself before the Almighty God of Jonah and commanded all to do likewise from the smallest to the greatest.

The question is often asked, why doesn't the book of Jonah relate the end of the story? Why isn't the plot resolved? Why such an abrupt ending? The reason is perhaps that the most important ending had yet to be written in the first century. True, Jonah was long ago laid in his grave, but the nation of Israel still had an opportunity to accept the church of Christ. Jonah's chance to shed tears and hug his brethren the Ninevites had passed, but for the Jews there was still time to embrace the Messiah and the Gentiles. The Jewish theocracy could still turn to God and accept the Way provided for all men.

In conclusion, the book of Jonah is not so much about Jonah himself as it is about Jesus and the Jews of the first century. The book of Jonah is a love-letter to a runaway bride written 700 years before she left her groom. While the target audience of Jonah was the Jews,

it is a timeless message that reminds the servant of the Lord to be careful, cultivate a heart sympathetic to the commands of God, and resist a spirit that is impervious to Divine entreaty.

The ever present danger of the unpardonable sin, manifested through the rejection of God's living Word, should chill the marrow of our bones. Let us not fall into the same satanic trap.

—Bart Shaw, tbartshaw@hotmail.com

UNSPOTTED continued from page two

The apostle Paul said, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation (previous manner of life DLK) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4: 22-24). Even in Bible times clean living was a key to growth, and it surely continues to be so in our own time.

There are probably several reasons why worldliness is a problem today. However, we are convinced the problem could perhaps be improved if we heard more preaching about it like we once heard in every gospel meeting in the land.

In Ephesians 5 Paul writes of the church showing a beautiful analogy between the husband and his wife and comparing it to Christ and the church. In verse 26 he said, “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” Then in verse 32 he said, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church,” Paul loved the church. He lived for it and all he did in everyday life was for the benefit and growth of the church. Even his building of tents was intended to make his preaching more powerful to those who heard him.

Brethren, the glory of the church consists in her purity. We are the only ones who can keep her garments or character, as pure as a chaste or righteous woman, who is true to her husband in every way. We ARE the church. Our lives reflect the purity of the Lord's church where we live and worship. When members often find other pursuits to follow on Lord's Day evening and midweek, causing the crowd to be pitifully small, it says a lot to those who might chance to visit at those times. We advertise services at a certain time and day of the week. When we are unnecessarily absent, we need to keep in mind that we are telling those around us more than we would perhaps wish them to know. Think on these things. -DLK

HERE AND THERE*By RICK MARTIN*

Many people seemed to be concerned about the upcoming Presidential election. If you are concerned, don't be. Our trust should be in the Lord and not some politician or government official. Psalm 118:9 "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Isaiah 31:1 "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!"

Jane and I were on our way to church one recent Sunday morning and we had to stop and rearrange some things in my truck. When we got out a man came by on a bike and said, "have a good day at church." The question that came to my mind is how did that man know we were going to church? The only thing I can figure out is, it must have been by the way we were dressed. Could someone figure out you were going to church by the way you dress? I think we should give the Lord the best we've got.

Parents teach your children that the church building is not a place to run around in. I realize that it is sometimes hard to keep a watch on the little ones, but you would hate for your child to be the reason for some elderly or sick person to fall and break a bone.

If you are a young person and have recently obeyed the Gospel you need to know that your days of running around and playing in the church yard before and after services are over.

School is back in session and many clubs and sports teams will be raising money for various activities. Raffles are one of the most popular ways. Remember that raffles are a form of gambling. If you want to help the school club or sports team, just give them a donation and skip the raffle ticket.

I heard Brother Paul Nichols use this illustration in a sermon many years ago concerning giving; He said, two ladies were drinking coffee one morning and one began to complain about how her church was always on the members about tithing. The other lady spoke up and said, "Maybe you should consider the church of Christ. I've given a dollar every Sunday for forty years and they've never said a word." 2 Cor. 9:7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". 1 Cor. 16: 2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I

come". Are you giving as much as you can? Remember the Lord knows there are larger denominations of money than a one dollar bill.

I recently heard about a young girl who was asked by her teacher why she had such long hair. The girl told her because the Bible teaches that women should have long hair. The teacher read her Bible and later told the girl that she was right. From this, further inquiry was made and a study ensued. The results were that the teacher and her husband have obeyed the Gospel. Now if this isn't a great example of the importance of teaching your children the truth, I don't know what is!

That's all for now. Pray for the brotherhood.

Bonds of Matrimony

CARVER-MINK: Saturday July 30, 2016 was a day that will never be forgotten and will mark that date on the calendar by Trever and Jessica every year. In a beautiful wooded setting the air itself seemed to be filled with happiness as they exchanged promises to cherish each other until death separates them. Inclement weather dampened the rehearsal, but although weather threatened had no effect on the ceremony. Friends, family and loved ones were present to wish them well and encourage them as they began their life together. Trever is the son of Jackie and Jana Carver of Summertown, TN. Jessica is the daughter of David and Ann Mink of Clarksville, OH. It was an honor to be asked to be with them on this momentous occasion to present to the world Mr. and Mrs. Trevor Carver. They are making their home in Nashville, TN. -Barney Owens

Our Departed

MOORE: Betty Rosanne (Walker) Tidyman Moore. Sister Rose, as she was known by most passed away July 22, 2016 at Cox Hospital in Springfield, Missouri. Rose was born December 1st 1938 in Somerset, Nebraska. She was the daughter of Clarence and Dorris (Ratliff) Walker. A 1956 high school graduate. She married Frederick C. Moore, in Miami Oklahoma August 4th. 1978. Rose was a hard worker for many years at Fasco Ind. retiring in 2000. Rose and Fred always attended the Church of Christ after being baptized in Neosho some 10 plus years ago. I was honored to help them in their obedience to the Lord. Her service was held in Cassville, Missouri where a goodly number gathered to say goodbye. Rose's life was easy to speak about and she was a great joy to be around. She was a very positive lady and had a strong influence on family, friends, and her church family. I shall never forget this wonderful Christian lady who became a part of my life story. I

heard only good about her from all. We will miss her in Neosho and everywhere she visited. Brother Fred needs our prayers support and help in the days and months ahead. - Roger L. Owens

Announcement

To Whom It May Concern:

I cannot take part in military service in any form, directly or indirectly, in combatant or noncombatant service. Below are listed some of the reasons:

1. My duty and obligation to God is superior to all other obligations (Acts 5:29; Matt. 23:37).

2. My God in the Bible forbids that I engage in carnal warfare in the following references: "Put up again thy sword ... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. 26:52); "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (II Cor. 10: 3-4); "Turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:39); "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17).

3. To enter any military service, combatant or noncombatant, I would be compelled to "swear" (take an oath), but the Bible forbids that I do so. "Swear not at all" (Matt. 5:34).

4. To enter any military service I would be compelled to be yoked with unbelievers, which is forbidden. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. 6:14).

5. To be in any branch of the military service in any way, I would be a part of an organization and would therefore have fellowship in the service, but such is prohibited. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

6. To serve in the military service in any way, I would be deprived of obeying the command to assemble on the Lord's Day to worship God in the Bible way, at least part of the time, hence would disobey God. (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Therefore, I cannot conscientiously engage in carnal warfare in any form or branch, and for the above reasons, I ask that my name be listed in support of the above principles.

Josiah A. Nichols
7925 Eland Road
Joplin, Missouri 64804
September 23, 2016

Field Reports

Roger L. Owens - P.O. Box 239 Neosho, MO. 64850. Phone 1-417-766-8969 or E-MAIL @ (rowens700@yahoo.com). This year has brought many thoughts regarding the future of the church and its mission to

seek and save the lost. It has become increasingly more difficult to reach out to our world. We use a number of public media that seem to find the mark. The work in Wyoming moves forward because of the our TV program, newspaper articles, and Every Door Direct Mailings. We have increased our contact list over the past nine months. We have conducted two meetings in Casper this year one in May and one in August. We did have new visitors at both meetings. Brother Brett Hickey conducted the one in August, Bill Ferguson and I conducted the May meeting, We also were contacted by three new persons in Riverton area who want to study. I plan to be in that area for follow up and study during the month of September and into October. A number of congregations have supported this effort for which we are ever grateful. One man has told me he is ready to leave the cups church. Another Lady told me she is fed up with the local Christian church whose preacher is now working on his 3rd wife. She told me that many of her fellow brethren are ready to move on after years of service in their congregation. All of these continue to tell us they never hear their leaders use the bible in services any more. Opportunity stands ready and it's time to seek these souls who seem ready to find the truth and embrace it. Please pray for us as we travel to this area and work with these folks. I am asking for your prayers and support when possible. It costs much to do this work. I have made it my personal aim to do all I can to save the souls who seek the Lord in Wyoming.

Don L. King - 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, September 10. The church at home is doing pretty well and looking forward to a meeting with Doug Hawkins soon. We hope to see many of you at the meeting. Since last report I was able to preach here to a good crowd on a Lord's Day. This month we are publishing a good article written by Brandon Stephens on "Dancing." This article appeared in the November issue of "The Christian Informer" in 2013. It appears by permission and we appreciate their cooperation. It fits well with the Editorial this month about keeping unspotted from the world. We hope you enjoy and benefit from both articles as well as all the material included this month. We also thank preachers who have written articles recently as well as having sent field reports. The paper needs your help to do the work we have done for so many years and we thank the Lord and give Him all the praise for any good accomplished. Please, continue to send your writings. When you can, consider subscribing for a friend and we appreciate it when you mention the paper where you go to preach. Remember us when you pray.

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THE BACK PAGE...

IS THE ELECTION RIGGED?

By CARL M. JOHNSON

In less than a month after you read these words, Lord willing, our country will have a new president. Republican candidate Donald Trump caused a media stir recently when he said during a television interview, "I'm afraid the election is going to be rigged." His words hit a nerve with the opposition and there was an immediate and angry reaction.

I am not a registered voter and I know very little about the behind-the-scenes machinations of American politics, so I cannot comment on Trump's words. However, this controversy makes me think of another controversial election that is of far greater importance than America's current presidential election. Peter refers to it when he says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your CALLING and ELECTION sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Peter says God calls and elects people to salvation, but how and when does God do it? Therein lies the controversy.

Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) stoked this controversy with his teaching on predestination in the 1500s. After his death in 1564, some of his followers put together a five-point outline of his primary teachings and arranged these five points in the acrostic "TULIP." The following outline has become the classic statement of the Calvinist system:

Total Depravity, is the belief that each person is born carrying the guilt of Adam's sin and is unable to do even the slightest good thing.

Unconditional Election, teaches that God arbitrarily elects certain people to be saved and others to be lost, and that we have no choice in the matter.

Limited Atonement implies that God never intends to save anyone except those He arbitrarily elects. This point makes a lot of people who boldly proclaim the other four points of Calvinism a little squeamish and few still hold onto it.

Irresistible Grace teaches that if God has sovereignly chosen you to be saved, it is impossible for you to reject God's choice.

Perseverance of the saints, the final point, teaches "once saved, always saved." While the first four points are dark, unpleasant, and fill believers with anxiety about whether God has chosen them to be saved, the last point provides a "Pollyanna outlook." It ignores the many warnings in Scripture against falling away and removes any fear of God's judgment.

Sooner or later the obvious question of every true Calvinist has to be, "How can I be certain I am among the elect God has chosen to save?" While Calvin was confident in his own election, he offers little comfort to others who are trying to make the same determination. Calvin says there is no objective evidence to determine who is saved or lost—that you cannot distinguish the elect from the damned by their conduct, subjective experiences, or any other external criteria. You just sort of have to conclude intuitively that you are among the elect and then believe it.

Contrary to the teachings of Calvin, God does not call and elect people unto salvation in a coercive manner (irresistible grace). God calls ALL people unto Himself through the preaching of the gospel, and the gospel has the power to save anyone who obeys it (2 Thes. 1:7; 2:14; Rom. 1:16). This call goes out to men and women of every race, tongue, and nation in the world. Then God ELECTS unto salvation those who make the choice to obey the gospel. In this sense, we actually save ourselves (1 Tim. 4:16; Acts 2:40).

However, this gracious calling of the Lord can be resisted, voided, or received in vain (Cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Our calling and election are "made sure" by our obedient faith. Again, Peter says, "Wherefore, the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10).

Apparently, there was a time in our history when a voter could walk into a voting booth and pull one lever to vote for every Republican on the ballot or every Democrat on the ballot. The procedure was called, "voting a straight ticket." In much the same manner, we all have our names on one of two "tickets" in God's election process. We are on the Obedience ticket or the Disobedience ticket (Faith or unbelief), and God is voting a straight ticket. He elects all on the Obedience ticket unto eternal life, but He casts all on the Disobedient ticket into everlasting punishment (Mt. 25:46).

This illustration emphasizes that the initiative in salvation is taken by God. He sees us heading for damnation, calls us back through the gospel, and elects unto salvation those who respond in obedience to the gospel call.

This can be the only meaning of the words "calling" and "election" in 2 Peter 1:10. If John Calvin was correct and our eternal destinies were predestinated and sealed by God even before we were ever born, then our eternal condition, saved or lost, will have been the result of an election that God rigged from the very beginning. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com