

*Silence
Can Be
Sinful*

Winford Claiborne

International Gospel Hour

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Dedication

Dedicated To:

My Brothers And Sisters:

William Claiborne (deceased) and his wife Elizabeth

Eathel Currey

Edgar Claiborne and his wife Kathy

Raymond Claiborne (deceased)

Nadine Claiborne (deceased)

Charlie Claiborne and his wife Pauline

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Wilma (Claiborne) Hill and her husband Ervin

Lucien Claiborne and his wife Ellen

Douglas Claiborne (deceased)

Garvin Claiborne and his wife Libby

Introduction

"True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted"

By Francis Havergal and George C. Stebbins

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be;
Under the standard exalted and royal,
Strong in Thy strength we will battle for Thee.

Chorus:

Peal out the watchword! Silence it never!
Song of our spirits, rejoicing and free;
Peal out the watchword, loyal forever,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be.

The divinely inspired author of Ecclesiastes insists:

To everything there is a season and a time
for every purpose....A time to keep silent,
and a time to speak (Eccl. 3:2, 7).

Most serious Bible students will probably agree that being able to determine the appropriate time to keep silent and the appropriate time to speak requires wisdom, discernment and courage. Sometimes we speak when we ought to be listening. I agree with Thomas Carlyle that sometimes "silence is more eloquent than words" (**Heroes and Hero Worship**, Lecture II). Tragically, sometimes we fail to speak when the occasion demands it. In his drama, **The Good Natur'd Man**, Oliver Goldsmith wrote: "Silence gives consent" (Acts II). Failure to speak against evil betrays one as a coward. Can you imagine how different New Testament Christianity would have been if Jesus Christ and His apostles had not preached against hypocrisy, sexual immorality, greed, injustice and drunkenness? Jesus taught that we will be judged for every

idle word (Mt. 12:36). One prominent religious leader argued that we will also be judged for every idle silence. I wholeheartedly agree.

Some Excuses For Being Silent

Ignorance. "I would speak out against abortion, gambling, pornography, beverage alcohol and homosexuality if I just knew what to say." Jane Chastain, America's first woman sportscaster, has written an excellent book with the title, **I'd Speak Out on the Issues: If I Only Knew What to Say** (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987). Chastain furnishes a great number of valuable suggestions regarding a Christian's responsibility to be informed and to use his voice for making a difference in our world. Some of the chapter headings in her book are: "Do I Dare Get Involved?" "How Do I Get Started?" and "Can One Person Make A Difference?" Unless we make an effort to expose evil and support good, our nation will continue to deteriorate morally and spiritually. God will hold us accountable for our failure to speak for God and against Satan.

The law of the land does not recognize ignorance as an excuse; neither does God Almighty. Ignorance of moral and spiritual issues has a very simple solution: reading, studying and praying for wisdom. We are all ignorant-just about different topics. But nobody should remain ignorant about those attitudes and practices that are destroying lives, wrecking homes, dividing churches and threatening the welfare and stability of our nation. There are powerful resources available to every American-resources that provide us with all the information we need to combat every evil.

If you would like to speak out against gambling, for example, please read carefully the following books: Larry Braidfoot, **Gambling: A Dead Game** (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985); Norman L. Geisler with Thomas A. Howe, **Gambling: A Bad Bet** (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell,

1990); Tom Watson, Jr., **Don't Bet On It** (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987). If you want comprehensive information about abortion so you can show just how unspeakably evil it is, you can get the right amount of ammunition in James T. Burtchaell's book, **Rachel Weeping: The Case Against Abortion** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982). George Grant's outstanding book, **Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood** (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2000) will give you all you must know to speak out against this murderous organization. Pleading ignorance for remaining silent on evil is itself evil.

Indifference. One of Israel's prevailing sins was not caring, at least, not caring enough. Isaiah describes some of the moral and spiritual conditions that prevailed among the Israelites about 150 years prior the Babylonian exile.

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands....Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (Isaiah 5:11-12, 21-23).

If the Israelites had joined Isaiah in speaking out against the evil in the nation, they could have made a difference. Even if they could not have avoided the Babylonian exile, at least, they would have known they were on the right side and so would their pagan neighbors. Instead, they did not care enough to demand changes.

Isaiah characterized the Israelites as "a rebellious

people, lying children, children that will not hear the word of the Lord." God's people did not support God's prophets in their opposition to sin. Instead, they said to the prophets:

Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things ('pleasant things,' NASB), prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isaiah 30:10-11).

What Isaiah wrote more than twenty-seven hundred years ago sounds very modern. There are churches—including some churches of Christ—that are not going to permit the preacher to condemn the popular moral evils, such as drinking, gambling and abortion; neither will some churches allow the preacher to condemn false doctrine. They argue that opposing moral evils and false doctrine is too negative. Besides, we want to leave the worship services feeling good.

Ethical Confusion. Liberal theologians are confused about right and wrong. John Shelby Spong's book, **Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), endorses homosexual practices, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament calls homosexuality "an abomination" (Lev. 18:22) and the New Testament describes it as being unnatural (Rom. 1:24-26). Spong says: "All of us should welcome the cry of 'gay pride.' It is the emotional equivalent of 'black is beautiful'" (p. 80). Victor Paul Furnish of Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, questions the inspiration of the scriptures—the very basis of all moral conduct. In his book, **The Moral Teaching of Paul** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), Dr. Furnish asserted: "Paul offered no direct teaching to his own churches on the subject of homosexual conduct." Dr. Furnish asks: "Shall practicing homosexuals be admitted to church membership?...Shall they be commissioned to the church's ministry?" Dr. Furnish answers: "It is mistaken to invoke Paul's name in support of any specific position on these matters" (p. 79).

The ethical confusion in some modern churches, in academia and in the media reminds us of the conditions that existed in Isaiah's day (about 750 years before Christ was born).

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20)!

Several prominent writers have written books that provide extensive information that will help us sort out some of the moral confusion that exists in our nation. Those books are: William Kirk Kilpatrick, **Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992) and Kathleen M. Gow's, **Yes, Virginia, There is Right and Wrong** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1980). Dr. Gow's book asks, "What values are our children being taught in the public schools?"

Moral Turpitude. There are millions of Americans who are not going to speak out against evil because they are committed to evil. If men are addicted to pornography, are they likely to condemn the people who produce, distribute and sell pornographic materials? How many abortionists lend their efforts to the prolife movement to end the senseless killings of 4,000 unborn babies each day? When men and women engage in immoral activities—either for pleasure or for profit—they seldom, if ever, join crusades to curb those activities. Can you imagine a homosexual working to pass laws to forbid all homosexual activity? Honorable people cannot count on drunks, drug addicts, abortionists, gamblers, extortioners and adulterers to improve the moral climate of our nation. That is the reason Christians and those who claim to be Christians sin when we remain silent on immorality.

Fear. When Elijah vigorously opposed the conduct of Ahab and Jezebel, is it possible that Elijah was afraid? We have no way of knowing since the Bible does not tell us.

But it would be remarkable if Elijah did not experience some fear. He knew the evil that these two infamous people had perpetrated. He also knew they hated him enough to kill him. But regardless of any fear he may have had, he did not hesitate to speak the word of the Lord. If he had failed to speak, would God have held him accountable for his failure? The true prophets had to speak as the Lord instructed them (Dt. 18:15-18).

John the Baptist was a man of enormous faith and courage. Matthew wrote concerning John:

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her (Mt. 14:3-4).

Did John tremble with fear as he spoke of Herod's grievous sin? We do not know but we do know this: John the Baptist had no choice about condemning Herod's behavior, that is, if John wanted to have God's approval. What would happen to a gospel preacher today if her were to stand before Moamar Khadfi or Saddam Hussein and speak out against their adultery and violence? Would I be as courageous as Elijah or as John the Baptist?

Preachers in our generation are often forbidden to preach on certain topics. One of my former students called to say he had been told he could not discuss corrective church discipline. He asked me what I thought he ought to do. I told him he had no choice about preaching the truth on every topic. He preached on church discipline and was immediately fired. Another former student called to tell me that during Vacation Bible School he had gone into the black neighborhood and brought dozens of black children to the Bible school. The elders instructed him not to do that any more. The elders said they were not going to integrate the church. He wanted to know what he should do. I urged him to bring all the children—white or black—to the VBS. He

also was fired or, more likely, allowed to resign. Preachers have been fired for preaching against drinking, for discussing marriage, divorce and remarriage and for speaking out on other popular evils.

I make no claims for having always preached what I should have preached in the way I should have preached it. I know I have made many blunders. For that I have sought forgiveness. But I have worked to prepare myself to preach what I honestly believe I should preach. I try to preach the whole counsel of God because I know God demands it. But I also know that churches are not going to be faithful if they do not know the truth and obey it. I take seriously Paul's admonition to Timothy: "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). I want to go to heaven when I die and I want to take you with me.

Explanations

Some of the chapters in this book may appear to contain some errors on abortion. I have used the figure 30,000,000 of those babies that have been aborted since 1973 when abortion became legal on demand. In other lessons, I have used a different figure. The reason for that is very easy to understand. Some of the lessons were prepared when only 30,000,000 babies had been killed in their mother's wombs. But at a later day, the number had increased to 35,000,000 or to 40,000,000. The number now may be closer to 45,000,000, although nobody knows for sure. But whatever the case, we cannot afford to be silent on this great evil.

The shorter chapters in this book are transcripts that have been used on the International Gospel Hour. The longer chapters were broadcast on our local program (WEKR in Fayetteville), on WAKI in McMinnville, Tennessee, on WFHC at Henderson, Tennessee, and on a number of other stations not connected with the Gospel Hour. KCBL in Shreveport, Louisiana, broadcast free of charge over 1,100 of our full thirty-minute programs.

Paul and LaDon Sain have done a superb job in publishing my books for the International Gospel Hour. I am grateful for the work they do. I have hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts I want them to publish over the next several years—if the Lord allows me to live that long. All of the money from the sale of these books goes to support the Gospel Hour.

My work for the past fifty-three years has been immeasurably more effective because of my Molly's support. She has made many sacrifices so I could buy books, read those books, write radio transcripts and record them. She has been and continues to be a great inspiration to me. I cannot imagine having her in my life. How wonderfully blessed I have been to have someone so beautiful and so gracious to love and to love me for more than a half century! I pray that God will allow us to be together for many more years.

~ Winford Claiborne
Fayetteville, Tennessee
August 24, 2002

Preface

The prophet Elijah fearlessly confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and called on the people to be decisive in religious matters. Like the prophet Elijah, Winford Claiborne has been a clarion call for people to take a stand on spiritual issues in our day. Brother Claiborne has demonstrated numerous times on the radio, in sermons and in lectures he is willing to stand up and speak out on matters of right and wrong. It does not matter if those promoting the error are in the hallowed halls of the White House, the ivy towers of higher education, the masses in our local city or even in the pulpits of our brotherhood, his voice is clear and persuasive. This book not only reflects the truth revealed in scripture but the courage and conviction of brother Claiborne over the years.

Winford Claiborne is a uniquely talented man in our generation. He is gifted in the ability to communicate in a forceful fashion at the same time expressing concern and compassion for those who are so deceived by sin. The ability to communicate confidently and compassionately is so needed in this age. His studious nature has prepared him to speak with confidence and clarity. Brother Claiborne is perhaps one of the best-read men of our generation with a keen mind that is able to grasp the trends of this generation. His reading and research have led him to be insightful regarding directions that many in the Lord's church are taking. The warnings that he sounds are real and necessary.

For many years it has been my privilege to know the Christian gentleman, Winford Claiborne and his dear wife, Molly. As a team they have served the Lord's church in such an effective way in so many areas. The congregation at Bybee Branch has sponsored a radio program on the local station, WAKI, with brother Claiborne as the speaker

for over a decade and in addition he has spoken numerous times on our annual Bible Lectureship. He and Molly have truly become our friends. The encouragement that they have given to so many of us is immeasurable. There are many of us that are delighted to see his years of research now being put into print. I gladly commend this volume and the man who authored it.

~ Tony Lawrence
Church of Christ at Bybee Branch
McMinnville, TN
July 11, 2002

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Chapter 1

Silence Can Be Sinful

The scriptures speak explicitly on the evil of misusing the tongue. Please listen to a few examples.

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell...The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things, ought not so to be. Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh (James 3:5-6, 8-12).

Our Lord used language similar to that of James:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Mt. 12:33-37).

The book of Proverbs has more to say about the abuse and misuse of the tongue than any other Bible book. I shall read just one paragraph from this great book of wisdom.

So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport? Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart (Prov. 26:18-25).

Dozens of other biblical references on the misuse of the tongue could be given, but these are sufficient to establish that human beings often sin by gossiping, lying, flattering, blaspheming, taking the Lord's name in vain, foolish jesting, idle talk, and in other ways. Even if the Bible did not speak so specifically and emphatically on these matters, we could see the great damage which is done to men's reputations by those who gossip or slander or lie. All of us - Christians included - must constantly be on guard against using our tongues to dishonor God and wound our fellowmen. But, Christians may also sin by being silent. The dangers in this area are just as grave as in speaking too much or at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

The Old Testament book of Esther records a plot which Haman, a bitter enemy of the Jews, had conceived against God's people. Mordecai, Esther's cousin, learned of the plot and pled with Esther to go before king Ahasuerus and reveal what was about to happen. Esther, as you know, was a Jewess and the wife of king Ahasuerus. She stood to lose her life, too. Mordecai made a very eloquent appeal to Esther in these words:

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to

the kingdom for such a time as this (Esther 4:14).?

Notice carefully the words: "If thou holdest thy peace at this time." Those words indicate that Esther would have sinned grievously against God and against her people if she had refused to speak for her nation. Thanks be to God that she did not hold her peace; she did not remain silent. There is one other expression in this verse that deserves mentioning in passing. Mordecai asked Esther, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as time?" My friends, you and I have sacred obligations to speak up for the Lord. We cannot afford to remain silent on the great issues which confront the church and the nation. God will surely hold us accountable for our criminal silence.

Immediately preceding World War II, many preachers, theologians, and other Germans knew what was taking place in Germany. They could see the handwriting on the wall, but so few spoke against Hitler and the Nazis until it was too late. One of those theologians was a Lutheran preacher by the name of Martin Niemoller. Please listen carefully to these words of Niemoller:

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time, no one was left to speak up (David Jeremiah. **Before It's Too Late**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, p. 165).

While I sincerely believe that every Christian and every American must speak up for what he believes and speak against what he opposes, I would like to address my remarks this morning to the preachers in our audience. In a special

way, preachers are supposed to be spokesmen for God Almighty. The old soldier of the cross, Paul the apostle, charged a younger preacher:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

The time for speaking out on every moral and spiritual issue which confronts our nation is NOW. In fact, we are a bit late on some issues. If we had been speaking as forcefully as we should on the sanctify of human life, the abortion issue could have been solved in the pulpits and not in the Supreme Court of the United States. Many of us simply could not believe that our nation would ever legalize the slaughter of millions of unborn babies, but when, the events came down to our homes, it was almost too late to do any good.

We have experienced for many years a dearth of biblical preaching. It reminds me of what Amos predicted concerning the Israelites.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it (Amos 8:11-12).

David Jeremiah, Chairman of the Board of Christian Heritage College, El Cajon, California, has written a very stimulating and challenging book entitled, **Before It's Too Late** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Dr. Jeremiah affirms that "America cannot survive another

decade of decline in Bible preaching" (p. 174). Dr. Jeremiah severely criticizes those who would use the pulpit for political speeches – and I am in total agreement with him. What "our people need to hear" is "thus saith the Lord" (p. 174).

What the church needs is leaders like Josiah who are willing to stand up for the word of God. King Josiah,

...sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers (2 Chron. 34:29-33).

Preachers of the gospel cannot afford to remain silent when God has spoken. We are obligated to know what God has revealed and to have the courage to stand up for the Lord and His word. When the word of God is attacked, as is being done in modern times, we must speak out plainly for the total inspiration of the Bible. We cannot hold our peace or we shall experience further deterioration of spiritual and moral values.

I want to mention some social issues which all of us

hear discussed almost daily on radio and television and ask some questions about these issues. First, since alcohol constitutes our number one drug problem in the United States, how many of us preachers are speaking out against such a gross evil? Jay Strack, a young Baptist preacher from Ft. Meyers, Florida, has recently authored a book which he calls, **Drugs and Drinking: The All-American Cop-out** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979). Jay Strack has used all kinds of drugs, including alcohol. According to Strack,

alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive drug in North America. The National Council on Alcoholism estimates there are nearly ten million alcoholics in the United States. According to one American Medical Association Journal article, this is robbing our nation of ten million brains (p. 35).

Please listen to these facts relating to the drinking of beverage alcohol: First, "some forty million (the afflicted and their families) are directly suffering from the results of prolonged, excessive drinking" (p. 37). Second, "alcohol has been a major disrupter of family life. It has been found that sixty percent of marriages in which one or both partners are alcohol-dependent will end in divorce or separation" (p. 37). Third, "suicide rate of alcoholics has been found to be six to twenty times higher than that of the general population" (p. 38). Fourth, "chronic alcoholism causes brain damage, nerve damage, and pancreas damage. Cirrhosis of the liver is now the fourth leading cause of death among males fifty-five to sixty-five....Resistance to infection is also impaired and pneumonia and tuberculosis are not uncommon among heavy drinkers. Alcohol addicts have been found to sustain higher than average rates of cancer of the liver, throat, and upper gastrointestinal tract. The average life span of a heavy drinker is shortened by eleven years" (p. 38). Fifth, "many drinkers suffer vitamin deficiency, sexual impotence, and infections...Chronic drinkers suffer from a loss of memory and mental confusion" (p. 38). Sixth, "alcohol is potentially more dangerous to the

individual than heroin, LSD, or marijuana, according to Samuel Irvin, professor of Psychopharmacology at the University of Oregon Medical School. Irvin ranks alcoholism as the third most potentially dangerous form of drug abuse, behind sniffing glue and other inhalants and injecting methamphetamine (speed). Cigarettes are in fourth place....Irvin bases his ranking on alcohol's ability to produce violent behavior, to cause damage to the brain, liver, and other vital body tissue, and to cause physical and psychological dependence. Heroin does not impair coordination and judgment, nor does it produce tissue damage or aggressive behavior. Its danger is due to overdose" (p. 39).

Do you realize that a quarter of a million people die every year from alcohol, its illnesses and related crimes (p. 40)? What does the Bible have to say on this great evil? "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:32). "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). "Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness" (Rom. 13:13).

Do you need any other reason for speaking out against one of the greatest evils that men have ever known - beverage alcohol? Oh, I am aware that many church members both drink alcohol and sell it. In some cases they are influential members - those who may either have control of the congregation's purse strings or who are liberal givers - but what does that have to do with failure to speak out against the destructiveness of alcohol? Many members also engage in various forms of sexual immorality; they are guilty of gambling and other illegal kinds of behavior. Are we going to cease preaching against the sins of which so-called Christians are guilty? If we are, we shall have to quit preaching against all sins.

The second social and moral issue on which those of us who preach ought to speak against is abortion. Do you remember the horror you felt when you first learned that Adolf Hitler and the German Third Reich had killed

6,000,000 Jewish citizens? I had difficulty even conceiving that a monster like Hitler or Eichmann or anyone else could do such a hideous deed. These many years later, it still seems almost incomprehensible. But in the last four years, in the United States alone, pregnant women and their doctors have killed as many human beings as did Adolf Hitler and his henchmen. Worldwide almost fifty million babies are being aborted every year. In recent years, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, dean of the Simon Greenleaf School of Law and Director of Studies at the International Institute of Human Rights, Strasbourg, France, has written a book on abortion which he calls, **Slaughter of the Innocents**, (Westchester, Illinois: Cornerstone Books, 1981). What more appropriate title for his book could Dr. Montgomery have chosen—**Slaughter of the Innocents**?

In Dr. Montgomery's book, there is a letter from a fifteen year old high school sophomore. This fifteen year old wrote to Associate Justice Powell of the United States Supreme Court as follows:

I think it is wrong for a woman to have an abortion. Some people think it's not murder for someone to have an abortion, but I think it is. And when they make murdering helpless unborn children legal, how long will it be before it is legal to kill sick old people, the mentally retarded, etc.?

The Supreme Court, it seems to me, should be protecting the rights and lives of all people, not legalize the murder of innocent people.

Please try to do whatever you can to help.
Thank you for reading my letter (p. 105).

Dear preacher friend, I know that there are probably young women and maybe some older women in your congregation who have had their children aborted. I am not asking you to make their burdens any heavier or their guilt any greater. If they are sensitive at all to what they have done—to the sacredness of human life—they have a great burden of guilt. Please hold out to these women who

are suffering from having put to death their own flesh and blood that God can and will forgive that sin if they will turn from their unrighteous conduct and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse all sins—including abortion—when the sinner turns to the Lord. Even so-called Christians have been guilty of slaughtering the innocent. Please remember that you “have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).

If abortion is a sin – and surely there can be no question about it, then what sins do preachers commit when they fail to speak against the modern holocaust called abortion? If we preachers and other Christians hold our peace at this time, will enlargement and deliverance arise from another place? If relief (which is the meaning of the word “enlargement”) and deliverance arise from some other source, will God hold us guiltless for lack of courage to speak out on this unbelievably wicked practice? Are we not sinning grievously by remaining silent?

Let me discuss a third social and moral issue with you before our time expires. That issue, like drinking, has touched the lives of almost everyone in America. I speak of the divorce situation in America. In 1976, for the first time ever in the history of the United States, there were over one million divorces. That means that over two million husbands and wives reneged on their promises of life-long love. But the situation is far more serious than that. These two million husbands and wives had approximately one and a half million children. In addition, their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, and other family members, friends, and fellow church members suffered with them. In that year and in every year since, as many as ten million people have suffered great sorrow and heartache because of the millions of divorces which are occurring.

I do not have the time this morning to examine the causes of divorce. The Lord willing, I should like to do that in the not too distant future. There is only one question we

have time to discuss this morning: What is the Lord's attitude toward divorce? If we can discover from God's word what His attitude toward divorce is, that should settle the matter for Christians. The Lord's attitude toward any issue must be definitive for every Christian. That truth should be obvious from the following passage in the Philippian letter. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Whatever Christ thinks, Christians ought to imitate.

In the very beginning of the human family, God revealed what the ideal for marriage ought to be. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). In the Lord's discussion of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, He quoted these words from Genesis 2 and then added: "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt. 19:5-6). What was and is the Lord's attitude toward divorce? "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." What should a Christian's attitude toward divorce be? It must be the same as the Lord's.

The little Old Testament book of Malachi outlines some of the complaints which the Lord had against Israel. One of the Lord's complaints was the prevalence of divorce among the people.

The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal. 2:14-16).

According to the prophet Malachi, what did God think of

divorce? Many modern versions express the truth a little more bluntly and correctly. For example, some versions translate the Hebrew this way: "I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel." My friends, did you understand what God said? He said, "I hate divorce." If God hates divorce—and He most certainly did and does—how should we regard it? That question has an answer that is so obvious that everyone ought to be able to give a Bible answer. We, too, should hate divorce.

Churches are full of divorces and many of them absolutely unscriptural. What are we preachers doing about it? In too many cases, we are keeping our mouths closed. Do we not realize that we are going to have to give an account of our preaching? How shall we be able to say with Paul, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," when so many of us have neglected to preach what the Bible teaches on this and a number of other topics?

May God help all of us—preachers and all other Christians—to speak when we need to speak and to be silent when we ought.

I close this morning with a short poem from John Greenleaf Whittier:

Is the old pilgrim spirit quenched within us?
Stoops the proud manhood of our souls so low;
That mammon's lure or party's wile can win us
to silence now?

Now, when our land to ruin's brink is verging;
In God's name let us speak while there is time:
Now, when the padlocks of our lips are forging,
Silence is a crime!

(David Jeremiah, **Before It's Too Late**, p. 177).

Chapter 2

Presbyterian Church USA And Homosexuality

What are local churches supposed to do? O I know they are supposed to worship God, evangelize the lost and help the needy. But do they have any responsibility for elevating the moral tone of the community where they reside? Should they vigorously oppose beverage alcohol, gambling, adultery, premarital sex, pornography and such evils? And what should be their stand on homosexuality? Should they act as if homosexuality were not a threat to the home, to the individuals involved and to society in general? I am appalled at the way many modern churches are dealing with sin—primarily the popular sins, such as, homosexuality and premarital sex.

If I could afford it, I would like to place a copy of Dr. Thomas C. Reeves' book, **The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity** (New York: The Free Press, 1996), in the hands of every preacher and priest in the United States. Dr. Reeves, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and a Senior Fellow at the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, has written the most devastating critique of liberal religion I have ever found. What makes his book even more useful is that Dr. Reeves is an Episcopalian, admittedly a member of one of the most liberal churches in our nation. He explains one of the purposes of his book. "I sought to know why these (liberal, mainline denominations)...had lost their effectiveness in recent decades, especially since that volatile period from 1965 to 1975." As Dr. Reeves revealed to various people his rationale for writing the book, he was often asked, "Do churches, well, really matter any more" (p. ix of the Preface)?

The reason I have mentioned the liberal churches and their willingness to compromise on moral issues relates to an article in **The Tennessean** (Thursday, March 15, 2001). The article had the title, "Presbyterian clergy now free to officiate at gay commitment rites." The article was distributed by Associated Press. Do you need further evidence of the decline in influence of many of America's mainline denominations? Who could have believed fifty years ago or even twenty years ago that any church, except the United Church of Christ, would approve of its preachers or priests officiating at so-called "homosexual commitment rites?"

Before I proceed to analyze the article and show from the scriptures how irresponsibly ridiculous such actions are, I do want to make a few observations. The Presbyterian Church making the decision to allow their preachers to officiate at homosexual commitment rites is the Presbyterian Church USA—a very liberal denomination. Thousands of Presbyterian preachers and hundreds of thousands of Presbyterians are just as strongly opposed to that decision as are millions of other Americans. The truth is: Many liberal churches, including the Presbyterian Church USA, are losing members by the thousands. Those members are either staying away from the services of those liberal churches or they are affiliating with other religious groups. The members can no longer approve of the actions of the ruling bodies in those churches.

I am not questioning the sincerity of the members or of the leaders of the Presbyterian Church USA. I have no way of knowing if they are sincere. But that has absolutely no bearing on the sinfulness of their behavior. As everyone who has thought about it knows, people can be sincerely wrong. Was Paul sincere when he used his considerable talent in imprisoning Christians and even in giving his consent to their martyrdom, as he did in the case of Stephen (Acts 8:1)? As the apostle Paul was being tried before the

Jewish council, he assured his judges: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Many of the Nazis were almost certainly sincere when they murdered six million Jews. They believed they were doing the human race a great favor by removing subhumans. Does that mean the Nazi butchers were right? Right is determined by consulting the word of God—not by consulting our feelings or by deciding what is politically correct.

I want it clearly understood that I am not promoting violence toward homosexuals or toward any other group. On a number of occasions, I have spoken out against the abuse of any group, whether homosexuals or Klansmen or militia members or white supremacists. But if I discuss the sinfulness of homosexuality, am I not encouraging violence toward homosexuals? When Jesus Christ condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Mt. 23), was he guilty of promoting violence toward the Pharisees? I often preach on the evils of killing babies in their mothers' wombs, but I do not approve of killing abortionists. I may be accused of supporting hate because I oppose homosexuality. I must imitate the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, if I am to be a faithful Christian. Will you please give attention to what Christ said? He commended the Ephesian Christians for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. He even said he hated their deeds also (Rev. 2:6). Is it possible to distinguish between the persons who engage in evil conduct and the evil deeds they commit? Can we love the sinner and hate his sin? Not only can we do it; we must do it.

You may have noticed the word "gay" in the title to the article. The use of that word to describe one of the most abominable practices imaginable offends me. There is nothing gay about the homosexual lifestyle. Homosexuality has been the culprit in the spread of AIDS in the United States. But long before AIDS came on the scene, homosexuals were infected by every sexually

transmitted disease known to man. Did you know that the average age at death of male homosexuals is forty-two? While the life span of heterosexuals has been increasing for the past fifty years, that of male homosexuals has been decreasing. That fact and many others challenged Dr. Tim LaHaye to write an excellent book with the title, **The Unhappy Gays: What Everyone Should Know about Homosexuality** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978). Dr. LaHaye quotes historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. as saying, "Gay used to be one of the most agreeable words in the language. Its appropriation by a notably morose group is an act of piracy" (p. 39). According to Tim LaHaye, "'Gay' isn't gay for the majority of homosexuals, not even some of the time. It is more a propaganda word than a definition, an illusion to hide the loneliness their way of life imposes on them." Dr. LaHaye points out that suicide rates among homosexual are several times greater than they are in the straight community (p. 40).

The article in **The Tennessean** reports that a proposal to bar Presbyterian clergy from officiating at commitment ceremonies for gay couples was defeated in a vote tally released yesterday. That leaves clergy free to conduct such rites, as long as they are not confused with marriages. The vote is a victory for the liberal side in a conflict that has divided the 3.6 million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) for 24 years" (p. 12-A).

Several questions should arise in the minds of all who call themselves "Christians" – and not just members of the Presbyterian Church (USA). By what authority did the Presbyterian Church (USA) decide it was permissible for their preachers to perform commitment ceremonies for people who engage in perverted sex? Could they decide by the same authority to perform commitment ceremonies for thieves, for drunks, for exhortioners and for adulterers? After all, these sins are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 as excluding their participants from the kingdom of heaven.

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) rejects what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, why would they hesitate to disregard any other teachings they do not like or with which they do agree? Some modern churches have arrived at their position on homosexuality because they have little or no respect for the scriptures. They do not accept the inerrancy of the scriptures. So whatever they want the scriptures to say, they read those ideas into the word of God. There is not a man alive who can find support in the Bible for the homosexual lifestyle. Most theologians will not even try.

One other question should be framed before we examine what the Bible so plainly teaches on homosexuality. Will those preachers, seminary professors and theologians who have approved of their leaders' performing commitment rites for homosexuals have the courage to debate their immoral proposal? You can know for sure they will not do so. They know their views will not stand the light of scripture or the findings of modern science. Would you not be ashamed to embrace a moral position you would be unwilling to defend? Do you remember what the apostle Peter said about defending your beliefs? "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

There are a number of biblical passages that deal with homosexuality – Genesis 19, Judges 19, Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10 and Jude 7. Time will not permit me to deal with all these passages; so I shall concentrate today on Romans 1:22-27. Before I analyze this well known passage from the great book of Romans, I want to read to you from some of the world's most respected commentaries on Romans 1. I do this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to show that preachers among churches of Christ are not the

only ones who believe that homosexuality is a grievous sin. Please listen carefully to these brief excerpts from a number of prominent Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist scholars.

Albert Barnes, preacher for the large and influential First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, made these observations in his **Barnes' Notes on the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953, A reprint) "The sin which is here specified (that is, male homosexuality) is that which was the shameful sin of Sodom, and which from that has been called sodomy. It would scarcely be credible that a man has been guilty of a crime so base and so degrading, unless there was ample and full testimony to it. Perhaps there is no sin which so deeply shows the depravity of man as this; none which would so induce one 'to hang his head, and blush to think himself a man.'" Albert Barnes quotes Xenophon, the fourth century B.C. Greek historian, as saying that "the unnatural love of boys is so common, that in many places it is established by public law" (p. 48). Homosexuality was widely practiced both by the Greeks and the Romans, but uncompromisingly opposed by both Judaism and Christianity. Does the Presbyterian Church (USA) prefer the morals of pagan nations, like Greece and Roman, to the teaching of Christ's apostles?

Dr. John R. W. Stott, one of evangelical's brightest stars, has dealt extensively with homosexuality. In his commentary on **Romans: God's Good News for the World** (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Pres), Dr. Stott mentions the fact that God had given homosexuals over to shameful lusts, "which Paul specifies as lesbian practices (Rom. 1:26) and male homosexual relationships" (v. 27). In both cases he describes the people concerned as guilty of a third "exchange": the women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones, while the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one

another. Dr. Stott says the "only one flesh relationship is heterosexual monogamy....A homosexual partnership (however loving and committed it may claim to be) is 'against nature' and can never be regarded as a legitimate alternative to marriage" (pp. 77-78).

Adam Clarke, a highly respected Methodist scholar, wrote a complete commentary on the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press). Dr. Clarke's commentary on Romans to Revelation says very little about homosexuality. He seems to have been embarrassed even to write about it. He argues that the Gentiles' "system of idolatry necessarily produced all kinds of impurity. How could it be otherwise, when the highest objects of their worship were adulterers, fornicators and prostitutes of the most infamous kind, such as, Apollo, Mars, Venus and others" (volume 6, p. 44)?

William S. Plumer, professor in the Columbia Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina and a Presbyterian preacher, wrote a **Commentary on Romans** (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971, a reprint) that is widely respected among New Testament scholars. Dr. Plumer made these comments on homosexuality: "Such wickedness met with punishment, recompense, retribution, even in this life....The destruction of domestic love, the brutality consequent upon the basest vices, and the hideous forms of loathsome disease thus induced constituted a meet, appropriate reward of forsaking God" (p. 70). If time permitted, I would like to read from other scholars, but I shall turn now to an analysis of Romans 1.

In order for us to understand what Paul wrote about homosexuality, it is necessary that we read Romans 1:18-23. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal

power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

If you listened carefully to that reading from Romans 1, you should be able to understand the depths of degradation to which the Gentiles in Rome had sunk. They had exchanged the true and living God for gods made by man's hands. About six hundred years before Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, the prophet Jeremiah had expressed astonishment at the Jews' turning from God to serve idols. "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). Please remember what Dr. Adam Clarke said: The Gentiles' "system of idolatry necessarily produced all kinds of impurity" (volume 6, p. 44). Idolatry at Rome was responsible for causing many of the Gentiles to believe that homosexuality was just another lifestyle—that it was normal and natural and perhaps even desirable. Are Americans making the same foolish and destructive mistake?

Because the Gentiles had forgotten God, "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (Rom. 1:24-25). These verses teach a very sobering truth: When we give God up, he in turn will give us up. He cannot continue to endorse our behavior when we have forsaken his will. Does that same truth apply to children of God? Will he give us up when we give him

up? The passage I read to you from Jeremiah makes that truth very plain. Jeremiah was not speaking of Gentiles when he said they had forsaken the fountain of living waters. They had never known the fountain of living waters. He was talking of the Jews, God's own people.

Homosexuality was not and is not the only way human beings can dishonor their own bodies between themselves. When men and women engage in premarital sex or extramarital sex, they are dishonoring their own bodies between themselves. We would not consider illicit sex among heterosexuals as being "unnatural," but it is still sinful and will condemn those who do not repent of that sin. Paul listed fornication and adultery among the lusts of the flesh and then said, "They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

But if Christians become involved in the sin of homosexuality, will not the grace of God compensate for that transgression? It is not unusual to hear some professed Christian say: "I know homosexuality (or adultery or stealing) is wrong but God is so gracious he will forgive me." My friends, God will forgive any sin, but only if we repent of that sin. If Christians do not walk in the light as Jesus Christ is in the light, they will not continue to enjoy the forgiveness of sins. Walking in the light always involves turning away from whatever sins we have committed—including homosexuality—and asking God to forgive us.

The Gentiles knew God, but they glorified him not as God and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Rom. 1:26). The expression, "vile affections," means passions of dishonor. The New American Standard Bible renders the Greek "degrading passions." Dr. Hugo McCord translates the Greek "shameful passions." Does that expression furnish you some insight as to what God thinks of homosexuality?

In the Old Testament God called homosexuality "an abomination." In the New he refers to it as "degrading passions."

One of the keys to understanding what God thinks about homosexuality is the word "nature." "For even their women did exchange the natural use into that which is against nature" (Rom. 1:26). What does Paul mean by the term "nature?" We must go back to the creation to understand God's intent in creating us male and female. In the very first chapter of the Bible, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:26-28). God meant for man and woman to enjoy sexual union in the marriage relationship. God's inspired word does not allow for any other arrangement than the male-female arrangement. Besides, homosexual couples cannot fulfill the divine mandate about being fruitful and filling the earth. Homosexuality is a perversion of God's pattern for sexual behavior.

Paul addressed the same problem among the men. "And likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lusts one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error that was meet" (Rom. 1:27). One does not have to be an expert in physiology to understand the point the apostle Paul was making. He was arguing that God made males and females to communicate sexually. Men are not designed to have sexual intimacy with another male or women with other women. When they do so, they are committing grievous

sin against each other and against the God who made us. One does not even have to know and believe the Bible to understand that homosexuality is a perversion of human sexual functioning.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates the last part of verse 27 as follows: The men were “consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own person the due penalty for their error.” The expression, “consumed with passion,” or as the King James Version says, “burned in their lusts one toward another,” describes the intense sexual behavior of many homosexuals. Many male homosexuals have as many as three hundred partners per year. Their sexual desires are not very discriminating. That is also one of the reasons sexually transmitted diseases are so rampant within the male homosexual community.

Tragically, some of the liberal theologians accuse Paul of being prejudiced against homosexuality. They do not believe Paul was writing by the supernatural guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. When Paul vigorously and uncompromisingly condemned all homosexual conduct—both between two males and between two females—it was the Holy Spirit who was condemning all sexual perversion. What Paul’s views were does not matter; it is only what the Holy Spirit provided for us through Paul that matters.

Theologians also argue that the word “nature” just means what was customary. It is certainly true that the Jewish people—if they were faithful to the old covenant—were adamantly opposed to sexual perversion. They knew the law of Moses specifically forbade homosexual conduct as well as other forms of sexual immorality. But Paul was not condemning homosexuality because it was customary to do so. He was using God’s original pattern for sexual relating. As I have already mentioned, God made us male and female. All sexual conduct outside the marriage relationship is immoral and destructive. At least, that is

God's view as revealed in the Bible. Are you willing to live outside the will of God and bring the curses of God on your life? That is precisely what every fornicator, adulterer, incestuous person and homosexual does. They trample under foot the word of God and endanger their own souls.

One prominent writer on homosexuality says that Paul condemned only those homosexual acts connected with idolatry. It is true that in many cases homosexuality had a direct relationship to idolatry. But is that the only reason Paul opposes all homosexual activities? Would that kind of reasoning apply to the other sins mentioned in Romans 1? Paul lists fornication, covetousness, murder, deceit and other sins (Romans 1:29-31). Does he condemn these practices just because they are in some way related to idolatry? Or are they wrong within themselves?

I close today with Paul's advice to the church at Ephesus. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those that are done of them in secret" (Eph. 5:11-12).

Chapter 3

Whitewashing Sin

Until I had the privilege of studying the book of Ezekiel in graduate school, I had almost completely avoided the book. O I had preached sermons on the topic, "Watchman, Sound the Trumpet." I had also preached on leadership based on Ezekiel 34:1. But the book seemed to be so difficult that I had neglected studying it as carefully as I should have. Since graduate school I have preached many sermons on Ezekiel and have personally profited greatly by my study of this book. Now I preach on Ezekiel regularly and write articles based on it. In fact, I have just written an article entitled, "Whitewashing Sin," from Ezekiel 22:23-31. I invite you to study that topic with me today.

Ezekiel probably did most of his prophesying in the land of Babylon. The Israelite people had been captured by the mighty Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar and had been carried into Babylon where they were to be disciplined for seventy years, according to Jeremiah 25:11. God raised up the prophet Ezekiel to encourage, warn and comfort his people while they were in Babylon. Typical of the Lord's instructions to Ezekiel are these words from Ezekiel 33:7: "So you, O son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear the word of the Lord at my mouth, and warn them from me." If the prophet did not warn, God would hold him accountable for their behavior. If he warned them and they paid no attention to his warnings, their blood was upon their own heads.

Ezekiel 22 lays much of the blame for Israel's predicament on the shoulders of the leaders in Israel—the prophets, the priests, and the princes. But the people of the land were not without guilt in the apostasy of the nation. Ezekiel begins his prophetic utterance by affirming: "The

word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, You are the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation" (Ezek. 22:23-24). In reading the Old Testament prophets—and not just Ezekiel—we surely are impressed by the great number of times the prophets repeat a formula somewhat similar to the one Ezekiel uses: "The word of the Lord came unto me." Ezekiel had no superior knowledge or wisdom on his own; nor does he claim to have. He had to depend on the Lord for his message to the Israelites. But, like the other great prophets of the Old Testament, he was faithful in delivering God's message in God's words to God's people.

God demanded that Ezekiel tell the people of God that their land was not cleansed, that it had not been rained upon in the day of indignation. The moral and spiritual behavior of the Jews had caused the Lord to withhold the blessings they needed. The prophet Amos had earlier used somewhat similar language. The Lord said through Amos: "And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet you have not returned unto me, says the Lord" (Amos 4:7-8).

There were great prophets of God at every stage of Israel's development as a nation, men like, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. But there were other prophets who were more interested in the fleece than in the flock, as Ezekiel makes very plain with regard to the shepherds in Israel (Ezek. 34:11-19). Some of those prophets did not receive their messages from God, although they pretended to. Others perverted the messages they had received. Ezekiel says concerning some of the prophets: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravaging the prey; they have devoured souls; they have

taken treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof" (Ezek. 22:25).

The word "conspiracy" points to trouble within the nation of Israel—trouble which had been devised and perpetrated by her prophets. The nation had not come to its tragic position by some outside force. They had brought evil upon themselves because of their disrespect for God's law. They apparently thought they could tread upon God's covenant and not have to suffer the consequences. They had forgotten the truth Hosea had taught the nation. "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7). The entire Israelite nation was about to learn the lesson God had taught them through their prophets.

Ezekiel describes the greedy prophets who had formed a conspiracy as "a roaring lion tearing the prey." The prophets were supposed to be like shepherds carefully guiding and guarding the sheep. But they were acting like hungry lions. Their concern was for their own welfare—not for the people they were supposed to lead. The prophet Ezekiel condemns the shepherds in Israel—which probably included the prophets. He accuses them of eating the fat, clothing themselves with the wool, killing them which are fed; but they were not feeding the flock (Ezek. 34:3). The prophets were like the false teachers of Peter's day. "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words (or well turned words) make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not" (2 Pet. 2:3).

Ezekiel lists three indictments against the prophets who had formed a conspiracy. "They have devoured souls." They were not interested in building up the nation of Israel—strengthening the weak in the nation and restoring the nation to its greatness. Their sole concern was for their own welfare. The good shepherd, Jesus says in his great parable, knows his sheep, is known by his sheep and lays down his life for

the sheep (John 10:11, 14-15), The prophets of Ezekiel's day were the hirelings Jesus mentioned in the Parable of the Good Shepherd. They were looking out for number one (John 10:12).

The prophets had taken the treasure and precious things. In this respect, they had the attitude of Balaam, the Gentile prophet. Peter accused the false teachers of his day of being like Balaam "who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15). What that really means is that Balaam was available to the highest bidder. If Balak, king of Moab, would pay the prophet more than he was currently earning, he would prophesy for Balak. But surely there are no preachers today who will sell their souls for a mess of pottage, are there? Does the money-grubbing you see on Trinity Broadcasting Network bother you? Do you ever wonder if the preachers on those programs have any other interest than money? The so-called "health and wealth" gospel has made a number of television preachers rich.

In their search for wealth and power, the prophets had made many widows in the midst of the nation. Does Ezekiel mean that the prophets actually killed people to gain their wealth? I know that sounds very evil, but there is no doubt it has happened through the years. Ahab and Jezebel made Naboth's wife a widow and took their possessions. That was not the first or the last time that greed has caused the death of good people. In fact, we have come to expect it of people of the world, but the men Ezekiel had in mind were prophets. It would be similar to what we have seen from men like Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Henry Lyons and countless others. No wonder religion has such a minimal influence on the United States.

If the prophets alone had been guilty of greed, violence and theft, that would have been tragic enough. But the priests in Israel had violated the law and profaned the Lord's holy things: they put no difference between the holy

and the profane, neither did they show any difference between the unclean and the clean, and hid their eyes from my sabbaths. The Lord said to the priests, "I am profaned among them" (Ezek. 22:26). How sad that the men in Israel who were supposed to be moral leaders had themselves become immoral. Can a nation prosper or even survive with such leadership?

Ezekiel's older contemporary, Jeremiah, confronted many of the same problems with the leadership in Israel. He mourns the behavior of the prophets. "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones within me shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, says the Lord" (Jer. 23:9-11).

The major responsibility of the priests in Israel was to know the law and to teach it to the people. Only a small number of priests could actually offer sacrifices and take care of the temple. Most of the priests were to teach God's law and to observe that law. They of all people should not have profaned God's holy arrangements. Did they offer sick and diseased animals, as some of the priests did in the days of Malachi? Were they greedy, like the sons of Eli? We are not told about the nature of their sins, except, they had put no difference between the holy and the profane and between the unclean and the clean.

The sacrifices, the feasts, the other acts of worship under the law had been ordained of God. Many of the priests either did not know the difference between the profane and the holy or they did not care. Are we guilty of the same lack of discernment? Some of the worship services on television resemble a rock concert more than worship to God almighty. When we witness men and

women skipping, shaking, yelling, dancing, prancing, rolling on the floor and barking like dogs, such behavior reminds us of Ezekiel's condemnation of not discerning the difference between the holy and the profane. How can anyone treat the worship services as if they were a carnival or a ballgame?

God in his infinite wisdom declared some activities clean and others unclean. In some cases, the priests may not have understood why God had done that. But their duty was to make sure the distinction between the clean and the unclean was maintained. It was not their responsibility to decide what was clean and what was unclean, but to make sure they knew the difference and that the people of God observed the difference. The message for us should be very plain. We are to observe God's rules and regulations, even if we are not able to understand his reasons for giving them. How foolish for ordinary human beings to say: "I do not understand why God gave this or that command." If we want to honor God, we follow his inspired directions for our lives.

For Christians the sabbath law is one of historical interest. We were never given the sabbath for this covenant. But the sabbath was a very significant law of the old covenant. Every priest knew that, but many of them did not honor the sabbath. One of the reasons the Jews were carried into Babylonian exile was because they had ignored the sabbath and had desecrated that holy day. Many of the Jews acted as if the sabbath was no different from any other day.

The political leaders in Israel—the princes—were not unlike the prophets and the priests. Ezekiel said concerning the princes: "They are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain" (Ezek. 22:27). Maybe in our generation we have come to expect corrupt political leaders, but the political leaders in Israel were also spiritual leaders. The so-called separation of church and state in our nation did not exist in Israel. Israel

was a theocracy, meaning, that God was over both the so-called "secular activities" and the spiritual activities. The princes had been chosen by God and were to follow his directions.

If the language of Ezekiel were a little more modern, one would think he was describing some of America's political leaders. The princes in Israel were like wolves tearing the prey. The princes in this respect were like the prophets which Ezekiel mentioned in verse 25, except he uses a lion in that verse—not wolves. But the meaning is the same. Both prophets and princes were using their positions to enrich themselves. So long as they had power, prestige and money, the nation could go to pot, for all they cared. And that is exactly what happened. Without good leadership, the nation went from bad to worse. Eventually it had to be taken from its homeland and carried into a strange land. What will happen to America if we do not elect men and women of character? Can we continue to prosper—financially and otherwise—if we have adulterers, liars and thieves in places of leadership in the United States? Does character really count in our elected officials?

Ezekiel accuses the princes of shedding blood. He does not give any particulars, but we know what has happened through the centuries. Men have robbed and stolen and killed in order to obtain what they wanted—whether money or power or sexual fulfillment or whatever. It happens so often in our country that we hardly pay attention to it any more. But the princes were God's rulers. They were expected to observe his statutes and commandments against shedding innocent blood. The nation had to pay dearly for its cruelty.

America is supposed to be a compassionate nation. At least, we tell ourselves that. But how could any nation be compassionate when it murders 1,500,000 of its children every year? If killing babies by abortion is not the shedding of innocent blood, what would be? Those precious little souls have done no wrong. They are creatures made in the

image of God, But the supporters of abortion treat little unborn babies as if they were trash. Can God bless America when we kill so many of his precious creatures? There is no doubt, dear friends, that God hates the shedding of innocent blood, including the blood of 30,000,000 babies killed by abortion since 1973. Is it not time that we weep for our great nation?

The political leaders in Israel were guilty of destroying souls to get dishonest gain. Was money so important that the princes would destroy souls to obtain it? You know that has happened in every generation and is happening today. Some of our political leaders will sell their souls and the souls of their constituents to gain the favor of big business, of the sleazy pornography industry and of many other immoral practices. Why do America's leaders-political, religious and social-sit idly by and allow programs like the Jerry Springer Show to be on television? Are they so spineless that they are afraid to do anything about such vulgar programs? It is time that we elect men and women who will show courage by opposing this great evil.

Money constitutes a great temptation for most people. But how can politicians sell their own country to foreign interests? Are we so naive as to believe the Communist Chinese are not buying our military secrets to destroy this country? The Communists have always said they would win in the long run. Unless our leaders use more judgment than they have been using, the Communists will win over this nation very easily. Is getting elected so vital to an individual that he will betray his country? Paul fully understood the attraction of riches. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-10). In His Parable of the Sower, Jesus

spoke of the "deceitfulness of riches" (Mt. 13:22). For some reason, most politicians have not read or do not believe what Jesus said.

How absolutely tragic when politicians compromise their convictions and betray their country, as the princes in ancient Israel did. But what is infinitely worse is for God's prophets and preachers to attempt to cover up the sins of the princes. Ezekiel says that "her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them saying, Thus says the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken" (Ezek. 22:28), The King James Version does not bring out the full meaning the original language. Please listen to the rendering of the New Revised Standard Version. "Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, Thus says the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken."

The prophets were God-ordained and were supposed to speak God's words to the nation of Israel and to nations surrounding Israel (Dt. 18:15-18). How could men who were called of God be so rebellious against God's will? They whitewashed the sins of the princes, the priests and the people. I grew up in an era when many people could not afford paint for their barns and other farm buildings. Most people in my community whitewashed their barns, their fence posts, and their smokehouses. Of course, the whitewash was intended to cover up whatever actually needed painting. Whitewashing was a temporary solution.

The sins of the Israelite people needed addressing with words from God almighty. Those sins were destroying the people of God, but the prophets were providing a cover-up for the evils in the nation. We do not know the exact words the prophets were using, but we know they were not doing themselves or their listeners any favors by covering up the sins of the people.

Our generation of preachers and other religious leaders

have become experts at whitewashing sin. There was a time when preachers of almost all religious groups preached against divorce and remarriage. They knew the teaching of the Bible on the topic and generally were not reluctant to teach the truth. Remarriage was allowed for marital unfaithfulness. In our day, most churches are full of people who have been divorced, remarried, divorced and remarried—over and over. Churches in too many cases do not even investigate why the marriages failed. When men and women are divorced for reasons other than sexual immorality, they have no scriptural right to remarry. When churches open their arms to these people, they are condoning adultery. But how many churches do you know who disfellowship adulterers or who refuse to have them in their membership? Is that not whitewashing sin?

Americans—both religious and irreligious—often speak of living together or cohabitating rather than sexual immorality. We speak of adultery as having an affair rather than calling it what it is. Homosexuality becomes an alternate lifestyle. Are we preachers not concerned about the souls of men and women who are involved in blatant rebellion against God? Are we not concerned for our own souls when we whitewash sin? Have we forgotten Paul's warning to a young preacher: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In view of that tendency in nearly every generation, what are gospel preachers supposed to do? Do we whitewash sin among members of the various churches or do we preach the truth and drive people away? My friends, here is what preachers must do—if they want to have God's approval. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Truth and truth alone will set men free (John 8:32).

Woe to that preacher who is more interested in keeping his job than in preaching the truth!

The prophets of Ezekiel's day were seeing vanity, that is, their so-called "visions" were nothing more than their imaginations working overtime. All of us know—if we are Bible students and careful observers—that the visions men on television and radio are supposed to experience are also vanity. They are not having visions from God. They are making up their visions and giving them to their hearers as if they came from God. The preachers on television are using their trumped-up visions to bleed their viewers and listeners of their money.

The prophets were "divining lies" and saying, "Thus says the Lord God, when the Lord had not spoken." The expression, "divining lies," shows that the prophets were inventing the messages they were presenting to the Jewish people. That is further explained when Ezekiel says, The prophets are saying, "Thus says the Lord, when the Lord has not spoken." When a man claims to speak for God, he had better make sure he really is speaking for God. The prophets brought the curses of God on their heads when they claimed to speak for God and had not received a message from the Lord. How do the men and women on television think they are going to escape condemnation for claiming to speak for God when they have invented their messages? The only way men can speak for God in our day is to find the message they are delivering in the word of God. God does not reveal his message in any other way in this dispensation. All who teach otherwise are either deceiving themselves or their listeners or both. This is a serious charge, but I am prepared to sustain it.

Chapter 4

Whitewashing Sin (No. 2)

Most of the speakers on the Trinity Broadcasting network—with the exception of men like Dr. D. James Kennedy—pretend they are in direct communication with God Almighty. I have heard preachers like Paul Crouch, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, and Marilyn Hinkley claim to have received oral messages from God. What is particularly troubling is their demeanor when they speak of such communications. They talk as if they have just had a telephone conversation with their neighbor or with the gas company representative. They never fall to the ground and take off their shoes, as Moses did when God told him he was standing on holy ground (Ex. 3:5). The television preachers act as if a vision from God is not all that different from getting a letter in the mail. They appear to exhibit no reverence for their privileged position.

The truth is, dear friends, these television preachers have not received direct word from God. The New Testament makes it very plain that God has said all this generation needs. If that were not true, why would Paul write to Timothy as follows: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)? The Bible, according to Paul, is profitable for whatever a Christian needs—doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. That does not leave any of our needs uncovered. Besides, the word of God makes the man of God mature and furnishes him unto **all** good works. What else could man possibly need that is not in the word of God? If he needs more, then the word of God does not furnish us unto all good works.

The nation of Israel faced some of the same false

prophets which our generation has come to expect. Ezekiel claims there was a conspiracy of the prophets of Israel. They were like roaring lions tearing their prey. They devoured souls rather than strengthening them in their service to God. The prophets took the treasure and precious things and made many widows in the nation (Ezek. 22:25). The priests were not that much better. They violated the law and profaned God's holy things. They made no distinction between the holy and the profane; neither did they put any difference between the unclean and the clean. They disregarded the sabbaths which God himself had ordained. In all of this, God was profaned among the priests (Ezek. 22:26).

The political leaders in the nation were like wolves tearing the prey. They had no respect for human life and, like the abortionists of our day, they "shed blood." They destroyed the souls of God's people in order to get dishonest gain. If one read these words in a little more modern language, he might think he was reading about some of our current political leaders. The president, the vice-president, hundreds of members of Congress and millions of Americans endorse the killing of babies by abortion. The president says he wants to keep abortion safe, legal and rare. I think he does want to keep it safe, and legal; I have serious questions about his wanting to keep it rare.

One of the most disturbing statements about the prophets is their whitewashing of sin. Unlike the great prophets of God—Elijah, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Ezekiel—most of the prophets whitewashed sin. They were not concerned about "reproving, rebuking, and exhorting." They wanted to make as much money as possible and be as popular among the people as possible. Can you imagine the great damage such preaching does—both to the people of God and to outsiders? The prophets were not supposed to ridicule or lampoon their hearers, but they were supposed to preach the truth in love. They could

not compromise; they could not negotiate. They were obligated to deliver God's message in God's word to God's people. If they failed to do that, God would hold them accountable.

We have no way of knowing in every case exactly how the prophets whitewashed sin, but the Bible gives us enough examples that we can discern what happened. During the days of Ahab, the prophet Micaiah would not go along with the court prophets. They had assured Ahab that he would win the battle for the possession of Ramoth-Gilead. One of the prophets named Zedekiah the Son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron. He said to Ahab and Jehoshaphat, "The Lord says, with these you shall push the Syrians, until you have consumed them." The other prophets in the court of Ahab also said, "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into king's hand" (1 King 22:11-13). A messenger was sent to get Micaiah to hear what he had to say. The messenger told Micaiah, "Behold, now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let your word, I pray you, be like the word of one of them, and speak what is good" (1 Kings 22:13).

The messenger was not really interested in what Micaiah had to say. He wanted him to tell the king exactly what the other prophets had said. Could any faithful prophet speak what the other prophets were saying to Ahab unless it was the truth? Could they invent the message on their own? Please listen to Micaiah. "As the Lord lives, what the Lord says unto me, that shall I speak" (1 Kings 22:14). But, Micaiah, surely you are not going to disagree with all these four hundred prophets who assured Ahab that he would take Ramoth-Gilead? My friends, I take great courage in Micaiah's answer to the messenger. "As the Lord lives, what the Lord says unto me, that shall I speak." What else could a prophet of God say? What can a preacher of the gospel say? We must not invent our messages, as Ahab's

court prophets did. We must speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). The fortunes of Ahab and of the nation would have been different if they had listened to God's word delivered by Micaiah.

Balak, king of the Moabites, made every effort possible to get Balaam, a Gentile prophet, to curse God's people. Balaam wanted to curse the Israelites because the pay for doing so was very good. But he said to Balak, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more" (Num. 22:18). Tragically, Balaam tried to curse God's people but was not allowed to do so. His answer was right, but his attitude was wrong. Peter provided this epitaph for Balaam: He "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15). Balaam was not able to whitewash sin, but he tried and stood condemned before the God of heaven.

During the days when Israel was on the brink of being carried captive to Babylon, king Zedekiah sent word to Jeremiah for him to pray for the nation. But the nation had gone so far away from God that prayer would do no good. The king and the people were looking for Jeremiah to ask God to prevent the exile. Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel; Thus shall you say unto the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus says the Lord, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city" (Jer. 37:6-10).

Jeremiah's preaching made the political leaders so angry that they put this humble servant of God in a

dungeon. Zedekiah knew Jeremiah was a faithful prophet of God. Zedekiah had Jeremiah removed from the dungeon and brought to the king. Zedekiah asked Jeremiah, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Jeremiah answered, "There is: for, said he, you shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon" (Jer. 37:15-17). The king and the princes of Israel wanted Jeremiah to whitewash their sins and give them assurance that their endeavors were not going to fail. Jeremiah could not do that and remain faithful to his calling. The leaders in Israel accused Jeremiah of betraying his country. They said, "You have fallen away to the Chaldeans." Jeremiah vigorously denied their charge (Jer. 37:13-14).

Have we as preachers of the gospel learned the lessons these Old Testament incidents were intended to teach us? Are preachers in our day willing to stand up to the powers that be and oppose whatever evil they commit? If every preacher in America had the courage of Micaiah or Jeremiah, would our nation be so steeped in sin? Would America have been free to destroy 30-35 million babies by abortion over the past twenty-seven years? Would beverage alcohol be killing so many people on our highways? Would gambling be making addicts out of millions of Americans and destroying so many homes? Would we be talking favorably of euthanasia, infanticide and physician-assisted suicide? How many of us have the courage to condemn the Jerry Springer show and similar programs on television?

Whitewashing sin applies not only to the evils in our world, but to those within various religious organizations. Are preachers whitewashing sin when they fail to point out the many unscriptural and unreasonable trends within the religious community? Are we concerned about the compromises most religions—especially the mainline denominations—are making? Should we not have the attitude of the great prophet, Jeremiah when he asked the Jewish people, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold,

and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger" (Lam. 1:12)?

Psychiatrists, psychologists and some theologians whitewash human behavior—such as, alcoholism, by referring to it as a disease. And who wants to call sin what the Bible does—SIN? Preachers may whitewash sin but that does not make it less sinful in the eyes of God almighty. So how can a preacher live with himself when he fails to preach what the Bible teaches on all topics? There is nothing to be gained by being harsh, unloving and mean-spirited, but we must tell it like it is. I do not want to stand before God in the judgment and have him say, "You knew that premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness and such like were wrong, but you did not have the courage to follow the instructions of my word." I want to be able to say with the apostle Paul: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). If we preachers miss heaven, how much good will worldly popularity do us in the judgment?

Now please think of this question: If prophets form a conspiracy against God's law and against God's people, if priests have violated God's law and profaned his holy things, and if the political leaders are greedy to the point of destroying souls, what influence will their conduct have on the people? If the prophets whitewash sin, see vanity, divine lies and claim to have revelation from God when they have none, will the people be drawn closer to God or turned away from God's law? It should not take great knowledge of God's word to answer those questions, but just in case someone may not know what the Bible says,

please listen carefully: "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully" (Ezek. 22:29). What can one expect of the people when the leaders committed almost every crime you can imagine? The prophets stole the precious things and made many widows in the land. The priests did not make any distinction between the holy and the profane, between the unclean and the clean, hid their eyes from God's sabbath so that God was profaned among the priests. The political leaders were ravenous wolves tearing the prey. They shed innocent blood and used underhanded and illegal methods to gain money. In addition to all of that, the prophets whitewashed the sins of the leaders. You would expect the people to become like their leaders. Tragically, that is exactly what happened.

Like their leaders, the common people used oppression to gain their ungodly goals. We are not given the exact nature of the oppression, but we know what happened in ancient times and we know what occurs in our generation. Sometimes business people, professional people and others take advantage of the defenseless. Banks sometimes gouge the poor because the poor have little influence. The poor cannot usually hire lawyers to defend their interests; so they suffer at the hands of their oppressors. Racial minorities often fall into the same category as the poor. Oppression of racial groups is par for the course in some communities. When the people know their leaders are mistreating others and getting by with it, what hinders people from following the dirty tactics of their leaders?

The common people in Israel "exercised robbery." Did the people use weapons to rob the poor and others? Truthfully, some robbery is carried on in broad open daylight by various schemes which are designed to enrich the perpetrators and to impoverish the poor and the needy. We know such behavior occurred in ancient Israel because

the Bible says it did. Furthermore, we can read it in secular histories. But does it happen in our generation? How many old people have been cheated by companies and by individuals which pretend to be helping them? I know dozens of cases where unscrupulous contractors have charged old people many times the value of the work the contractors did. That might not be called "robbery," but it really amounts to that.

God has always been concerned about the poor and the needy. One cannot read either the Old Testament or the New without coming to that conclusion. Over and over in the Bible, words such as the following appear: "Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widows" (Isa. 1:17). "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out of your house? When you seek the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh" (Isa. 58:6-7). The New Testament is no less explicit on this topic. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). When we give to the poor, we lend to God almighty.

Some of the Jews in Ezekiel's day apparently believed they could oppress the stranger without endangering their souls. But God did not permit his people to abuse and misuse anyone, even if they were not Israelites. But are Christians responsible for helping non-Christians? Absolutely! Our first duty is to our brothers and sisters in Christ, as I have just read from Galatians 6:10, but we are to help all people when we have the opportunity. Does that mean people of other religions, other races, other stations in life? Yes, a thousand times yes. We not only may not oppress the stranger, but we must provide positive help.

The Lord knew of the greed, rebellion, violence and disrespect for his law among the prophets, priests, political leaders and the common people. So he initiated a search "for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezek. 22:30). The New American Standard Bible translates the Hebrew in a little plainer English. "And I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."

In times of great wickedness, God searches for a man or a few men who will stem the tide of ungodliness. He found Noah in the days before he was to send destruction on the whole earth. But in the time preceding the Babylonian exile he could not find enough good men and women to preserve the nation from the captivity. Ezekiel expressed that truth in these words: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying. Son of man, when the land sins against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14). The same sentiment is presented in verse 20. "Though Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

Is the Lord saying through Ezekiel that enough good men and women could preserve a nation or civilization? Just ten righteous men could have saved Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities of the plains, but ten righteous men could not be found. Only Lot and his two daughters were righteous in the sight of God. So the cities of the plains—including Sodom and Gomorrah—were simply wiped off

the face of the earth. The cities were so completely destroyed that no one has been able to find even a trace of those ancient cities.

At the time of the Babylonian exile, the Lord could not find one man who would stand against the evil which was so rampant in Israel. He wanted someone who would build up the wall, spiritually speaking. He looked for someone who would stand in the gap to prevent further erosion of the moral and spiritual values he had given to the Jews. God did not want to destroy his people, but he could find no one who would speak for him and live for him. How can a nation survive when her leaders have become so grossly immoral--when they lie, commit adultery, obstruct justice and promote many kinds of evil, such as, the killing of millions of innocent babies, the abuse of taxpayers' money and stealing from the public treasury?

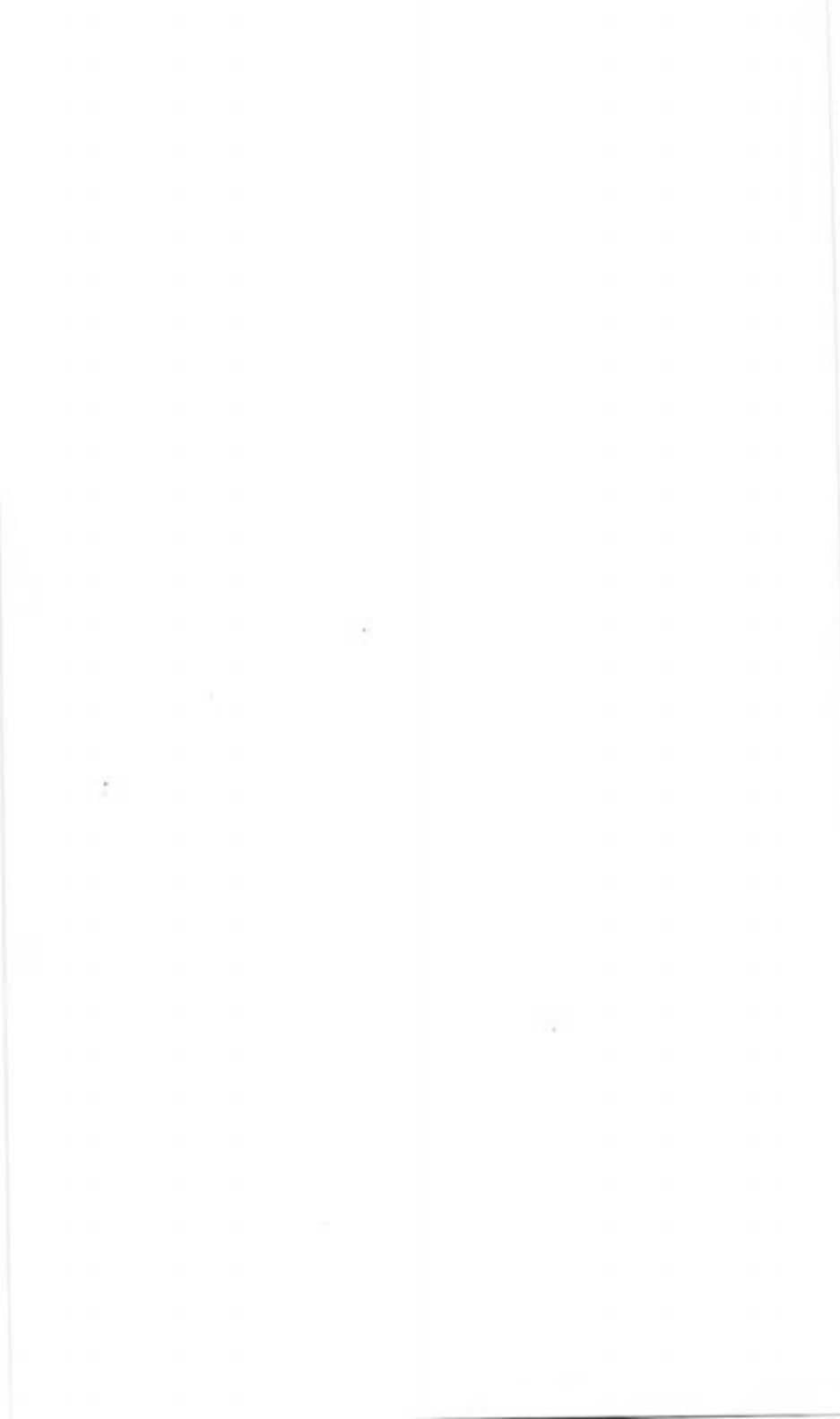
Is God searching in our day for men and women who will build up the wall and stand in the gap to save the land? Are not all members of the body of Christ--and not just preachers or other religious leaders--supposed to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt. 5:13-16)? Paul pled with the Philippians: "Do all things without murmuring and disputings: that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of the Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Phil. 2:14-16).

My friends, are you willing to stand up and be counted for the Lord? Are you willing to take a stand against all evil and be a positive influence for good in your community? Preachers have a sacred obligation to inform men of the immorality which is destroying our nation. They may not be popular with many people if they do speak out against sin, but should we not be more concerned about being popular with our Lord? I am not suggesting that we be

harsh or mean in our opposition to sin, but we must take a stand against the devil and for the Lord. Am I sure we can reverse the trends which are destroying our land? No, as a matter of fact, I am not, although I am hopeful. But in the final judgment, I want to hear my Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Should not all who call themselves Christians long for that day?

Since no man to build up the wall and stand in the gap could be found, the Lord poured out his anger upon them. He consumed them with the fire of his wrath. Their own way God visited upon their heads (Ezek. 22:31). Is the Lord saying to the Israelites through Ezekiel: "You have sown to the wind, you are reaping the whirlwind?" From the preaching of the faithful prophets, the Jews should have known they would have to suffer the consequences for their wrongdoing. But they acted as if God were joking when he warned them of the punishment they could expect if they disobeyed his will.

There is much we can and should learn from Ezekiel 22:23-31. I hope we have learned some of the lessons God intended. But I want to stress one truth in closing: Those theologians and preachers who say that God is so gracious, merciful and loving that he will not punish the evildoer must not have read or must not believe this great chapter and dozens of others like it. My friends, God says what he means and means what he says. If you are not a New Testament Christian, will you not obey our Lord today?



Chapter 5

Your Hands Are Full Of Blood

The great statesman prophet, Isaiah, was called of God at a time when the nation of Israel was on a collision course with disaster. Isaiah one lists and discusses some of the grievous sins of which God's people were guilty. Isaiah accuses the Israelites of having forgotten God's goodness to them in their deliverance from Egypt and in their occupation of Canaan. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider" (Isa. 1:4). The nation of Israel had become evil and rebellious like the nations around them. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:6). The remedy for Israel's spiritual sickness was readily available, but the Jews had chosen to reject it.

The Israelites' worship services had deteriorated until they consisted primarily of ritual, ceremony and show. The Lord asked his people, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you appear before me, who has required this of your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I am weary of bearing them; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings" (Isa. 1:11-13). Unfortunately, many critical scholars have mistaken God's condemnation of hypocrisy and shallowness for his opposition to any kind of ritual or ceremony. They have misunderstood what the prophet was telling the Jews. He was not condemning sacrifices of bullocks and lambs

and he goats; these were offered in harmony with God's provisions for the Israelite people. The prophet was criticizing the Jews for their belief that ceremony and ritual were substitutes for righteous and godly living. The Lord said, "Bring no more **vain** oblations," but he did not object to their bringing sacrifices if they were accompanied by sincerity and devotion.

Probably the most shocking criticisms of the Jews were these words: "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of God, you people of Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:10). Comparing the rulers to Sodom and the people to Gomorrah would not be considered very complimentary. Modern self-esteem preachers, like Robert Schuller and Norman Vincent Peale, would be offended by the prophet's words. They would probably accuse the prophet of not trying to win friends and influence people. But the prophet was following God's directions in trying to turn the Jews from their wicked ways to serve the true and living God.

Since God had chosen the Jews to serve a special purpose in the redemption of mankind, would he ever sever his relationship with them? Would he ever cease listening to their prayers and honoring their worship services? "And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa. 1:15). I have already given you some of the reasons why God would not listen to his people's prayers, but let me read the last part of verse 15. "Your hands are full of blood." Let me repeat that last statement. God said to the Jews: "Your hands are full of blood." The violence which had crept into Jewish life was displeasing to God and a detrimental influence on the nations surrounding Israel.

The idea of having blood on our hands or of having our hands full of blood is a recurring theme in sacred as well as secular literature. Let me give you some examples. Toward the end of the book of Isaiah, this great prophet

said, "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness....Their feet run to evil and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths" (Isa. 59:3, 7).

In the New Testament, Christ accused the Pharisees of opposing and killing the prophets God had sent to them — just as their fathers had done. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar" (Mt. 23:34-35),

Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver. After he recognized the great evil he had committed, he brought the money and gave it back to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt. 27:3-4). The chief priests and elders were not the least interested in Judas Iscariot's guilty conscience. They responded to Judas: "What is that to us? That is your problem" (Mt. 27:4). The truth is — as all of us recognize — the Jewish elders and Judas Iscariot were guilty before God. Their hands were full of blood.

Pilate, the Roman governor during the trial of Jesus Christ, lacked the courage to take a stand for Christ, although he knew he was doing a grave injustice to Christ. Please notice Pilate's action. "When he saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see to it yourselves. Then answered all the people, and said. His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt. 27:24-25). Pilate knew he was guilty of complicity in the death of Jesus Christ. Washing

his hands before the multitude and disclaiming any responsibility for Christ's death did not absolve him of his guilt.

Some of you will remember reading--either in high school or in college--William Shakespeare's play, **Macbeth**. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plotted to kill the good king Duncan. Act V, scene one portrays Lady Macbeth as constantly washing her hands to remove the blood of the king. The doctor attending Lady Macbeth speaks, "What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands." The Gentlewoman says, "It is an accustom'd action to her, to seem thus washing her hands; I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour." Lady Macbeth speaks: "Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Lady Macbeth's conscience would not let her forget her guilt in the killing of king Duncan. Shakespeare had well learned his lesson about responsibility for our actions. Lady Macbeth symbolizes millions of men and women who feel guilty because they are guilty.

Shedding innocent blood—to quote from Moses in Deuteronomy 19:10—covers a multitude of sins—the German holocaust, the atrocities in Cambodia, in Bosnia Herzegovina—but I shall concentrate in today's lesson on the evil of abortion. Abortion kills babies and everyone involved in this inexcuseable evil has the blood of innocent babies on his hands. The people involved in the abortion holocaust may not have thought seriously about their gruesome activities—which is tragic itself—but they are guilty before God and before right-thinking people of one of the greatest abominations known to man. 30,000,000 innocent children have been killed in the nineteen years abortion has been legal in the United States.

My friends, the women who choose abortion for other than therapeutic reasons have blood on their hands. From a biblical viewpoint, there is no question about the humanity

of the child conceived in its mother's womb. Nor is there any doubt that the abortion of a child brings death—often cruel and painful death—to the child. These facts are established beyond dispute—regardless of the vain reasoning of liberal theologians and self-serving politicians.

Unquestionably, most women—but not all believe they have the aborted baby's blood on their hands. They should believe it because they do. Let me give you examples of women's guilt regarding abortion. Barbara Morris's book, **Change Agents in the Schools** (Upland, CA: The Barbara Morris Report, 1979), tells of the work of Dr. Carol A. Crowell, a Toronto, Canada, abortionist, who "found that teenage abortion can be traumatic and dangerous not only physically, but emotionally. She found that all girls—all girls—had some sort of grief reaction and 'the sense of loss at six months post-abortion can be quite immense. I feel that these girls care and react internally more than they realize." One woman wrote: "I shall never forget those nightmares which still occur. The pieces of my baby being torn from my body, the children that never were, accusing me...Oh, the guilt. My dreams come to haunt me night and day" (pp. 157-158).

Jeanine Woody had an abortion and calls it a fatal mistake, "fatal to my marriage, my health, and any future worthy living." After her abortion, she wrote a book with the simple title, **Abortion?** (Houston: Hunter Ministries Publishing Company, 1977). Jeanine Woody tells of a friend who came to comfort her and said, "Jeanine, let me tell you about the mother of a friend of ours. This lady is in her eighties and is having so many mental and emotional problems that doctors fear for her sainty." "What's the problem?" I asked. "Senility?" "No," she replied. "Listen to this. Over fifty years ago this woman had an abortion. Her family never knew anything about it. Now she is literally being eaten alive by unresolved guilt" (p. 94). Is such guilt unrealistic? Is there any way to remove the unresolved

guilt?

Dr. David Reardon's excellent book, **Aborted Women: Silent No More** (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1987), chronicles the guilt feelings of a large number of American women. These women whose stories are told in Dr. Reardon's book believed they had been fed a dangerous lie by the women's liberationists and by many others in our society. They wanted to tell their stories to help other women avoid the mistakes they had made in having their babies aborted. The women formed an organization called WEBA: Women Exploited by Abortion. Dr. Reardon says the most frequent complaint from women who have had abortions was feeling guilty or dirty. "Many said they felt they had killed or murdered their babies and expressed self-hatred because of what they had done" (p. 52).

According to Dr. Reardon, one of the largest detailed studies of post-abortion consequences revealed that "43% of the women suffered from anxiety, 31% from depression and 26% from guilt" (p. 120). Mary Zimmerman's study of abortion "found fully 70% of aborting women expressed general disapproval of abortion." They felt it was murder, but justifiable murder, at least, in their cases (p. 121).

My friends, there are psychiatrists, psychologists, medical doctors, women's liberationists and even theologians who would call women's guilt over abortion "false guilt," but it is not. It is wrong for a woman to kill her baby which every mother may instinctively know, but which she may choose to ignore. But whether or not she knows it is wrong to kill her babies, it is. Women who abort their babies feel guilty and should feel guilty because they are guilty. But they can do something about the guilt.

But the women who have abortions are not the only ones who have blood on their hands. Fathers, husbands and boyfriends who consent to abortion also have blood on their hands. Fathers, generally speaking, do not want their teenage daughters to become pregnant. The fathers may

not have taught their daughters the immorality of premarital sex. They may have said or implied that sex before marriage is not wrong, so long as their daughters protected themselves from getting pregnant. If a teenage girl becomes pregnant out of wedlock because of the foolish advice of her father or in spite of his good advice, he may be embarrassed or hurt because of her actions. Such fathers sometimes encourage their daughters to make even worse mistakes—killing their babies. If the fathers who insist that their daughters kill their babies are Christians or claim to be Christians, they almost certainly will suffer from guilt. They have every right in the world to suffer from guilt because they have supported a grievous crime by having their grandchildren killed. Their hands are full of blood—their own grandchildren's blood. One of the six things God hates is "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). What unborn baby is guilty of a crime which deserves to be punished by the death penalty?

Husbands and boyfriends often give their consent for an abortion or they demand abortion. Jeff Hensley edited a very enlightening book called **The Zero People** (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1983). One of the chapters in the book was written by Bill Stout, for many years a nationally known CBS network correspondent. Bill Stout tells of his wife's abortion which occurred twenty-three years before he wrote the article. Bill Stout's wife argued—just as feminists do today—that her body belonged to her. The abortion was her decision alone. Please listen carefully to Bill Stout's own words. "If I am still wondering about the first one that never was, what about other men? How many of them share my haunted feelings about children who might have been? Why are we, the fathers who never were, so reluctant to talk about our feelings? And if it can be so painful for the men, how much worse must it be for the women who nurture and then give up the very fact of life itself....Clearly, as the saying goes about wars and generals,

abortion is far too important to be left the a woman and her doctor" (p. 219).

While husbands almost certainly hurt more than boyfriends, there are boyfriends who feel tremendous shame and guilt when their girlfriends have abortions. Those young men know – as all of us should – that abortion kills babies – their babies – the only babies they may ever have. Husbands and boyfriends who consent to abortion or who pressure their wives or girlfriends to have abortions have their hands full of blood. It may not make much difference to them now, but it will – unless they take steps to correct the evil they have done.

Doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who participate in abortions or support abortions have blood on their hands. I grew up with the belief that doctors are healers – not killers. I have not yet recovered from the shock of learning that medical doctors will cut little babies into millions of pieces and suck them from their mothers' wombs or will scrape them from the uterine walls. How do you explain a doctor's willingness to kill babies? Are the doctors not supposed to have compassion, understanding and love for their fellow human beings? Are not unborn babies their fellow human beings?

Doctors could stop the vast majority of abortions over night if they would simply put their feet down and refuse to kill babies. All doctors know – **all doctors know** – that what is conceived by a human father and a human mother is a human baby. How can medical doctors possibly justify killing 4,000 babies every day? Even from a purely pragmatic viewpoint, doctors are killing their future clients at the rate of 1,600,000 per year. Doctor, does that bother you? Can you see the blood dripping from your hands?

Dr. R. C. Patterson, a Nashville gynecologist, and his wife Janet wrote a book on abortion in 1974. Their book has the title, **Abortion: Trojan Horse** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers). These authors tell of a report from Hawaii

which stated "that many experienced a delayed (six months to two years) psychological problem after routine service on abortion cases" (p. 42).

Millions of Americans have seen the film, "Silent Scream," on television. The doctor who narrated that film is Dr. Bernard Nathanson, an American gynecologist. In 1979, Dr. Nathanson along with Richard Osling wrote an outstanding book, **Aborting America** (New York: Pinnacle Books). Dr. Nathanson had personally aborted 3,000 babies and supervised the aborting of 60,000 more. He claims he was "deeply troubled" by his "own increasing certainty that he had presided over 60,000 deaths" (p. xi).

Dr. Nathanson tells of talking to another physician's wife at a cocktail party. "She drew me aside and talked in a decidedly agitated manner of the increasingly frequent nightmares her husband had been having. He had confessed to her that his dreams were filled with blood and children, and that he had latterly become obsessed with the notion that some terrible justice would soon be inflicted on his own children in payment for what he was doing" (p. 145). Dr. Nathanson affirms that performing abortions has led to increasing drinking among medical doctors (p. 145). Should it surprise anyone that doctors drink alcoholic beverages to try to cover up the blood stains on their hands for killing babies? Abortionists' hands are full of blood—the blood of little innocent babies.

Supreme Court justices and all other judges who approve abortion have their hands full of blood. Two Supreme Court decisions--**Roe vs. Wade** and **Doe vs. Bolton**--legalized the killing of 30,000,000 babies in the United States. Justice Blackmun can talk about "potential life" all he wants to, but his ungodly and unconstitutional reasoning has led to the killing of millions and millions of babies and the end is not in sight. In recent years, the Supreme Court has chipped away at **Roe vs. Wade** but while it is chipping, 4,000 babies per day are dying at the

hands of doctors. Chipping away **Roe v. Wade** will not keep babies alive; the decision must be overturned. Other judges are guilty of shedding innocent blood when they uphold abortion. If they fail to agree with the United States Supreme Court, their decisions will be overturned. But is there no milk of human kindness flowing through the veins of state and federal judges? Would they not rather have their decisions overturned than to kill babies? Judges know—or should know—that abortion kills babies. Our Constitution must be used to protect babies. When a judge or any other governmental official approves of the killing of babies, his hands are full of blood. How can he stand before the Judge of this universe when his hands are full of blood?

Americans who are indifferent to the slaughter of millions of innocent babies have their hands full of blood. We can sin by doing and saying nothing, as well as by active participation in the abortion holocaust. My preacher friends, what are you doing and saying to your congregation about abortion? Nothing? How can you stand before families every Sunday and not talk about the killing of family members? Do you honestly believe God has no concern about what happens to his beautiful creatures—the little babies he himself creates in the womb? Are your hands full of blood because you lack the courage to preach the truth on abortion? Please do not tell me you do not know what the truth on abortion is!

The prophet Jeremiah grew weary of constantly combatting evil and decided he would not speak anymore in the Lord's name. But there was a fire burning in his bones and he could not keep quiet about evil (Jer. 20:9). Can we preachers stand on the sidelines while millions of babies are being brutally killed and do nothing about it? Can we preach the whole counsel of God and not condemn the killing of babies? Paul instructed Timothy to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2). The word condemns the killing of innocent

people.

My fellow Americans, what are you saying and doing about abortion? Are you using your time, your money and your vote to stop an evil which makes Hitler's slaughter of the Jews look almost harmless by comparison? Could our hands be full of blood because we are not doing enough about the abortion evil?

If mothers, husbands, fathers, boyfriends, doctors and judges have blood on their hands, what can be done about it? Let the great prophet Isaiah speak directly to your hearts. Isaiah said to the guilty Jews of his day: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:16-18).

Peter told the Jews who had participated in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). If you want blood washed from your hands, turn to the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Chapter 6

Religion And Abortion

One of the greatest tragedies in the abortion controversy is the role American religion has played. Oh, there have been hundreds of thousands of Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and other conservatives who have preached, prayed, boycotted, marched and in other ways sought to rescue babies from being killed by their mothers and doctors. In some cases, success has crowned the efforts of prolife people. Abortion clinics have been closed, abortionists have been driven out of the bloody and murderous business of killing babies and some laws have been modified to make it harder to destroy innocent human beings. But what have the so-called “mainline churches” done to stem the tide of destroying our future by killing our babies? The sad fact is that many of the mainline churches have joined the baby killers in their nefarious activities. I want to use our time today in examining “Religion and Abortion.”

One of the reasons so-called “mainline churches” have not joined the battle against abortion and abortionists is their almost total rejection of the word of God. They do not believe in the sacredness of all human life because they have no basis for judging what is and is not truly human. Oddly enough, many of the liberal theologians vigorously support the radical animal activists and decry the the destruction of eagles’ eggs, but never shed a tear for the millions and millions of babies who are mutilated in their mothers’ wombs. Have their never read that John the Baptist was a child before he was born, just as he was after he was born (Lk. 1:41, 44)? Does it matter to these supporters of death that the New Testament uses the word **brephos** of an unborn child **and** a newborn child or of an older infant? Do they not care that all human beings – born and unborn–

are made in the image of God? What would it take to change the hearts of these supporters of abortion? Their hearts will be changed, but it may be too late.

In October, November and December of 1981, hearings were conducted before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee of the Judiciary of the United States Senate. Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah served as Chairman of the Subcommittee. Others on the Subcommittee were Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa, Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona and Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont. The hearings lasted for eleven days and included over two thousand pages of testimony from dozens of organizations and individuals. The results of the hearings were published in two large volumes. I will be reading from both of these volumes in our discussion today.

I must make an explanation before reading some of the testimony from the senate hearings. I will be mentioning the names of several denominations in our examination of "Religion and Abortion." As I do so, please understand that I am not being ugly or mean in pointing out what these denominations and their leaders believe. They had every legal right to appear before the subcommittee and testify against the human life amendment which would have outlawed abortion. Their testimony is public record and should be carefully reviewed. I am aware that there are thousands of men and women who disagree with their denomination's stand on abortion. So when I mention a particular denomination, that does not mean that I believe every member of that denomination is pro-abortion. I happen to know there are thousands of Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Jews who believe that abortion is wrong – morally, politically and otherwise. But my concern today is to look carefully at the official stand of various liberal denominations. Please listen carefully to what these people say.

In volume one of the Subcommittee's hearings, there is a "Statement of Elizabeth Verdesi" from the United Presbyterian Church Council of Women in the Church. She identifies herself as a minister's wife, mother of two children, director of Christian education in a local congregation, organizer of a counseling service, and a youth worker. She mentions a report from the United Presbyterian General Assembly which stated: "Women should have full freedom of personal choice concerning the completion or termination of their pregnancy, and that should not be restricted by law, except that it be performed under the direction and control of a properly licensed physician" (p. 1143).

I want to summarize some illogical and inexcuseable statements in this excerpt from the Presbyterians' views on abortion. I did not see one word about a husband's rights with respect to the unborn. Babies result from the union of two persons—one male and one female. Why does the female only have a right to kill the baby? Should not the father's wishes be taken into consideration? If they are not, does that not create enormous tension between a husband and a wife? Yet husbands and wives are supposed to love each other and look after the other's welfare.

There is also nothing in the statement about the rights of the unborn. Later in the statement, Elizabeth Verdesi claims that the United Presbyterian Church in the USA has a strong commitment that all people made in the image of God (p. 1144). All people are made in the image of God—except babies whose mothers choose to have them executed by a medical doctor. Could God approve the wanton destruction of creatures who are made in his image? And it does no good—in fact, it makes no sense—to say that an unborn baby is not a human being or a person. There is not a medical doctor on earth who does not know that what is conceived of a human father and a human mother is a human baby. It is insulting to God almighty and to human intelligence to speak of an unborn baby as a clump of cells

or a mass of protoplasm. Unborn babies are human babies – little children – creatures of God almighty.

Elizabeth Verdesi pleads for having a properly licensed physician. Surely, if we are going to kill babies, we must have sanitary conditions and qualified physicians. But how can medical doctors who are sworn to help human beings take the lives of innocent babies? Recently, I talked with a physician friend of mine who said very plainly and pointedly: “I was trained to save lives – not to destroy them.” He was speaking primarily of physician-assisted suicide, but he holds the same views of abortion. If he were not prolife, you can know for sure I would not consult him for any reason.

Elizabeth Verdesi insists that “United Presbyterians believe that motherhood should be chosen and not coerced and that women have a right to bear children when they are prepared in their own view to undertake that kind of responsibility. Any society that insists that women must bear children as a duty to the State is more tyrannical than democratic” (p. 1144). I, too, believe motherhood should be chosen and not coerced. In fact, almost every person I have ever met believes that. But when a woman freely chooses to engage in the intimate relationship in marriage and a pregnancy results, she has not been forced or coerced. She has freely chosen and will be held accountable for bearing and rearing the child.

If she has the right to abort a baby, does she also have a right to kill the baby when it is born if she does not want it? Would Susan Smith of Union, South Carolina, have been less guilty **before God** if she had destroyed her beautiful little boys in her womb rather than pushing them in the lake to drown? If the child in the womb is called a **brephos** and a **brephos** after it is born, how does one decide it is right to kill the baby before it is born but not afterwards? Elizabeth Verdesi speaks of a woman’s making decisions according to her own conscience. Is that the way Christians

make decisions—by their own consciences? Or do we make decisions according to God's objective standard—the inspired word of God? If we make decisions on the basis of our consciences, how can we condemn the women of India who sacrifice their babies to the crocodile gods?

Volume two contains a letter from Cynthia Kirkman, Chairperson of the Committee of Women's Concerns of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Like her sister in the business of killing babies, she thinks abortion should be available to all who desire and qualify for it. She then quotes a statement from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA. "We hold in high respect the value of potential life" (p. 10). Potential life—a baby in its mother's womb is potential life? How utterly unscientific, unchristian and unreasonable! A baby in its mother's womb is a **brephos** (Lk. 1:41, 44). A baby outside its mother's womb is a **brephos** (Lk. 2:12, 16). How can we decide which **brephos** to kill?

Anne P. Schneibner is Convener of Economic Justice Task Group, of the National Episcopal Urban Caucus. Anne Scheibner's letter adds precious little to the other letters I have read to you, but there is one thought which should be noticed. Any attempt, she says, to outlaw abortion "is a violation of religious freedom" (p. 11). Is it a violation of religious freedom to prevent mothers from killing their children? What if the children are already born? Our laws forbid on penalty of death that parents not kill their children. Morally, there is no difference between killing an unborn child and in killing one already born.

Helen Parolla is Director of the Public Policy Center of the National Board of the YWCA. She makes only one statement which I wish to examine. She says no "consensus exists in attitudes toward abortion, and no restrictions on this right could achieve such consensus" (p. 14). Of course, no consensus on abortion exists. Is that the way our moral values are determined—on the basis of consensus. Paul

asked the Corinthians: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" There is no consensus on who the righteous are and what the term "inherit the kingdom of God" means. But what Paul wrote is the truth—even if the whole world rejects it. In this same verse, Paul condemns fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous people, drunkards, revilers, extortioners (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Is there any consensus on the sinfulness of any of these people? Homosexuality is an abomination in the sight of almighty God; it is against nature and will condemn the practitioners to eternal torment. But there is no consensus even among the churches—as to the sinfulness of homosexuality. Our conduct, dear friends, is not judged on the basis of consensus but on the truth of God's inspired word. To suggest otherwise is to throw moral values into a state of utter confusion.

B'nai B'rith Women—an internationally respected group of Jewish women—testified in support of killing babies in their mothers' wombs. These women speak of the diversity which exists within American Judaism—a fact which most Americans know. But they all share some values which are integral to their religion: "A respect for family, a concern for justice, a passion for freedom, a reverence for life" (p. 16). If time permitted, I would like to examine in great detail everyone of these values which the Jewish women said they shared in the Jewish community. Do the women in Judaism who support killing unborn babies really have "respect for family?" How could they have respect for family and kill many of the next generation? Should not the German holocaust have left Jewish people with a greater reluctance to kill future Jewish citizens?

Are the members of B'nai B'rith concerned for justice? The Old Testament prophets to the man vigorously condemned injustice and promoted justice. Amos commanded the Israelites: "But let justice run down as

waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). Does God's justice allow for the innocent—and all unborn children are innocent—to be brutally murdered by mothers and their doctors? Is that the kind of justice Amos was preaching? If it were, we can certainly get along better without it.

The Jewish women expressed a strong passion for freedom. I can understand that with no difficulty. The Jews unquestionably have been as mistreated as any other people on earth. They have been scattered throughout nations on earth and not made to feel at home in many of those nations. In view of their passion for freedom, how can they take away the freedom of the unborn child to be born? That kind of freedom we are better off without.

And how can these Jewish women speak of "reverence for life" when they support the destruction of life within the bodies of millions of mothers? In the powerful and beautiful movie, "Fiddler on the Roof," the constant theme it seems to me can be expressed in two words: "TO LIFE." Is it not a contradiction to speak of having reverence for life and then killing unborn babies? They do mention that Jewish law does not consider the fetus as a person (p. 16). If the Old Testament is a part of Jewish law, then they are sadly mistaken. The Old Testament writers unquestionably thought of the unborn child as being a person and important in the sight of God (Jer. 1:5; Psa. 139:12-15).

The members of B'nai B'rith who testified before Senator Hatch's committee affirmed that if abortion were restricted "women will find ways around those restrictions" (p. 17). I do not know anyone who would dispute that statement. Of course, some women will find a way to have an abortion regardless of what the law says. So what is the significance of such an observation? Murder is illegal in the United States—in every jurisdiction, including the nation's capitol. Has that fact prevented murders in Washington, D.C.? Did you know that the nation's capitol is also the

nation's murder capitol? Carrying firearms to school is illegal everywhere in our country. But 38,000 children take some kind of weapon to school every day. Some of those weapons are knives and not firearms, but the illegality of having weapons in school has not stopped young people's bringing them.

But if abortion were made illegal in every state in the United States, there would be far fewer abortions. There are hundreds of thousands of women who would not intentionally violate the law to kill their unborn babies. Over a period of years millions of babies would be saved. I am deeply saddened that women from any religious group would want to kill babies, but I am especially disturbed that Jewish women would. Does the Old Testament mean nothing to modern Jewish women? Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a convinced Jewish atheist, strongly condemns abortion. But many Jewish believers in God support abortion. I am at a loss to understand their rationales.

The United Church of Christ prepared a statement which appears in volume 2 of the Senate Subcommittee hearings. You probably know that the United Church of Christ is a new denomination and is one of the most liberal – if not **the** most liberal – denominations in the world. That denomination stands solidly against any attempt to stop abortion on demand. One paragraph from the testimony of the United Church of Christ allows us to see their unscriptural and unreasonable view of abortion. "An ethical view does not require an **undifferentiated** concern for life. It places peculiar value upon personal life and upon the quality of life, both actual and potential. In that light it is understandable that today an increasing number of persons find it difficult, if not impossible, to attribute anything more than the potentiality of human personhood to the embryo in its early stages. The implication is that factors other than its existence may appropriately be given equal or greater weight at this time—the welfare of the whole family, its

economic condition, the age of the parents, their view of the optimum number of children consonant with their resources and the pressures of population, their vocational and social objectives" (p. 24). The members of the United Church of Christ who prepared this statement show total disregard for the scriptural view of human life. The embryo—as they refer to an unborn child—is a child, a baby, a human being.

The Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church submitted to the Senate Subcommittee a Resolution Opposing a Constitutional Amendment Banning Abortions. A few brief excerpts from that resolution will be all I can give today. "We believe that continuance of a pregnancy which endangers the life or health of the mother or poses other serious problems concerning the life, health or mental capacity of the child to be, is not a moral necessity. In such cases, we believe the path of mature Christian judgment may indicate the advisability of abortion. We support the legal right to abortion as established by the 1973 Supreme Court decision" (p. 59). The Methodist resolution further says, "The language stating that fertilized eggs are persons, entitled to constitutional rights, leaves as highly likely the possibility that certain forms of contraceptions would become illegal. Our longstanding commitment to the right of couples to use safe contraceptive measures in responsibly controlling conception according to their circumstances thus becomes threatening" (p. 60).

I have many Methodist friends scattered throughout the southeast. The majority of these Methodists do not support abortion, at least, not to the same extent the leaders in Methodism do. But the statements I have read to you from the Methodist resolution which was given to the Senate Subcommittee draw very few lines against abortion at any time during the pregnancy of a woman. The baby can be killed by its own mother at any time if continuing the pregnancy threatens the mother's physical or mental health.

In other words, if she decides to have an abortion, the United Methodist Church supports her killing her own child. The testimony I have read to you from the United Methodist Church, from the United Church of Christ, from B'nai B'rith, from the Episcopal Church and from the Presbyterian Church of the United States disturb me tremendously. How can any group which claims Jesus Christ as their Lord destroy the creatures which are made in the image of God almighty? But what disturbs me more was the testimony of Dr. Paul Simmons, professor of Christian ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Simmons points out what ought to be obvious to all who have studied this matter carefully that a consensus on abortion does not exist in the United States. He seems to think we should not pass any restrictions on abortion until such a consensus is established. That is really an unusual and indefensible position for a man who teaches "Christian ethics." Is there a consensus on the sinfulness of homosexuality, of gambling, of beverage alcohol, of pornography, of premarital sex? Dr. Simmons insists that "there is not even a consensus among religious groups in the United States" (p. 33). So what else is new on the religious horizon? Is there a consensus among so-called "Christian denominations" regarding the deity of Christ, the inerrancy of scripture, the creation of man? I can go a step further. Is there a consensus within the Southern Baptist Convention on the inerrancy of scripture? Do we have to wait for a consensus to oppose evil — any evil? Even in our own government there is no consensus on any moral issue you can mention. Shall we fail to legislate against child pornography because there are millions of people in our world who see nothing wrong with pornography — including child pornography?

I could read to you more testimony from various religious groups and from leaders in politics, in churches and in education. But let me complete our discussion today

by making a few observations. The abortion holocaust could be stopped by churches in the United States if the leaders in those churches respected the biblical material on human life and if they had the courage to teach and vote their convictions. There are more than a hundred million people in the United States who claim to believe in God and to be members of churches. We simply have not seen—and are unwilling to see—the enormous damage abortion does to the family, to the church, to the nation and to the human spirit. Until we do, we shall continue to kill our babies at the rate of 4,000 per day—**4,000 per day!** To the end that we shall be able to understand the cruelty and immorality of abortion, I pledge my sincere efforts to fight against abortion as long as the Lord lets me live. I pray to God you will join me in this effort to save our babies. After all, Silence Can Be Sinful.

Chapter 7

The Babies' Pond

John W. Whitehead, a constitutional lawyer and president of the Rutherford Institute of Manassas, Virginia, has written extensively on legal, moral and religious themes. Through the years I have profited tremendously from reading Whitehead's books and articles. His latest book, **Religious Apartheid: The Separation of Religion from American Public Life** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), provides a great amount of historical background information which should enable us to understand the current situation involving religion in the United States. As is always the case, Whitehead's book is well written and thoroughly documented. If I had the money, I would like to buy a copy for every political leader in the United States. If our leaders—both political and religious—would follow Whitehead's observations and recommendations, the atmosphere in our nation would change radically for the good.

Dr. Whitehead maintains that "religion, especially public manifestations of Christianity, is being systematically separated from American society" (p. 9). He argues that "those supporting the system of religious apartheid in America will intensify the pressure, and oppression and overt persecution of those holding a religious worldview may result" (p. 12). The American people must be aware of efforts to remove all Christian concepts from all public places—schools, courthouses, and such like. I encourage you to buy and to read the topic Dr. Whitehead's book so ably discusses. If you are concerned about religious liberty and about the welfare of this nation, you will get the right information about this serious problem and use your courage to act on it.

One of the chapters in Dr. Whitehead's book has the

heading, "The Killing Fields" (pp. 97-115). This disturbing chapter on the unspeakable evils associated with abortion begins with these chilling and disturbing words: "During the 1800's a Christian missionary to China desparingly reported: 'When I reached Amoy thirty-two years ago, there was a pond in the center of town known as the Babies' Pond. This was a place where unwanted little ones were thrown by their mothers. There were always several bodies of innocents floating on its green and slimy waters and passersby looked on without surprise" (p. 97).

In the United States of America—a nation which has long boasted of being a "Christian nation"—we have our own versions of "babies' ponds." They are not usually in the center of town, at least, not in positions where passersby can readily see them. Our "babies' ponds" are located in respectable doctors' offices, in tax-supported hospitals, and in abortion clinics operated by Planned Parenthood—or better still—Planned unparenthood. The babies who are brutally destroyed in these offices, hospitals and clinics are not thrown into a pond for everyone to see just how cruel and heartless the abortion industry really is. They are cut up in little pieces and thrown out with the trash or burned in an incinerator or flushed down the drain. Americans are too compassionate and too civilized to throw unwanted babies in a pond or to leave them beside the road where all can see the bloody business of abortion. But millions of Americans pass by the places where unborn children are torn apart and mutilated and look on "without surprise." The words of the prophet Jeremiah are appropriate in reference to the baby killers. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the Lord" (Jer. 8:12).

As you sit and watch the television news or read your daily newspaper, you often learn about little children's being

beaten or battered or bruised. Have you ever made a logical connection between child abuse in America and the national passion to kill as many unborn babies as possible? When we lose respect for the unborn—as millions of Americans, including a large number who call themselves Christians—have done, are we likely to lose respect for the children already born and for our old people who are no longer able to care for themselves? In other words, are we on a slippery slope which will lead from abortion to infanticide to euthanasia to suicide? We must not ignore the signs which are leading in that direction.

As you probably know, abortion providers and supporters become very angry when abortion and other forms of child abuse are shown to belong in the same category. Abortion is the ultimate form of child abuse. It kills millions and millions of unborn babies, the consciences of our fellow citizens. It is my considered judgment after years of reading thousands and thousands of pages on these issues that child abuse will never be stopped—or even slowed down markedly—until we cease killing unborn babies. Why child protectors cannot understand what is involved in abortion defies good sense. You may remember from your college literature the expression, “A rose is a rose is a rose.” I would paraphrase that by saying, “Killing babies is killing babies” —whatever the method or the motivation.

The nation's attention was riveted on Union, SC in the fall of 1994 when a young mother placed her children in the back of her automobile and then allowed the car to roll into the lake and drown the children. I am not going to make any judgments concerning Susan Smith's mental or emotional state when she killed her beautiful little boys, but it was a tragedy which caused millions of Americans to question the concept of “motherly love.” What Susan Smith did cannot be justified. She made the lake in South Carolina where she drowned her boys a “babies’ pond.”

But what is the difference between her inexcuseable behavior and that of the mother who agrees to have her baby cut in little pieces and sucked out of her body? If we felt compassion for those little boys and their father and anger at the mother—and apparently most Americans did—why are we so insensitive and uncaring in our attitude toward mothers who sacrifice their babies to abortion? Dr. Francis Schaeffer often accused America of being schizophrenic. The Bible uses the word “double-minded” (Jas. 1:8).

In ancient times, people in various cultures—including Israel—offered their children to pagan gods. I can hardly grasp the concept, but I know it happened. Child sacrifice was occurring all around the Jewish people, but God specifically forbade the Israelites from passing a son or daughter through the fire unto pagan gods or to the true God (Dt. 18:10). The Ammonites—Israel's perennial enemies—worshipped a god they called Molech or Molech. The same idol may also have been called Milcom, Malcam and Malcan. God warned the Israelites through his servant Moses: “You shall say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, that gives his descendents unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he has given of his descendents unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do in any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he gives his descendents unto Molech, and kill him not: then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among the people” (Lev. 20:2-5).

We cringe when we read of such abominable evils among pagan people. But they were not the only ones guilty of sacrificing their children. Ahaz, the son of Jotham,

“reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from among the children of Israel” (2 Kings 16:23). Manasseh “worshipped the host of heaven, and served them....And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger” (2 Kings 21:3, 6).

Jeremiah who lived about 600 years before Christ also condemned the Israelites for offering their sons and daughters on the altar. “But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of Hinnom, to cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin” (Jer. 32:35). Such degradation was unbelievable among heathen people, but doubly so among God's people.

Dr. Jim Nelson Black's book, **When Nations Die** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1994), describes what happened to the Carthaginian empire which led to its ultimate demise. The people turned from worshipping their traditional god-Baal Hammon-to the worship of the goddess Tanit. Baal was the fertility god of many ancient people. Please listen to Dr. Black's account of his visit to the site of ancient Carthage. “When I visited the funeral gardens and cemeteries at the realm of Tanit, I saw the tiny stone coffins of infants who were murdered and burned as sacrifices to the pagan goddess. The sight of the thousands of these coffins lined up, row upon row upon row, was chilling. Twenty years after that first visit, I still remember the sense of sorrow I felt then. I recall wondering what

horrors the mothers and fathers of all those innocent victims must have endured at the hand of their demon gods" (p. 165).

There are some very serious questions I need to ask about these Old Testament passages and about this brief excerpt from Dr. Black's book. How can any people—especially those who call themselves "civilized people"—ever destroy their future by killing their children—regardless of the excuses they offer for the children's destruction? Dr. Black speaks of the thousands of coffins lined up, row upon row upon row. What would the coffins of over thirty million American babies look like—thirty million? I shudder for the future of my country when I think of such brutality. Americans are not offering their children to the heathen gods—Molech, Tanit or Baal. We are offering them to the gods of convenience, of greed, of irresponsibility, of sexual liberation and of comfort. But are abortionists and their conspirators less guilty before the God in whose image these tiny people are made? If you have reasonable answers to these questions, you would do my listeners and me a great favor by providing them. But I am not going to delay preaching against abortion until I hear from you.

What I have discussed with you today is contingent on the personhood or the humanity of the unborn child. But what if the unborn are not "persons" or "human beings?" Abortionists and their supporters might agree that we should not kill babies, although hundreds of thousands would not agree because they also believe in infanticide but they argue that the unborn are not human and are not persons. In fact, abortionists become angry when prolife people used the word "baby" or "child" in referring to the unborn. But whatever their objections, I intend to keep on using the word "baby" of the unborn child and I intend to keep calling abortionists baby killers.

The psychologists, sociologists, feminists, legal scholars, and theologians who approve of killing babies are

not our guides in moral and spiritual matters. Our standard is and always must be the inspired word of almighty God. What does the Bible say about the humanity or the personhood of the unborn? If we can determine that—and I believe we can—the argument over abortion for Christians has been settled in favor of life.

One of the Greek words for “child” or “baby” is **brephos**. Arndt & Gingrich's **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) says that the word **brephos** means unborn child, embryo, baby, infant (p. 146). Walter E. Vine's, **Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984) defines **brephos** as “an unborn child...a newborn child, or an infant still older” (p. 85). Other Greek scholars agree with these two sources I have just quoted.

Let us now examine the New Testament to see if Arndt & Gingrich and Walter E. Vine have properly evaluated the biblical evidence. The first two verses I will read show that the word **brephos** clearly means an unborn child. Mary, the mother of our Lord, made a trip to the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist with whom she was already pregnant. As Mary entered the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth she saluted Elizabeth. “And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” Elizabeth said to Mary, “For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy” (Lk. 1:41, 44). John the Baptist was a person—a human being—a child—before he was born. What other conclusion can we reach based on the evidence I have read from the book of Luke? Incidentally, Luke was a physician and knew about such matters.

The New Testament also uses the word **brephos** of newborn children and of older infants. Let me give you several examples. Mixing Old Testament prophecies with the events surrounding the birth of Christ, an angel of God

said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:11-12). The shepherds heard the good news of the arrival of the Messiah. "And they came in haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:16). The word "babe" in both of these verses is **brephos**--the same word used of an unborn child in Luke 1:41, 44.

Later in the book of Luke, some people brought "unto him infants, that he would touch them: but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them" (Lk. 18:15). Luke uses the word **brephos** in describing the infants which were brought to Jesus. Jesus used a different word--**paidia**--which means little children. "And Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 18:16). It ought to be obvious from these verses that the words **brephos** and **paidia** are used interchangeably. The word **brephos** refers to children--whether born or unborn. The New Testament does not make any distinction.

One of the great speeches in the book of Acts was given by Stephen in response to accusations made against him by the Jews. His speech is a thumbnail sketch of Israel's glorious and troubling history. He speaks of a king who "knew not Joseph" and who "evil treated our fathers so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live" (Acts 7:18-19). You will recall from your knowledge of the Old Testament that the Egyptian pharaoh did not kill the babies in their mothers' bodies. Only children who were already born came under the death penalty imposed by the pharaoh. The word **brephos** in Acts 7:19 means newborn children--not embryos or fetuses. We have no more right to kill a baby in his mother's womb than to kill one who has already been born.

The apostle Paul wrote as follows concerning his

trusted companion, Timothy: "From a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Does anyone believe that Timothy was taught about God and about the holy scriptures while he was still in his mother's womb? Like everyone else in the world, Timothy was a child before he was born and he was a child after he was born. The Greeks used the word **brephos** in both instances, although the Greeks had a word for embryo.

I have given you every verse in the New Testament which uses the word **brephos**—except for the one I am about to read to you now. The apostle Peter commanded Christians to lay 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 you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). Let me summarize briefly what we have read from the New Testament about the Greek **brephos**. Luke uses it of the baby still in his mother's womb (Lk. 1:41, 44). He also uses it of the newborn Savior (Lk. 2:11-12, 16). Our Lord Jesus Christ, the first Christian martyr, Stephen, the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter use the same word in speaking of children who were already born. If you accept the scriptures as our standard for faith and practice, these passages will settle the matter of the humanity and personhood of the baby—both before he is born and afterwards. If you think I have mishandled or misunderstood the biblical material, please tell me what these verses mean.

A number of excellent books—including at least one by a "convinced atheist"—Dr. Bernard Nathanson—have argued for the humanity and personhood of unborn children. Not one of these—in my opinion—is of greater value than Francis J. Beckwith's book, **Politically Correct Death: Answering Arguments for Abortion** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). Dr. Beckwith is lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Please listen to these

observations in Dr. Beckwith's book. "When I say that the unborn entity is fully human, I mean that she is just as human as either you or I and hence deserving of all the rights which go along with such a status....When I say that killing a being who is fully human is *prima facie* morally wrong, I mean to say that in ordinary circumstances no one is morally justified in killing another human being" (p. 12).

Dr. Beckwith says that "some cultures, such as the Chinese, count one's beginning from the moment of conception. Does that mean that the American unborn are not fully human while the Chinese unborn are? Also, there is no essential difference between an unborn entity and a newborn baby, just a difference of location. As (Robert) Wennberg writes: 'Surely personhood and the right to life is not a matter of location. It should be what you are, not where you are that determines whether you have a right to life'" (p. 105).

Unfortunately, some philosophers, biologists and theologians refuse to acknowledge the humanity or personhood of a child unless it meets certain criteria which they in their infinite wisdom have established. For example. Dr. Michael Tooley thinks a child does not have a right to life "unless he possesses the concept of a subject of experiences, the concept of a temporal order, and the concept of identity of things over time" (Beckwith, p. 106). I have observed dozens and dozens of six-month-old babies, twelve-month-old babies and I have never seen one who would qualify for personhood or humanity if we used Michael Tooley's standards. Every newborn and every child up to one year of age could be put to death without having killed anyone, since we have defined such entities as non-human or non-persons. If biologists like Peter Singer, philosophers like Mary Ann Warren, and theologians like Joseph Fletcher have their way, no children will be safe from the doctor's killing machines unless they meet certain criteria. And that includes born children as well as unborn.

Tragically, the unchristian and unreasonable worldviews of such people are being implemented everyday all across the United States of America. We are not often aware of these cruel acts of mothers and their doctors because the popular media have very little, if anything, to say about such death purveyors. If we had babies' ponds, as the Chinese did in earlier times, and all Americans could see what we are doing to our babies, maybe we could awaken our nation to the immorality of abortion.

Please pray that the American people may have a change of heart about killing our most precious treasure—our children.

Chapter 8

Choose Life

When the Israelites were preparing under God's guidance to cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land, God gave his people a great number of instructions which he expected them to follow. He informed them of the curses they would bring upon themselves if they ignored or defied his will for their lives. On the one hand, they would be cursed if they made images to worship, or removed their neighbor's landmarks, or perverted justice of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, or committed adultery or bestiality or incest (Dt. 27:15-23). On the other hand, the Jews would be blessed if they walked according to all the statutes and commandments which God had so graciously given them. Now please listen carefully to these inspired words. "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land where you are going to possess it. But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them: I declare unto you this day, that you shall perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, where you pass over Jordan to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: that you may love the Lord your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Dt. 30:15-20).

There is so much in these verses which should be very helpful to all of us in living for God, but I want to dwell today on one little expression in verse 19: Choose life! It is significant that the Bible emphasizes man's need and ability to choose. Man's life on earth and his eternal destiny are not predetermined, as the materialists, the behaviorists and the Calvinists maintain. Sometime later, Joshua, the successor of Moses, cautioned the Jewish people: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth: put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:14-15). The New Testament is no less explicit in its teaching on man's need and ability to choose—either to serve God or to serve the devil. Christ's invitation in Matthew 11 necessitates man's free will either to come to Jesus or to reject him. "Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto you souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). Who can forget these words from the very last chapter of the Bible? "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). My friends, there is not any possibility of harmonizing predestinationism and the word "whosoever." We can choose which way we shall go and we shall be held accountable for our choices.

For the past twenty years, I have spoken hundreds of times in churches, in college auditoriums and on radio about the evils of abortion. I usually describe the horrible mutilation of the babies who are viciously torn from their

mother's womb. I often quote these words from some writer whom I am not able at this time to identify: "The most dangerous place on earth for a baby is in its mother's womb." Approximately 30,000,000 babies have been destroyed by abortion since the **Roe vs. Wade** decision in 1973. Do you ever wonder if any of the Supreme Court justices ever stay awake at night worrying about the irreparable damage they have done to families, to churches, to the nation and to the babies who might have been some of America's finest citizens?

No passage in all of God's book, at least, in my judgment, stresses the preciousness of human life—even in the womb—more than these inspired words from the book of Psalms. "For thou hast possessed my inward parts: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb, I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unformed; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them" (Psa. 139:13-17)! How could anyone read these words and still participate in the killing of God's precious creatures—little human babies?

The second paragraph of "The Declaration of Independence" begins: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Tragically, the majority of the American people apparently no longer believe these lofty sentiments. Only people who are wanted and valued by society are created equal. If the mothers and/or fathers do not want children, they are permitted by the United States Supreme Court—not

by the United States Constitution or by "The Declaration of Independence"-to put their babies to death by burning them to death with a saline solution or cutting them in little pieces and sucking them from their mothers' bodies or puncturing their skulls with a pair of scissors and removing their brains so they can be extracted from their mothers' bodies.

Why, dear friends, is not every preacher and priest and rabbi taking a stand against this abominable and pagan practice? Do not religious leaders understand the seriousness of killing 30,000,000 Americans for the convenience of their parents? Do they not know or does it matter that financially our nation will suffer because we have killed 30,000,000 wage earners? Social Security will either become unavailable for future generations or the surviving families will be taxed beyond their ability to pay. Why are not our governmental leaders—from the president of the United States to local leaders—protecting the most vulnerable, the most precious creatures in the universe—our innocent babies? Why do the American people ignore the moral turpitude of so many of America's prominent leaders and insist that character is not an issue? I totally agree with Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas: "Character is the issue." With the help of God almighty, I intend to keep crying out: Choose life! Choose life for the millions of babies who are being thrown out in the trash.

If it is legitimate for parents and their doctors to choose death for their unborn babies, what moral principles prevent their killing little babies who are already born? If we abuse babies in their mothers' wombs by burning them with salt or cutting them in little pieces, what is wrong with abusing babies after they are born? Some babies—although not the majority by any means—would be born with either physical or mental handicaps. If the mothers are morally justified in killing those children, why would they be morally culpable for killing handicapped children who are already born?

Tragically, infanticide is occurring on a broader scale than many of us realize, but it is not now so widely accepted as abortion. And, frankly, I do not understand why infanticide is wrong and abortion—which is a form of infanticide—is permitted.

Many Americans, including doctors, nurses and other health care professionals are uncomfortable or downright resentful of babies who are not perfect. If a baby is born with Down's syndrome or spina bifida or some other debilitating disease or condition, we want to put it away from sight or let it die. About twenty-five years ago a young woman who had been my secretary called from the hospital in our town. She was crying so hard I had difficulty understanding her words. She finally made it clear that she wanted me to come to the hospital. When I walked into her room, she said, "They are trying to take my baby away from me." I asked her who was doing it. She said the doctors at the hospital were putting pressure on her. She had given birth to a Down's syndrome baby. The doctors assured her she would be better off if she placed her child in a state home. It would be easier, they said, on her other child and on the rest of the family.

She asked me what I thought she ought to do. Obviously, I did not tell her what to do, but I knew when I left the hospital that day what she was going to do: she was going to take that little boy home with her and that is exactly what she did. Several years after that mother took that little guy home from the hospital, I went to her home congregation for a meeting. He was quite alert and a genuine joy to his mother and to the rest of the family. Have we reached the stage in our country's history when we are willing to keep and to love only perfect babies? What price are we willing to pay for only perfect babies?

A few year ago, Baby Boy McKay was born in Harvey, Illinois. He was the son of a veterinarian. The child was born with a cleft palate and a condition known as "clined

fist." Both of these deformities are correctable by surgery. The father went to the hospital to visit his newborn son. He was so distraught that he grabbed the child from his crib, hurled him against the floor and killed him. The father was arrested and tried for murder. He was released because the judge said there was no law to cover such an ordeal. No law against murder in Illinois?

During the trial of Dr. McKay, his neighbors were summoned to be character witnesses. They testified that he would stay up all night to save the life of a sick pet. Why would a man so compassionate in treating animals kill his own son? If he did not want his son, he could have found dozens, perhaps hundreds, of couples who would have given all they owned to have that little boy. How do I know that? Because it has happened hundreds of times through the years. But, apparently, that father wanted his son dead. What if Dr. McKay had known these powerful words from the Old Testament: "Choose life!" Do you think the doctor has any regrets that he destroyed his own flesh and blood? I would like to say to all people who are in similar situations: Choose life!

As many of you know, the state of Oregon voted in 1994 to allow physicians to prescribe lethal doses of drugs to terminally ill patients. The law was challenged in the courts, but reaffirmed by the voters of Oregon last year. **The Tennessean** (Thursday, March 26, 1998) published an article with the title, "Doctor assists Oregon woman's suicide." A few brief excerpts from this article need to be read. "An elderly woman stricken with breast cancer has become the first known person to die under the nation's only doctor-assisted suicide law, an advocacy group said yesterday.

"The Oregon woman in her mid-80s, whose name was withheld by her family, died Tuesday night, about 30 minutes after taking a lethal dose of barbiturates mixed with syrup, and washed down with a glass of brandy," the

advocates said.

"I'm looking forward to it," the woman said in a tape played for reporters by the group Compassion in Dying. "I will be relieved of all stress I have" (p. 10-A).

As you were growing into manhood or womanhood, did you believe you would ever hear words like compassion, kindness and gentleness used of killing people? Have we allowed idiots like Jack Kevorkian and Derek Humphry to lead us blindly into believing we have the right and maybe the obligation to end other peoples lives? Incidentally, if you believe killers like Jack Kevorkian and Derek Humphry are compassionate, you need to read Rita Marker's book, **Deadly Compassion: The Death of Ann Humphry and the Truth about Euthanasia** (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993). Derek Humphry founded an organization called The Hemlock Society. Ann Humphry-Derek's second wife-says Derek Humphry killed his first wife, Jean, and then wrote a book about it, **Jean's Way**. Jean Humphrey developed cancer and was euthanized. Ann wrote these pathetic words to Rita Marker. "My final words to Derek. He is a killer, **I know**. Jean actually died of suffocation, I could never say it until now. Who would believe me? Do the best you can."

When Jean Humphry became critically ill, she was given enough drugs to kill her, but they did not kill her quickly enough for her husband. So he placed a pillow over her face and suffocated her.

Dr. Kevorkian's book, **Prescription: Medicide: The Goodness of Planned Death** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991) proposes that obitoriums (that is, killing places) be established across the country to assist in killing people who want to die. The word "obitorium" comes from the Latin **obitus**, mean to go to meet death. A medical specialty should be developed and taught in the medical schools. The speciality should be called obitiatry (oh-bit-eye-a-tree). **Obit** means death and **iatros** means physician. How easy

would it be to recruit young people for that kind of specialty? How would you like to live next door to an obitorium?

How wonderful it is that those who believe in various forms of killing—abortion, infanticide, physician-assisted suicide, and eunthanasia—have invented a vocabulary which makes these hideous actions sound so sweet, loving and compassionate! Abortion becomes the emptying of the contents of the uterus, as if we are not speaking of a baby. Infanticide is the loving removal of a life which would be miserable if allowed to continue, although, for some odd reason, handicapped people do not feel that way. Organizations of handicapped people almost universally oppose abortion and infanticide. There is an expression which ought to be engraved on the door of every hospital, clinic and abortuary in the world: CHOOSE LIFE!

Peter Jennings recently reported that America's young people by the thousands are taking up smoking, inspite of the government's efforts to discourage them. The increase in smoking among boys was truly alarming, but even more alarming among girls. According to knowledgeable medical people, one-third of all the young people who are addicted to nicotine will die painful and needless death from lung cancer, heart diseases, high blood pressure and other avoidable illnesses. Why are America's young people destroying their lives in such great numbers? Could it be that they have not learned just how sacred life really is? When they play violent video games, watch movies, such as, **Rambo III**, **Total Recall** and **Robocop II** and see thousands of people being blown away on television programs, how could they have any respect for human life—including their own? When churches fail to instill absolute values into the minds and hearts of their young people, how can we expect those young people to think of their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20)?

Alcohol and other drugs, including prescription drugs, are killing hundreds of thousands of people every year.

Alcohol alone probably kills as many as 150,000 Americans each year. In addition, alcohol and other drugs cripple men and women, boys and girls—intellectually, morally, financially and spiritually. Those who use drugs cannot think so clearly as those who do not use them. America has lost some of its brightest writers, actors, teachers, preachers and physicians through the use and abuse of drugs. Why are Americans so blind they cannot discern what smoking, drinking and using other drugs do to our bodies and our minds? Why are parents, church leaders and government officials doing so little about this national disgrace?

If we tell our citizens to choose life, is that going to work miracles with drinkers, drug users and smokers? I certainly do not believe that, although that is a step in the right direction. From the time our children are big enough to understand, we must give them the basis for choosing life. We must instill in them a sense of God's caring for each individual. We must convince them that they are made in the image of God, that he will hold them accountable for the way they use or abuse their bodies, that they are here to serve their God and their fellowmen. I am reminded of these pessimistic words from Dr. Kevorkian's book, **Prescription: Medicine**: "Nobody has even a hint of true knowledge about where we came from, where we are now, and where we will be when we die" (p. 242). Albert Ellis expressed similar thoughts in his book, **Sex and the Liberated Man** (Seacaucus, NJ: Lyie Stuart, Inc., 1976). "You came into the world for no special reason, and the universe does not care whether you live or die, achieve great pleasure or pain" (p. 51).

If young people are indoctrinated with Jack Kevorkian's or Albert Ellis's philosophy, what would motivate them to choose life—whether we are speaking of eternal life or of physical life? Tragically, millions of young people and older ones have no reason for living, at least, none they can articulate. As Dr. Ellis said, "You came into

the world for no particular reason." The popular media have worked at convincing Americans that they need to grab all the gusto they can get since they only go around one time. Tragically, some of America's major companies and corporations speak to young people about the meaninglessness of life. Burger King advertises, "Sometimes, you gotta break the rules." Bicardi Black Rum calls itself "the taste of the night." Its advertisement says, "Some people embrace the night because rules of the day do not apply." Even Merrill Lynch declares that "your world should know no boundaries." Under the circumstances I have described, how can people decide with such pressure to choose life? If they do choose life, it will be almost purely accidental.

But I am not talking with you today just about choosing physical life, although it is vital we do so. God gave us life and we must protect it and use it for his glory. My chief concern today is that everyone under the sound of my voice choose eternal life. I am aware that our Calvinist friends may take exception to my emphasis on the man's obligation to choose. Since man is wholly passive in salvation, they argue, then men do not really choose. God chooses for them, although they are guilty before God if he does not choose them. I know this sounds strange to those who have not studied Calvinist theology, but it is what Martin Luther and John Calvin taught.

However, the whole tenor of the Bible's teaching is against this doctrine. Men and women are either capable of believing God's word and obeying it or they have been badly deceived by Bible writers. If salvation is all God's part and men do not have to cooperate, one of two results must follow. Either all men will be saved or all men will be lost. Bible writers continually emphasize that God is no respecter of persons, but he would be if he chooses one person and not another. God does elect, but he elects on the basis of our response to his gracious invitation. Is that not what Jesus meant when he said to the Jews, "You will

not come to me, that you might have life" (John 5:40)? If the Calvinists were right, what Jesus should have said was, "You cannot come to me that you might have life."

How tremendously encouraging it is to know that Jesus came into this world that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). It is my firm conviction that even physical life has greater meaning if we know God and live by his precepts. But we know life eternal cannot be ours unless we believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, repent of our sins which have separated us from God, confess the name of Jesus before men and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

I close today with this biblical admonition: **CHOOSE LIFE!**



Chapter 9

Is America On The Right Track?

A number of national surveys in recent months have shown that the American people think the nation is doing well. According to some experts, anytime the economy seems to be healthy and growing, many people give a favorable rating to the political administration in power, even though most economists know that there is no necessary connection between the administration and a good economy. Of course, if politicians and media pundits keep telling us there is a direct relationship between what the administration believes and does and a flourishing economy, millions of people are going to listen and believe it.

The Tennessean (Saturday, December 27, 1997) published an article with the title, "Americans believe nation on right track" and was written by Chuck Raasch of Gannett News Service. Raasch says that almost two-thirds of the American people "believe the country is on the right track" (p. 1-A). On the same page of **The Tennessean**, there was an article about Nashvillians who think the nation has a brighter future. Several people expressed considerable optimism about the nation's future. One man thought Nashville provided a good work environment, but expressed concern over some of Nashville's priorities. He said that sporting events had a higher priority than the well being of the people. He was also concerned about indifference in caring for others. An older Nashville citizen was not too optimistic. He said the whole country was going to hell. He was very critical of the president for his lack of principles (p. 1-A).

I have read similar statements in other print media and have heard them on television and on radio. I must ask you a question. "Is America on the right track?" I am not in anyway denying the importance of a sound economy.

But does a good economic situation mean the nation is on the right track? Are there not other conditions and ideas which must be considered before we proclaim to the world that our nation is on the right track? Do moral and spiritual values have any place in the well-being of a nation? In other words, might a nation be on the right track economically and on the wrong track morally and spiritually?

Ben J. Wattenberg, a very influential thinker, presidential speech writer and public television personality, tells us in his 1995 book that "values matter most." In fact, that is the title of Wattenberg's book. The subtitle of the book is "how Republicans or Democrats or a Third Party can win and renew the American way of life" (New York: The Free Press, 1995). A few excerpts from Wattenberg's excellent book should help us understand that our nation has made many wrong turns, at least, according to Wattenberg and I heartily agree with him. He writes, "I believe that the values situation in America has deteriorated. I believe that government has played a big role in allowing values to erode" (p. 10). "If America founders, it will be on values, not economics" (p. 393). Ben Wattenberg is an unusually perceptive writer, as can be seen by the following comments. "President Clinton is in deep trouble on the betrayal issue and on personal matters" (p. 385). "When Democrats of my stripe think of the Clinton presidency, a single word comes to mind: 'betrayal'" (p. 400). Incidentally, Ben Wattenberg has always been a liberal democrat and wrote these comments on the state of our nation in 1995. I wonder what he would say in 1998.

The Tennessean (Saturday, August 22, 1998) reported that drug use among America's teenagers is on the rise. A national survey of 24,500 people revealed the following about drug use among teenagers. Teens are more likely to use illegal drugs if they already use tobacco and alcohol. There was a significant increase in the number of teens who

have smoked cigarettes in the past months. Almost ten percent of the 12 to 13-year-olds smoked within the last year. Marijuana use is on the increase because many of America's young people believe it is not too dangerous. Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services, says many parents are actually relieved when they learn that their children are smoking marijuana as opposed to using heroin or cocaine. She warns parents and young people that marijuana is not a soft drug and can hamper memory and learning (p. 13-A).

Millions of our young people are drinking regularly and some are getting drunk weekly. Thousands of our children are killing themselves and others on our highways because they are addicted to alcohol. In addition, they are failing in school, on the job and in their personal relationships. The future of young people who are addicted to alcohol or to other drugs is not very bright. Many of them will go through life neglecting their God-given talents, leading lives of crime and violence and causing their families heartaches and headaches. At this time, there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel in our dealing with alcohol and other dangerous drugs.

If you have a son or a daughter who is addicted to drugs and who is causing so much concern and sadness, is it of great comfort to you to know that our economy is prospering? Are we willing to sacrifice the welfare of our children for the financial stability of our nation? I am not saying that we cannot have a healthy economy and good, strong citizens at the same time, but we do not have a good moral climate in our country at this time. I am not trying to assess the blame for the increase in the use of alcohol and other drugs. But I am saying: We are not on the right track in America when drugs are doing so much damage to so many individuals and homes. Furthermore, we are not on the right track when we as families, as churches, as communities and as the government are not doing more to

change the drug abuse situation.

A recent report says that 40,000,000 babies have been destroyed by abortion since the infamous **Roe** decision in 1973—40,00,000 innocent babies killed primarily for the convenience of the mothers. I have no way of confirming or denying this number of babies murdered, but I suspect from all the reading I have done in this area that the number is substantially correct, give or take a million or two precious babies. Government reports state that between 1,500,000 and 1,600,000 babies are killed every year in their mothers' wombs.

The morality of this situation defies imagination, but let us forget—if we can—the morality of abortion for just a minute. What about the economy of killing so many of our citizens? No, I am not speaking of the enormous amount of money abortionists, Planned Parenthood and hospitals make on the millions of abortions they perform. I am thinking of the economic impact killing 40,000,000 people will have the American society in the years ahead. The children who were aborted in the first two or three years after abortion became legal today would be twenty-two to twenty-five. They would have been in various occupations and professions making money to contribute to the tax rolls in local communities, in states and in the federal government. They would be producing goods and services which would make our economy even stronger. In addition, they would be strengthening our weak social security system. Even if you are interested only in the economy, can you not see how seriously we have erred in killing 40,000,000 babies?

But abortion is not just a financial disaster; it is moral tragedy for families and for the country. There is hardly any doubt that abortion has so desensitized the American people that they are not disturbed too much when young couples kill their babies if they do not want them. If the couple could have killed their baby a month before it was

born – and they could have legally – why should Americans be so concerned when they kill their babies minutes or hours after they are born? Is it possible abortion could lead to infanticide and to euthanasia? It may not, but I can think of no valid reason why it would not. When you think about what some have correctly called the “abortion holocaust,” do you still believe America is on the right track? What would we have to do to get on the wrong track?

If America is on the right track, why is there so much violence among our children? **The Tennessean** (Tuesday, August 11, 1998) reported the murder of an eleven-year-old child. The incident occurred in Chicago and involved two buddies 7 and 8 years old--7 and 8--not seventeen and eighteen. The two little boys are charged with hitting the 11-year-old girl on the head, molesting her and then suffocating her. What would motivate two boys to be so brutal and senseless? Was the eleven-year-old cursing them, fighting them? They simply wanted her bicycle. Why not kill a little girl if she has a bicycle and you do not? Assistant Cook County States Attorney Michael Oppenheimer called the little girl's death “a brutal and shocking crime” (p. 4-A).

I need not remind you of the senseless violence at Paducah, Kentucky, Pearl, Mississippi, Jonesboro, Arkansas and in other schools across the country. You have, no doubt, kept up with these unspeakable tragedies, but they are typical of what is occurring in many communities throughout our nation. When thousands and thousands of our children are being killed by such vicious criminals--whether those criminals are young or old – does that suggest that America is on the right track? Can the very best economic situation in the world compensate for the loss of our children and young people?

Dr. William Bennet, whom most of you know from his having served as education secretary under President Reagan and drug czar under President Bush, and Dr. John

DiIulio, Jr., Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton, have written a book which should be read by every parent and every other citizen concerned about America's young people. The book has the title, **Body Count: Moral Poverty...And How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). This book presents a very disturbing picture of juvenile crime in our country. These distinguished authors quote these words from Chief David G. Walchak of Concord, New Hampshire: "It is clear that youth violence has reached epidemic proportions that must be addressed....In 1993, law enforcement agencies made almost 2,400,000 juvenile arrests. If the present trends continue, the violent crime arrest levels alone will double by the year 2010" (p. 20). Incidentally, Chief Walchak is also President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

A few brief excerpts from the book by Dr. Bennett and Dr. DiIulio should cause us to take notice of the juvenile crime confronting the United States. "Males ages 14 to 24 are now about 8 percent of the population but they constitute 27 percent of all homicide victims and 48 percent of all murderers" (p. 22). "A Philadelphia jury convicted three suburban teens of third-degree murder for beating an altar boy to death with baseball bats in front of his church" (p. 23). "A new generation of street criminals is upon us—the youngest, biggest, and baddest generation any society has ever known" (p. 26). One final paragraph will have to suffice for today. "Based on all that we have witnessed, researched and heard from people who are close to the action, here is what we believe: America is now home to thickening ranks of juvenile 'super-predators'—radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including evermore preteenage boys, who murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs, and create serious communal disorders. They do not fear the stigma of arrest, the pains of imprisonment, or the pangs of conscience. They perceive

hardly any relationship between doing right (or wrong) now and being rewarded (or punished) for it later. To these mean-street youngsters, the words 'right' and 'wrong' have no fixed moral meaning" (p. 27).

Since I have been speaking with you about problems relating to teenagers, let me mention another problem which applies primarily but not exclusively to teenagers. I have in mind the enormous number of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Some recent reports indicate that there may be a slight reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies. The reduction is very slight, but any improvement is certainly welcome. You know, even if you are not a Christian, that premarital sex is wrong—always wrong. But my concern today is over the hundreds of thousands of babies who are reared by a teenage mother without the aid and support of a father. Every child born into this world deserves both a mother and a father. Where they are deprived of either—not only do the children suffer because of it—but so does society as a whole. Besides, of the 1,000,000 babies conceived out-of-wedlock, 400,000 of them pay with their lives by being aborted. But what possible difference could all of this make—if we are enjoying a healthy economy? We can forget about the thousands and thousands of lives which are ruined by an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. We can overlook the irresponsibility of the fathers of those babies—fathers who want many of the benefits of being married but none of the obligations of marriage. But if we have two cars in our garages, money in the bank, resources for several vacations each year and a sufficient number of toys, who cares about the lives which are destroyed by immorality?

Is the nation on track when approximately 50% of all marriages end in divorce? About 100 years ago, the number of divorces was about 5,000 per year in the United States. Even that figure is distressing when you remember the lives which are adversely affected by every divorce. In 1976

for the first time in the history of our nation, there were 1,000,000 divorces—1,000,000—200 times the number of divorces which occurred 100 years ago. That staggers the imagination. 2,000,000 adults and approximately 1,700,000 children have their lives altered forever. Even if husbands and wives are devoid of moral values, they cannot escape the hurt of a divorce. And children who love both parents are marked for life. In many cases, they will wonder what they did or failed to do which drove their parents apart. Children do not deserve that kind of fate. Every child has a right to a father and mother who love each other and love the children. That is God's arrangement and cannot be violated with impunity.

As tragic as divorce is, there are other aspects of marriage which ought to cause alarm among right-thinking people. I am referring to the unhappy, joyless and unfulfilling marriages. Dr. Joyce Brothers, a well known psychologist and television personality, says that one of twelve marriages is what she call a total marriage—a marriage where the husband and wife truly love each other and find contentment in each other's company. If that figure is correct—and I have no way of confirming or denying it—it is a sad commentary on the state of marriage in our nation. How does one explain the condition of marriages in our country? Have the churches failed to preach and to enforce God's pattern for the home? Have fathers and mothers neglected to teach their children what it means to be a husband and a wife? Have television, the movies and the printed media advocated or, at least, accepted the moral values of barnyard animals?

If divorce and unhappiness in marriage were the only problems relating to the home, they would be serious enough. But that is not the whole story. Spouse abuse in almost every community has become a national disgrace. There are men who beat their wives, abuse them mentally and emotionally and fail to provide the support—not just

financial – their wives want and deserve. How can any man think he is a man when he attacks his wife, blacks her eyes and sends her to the hospital? Only brutes and beasts abuse their wives. No decent man would ever do so. A good man might feel forced to leave a wife, but no man should ever under any circumstances hit his wife.

Child abuse has also become a national disgrace in our country. Statistics on wife abuse or on child abuse are difficult to obtain and notoriously unreliable. Both forms of abuse are almost certainly much higher than national surveys reveal. But we know there are at least 2-3,000,000 children abused in the United States each year. Experts estimate that between 2,000 and 7,000 children die because of abuse each year. Nobody knows how many children are seriously and permanently injured from abuse, how many die immediately or in subsequent years, how many children take their lives because of the abuse they suffer from parents or guardians and the turmoil which invariably accompanies such abuse. There is hardly any tragedy which affects me emotionally more than child abuse. My heart goes out to these children and young people who almost certainly will never overcome the terrible effects of child abuse. Maybe divorce, marital unhappiness, spouse and child abuse are not really all that serious. Is it possible I am disturbed by these conditions just because I am a preacher? If I were a politician whose main concern was the economy, maybe I could explain these matters in a more favorable light. Are religious people simply too sensitive or too Victorian or too narrow-minded? If we were just a little more broad-minded and less idealistic, maybe these tragic situations would not cause us so many heartaches. The popular notion seems to be: Just get the economy going in the right direction and everything will be alright. Is anybody in my audience naive enough or hard-hearted enough to believe such claptrap? Like many of the older people in my audience today, I have lived through the civil rights movement. I have seen changes

in the south I never dreamed possible forty or fifty years ago. Who would have thought a half century ago that thousands of churches in the south would be integrated in this century? I seldom preach in a revival anywhere—in Tennessee, in Georgia, in Alabama, in Mississippi and in Florida—that does not have a good number of Blacks in attendance. The West Fayetteville Church of Christ does not discriminate on the basis of race. If it did, I would have no interest in preaching at West Fayetteville. God does not allow his people to discriminate against anyone on the basis of race. That was Peter's reason for saying at the house of Cornelius: "Of a truth I perceive that God is not respecter of persons: but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

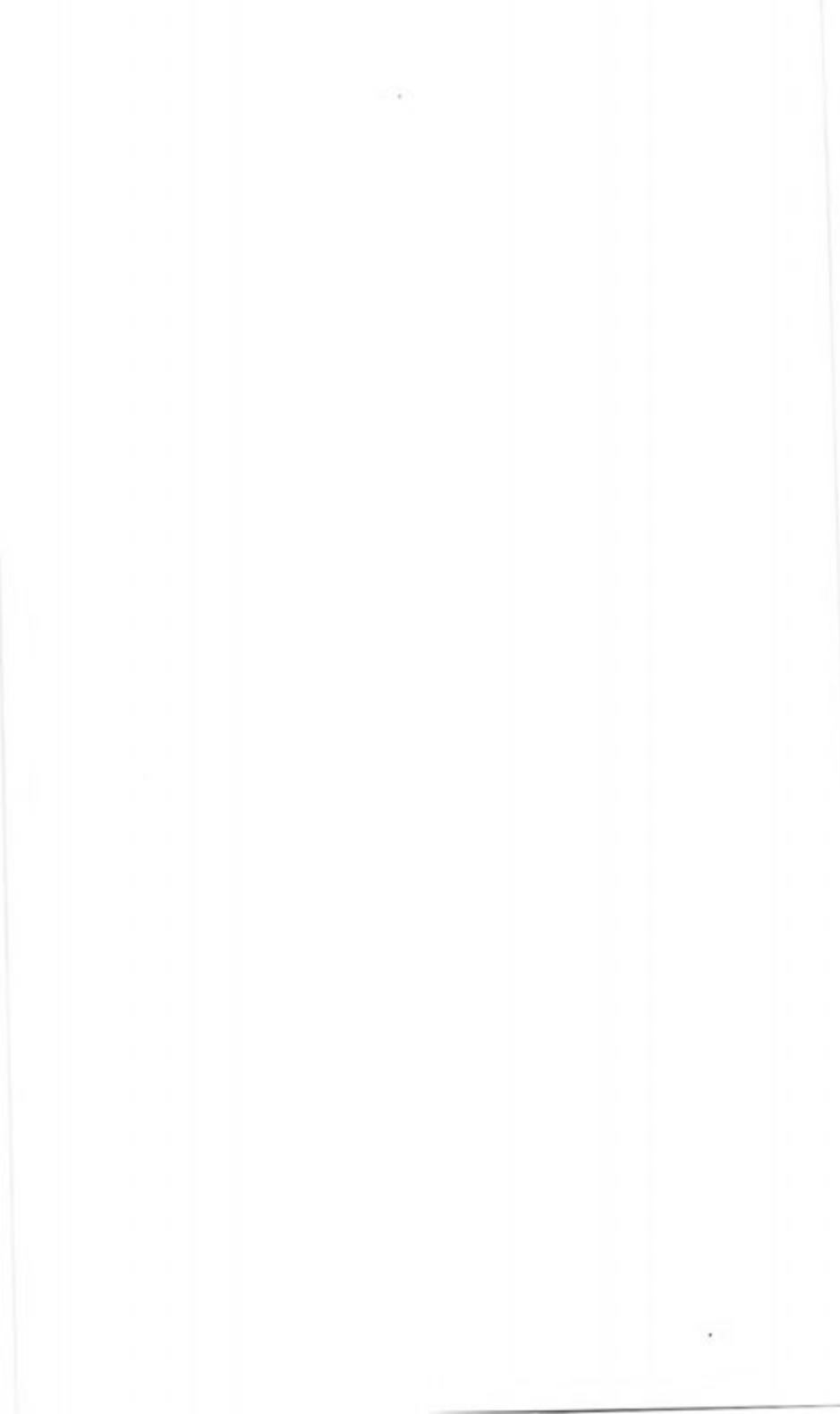
While I have seen many changes occur in our nation—changes which ought to be welcome to all except members of the Klan and of some of the militia groups—the changes are not broad enough and deep enough. It is not enough just to welcome people of other races, nations, social and financial conditions into the church; we must demonstrate our love for all people. Our God loves all people. We are all made in his image. How can we fail to love whom God loves? Most of our national leaders seem to be concerned about the blight of racism in the United States. But in many cases, they either do not know what to do about it or they do the wrong thing. When governmental leaders—either state or national—establish affirmative action programs or set-asides, they ought to know that these arrangements promote anger, bitterness and bigotry. If a man is eliminated from a project because he is white, what is the difference between that and eliminating a man because he is black or Hispanic or Jewish or Asian? Who can be so blind as to believe that discrimination of any kind will remedy the evil of discrimination?

I have sketched for you today some of the moral and spiritual problems we face as a nation. All who have eyes

to see can surely understand the seriousness of all of these problems. Why are politicians so blind that they—especially when they are running for office—will not address these truly tragic conditions? If they really care about us as human beings and not just as votes, they must get involved in correcting the gross evils which are hurting so many people and can eventually destroy our democratic way of life. I do not mean to sound pessimistic, but a reading of the scriptures and other historical works should open some eyes.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the famous Russian dissident, was talking with an older man about the moral, social and economic situation in the former Soviet Union. When Solzhenitsyn asked the older man what the heart of the problem was, the old man replied: "We have forgotten God." Do you see any evidence on the nightly television news, in the daily newspaper, in weekly magazines and in our communities that we have forgotten God or perhaps that we never really knew God?

Ben Wattenberg, says that "it is not the social issues that are phoney baloney. The economy is the snake-oil issue, the smoke-and-mirrors issue" (p. 92). Wattenberg vigorously denies what some prominent politicians have said: "It's the economy, stupid." I close with this wise observation by Ben Wattenberg. "If America founders, it will be on values, not economics" (p. 393).



Chapter 10

Hate Groups' Danger To America

Hating righteous and godly people has been a part of life for many millennia—maybe from the beginning of the human family. While the word “hate” is not used of Cain, is there any doubt he hated his brother? The sacred record says, “Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:8). The very first time the word “hate” appears in the King James Version of the Bible is in connection with Jacob and Esau. Jacob and his mother conspired to rob Esau of his inheritance. “And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will slay my brother” (Gen. 27:41). Jacob made a very foolish mistake in showing favoritism toward Joseph. He “loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably with him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brothers: and they hated him yet the more....And his brothers said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words” (Gen. 37:3-5, 8).

Several hundred years later, king Ahab of Israel asked king Jehoshaphat of Judah if he would join with the army of Israel in attempting to recapture Ramoth-Gilead from the king of Syria. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to consult the prophets of God to ascertain if the battle had God’s approval. Ahab gathered four hundred court prophets to ask them if he had God’s permission to march against Ramoth-Gilead.

The prophets apparently were Ahab's "yes men." The prophets told Ahab to go to battle and the Lord would give him the victory. For some reason, Jehoshaphat did not believe the court prophets were speaking for God. He asked Ahab, "Is there not here any other prophet besides, that we might inquire of him?" Ahab replied, in effect, yes, there is another prophet, "Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he does not prophecy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so" (I Kings 22:4-8). Incidentally, Ahab also hated Elijah, although the word "hate" is not used in the biblical story of Elijah and Ahab. And can you imagine how much Jezebel hated Elijah? It must have been about the same amount Hillary Clinton hates Judge Kenneth Starr and the so-called "vast right wing conspiracy."

In the last twenty-five or thirty years, hate groups have proliferated at an alarming rate in the United States. They have viciously attacked the nation that has granted them the greatest freedom of any nation on the face of God's earth; in fact, the only nation on earth that would grant them the freedom to cause so much strife and confusion. If such groups had existed in the former Soviet Union, they would have been wiped off the face of the earth. Oh, I am aware that the communists used anarchists to stir up trouble in Russia so the communists could take over the government. But as soon as the communists had gained control of Russia, they killed the anarchists. The communists knew their revolution would not and could not succeed while the anarchistic troublemakers were still alive. So they killed the anarchists by the thousands. Boris Pasternak's novel, **Dr. Zhivago**, and the movie based on the novel stress that fact.

A few days ago I received hate mail from the state of Texas. I realize that the letter does not represent the good people in Texas. Instead of a return address on the letter, these words appear where the return address was supposed

to be: "Abort Your Cowardly, Kosher, 501-C3 Preacher." In case you are wondering, I am that "Cowardly, Kosher, 501-C3 preacher," although I am not involved in a 501-C3 arrangement. Before I examine some of the leaflets this cowardly hatemonger sent me, I need to comment on what he wrote about the "cowardly, kosher, 501-C3 preacher." If I were cowardly, I would keep my name secret from my radio audience. I would do just what my Texas correspondent did—write a letter and keep my name from appearing anywhere in the letter. I do not claim to be brave, but I do not hesitate to speak out publicly on the moral evils of our day, including the destructive hatemongering that comes from the white supremacist groups, such as, the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nations, the so-called "Christian Identity Movement," the Patriot movement and similar ungodly, unamerican and unchristian organizations.

If you have any doubt about the enormous damage these hate groups do, just think about Timothy James McVeigh and James Nichols. These two men killed 168 innocent men, women and children—19 children whom Timothy McVeigh described as "collateral damage." And McVeigh lied when he said he did not know there were children in the federal building in Oklahoma City. McVeigh claimed to have been motivated by the tragedies of Waco and Ruby Ridge. I do not know all the circumstances surrounding Waco and Ruby Ridge, but I know—and so do all right-thinking people—that killing 168 people is not the way to right the wrongs that were done, if indeed wrongs were committed. Timothy McVeigh was simply looking for an excuse to take revenge against the government, particularly against Janet Reno. He unquestionably was desperately searching for any excuse and found it when the government raided the Branch Dividian compound. I do not wish to defend the government's actions at Waco or Ruby Ridge, but what Timothy McVeigh and James Nichols did was immeasurably worse than the government did.

After all, David Koresh was a criminal. And anyone who defends the actions of mass murderers like McVeigh and Nichols are guilty of supporting two of the worst criminals of all time. Some of the lawyers who defended McVeigh made me sick at my stomach when they implied that he was just a misunderstood good ole' boy. He was a vicious killer who deserved to die for his heinous deed. I sincerely hope McVeigh's execution sent a chilling message to other hatemongers.

I reserve the right to criticize governments—ours as well as others—but murdering 168 people from a heart of hate and anger does nothing to correct the mistakes our government had made and is making. There are avenues we can use for making our government more responsive to the needs and desires of the American people. In America, we can vote men and women in and out of office. We can use petitions, boycotts, letter-writing campaigns and prayers. Yes, I said prayers. Paul commanded a young preacher: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:1-2).

The letter writer referred to me as "Kosher" because he probably believes I endorse what the nation of Israel has done and is doing. He could not be more wrong. I do not share John Hagee's belief that God blesses modern nations as a consequence of their treatment of Israel. That was unquestionably true when the Jewish nation was God's elect people. It is not true any more. In fact, the nation God chose to be his elect nation does not even exist today. It came to an end when Titus and the Roman army destroyed Israel. Israel does not enjoy any blessing or honor that is not available to every other nation on earth. Besides, the modern nation of Israel has taken billions and billions of dollars from the United States and yet sent spies into our

country. In my judgment, Israel is not a friend of this nation, except when it is paid to be. I strongly oppose the Arabs' intention to drive Israel into the sea, but Israel has no greater reason to exist than any other nation. Israel is a strongly secular society. And the premillennial view that Israel will eventually be converted to Christ is a serious misreading of scripture.

There is much in the packet of material I received I would like to discuss with you, but I shall devote the rest of our time to one little leaflet that has no name and no title—a fact hard to understand when the sender calls me a cowardly preacher. Please listen to these unbelievably stupid observations—observations no knowledgeable person could possibly make. “Since the 1950s Adolph Hitler has been portrayed by ‘our’ Jewish controlled media as the reincarnation of the devil. Adolf Hitler and Robert E. Lee were the most morally pure historical figures in the last two centuries. Hitler’s ‘sin’ was he choked the communistic Jews (Jews’ religion is communism) loose from the control of Germany and set them to work.”

The cowardly author of this brief statement describes the American media as being Jewish controlled. Of course, he provides no evidence for his foolish accusation. Are there newspapers, television and radio stations that are controlled by Jews? It would be strange indeed if that were not the case, but to insist that the American media are Jewish controlled cannot be proved. But even if that were the case, would that mean the media would be more biased against Hitler and his cruel regime than media not controlled by the Jews? I have no doubt many media outlets are biased in favor of liberal politics and religion, but that does not mean that the media are Jewish controlled.

Have the media portrayed Adolf Hitler as in reincarnation of the devil? I have never heard or read that kind of language. But there is not even the slightest doubt that the devil was thrilled and exhilarated by every move

Hitler made. Except for some of the Communist leaders, like Stalin, Castro, Pol Pot and Mao Tse Tung, there probably has never been a more thoroughly evil person on the face of God's earth than Adolf Hitler. He despised major portions of the human race, New Testament Christianity and the inspired word of God. How could it have been otherwise when his chief influence in philosophy had been Friedrich Nietzsche and his favorite musician Richard Wagner? A careful reading of his book, **Mein Kampf**, will convince any honest person that Adolf Hitler was under the devil's influence. So were all those Germans who followed the evil schemes of Hitler. So are modern anti-semites and white supremacists who exalt Hitler as if were a saint. How could Americans follow and honor Hitler in view of the great losses American families suffered because of Hitler's beliefs and practices? Thousands of American boys would be living today were it not for the greed and ambition of Hitler and the Nazi party.

One of the strangest incidents in my life as a preacher occurred about twenty years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, after I had delivered some lectures on the so-called Women's Liberation Movement. A fellow gospel preacher said to me: "What we really need in this country is a man like Hitler. He would straighten out the mess that exists in our country." His comments absolutely shocked me. For once in my life, I could not find the appropriate words to respond to that preacher's comments. If we had a ruler like Hitler, he would kill hundreds of thousands of Americans—homosexuals, hundreds in the media, hundreds of thousands in America's churches—in fact, anyone who opposed the prevailing philosophy. To deny that fact shows great ignorance of historical events in the 20th century.

The author of the leaflet I am reviewing calls Adolf Hitler and Robert E. Lee "the most morally pure historical figures in the last two centuries." I have no inclination to discuss General Robert E. Lee except to say: His fighting

to keep human beings in abject slavery was evil—completely and inexcusably evil. I hate slavery as much as I hate Nazism. Come to think of it, Nazism was one of the worst systems of slavery ever known to the human family. And how could some of the most brilliant minds in the world buy into Hitler's philosophy? Medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, military leaders, and other intellectuals swallowed Hitler's philosophy hook, line and sinker. If any part of hell is hotter than the other part, surely the hottest part will be reserved for Hitler, for his henchmen and for modern people who exalt and promote the worst kind of hatred known to man.

I wonder what standards the author of the leaflet used for insisting that Robert E. Lee and Adolf Hitler were "the most morally pure historical figures of the last two centuries?" Could it be that the more innocent people a ruler kills the more morally pure the hatemongers believe he is? If that is the standard, Hitler qualifies as morally pure since he was responsible for the killing of some twenty million people during World War II. He also shares some of the responsibility for the murder of 168 people in Oklahoma City. Timothy McVeigh apparently thought Hitler was a great leader and killed those people in Oklahoma because of his respect for Hitler. The neo-Nazis have killed many other people—not only in the United States—but in Europe as well. I am absolutely baffled that anyone would honor a vicious, cruel and bloodthirsty killer like Hitler. Was he morally pure? If Satan has ever had a more obedient servant than Hitler, I would not know who it was.

The leaflet says that Hitler's "sin" was that he choked the communistic Jews loose from Germany and set them to work. The word "sin" is in quotation marks. Did Hitler hate the communists? He hated them with a passion because they had the potential to do as much evil as he did. But were the Jews of Nazi Germany communists? Some of them probably were, but to call them communists has no basis

in fact. Millions of Jews hated communism as much as they hated Nazism. Both systems were anti-Semitic and are today. The number of Jews who were killed under communist regimes will never be known in this world, but the numbers are very disturbing. To call the Jews' religion "communism" defies good sense.

On the back of the little leaflet are these words: "Hitler never killed unborn babies—just commies." Did the writer mean that Hitler never personally aborted unborn babies? Although we have no way of knowing that, I doubt if he ever assisted a woman in having an abortion. But Germany began to abort babies as early as 1909. One of the reasons many Germans aborted babies was to keep the German nation free from mentally and physically handicapped people. The eugenic movement had been in progress long before Hitler came on the scene, but he did nothing to bring a halt to it. In addition, he supported the killing of sick old people and handicapped children. One child with "badly modeled ears" was put to death during Hitler's reign of terror.

If the hate groups who think Hitler was some kind of a god would just bother to read the works of reputable scholars, they would not make such grievous errors of judgment. One of the most disturbing books ever written on the bigotry and cruelty of Nazism has the title, **The German Euthanasia Program** (Cincinnati: Hayes Publishing Co., Inc.). The book was written by Dr. Fredric Werthan, an American psychiatrist. The little book was originally chapters eight and nine of a larger book with the title, **A Sign of Cain**. According to Dr. Werthan, the express purpose of the German Euthanasia program was not specifically to kill Jews and other non-Aryans, but "to purify the German race by direct killing off of pure blooded German citizens who were physically, emotionally, or mentally defective" (p. 3). Dr. Werthan says the Nazis killed Jews, gypsies, Slavs, prisoners of war and undesirable

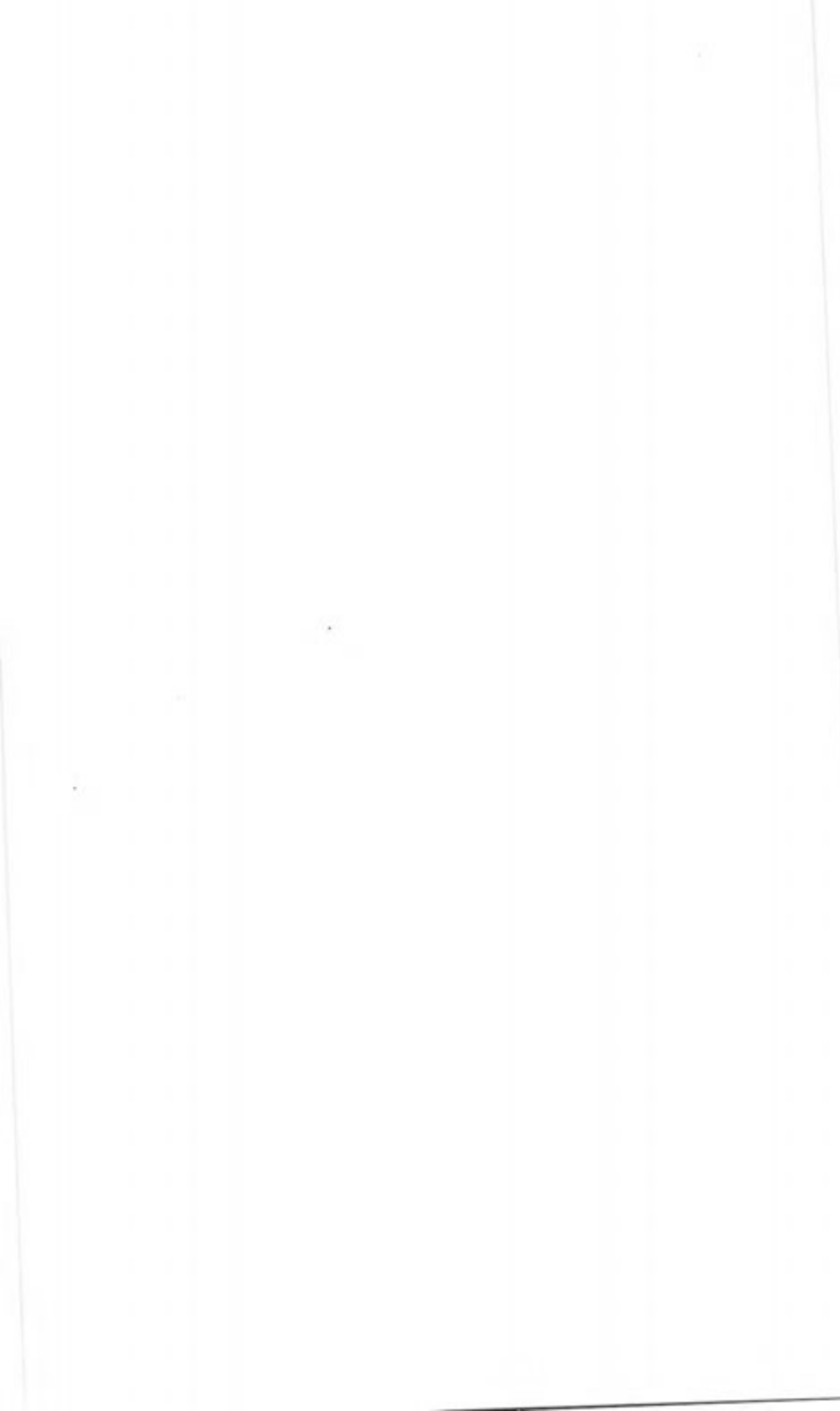
civilians. They may have confined as many as 7,500,000 to concentration camps. A bare of 500,000 of those people survived. Most reputable scholars believe that between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 Jews in concentration camps and outside were brutally killed—either gassed or shot or starved or killed in some other way (pp. 8-9).

Adolf Hitler sent the following letter to Dr. Brandt, Hitler's personal physician: You are "responsibly commissioned to extend the authority of physicians, to be designated by name, so that a mercy death may be granted to patients who according to human judgment are incurably ill according to the most critical evaluation of the state of their disease" (p. 38). The Nazis with Adolf Hitler's permission killed 275,000 German old people. They euthanized their own old people as if they were euthanizing dogs or cats. And that is morally pure?

Dr. David Rausch's book, **A Legacy of Hatred: Why Christians Must Not Forget the Holocaust** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), points out that German murder squads used children for target practice. They smashed infants' heads against the wall to hear them pop (p. 4). Dr. Rausch quotes these chilling words from Hitler's book, **Mein Kampf**: "This also is only a touchstone for the value of the race, and that race which does not pass the test will die and make room for races healthier or at least tougher and of greater resistance" (p. 6).

If time permitted, I would like to review a number of other books about the holocaust, such as, Helen Epstein's book, **Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors** (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979); Dr. Robert Jay Lifton's masterpiece, **The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide** (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986) and others, but time will not permit it today.

I close today with a very simple question: Where were the churches when all of his brutality was going on?



Chapter 11

The Stupidity Of Gambling

Preachers of the gospel are always reluctant to use the word "stupid," but sometimes it seems to be the only word that fits the situation. When the word is appropriate and we decide to use it, we are in good company. Incidentally, the King James Version of the Bible never uses any form of the word "stupid," but there is no doubt of the meaning of some passages. I shall read some King James passages where the word "stupid" is used in some modern versions. "A brutish man does not know, neither does a fool understand" (Psa. 92:6). Both the New Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Version use the word "stupid" rather than the word "fool." Jeremiah wrote concerning God's people: "For my people are foolish, they do not know me; they are sottish children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22). The word "sottish" means resembling a sot. It was a perfectly good word in 1611, but is no longer widely used. Both the modern versions I have mentioned translate the word "stupid."

All of us are prone to make stupid remarks and to behave in stupid ways. Have you ever heard preachers on Trinity Broadcasting Network and at other places say, "The coming of the Lord is nearer than it has ever been?" Of course, the coming of the Lord is nearer than it has ever been. If the Lord delays his coming for another 100,000 years, his coming is nearer than it has ever been. The Lord's coming is nearer today than it was yesterday. Tragically, preachers are not the only ones who make stupid remarks. Sometimes politicians' statements make the views of everyone else—even the preachers who make stupid statements—seem like the greatest examples of logic one can imagine. I have time in this brief lesson to provide just

one such stupid political observation.

The Tennessean (Saturday, July 21, 2001) printed an article with the title, "Senator says 'God might even thank you' for the lottery" (p. 7-B). I want you to know up front that I am not calling State Senator Steve Cohen of Memphis "stupid." I have seen him on television many times and have heard him express his views on various topics. He appears to be reasonably well educated and articulates his views quite effectively. But nobody—and I do mean nobody—ever made a more irresponsible—and yes—stupid statement than that. If he had tried for a thousand years to formulate a more senseless observation, I cannot imagine what it could be. Let us hope and pray that the people in those jurisdictions that have not yet legalized gambling will examine Senator Cohen's views and choose to oppose gambling with all their might.

The Tennessean reported that Senator Cohen made a speech in Nashville to Tennessee broadcasters. After the speech, a woman told him that she opposed legalizing the lottery "because God's against it." Cohen responded by saying God exists in Georgia and in thirty-seven other states where gambling is legal. He affirmed that God looks after all of us (p. 7-B). Is God against gambling? You know he is. Of course, God exists in Georgia and in every other place. Does that mean he approves of all that transpires in all those places? Does God exist in those counties in Nevada that have legalized prostitution? Does his existence in Nevada mean he approves of prostitution? God exists in Palestine, but does he want the Palestinians and Israelis to keep mutilating and killing each other?

Senator Cohen makes reference to the well-known fact of Tennessee's being the Volunteer state. He says our state has been gracious to help the children of Georgia, Kentucky, Virginia and Missouri to get scholarships for their children. He thinks we have gone too far in volunteering. We ought to keep some of that money at home for our own children

(p. 7-B). You already know – but I plan to keep hammering on it – that Steve Cohen’s views are irrational, immoral and destructive. If his views prevail, our state will be much worse off morally and probably even financially than it already is. The truth is: Gambling is always stupid conduct – always.

How does Senator Cohen or anyone else know what God approves and what he disapproves? Does the senator have a special pipeline into the mind of God? Is he operating on intuition? Has he consulted someone’s crystal ball? Is it possible he is bowing down to political pressure from his constituents? Surely a politician of convictions would not do that, would he? Do Senator Cohen and his bedfellows in the fight to legalize the lottery hope to gain personally from their nefarious activities? You do know of the corruption that proliferates in the states where gambling is legalized, do you not? If you do not, you should read Ovid Demaris’ book, **The Boardwalk Jungle** (New York: Bantam Books, 1986). Demaris lists some of the politicians who sold out to the mafia and went to jail for their greed. United States Senator Harrison Williams went to prison for his involvement with gambling interests in New Jersey. Demaris says that gambling is nothing more than “separating a sucker from his money.” He calls it “legal larceny.” Most of the people who gamble in Atlantic City are “from the poor and the lower-middle class senior citizens who can ill afford to lose any money” (Author’s note, p. 11).

If “God might even thank you” for the lottery, as Senator Cohen so foolishly says, God would be thanking you for promoting greed, for hurting poor families and for creating an atmosphere of crime and immorality. Gambling always involves greed. Somebody wants to get something for nothing. He does not want to earn it; he wants to get it by buying a lottery ticket or going to a casino or betting on the horses. Every student of the scriptures knows how strongly God opposes greed, even if Senator Cohen approves

of it. The King James Version never uses the word "greed," but it does use the words "greedy," "greediness" and "greedily." The King James Version uses the word "covetousness." The Greek word **pleonexia** (always translated either "covetousness," "greediness" or "covetous practices") literally means to over-reach. The word is always used in a bad sense. Jesus said to a certain rich man: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness (or greed): for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses" (Lk. 12:15). Paul classifies covetousness with murder, sexual immorality, hating God and maliciousness (Rom. 1:29-31). He commanded the Ephesians: "But sexual immorality, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints" (Eph. 4:3). Did you know that Paul called covetousness or greed "idolatry" (Col. 3:5)? Maybe Senator Cohen does not know what the Psalmist said about greed. "For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the covetous (or greedy), whom the Lord abhors" (Psa. 10:3). It is doubtful that "God might even thank you" for the lottery—very doubtful.

Incidentally, the people who buy lottery tickets or gamble in the casinos are not the only greedy people. Governors, state senators and representatives are sometimes greedy. They encourage their constituents to gamble so the state can have more money to spend on the politicians' pet projects. The politicians occasionally profit financially from gambling operations. Several years ago some politicians in Kentucky were indicted for taking pay-offs from racing interests. Anyone who thinks that will not happen wherever gambling is legalized is dreaming or deliberately covering up what has occurred in virtually every place in the nation where gambling has become legal. How can the state control various criminal activities when it legalizes some? And gambling—all gambling—is criminal from a moral viewpoint.

It is criminal for a state to promise riches to people

who gamble in state-sponsored lotteries or casinos. Government should always seek the welfare of its people. When the state seductively advertises that great sums of money can be made through gambling, it is destroying men's motivations for working to make a living, creating an atmosphere where people expect to get rich on the misery of others and endorsing some of the most despicable attitudes and behaviors known to man. In addition, the state is creating gambling addicts who have difficulty supporting their families and who often rob, steal and kill to get more money for gambling.

Our nation is suffering from unqualified, unconcerned and ungodly leaders. Do you remember how Jeremiah described the leaders of his day? Jeremiah delivered these very caustic words to the people of God. "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible things: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that no one returns from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaness gone forth into all the land" (Jer. 23:14-15). If Jeremiah were alive today, would he use words like "evildoers" and "profaness" of those who promote gambling? You know he would and so would all the great prophets of the Old Testament and the outstanding preachers of the New.

Do you know who buys lottery tickets? The rich did not get rich by spending their money stupidly. The poor are the ones who get hurt from lotteries. Even the supporters of gambling concede that gambling primarily hurts poor people. A few years ago, I spoke on a lectureship at Lakeland, Florida. On a Sunday afternoon, my wife and I stopped at a local drug store to pick up some items. There was a long line of people waiting to buy lottery tickets.

Outside in the parking lot, there were no expensive automobiles. The people buying the tickets were driving run-down cars and pickups. Their dress showed conclusively that they were poor but hoping to strike it rich in the lottery. All they succeeded in doing was getting poorer. It grieves me to see poor people spending their hard earned money on gambling—whatever the nature of the gambling. It also grieves me to know that politicians care so little about the people they represent that they want to get more money from them in the form of gambling. Are the politicians so ignorant they think they are creating a new form of revenue?

If I were a rich man, I would like to send a copy of Larry Braidfoot's book, **Gambling: A Deadly Game** (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985), to every congressman and senator in every state in our union. I am aware that many of them would not take the time to read it, but those who did read it would know for sure just how stupid gambling is and how stupid it is to legalize it. They could not discount the information Dr. Braidfoot provides in his book. Of course, there are politicians who have already made up their minds and do not want to be disturbed by the facts. Dr. Braidfoot is probably the best-qualified man in the United States to deal with every kind of gambling. He holds a law degree from the University of Texas Law School and a doctor's degree in Christian ethics from Baylor University. He has testified in dozens and dozens of hearings before state legislatures that were contemplating legalizing some form of gambling. How any honest person could read Dr. Braidfoot's book and ever again support any kind of gambling defies one's imagination. Dr. Braidfoot calls legalized gambling "an American tragedy." He points out that \$177 billion was legally wagered in 1984 and probably as much as \$23 billion gambled illegally (p. 15). I have no idea how much was gambled in the year 2000, but probably three or four times as much as in 1984. Dr. Braidfoot confirms

what I said to you a moment ago and that is, the people most in need of financial help are the ones most vulnerable to listening to the pitch of the gambling industry (p. 18).

The third chapter in Dr. Braidfoot's book has the title, "State-Operated Lotteries" (pp. 33-64). Dr. Braidfoot says that a person has one in two million chances of being struck by lightning. The odds of winning in the lottery are sometimes one in 10,000,000. The lottery is the very worst form of gambling so far as pay-offs are concerned (p. 33). Some have been so bold as to claim that lotteries are painless ways of taxing a state's citizens. Gambling is one of the most regressive forms of taxation known to man. "Regressive taxation" simply means that the state extracts more money from the poor percentage-wise than from the rich. Dr. Braidfoot tells of a survey of the lottery outlets in New Castle County, Delaware, in 1979. In the rich neighborhoods, there was one lottery outlet for every 17,630 people. In the middle-income neighborhoods, there was one outlet for every 17,774 people. In the very poorest neighborhoods, there was one outlet for every 1,981 people (p. 39). Dr. Braidfoot calls the lottery a "form of ethnic exploitation" (p. 46).

But legalized gambling will reduce other kinds of gambling, will it not? Dr. Braidfoot furnishes an abundance of evidence to show that such does not occur. Legalizing gambling probably increases illegal gambling. The National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, conducted a study on gambling. Their conclusion was: "Police efforts against gambling could not be reduced, even with legalization, because there is no evidence that legalized wagering decreases illegal gambling....Major system-wide gambling related corruption scandals in the recent past have been more likely to occur in cities where organized crime was thought to be directly involved in illegal gambling. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina conducted an interview with Lieutenant Colonel Justin J. Dintino,

commander of the Intelligence Division of the New Jersey State Police. Dintino was also a member of the Presidential Commission on Organized Crime. Senator Thurmond asked Dintino: "In other words, you're saying that when you legalize gambling it has increased other gambling, is that right?" Dintino replied: "Yes, in other words, when you introduce gambling to an area where they never had gambling before, you now develop a whole new group of individuals who start to gamble. Now, as a result of that, they may initially start out with legal gambling, but some of those people will turn to illegal gambling because maybe it offers them higher payments and there are no tax payments that have to be made" (pp. 50-51).

The sad truth is that hundreds of thousands of crimes are committed each year because of both legal and illegal gambling. More than two-thirds of compulsive gamblers have committed felony crimes while pursuing their addiction to gambling. Did you know that forty percent of "white collar crime" is committed by compulsive gamblers (p. 54)? Gambling interests in Atlantic City, New Jersey, have destroyed homes, created poverty and done irreparable damage to the community in countless ways, as you can confirm by reading Ovid Demaris' book, **The Boardwalk Jungle**. Dr. Braidfoot reports on a survey of Atlantic City High School students. The following are some of the results of the survey: "72% of the students gambled in the casinos; 69% started by the age of sixteen; 6% started gambling at the ages of ten through twelve; 9% gambled before the age of ten; 6% shoplifted to get money for gambling; and 3% sold drugs to get money to gamble" (p. 55).

Harry Reid once served as chairman of the Nevada Gaming Control Commission. He later became a United States representative from Nevada. His words should ring in the ears of everyone who favors legalizing any kind of gambling. "I'd be a fool to say gambling has not been good for the state....but any state trying to follow Nevada's lead

will find that social costs far outweigh any economic benefit" (p. 60).

There are many biblical principles that unequivocally condemn all forms of gambling. The sin of greed, mistreating the poor and encouraging and supporting criminal activities are just a few of those principles. But no passage in the Bible in my judgment speaks more effectively to this topic than what we commonly call "the Golden Rule." In his great Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said to his disciples: "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt. 7:12). The popular expression of that principle is: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." There are millions of people who profess no faith, but who honor the Golden Rule, at least, in word if not in practice.

How would you like for someone to take your money with little or no hope of getting value in return? That is precisely what occurs when one gambles—whether by buying lottery tickets or betting on horses or playing the one-arm bandits. One is five times more likely to be bitten by a shark than he is to win the lottery. The Golden Rule does not allow me to take from others without giving value in return; nor does it allow them to take from me.

I close today with these wise words from the father of our country. "It (gaming) is the child of avarice (or greed), the brother of iniquity, and the father of mischief." My friends, the scriptures completely agree with George Washington—not with Senator Steve Cohen.

Chapter 12

Civil Disobedience

Do you believe there is ever justification for disobeying the law of the land? If you were living in the Islamic republic of Afghanistan or in Communist China and the government forbade you to worship God or to teach your children about God, what would be your reaction? Would you defy the government and live according to your convictions? These may sound like purely theoretical questions, but they are not. It is a criminal offense in Afghanistan to seek to convert Afghans to Christ. You could go to jail or even to the graveyard. China has for centuries persecuted those who claimed to believe in Christ. Would God approve of civil disobedience under the circumstances I have described? Will you please think with me today on the topic: "Civil Disobedience?"

Civil disobedience became an everyday occurrence during the civil rights movement. Some of the men, like Rap Brown, involved in civil disobedience were simply criminals looking for opportunities to loot, to rampage and to seek revenge. Some of the radicals in the movement were real problems for leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Andrew Young. Dr. King and his confederates believed in nonviolence, but deliberately violated the laws they considered to be unconstitutional and unfair. I did not always agree with Dr. King's political or religious views, but what if a Rap Brown or a Malcolm X had enjoyed popular appeal throughout the nation? It goes without saying that many people—both black and white—would have died. And hundreds of millions of dollars of property would have been destroyed.

Dr. King, hundreds of other leaders and their supporters disobeyed segregationist laws because they believed that no unjust law should be obeyed. Dr. King led

thousands of blacks and others against segregated eating establishments, against segregated schools and against every other injustice that he thought ought to be corrected. He was willing to suffer the consequences of his actions. He went to jail in a number of southern cities. On occasions, he was whipped, ridiculed and abused in countless other ways in one city after another. Whether you agree with Dr. King's goals and methods—and I did not in some cases—he was an example of one who stood by his convictions, one who was willing to suffer and to die for those convictions. His actions and those of his fellow demonstrators permanently changed the face of America. Discrimination can no longer be countenanced as a part of our national heritage.

The consistent message of the Bible is: Obey the laws of the land. On one occasion, some Pharisees tried to trap Jesus Christ by asking, "What do you think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not" (Mt. 22:17)? The Roman government was one of the most despised governments in the history of the world. The Roman government had been especially oppressive toward the Jews, even though it pretended to protect all people. Our Lord knew the motivation behind the Jews' question. They wanted to impale Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If he approved of paying tribute to Caesar, he was no friend of the Jews. If he disapproved of paying tribute to Caesar, the Jews would use the Roman government against him. From their viewpoint, Jesus could not win.

Jesus Christ requested the Jews to show him the tribute money which had the figure of Caesar and a superscription on it. Christ asked the Jews, "Whose is the image and superscription" (Mt. 22:20)? They told him, "Caesar's." He then said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22:21). It ought to be obvious that Jesus recognized a proper realm for civil government. He knew society could not operate

for the welfare of its citizens without some form of government. But our obligations to our government must not conflict with our duties to the kingdom of God. What Jesus was teaching is very plain: We live in two realms—the civil and the religious. Civil government is vital to the welfare of all people—Christians and non-Christians alike. God’s kingdom on earth—the church of the living God—must be the very heart of Christian living. We cannot—we must not—allow our allegiance to the United States of America to overshadow our love for God and our work in his church. And, contrary to what some religious teachers seem to imply, the United States is not God’s kingdom on earth.

Not only did our Lord recognize a proper role for civil government; so did the apostles Paul and Peter. Paul commanded Christians to submit to governmental powers. The government serves as a minister to all people for good (Rom. 13:1-7). The apostle Peter urged his fellow Christians: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme: or unto governors, as unto them who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them who do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Pet. 2:13-15). Paul encouraged Christians to pray for those in political power so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:1-2). If all governments were always evil—if Christians must always appose all governments—why would Paul command us to pray for kings and all other in positions of authority?

Do these inspired examples and instructions leave any room for civil disobedience? Or must we place our duties to God above our duties to the state? Benito Mussolini wrote: “Everything for the State. Nothing against the State. Nothing outside the State.” Mussolini and many ancient Romans made a god of the state. Talking of civil

disobedience to such people would have been blasphemous. If they believed in God at all, they relegated him to a place inferior to the state. In their view, rebelling against the state would have been rebelling against their god. The death penalty would have been the punishment for treason.

The book of Acts gives us one very impressive example of civil disobedience. The apostles Peter and John were visiting the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. As they approached the temple, they saw a lame man lying at the Beautiful gate of the temple. The man had been lame since birth. Begging was his only means of supporting himself. When the lame man saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked them for a gift. The apostle Peter said to the lame man, "Look on us." He was expecting to receive a gift; so he listened to what Peter said. Peter told the lame man that he and John did not have any money, but they had a gift for him. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Peter took the lame man by the right hand and lifted up him. Immediately his feet and anklebones received strength. "And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:1-9).

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were disturbed over the healing of the lame man and because the apostles "preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2). The leaders seized the apostles and put them in a safe room until they could have time to examine what they were teaching. The Jewish leaders demanded to know by what power, or by what name the apostles had healed the infirm man. Peter explained: "Let it be known unto you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand before you whole. This is the stone that was rejected (or despised) by you builders, which is become the head of the comer. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name

under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:7-12).

The problem for the Jewish leaders was to decide what to do with the apostles. The Jewish leaders conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us warn them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name" (Acts 4:15-17). It ought to be obvious that the Jewish rulers were far more concerned about their position and about their income than about learning and obeying the truth. The Jewish leaders commanded Peter and John not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus. Peter and John answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, you be the judge. For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no basis for punishing them, because of the people: for all glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing had been performed" (Acts 4:18-22).

The apostles could not obey the dictates of the Jewish council. They went right on preaching the word and healing the sick. When the high priest learned what the apostles were doing, he became very angry, laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. But God had other plans for the apostles. He sent an angel to open the prison doors and to bring them out. He then commanded them: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Peter and John complied with the command of God's angel. When officers came to check on the apostles, they were no longer in prison. When the Jewish leaders learned that the apostles' had escaped from prison, they were concerned about what would come of it all. The captain and the officers brought the apostles before the

Jewish council. The Jewish leaders asked the apostles, "Did we not give you strict orders not to teach anymore in this man's name? And, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:17-21, 24, 27-28).

If the Jewish authorities thought they could intimidate the apostles, they were badly mistaken. The apostle Peter's answer to the Jewish leaders has served as a great inspiration to thousands of men and women who have been threatened because of their commitment to the cause of Christ. Peter very boldly said: "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). In the eyes of many people the word "ought" may not carry the force of the word "must," although it is a translation of the same Greek word. "We must obey God rather than man." But how does one harmonize Peter's response to the Jewish elders with what he said about submitting to civil rulers (1 Pet. 2:13-17)? The answer is very simple: We must obey civil rulers unless they require us to violate the law of God. For example, if the United States government forbade Christians to worship God, we would have no choice but to disobey our government. We cannot disobey our God for any reason—political or otherwise, that is, if we want to go to heaven.

But would modern governments actually take away men's rights to worship as they believe they ought? Our world is so much more sophisticated, educated and tolerant than the governments of ancient Rome, of Babylon and of Egypt. The sad truth is: There are governments all over the world that allow men and women to worship only as the government wishes. I have already mentioned Afghanistan. It is one of the most cruel, barbarous, malicious and intolerant governments on the face of God's earth. If you are not a Muslim, you and your family members are in constant danger. The Afghans cut the throats of those with whom they disagree. They disagree with everyone who is not a Muslim.

There are many other countries where those who claim to be Christians are persecuted, such as, India, Morocco, Nepal, China, Cuba and Russia. It is particularly troubling to me that Israel has not been friendly in recent years to people who try to convert others to Christ. The United States leaders have betrayed our country by allowing anyone to enter this nation regardless of their religious affiliations and not demanding the same privileges for our people. We have given Israel billions and billions of dollars, and yet they do not allow missionaries from our nation to have complete freedom to preach what they believe. The United States ought to stop the flow of money to Israel until she opens her borders to missionaries from America. The same is true of other countries, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere. Did you know that the leaders in Saudi Arabia would not allow American soldiers to bring Bibles to their country? If the United States had not protected Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries, their people would now be under the iron foot of Saddam Hussein. But some of those countries will not grant religious freedom to anyone other than to Muslims. That is clearly immoral.

Could the United States ever become like Hitler's Germany or Pol Pot's Cambodia or Stalin's Russia? Our Constitution guarantees churches freedom from governmental interference. So why should Americans worry about the erosion of religious freedom? It could not happen here, could it? My friends, our Supreme Court and other governmental powers have already removed some of America's religious freedoms. There are some jurisdictions in our nation where men and women are not allowed to meet in private homes to study the Bible or to have religious devotions. Some schools allow homosexual clubs, communist organizations, and similar radical groups to meet on campus, but will not allow Bible clubs to meet. And let a child mention the name of Jesus on a term paper or in a class discussion and the teacher calls in the Un-American

Un-Civil Liberties Union and maybe even the police. Do you remember how the press reacted to George W. Bush's admission that Jesus Christ was his favorite philosopher? How dare a man running for the presidency mention Jesus Christ in a campaign speech or in an interview! If president Bush had said that John Dewey or William James was his favorite philosopher, the press would likely have praised him for his great wisdom.

I shall furnish you some modern examples of people who defied the civil powers of their countries in order to live by their beliefs. I shall not vouch for the correctness of the doctrinal positions of the people I shall mention. But we should be able to learn from their courage in defying their governments. Corrie Ten Boom with the help of John and Elizabeth Sherrill wrote a fascinating yet disturbing book, **The Hiding Place** (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), which tells of the perils Corrie Ten Boom and her family faced during the Nazi take-over and control of Holland. Corrie Ten Boom, her sister Betsie and their father continually hid Jews in their Dutch home to prevent the Nazis from killing them. For their courage in trying to save the lives of their fellowmen, the Ten Booms were sent to concentration camps. They were treated worse than vermin. Corrie Ten Boom's sister, Betsie Ten Boom and their father died from malnutrition and from physical abuse. Corrie Ten Boom survived the terrible ordeal of some of the worst concentration camps the human family has ever known.

Were the Ten Booms justified in disobeying the Nazi government in order to save the lives of their fellowmen? What would you and I have done under similar circumstances? The Ten Booms knew they could be executed for their conduct, but they believed they had no choice except to protect the Jews from extermination. While I reject Corrie Ten Boom's charismatic beliefs, I honor her for her courage, compassion and convictions. If there had been more people like her in Holland, in Poland, and in other

countries the Nazis overran, more lives could have been saved. The human race might not have suffered the devastating loss of 6,000,000 Jews. I am fully aware of the views of neo-Nazis, skinheads, white supremacists and other radicals who think the Ten Booms deserved to die for saving the Jews, but no honorable person could take that position.

Mikhail Khorev spent fifteen years in a Soviet prison because of his unwillingness to cease preaching what he believed. In his book, **Letters from a Soviet Prison Camp** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), Khorev lists the trumped up charges the Soviet government brought against him. Please listen. The group of which he was a member sang too loudly. They were guilty of permitting the children to be present in the worship services. Khorev preached too loudly. The group was also charged with arranging a procession in the street (p. 24).

I close today with a few suggestions regarding civil disobedience. As Christians, we must pray for the president, our congressmen, our senators, our Supreme Court Justices and all others in positions of authority. We do not know how prayer changes people's lives and political situations, but we know it does. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous avails much" (Jas. 5:16). We must make sure we send to Washington and to our state capitals men and women who will protect all our rights, including our constitutional right to worship God as we believe we ought. If and when the government passes laws that restrict our privilege and obligation to serve the living God, we must protest, even if that means defying the laws of the land. We must not allow anyone or anything to prevent our worshipping and serving the God of heaven.

Chapter 13

Circumstances Alter Cases

Steve Allen died in the year 2000 at the age of 79. He was unquestionably one of America's most talented entertainers. He was the creator and first host of the "Tonight" show. He also created and served as the first host on the award-winning series "Meeting of the Minds." Steve was also a literary figure of some note. He was not a Shakespeare or a Milton, but some of his books have very valuable information and insights. On the other hand, his two books on **The Bible, Religion and Morality** (Prometheus Books, 1990 and 1993) reveal considerable prejudice toward the Bible—not a scholarly evaluation of God's word. He wrote fifty-five books, composed over 8,500 songs and contributed numerous articles to newspapers and magazines. His last book, published after his death, has the title, **Vulgarians at the Gate** (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001). While Steve's latest book has some ideas with which I strongly disagree, it is a great contribution to our understanding of the trashy smut that is being promoted through television, radio, popular music, movies, books and magazines. If you buy the book and read it, you need to know Steve's worldview. He was a secular humanist, although he was not an atheist (p. 317).

I have chosen one expression from Steve's book as the basis for our lesson today. That expression, "Circumstances alter cases," is "one of the most ancient legal principles," Steve affirms (p. 319). I know Steve Allen is right much of the time. Circumstances may and do alter legal cases, but does the principle apply in the moral and spiritual areas? For example, if a man kills another in cold blood, that is different from shooting a person breaking into a person's home. The law makes allowances for that difference and most people apparently agree. If the circumstances alter

moral values, we cannot even be sure if murder is always wrong. If circumstances always alter cases, that approach to moral conduct is nothing more than "situation ethics." In 1933 a group of secular humanists composed a document they called the **Humanist Manifesto**. It was signed by John Dewey, probably the most influential of the men who composed the document, by R. Lester Mondale, vice president Walter Mondale's brother, by Harry Elmer Barnes, a radical sociologist, and by a host of others. In 1973, the humanists produced another document they called **Humanist Manifesto II** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books). In the latter publication, ethics is said to be autonomous and situational (p. 17).

The word "ethics" relates to matters of good and bad, right and wrong. The humanists affirm that ethics is autonomous. The word "autonomous" comes from two Greek words, **autos**, meaning self, and **nomos**, meaning law. The word literally means self-law. The Old Testament provides these comments on the foolishness of man's attempt at autonomy. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). If you want to know where autonomy leads, you could do no better than to read the book of Judges or to survey the moral situation in the United States.

The word "situational" means that nothing is right or wrong within itself; it all depends on the situation. Is it ever right to lie? It all depends on the situation. If by lying you can help a fellow human being, it not only is right to lie; it is obligatory. But if lying hurts another, then lying is wrong. Is it wrong to commit adultery? The situationist responds: It all depends. If in committing adultery, you do not hurt yourself, your partner or another, then adultery may not be wrong. In fact, some situation ethicists are even using the term "healthy adultery." "Healthy adultery" would be the kind of sexual activity that would help you to be a better intimate partner for your husband or your

wife. But do humanists really believe that kind of junk? Sadly, the answer is that many of them do or at least claim to believe it.

Humanist Manifesto II has a rather long discussion of human sexuality. Humanists accuse orthodox religions of unduly repressing sexual conduct. Humanists make no attempt to prevent people from expressing their sexual desires any way they choose, so long as all the people involved are consenting adults and so long as they do not hurt anyone. One example of the humanists' views of human sexuality can be gleaned from Russell Vannoy's book, **Sex Without Love: a Philosophical Exploration** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1980). The book apparently has the endorsement of the American Humanist Association since it is published by the humanist publishing house, Prometheus Books of Buffalo, New York (now of Amherst, New York). Vannoy argues that sex with love or sex without love is merely a matter of taste—"tender versus raunchiness, predictability and security versus adventure and novelty, attachment versus independence." He says it is comparable to your preference for coffee without cream and sugar or coffee with cream and sugar (p. 29). Vannoy thinks that our disgust with certain kinds of sexual behavior stems from our conditioning—not from any absolute moral principle that governs the behavior of men and women. He does not understand or pretends not to understand "how anything in the world of nature can be unnatural" (p. 35). Would it surprise you that Vannoy affirms that it is "difficult to offer a philosophical proof that rape is always immoral" (p. 77)? Vannoy says he does not know how to distinguish perverted from non-perverted sex (p. 60). No humanist has any objective basis for distinguishing between perverted and non-perverted sex acts. The truth is: Vannoy believes in sex just for the sake of sex—no commitment, no love and no devotion (p. 92).

For many years, Lester Kirkendall taught marriage

and family courses at Oregon State University. He is a nationally known sociologist and sexologist. Dr. Kirkendall's book, **A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities**, was also published by Prometheus Books, the large humanist publishing house in New York. Like Russell Vannoy, Dr. Kirkendall endorses complete freedom of sexual expression, so long as no one does another harm (pp. 4-5). Have you ever wondered if professors like Kirkendall feel any guilt over the enormous number of young people and older ones who have destroyed their lives and their families because they have followed the stupid advice of men like Kirkendall? Do the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the proliferation of teen pregnancy and the tragic number of senseless abortions cause these liberal academicians any compunction of conscience? Do they worry about the immoral situation they have helped to create in the United States?

Does Steve Allen endorse the sexual views of Russell Vannoy, of Lester Kirkendall and of **Humanist Manifestos I & II**? A careful reading of his book, **Vulgarians at the Gate**, will show conclusively that he does not. But Steve may not have known that many humanists believe that two contradictory propositions may both be true. Did Steve Allen accept the judgment of some humanists who deny all absolutes? I will review some of his observations about show business and show business people and let you make your own judgments. But before I do, I shall briefly refer to a book the humanists published on **Humanist Ethics** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1980), edited by Dr. Morris Storer, a former professor of humanities at the University of Florida. Dr. Will Durant, a historian of philosophy and a secular humanist, wrote the first chapter entitled, "Humanism in Historical Perspective." Dr. Durant understood the difficulty humanists face in striving to find a "natural ethic strong enough to maintain moral restraint and social order without the support of supernatural

consolations, hopes, and fears" (p. 8). The truth is: It is impossible to mold a naturalistic ethic that can guide men without God.

In the same volume Alastair Hannay, professor of philosophy at the University of Trondheim in Norway, has a chapter with the title "Propositions Toward a Humanist Consensus." How can humanists ever reach a consensus on any topic or a near consensus when they have no standard by which to judge right and wrong? Hannay says that humanists want to believe we have moral responsibilities in some absolute sense and not just the product of arbitrary legislation. He then asks, "But on what principle or standard can they be based?" He concludes: "The divine legislator and guarantor has gone by the board, but the human legislator doesn't seem to have the credentials" (p. 187). Dr. Max Hocutt, former professor of philosophy and chairman of the department at the University of Alabama makes this perceptive comment on Hannay's chapter on consensus: Reading Alastair Hannay makes me suspect that the "humanist consensus will reduce to agreement that God does not exist" (p. 191). But even that is not certain. Steve Allen was not an atheist. Now let us examine some of Steve's comments about the immorality of some of the television programs, movies and songs.

Steve argues—and I agree—that pornography has always been available for people who wanted it. But it is only in the past few years that pornographic elements have invaded the mainstream media (p. 15). Like many other observers of modern culture, Steve Alien thinks that violence and explicit sex on television robs children of their innocence (p. 18). Incidentally, Michael Medved, a nationally syndicated radio talk show host and movie critic, and Dr. Diane Medved, a clinical psychologist, make the same point in their outstanding book, **Saving Childhood: Protecting Our Children from the National Assault on Innocence** (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1998). Steve Allen

reports on a CNN-USA TODAY Gallup poll that says that more than three-quarters of American adults believe that television, movies and popular music have a negative influence on children (p. 18).

After the massacre at the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, president Clinton said: "By the time the typical American child reaches the age of eighteen, he or she has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence and 40,000 dramatized murders" (p. 28). Steve Allen correctly refers to this situation as "culture war." Did you know – and most of you almost certainly do know – that major corporations are sponsoring the most vulgar recordings and television programs? They do it because they make hundreds of millions in profits. Steve says that American corporations are financing much of the "social damage we are suffering" (p. 31). Steve affirms that American entertainment is filled with "foul language and repulsiveness" (p. 34). He was especially disgusted with what he called "the witless spectacle known as 'Married... with Children' – a deliberately vulgar situation comedy aired on Fox network" (p. 35). Steve wrote a letter to Rupert Murdoch, owner of the Fox network and a very influential media mogul, to express his displeasure with what Fox network telecasts. Murdoch is supposed to be a devout Christian. Steve accused Murdoch of not living according to the Christian principles he professes (p. 59).

I really think Steve Allen has done a great favor for all Americans by pointing out the damage trash on television, in the movies and in popular songs does to the American family. If all entertainers had the moral values of a Steve Allen, the nation's moral values would surely improve. But Steve often takes a nasty swipe at some of the teaching of the Bible. For example, he quotes the apostle Paul as teaching that "the love of money is the root of all evil." He insists that Paul's observation is either a misquotation or a translation error since it is obvious there

are other kinds of evil that have no connection with money (p. 81). If Steve had bothered to consult almost any Bible student, he would not have made such a blunder in his accusation against Paul. I am aware that Steve was quoting from the King James Version, but the Greek reads: "For the love of money is **the**—not a—root of all evil." Honesty demands that every student search for the truth—not look for ways to try to prove that there are errors in the Bible.

Steve Allen says very succinctly and very correctly, "Teenage pregnancy is wrong. Rape is wrong. Incest is wrong. Adultery is wrong" (p. 85). Offhand, I would think that 99.9% of the people in my audience today would wholeheartedly agree with those brief but powerful statements. You would probably also agree that all of these immoral behaviors are given considerable publicity and approval on television, in the movies and in many popular songs. Our children and young people confront these kinds of smut and sleaze almost daily—sometimes hourly, especially if they watch MTV.

I know Steve Allen died in the year 2000, but I would like to have asked him: "By what standard are teenage pregnancy, rape, incest and adultery wrong?" Humanists cannot argue that these kinds of conduct are always wrong. Since, according to Alastair Harmay, "the divine legislator and guarantor has gone by the boards," mere mortals have neither the wisdom nor the authority to provide moral standards for our lives. All the humanist can consistently say is, "I do not like for my fellow citizens to engage in premarital sex, in rape, in incest and in adultery." But no humanist as a humanist can maintain that these activities are wrong—always wrong.

I am not arguing that some humanists do not have high moral values. The truth is: Most of them live far above their own moral commitments. But they do it for reasons other than the demands of their philosophy. Many humanists grew up in homes that were Christian or claimed

to be. They learned their moral values from their parents or from the churches they attended as children. Since I mentioned Will Durant a few minutes ago, I shall use him as an example of one who grew up in a religious home but became a secular humanist. In 1927 Dr. Durant wrote a book with the title, **Transition: A Sentimental Story of One Mind and One Era** (New York: Simon and Schuster). He provides some insight into his early childhood training. He originally planned to become a Roman Catholic priest, but changed his mind when he encountered the teaching of Charles Darwin. In spite of his later defection from his early training, he wrote these powerful words about Jesus Christ. His was "the noblest story ever told, the finest flower that has ever blossomed in the jungle of the human soul, this magnificent symbol of genius crucified for daring to redeem mankind....I thrill yet at the mention of his name, and hunger yet for the ideal life he wished mankind to live; if to love him and hear him gladly is to be a Christian, then, skeptic and pagan though I be, I am a Christian too, and Christ is still my God" (pp. 21-22).

I do not know about Will Durant's conduct. If he were a good moral man, his goodness had absolutely nothing to do with his humanism. His mother apparently was a good woman who had her son's best interests at heart. He had some religious teachers who were devout and lived their convictions. But no man can maintain a consistent moral life based on the tenets of secular humanism. Tragically, there are many who claim to be Christians but whose lives are shameful and bring reproach on the name of Christ. In too many cases, it is these people who stand in the way of men's becoming Christians or who drive men from the faith. That was the reason our Lord demanded that his disciples be salt and light. We are to so live that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is heaven (Mt. 5:13-16).

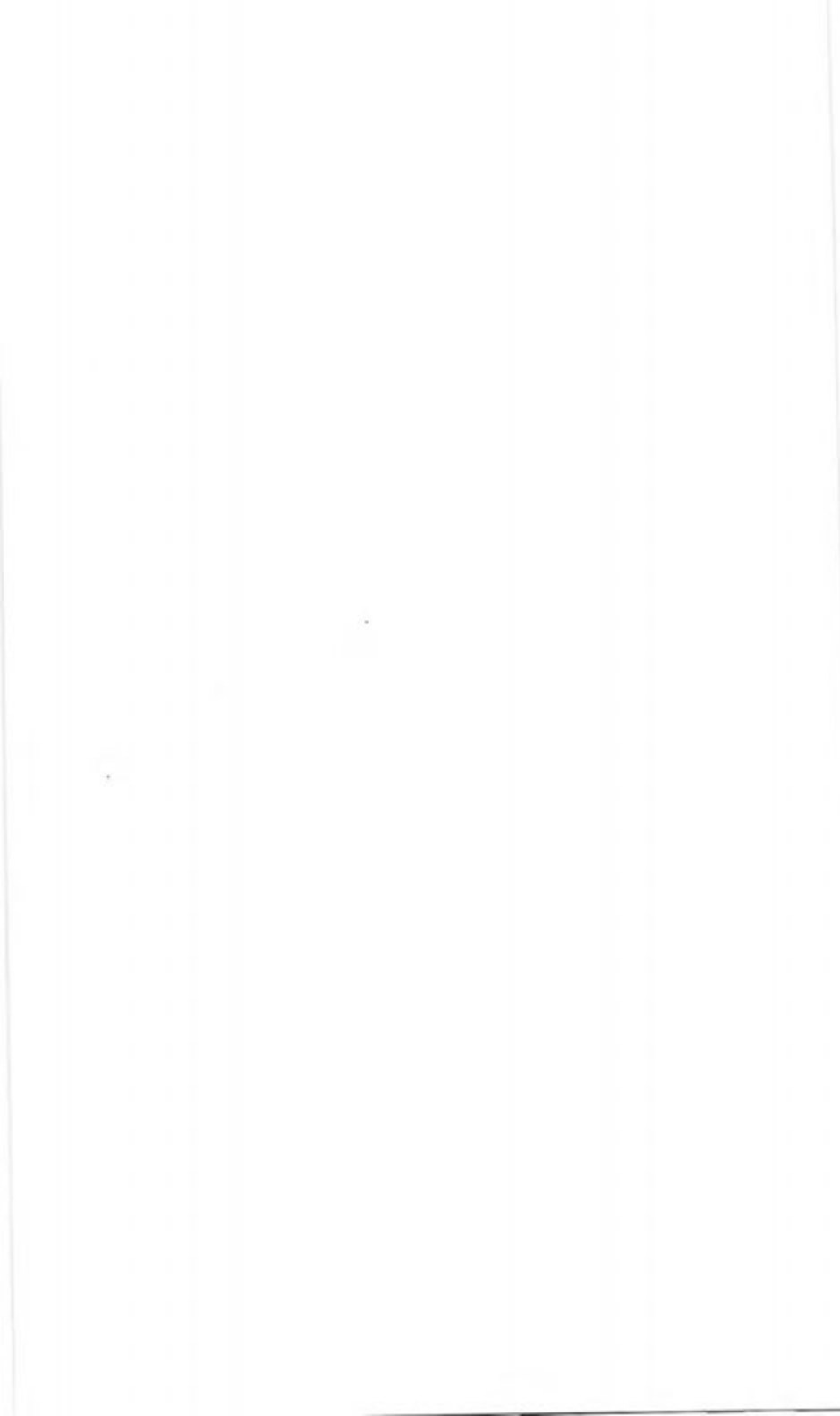
Christians of all people on the face of God's earth are

blessed beyond comprehension. We not only have a Savior who died to redeem us from our sins and give us the hope of eternal life; we have an infallible guide to help us live so we can have God's approval. How can people know it is wrong to engage in premarital sex? "Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me: It is good not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid sexual immorality, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:1-2). The word "fornication" in the King James Version refers in this context to premarital sex. And teenagers are not going to have babies out-of-wedlock if they observe Paul's admonition to the Corinthians.

Can I know that adultery is wrong and will condemn my soul to hell? Paul provides a long list of sins – fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, greed and such like – and says, they who engage in these activities – shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Paul urged the Ephesians: "But fornication (or sexual immorality), and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becomes saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3-4).

The Bible and the Bible alone is our infallible guide to the work and worship of the church and to our moral conduct. All of this says, dear friends, that you and I must study the word to determine God's will for our lives. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine (or teaching), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (or full grown), completely furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

I close with Paul's words to the Ephesian elders: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).



Chapter 14

Making A Mockery Of Justice

Millions of Americans—including your speaker—are justifiably disturbed by what transpires in the courts of our land. Almost weekly we read of some crook who has plea bargained his way out of jail or out of paying a large fine. The prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges often agree to allow a criminal to plead guilty to a misdemeanor when he is guilty of a felony. For example, a young man was arrested for driving on the wrong side of a four-lane highway. He was driving under the influence of alcohol. He was also driving without a valid driver's license and placed on probation. The other charges against him were dismissed. This example and thousands of similar cases lead me to talk with you today on the topic, "Making a Mockery of Justice."

The immediate stimulus for this lesson was an article in **The Tennessean** (October 23, 2001). The newspaper published an article entitled "Cannon sheriff Brandon quits, gets probation." The sheriff of Cannon County, Tennessee, a man named Charley Brandon, was "convicted of coercion of a witness and conspiracy to coerce a witness" (p. 1-A). Unless I am badly mistaken about the law, these are very serious charges. It is my understanding that Brandon could have received at least four years in prison for his transgression of the law. He did admit to the Circuit Judge Don Ash that he had done wrong. Is that not ironic that he admitted his guilt when the court had already found him guilty of breaking the law? Of course, he had done wrong—grievous wrong—inexcusable wrong.

The agreement was fashioned by District Attorney General William Whitesell and by defense attorney Jack Lowery. Judge Ash accepted the agreement. The judge told Brandon that he probably did not intend to dishonor the

law, but he had done so. Brandon did not get off entirely free, but he certainly will not be punished as he should have been. He will have to forfeit his salary, do 1,000 hours of community service and work with the county commissioners in helping to make a smooth transition for his replacement. I have a number of problems with the prosecutor, with the defense attorney and with the judge. Did either one of the principals have any interest in upholding the law? What if the criminal had been an 18-year old selling marijuana? Would they have been as easy on the 18-year old as they were on the sheriff? You know what the answer is without my having to tell you. It is a shame and a disgrace that the law can be twisted in the manner the attorneys and the judge twisted it.

Channel 4 in Nashville reported that the defense attorney objected to Brandon's receiving any jail time since the sheriff had a clean record. It was his first offense. How absolutely ridiculous! If the offender had been an ordinary Joe and not a law enforcement officer, the defense attorney's argument might have made sense. But Charley Brandon was the sheriff. He could not plead ignorance of the law. By virtue of his election to public office, he had an obligation to set an example for young people in Cannon County and for older people too. Since he was the sheriff, punishment for his crime should have been double or triple what it would be for anyone else. It certainly should not have been less.

The defense attorney should be ashamed of himself for his almost total disregard for the law. The sheriff did not run a stop sign or drive on the wrong side of the street. He committed a very serious crime—attempting to undermine the law of our land. Do defense attorneys believe they have to get major charges against their clients dismissed or reduced until those charges mean almost nothing? Are defense attorneys so disrespectful of the law that they will do anything to have their clients freed from responsibility

for their crimes? Do they believe they are honoring our justice system when they have all charges against their clients dismissed or drastically reduced, even if they know their clients are as guilty as sin? I have many grave concerns about the way defense attorneys behave. Do they believe they have any obligation to uphold the law and to create respect for the law?

Do they care about the influence their behavior has on the lives of our young people? If they negotiate an agreement where their prominent clients' get practically no punishment for their criminal activities, do they believe young people do not pay any attention to what occurs in our courts? Is defending criminals just a job with them? Does it matter what their actions do to our justice system? Should they be surprised or angered when the word "criminal" is applied to them as well as to their clients? And then when you have a nationally known criminal lawyer such as F. Lee Bailey say it does not matter who has the truth in a trial; the only thing that matters is how well the attorneys prepare, you know the American system of jurisprudence has been turned on its ear. And how can you respect a defense attorney who gets his client off scot-free when he knows his client is guilty?

The defense attorney would likely respond: "But just look what I did for my client. He does not have to go to jail. Who believes he will have to perform the 1,000 hours of community service he agreed to? He will be able to get on with his life." But has not the defense attorney made a laughingstock of the law? Would he want his client get no jail time if the client had committed these crimes against him or against some member of his family? As an officer of the court, should not the defense attorney be deeply concerned about upholding and honoring the law of our land? In my judgment – and I believe most Americans would agree with me – the defense attorney has brought shame on his profession and on our justice system.

Prosecutors—whether district attorneys or otherwise—have a sworn obligation to make sure—to the best of their ability—that criminals are brought to justice. If District Attorney General William Whitesell thinks justice has been served in the Charley Brandon case, he has a different view of justice than most Americans have. As you know, attorney-generals have enormous power. They can determine whom to prosecute or whether to prosecute. So when an attorney general allows a sheriff to escape the full justice of the law, that attorney general has contributed to disrespect for the law and for justice. District Attorney General William Whitesell knew Charley Brandon deserved to go to prison. He also should have known that his agreement to a plea bargain of serious crime amounted to a miscarriage of justice. I am appalled that the District Attorney General would undermine the very law he was sworn to uphold. There is no excuse for such behavior.

And now let us think about Judge Don Ash. Charley Brandon admitted wrong-doing to Judge Don Ash. He told the Judge: “I realize I have brought shame and disgrace on the people of Canon County. I’m sorry for the embarrassment” (p. 1-A). But everybody who knew about the case knew Charley Brandon had done wrong. Did admitting wrong compensate for the wrong he had done? Confessing wrong is certainly a good starting point in correcting the evil Charley Brandon had done. But when a sheriff—a law enforcement officer—has been convicted “of coercion of a witness and conspiracy to coerce a witness,” admitting wrong does not make up for the evil he has committed. If the judge did not know that, he ought to resign his exalted position.

Being a judge in any jurisdiction carries enormous responsibilities. Many people’s views of the law and of justice depend to a great extent on their view of judges. If the judge allows a person to get by with criminal activities and imposes practically no punishment, crime will almost

certainly increase because very few people are afraid of what the judge will do to them if they break the law. If a sheriff can disregard the law and trample it under foot, why should anyone be concerned about breaking the law? If we have defense attorneys, prosecutors and judges who are too cowardly to stand by the law and enforce it as they are sworn to do or if they compromise on enforcing the law, then we have some very serious moral problems. And we do have some very serious moral problems in the courts of our land.

Do you know how most defense attorneys, prosecutors and judges respond to charges relating to plea bargaining? Many defense attorneys—although certainly not all—are public defenders. They are not usually paid very well for their services in defending the poor. If they can work out a plea bargain, they make more money than if they have to go to court to defend their clients. They are happy if they can work out a plea bargain. Never mind that the poor are not usually well served under such circumstances, but the lawyer does well. And those defense attorneys who are not public defenders seek to minimize the chances of their clients having to go to prison for long terms or from having to pay large fines. If they work out a plea bargain, they are content and even happy to do so. Tragically, lawyers sometimes urge their clients to plead guilty when they are not guilty. They do it to keep from having to prepare extensive legal briefs and from being tied up in court for weeks or even months. My question to you is very simple: “Is justice served under these conditions?”

Prosecutors encourage plea bargaining—not because it is just for the accused criminal—but because it serves the interests of the prosecutor. In fact, plea bargaining may be the very worst arrangement for the person accused of crime, but prosecutors agree to plea bargaining for one primary reason: They are assured of conviction, even though the person accused of crime may be innocent. When they ask

the public to vote for their reelection, they can point to their conviction rate and assure the public they are the right people for the job. Prosecutors are not appointed or elected to feather their own nests, but to serve the cause of justice. When they fail to do that, they are guilty before God and in the minds of honorable people.

Judges have some of the gravest responsibilities of any human beings on earth. They can determine whether a person lives or dies, goes to prison for many years or goes free. They have a sacred obligation to make sure that the prosecutors and defense attorneys behave themselves. Judges must not allow either the prosecutors or the defense attorneys to pull the wool of their eyes and over the eyes of the jury—if it is a jury trial. In too many cases, judges allow lawyers to control the court proceedings, as in the O.J. Simpson fiasco. After all, how could any judge challenge the behavior of some of the most prominent lawyers in the world? The judge seemed to be intimidated by the “dream team” O.J. had assembled. The O.J. Simpson trial did as much as any trial in my lifetime to convince the average person that our courts care little or nothing about justice. I will have to admit that Marcia Clark and Christopher Darden handled the prosecution's case very ineffectively. I am not sure any prosecutor could have convicted O. J., but the prosecutors in this case seemed to be poorly prepared. They presented a seriously flawed case.

Why do judges allow the attorneys to arrange for plea bargains? The term implies that someone is selling out. If judges were willing, they could bring an end to plea bargaining. I know what many judges say. “We have to allow plea bargaining to prevent our courts from being log-jammed.” Is that all justice is supposed to do—keep the courts from being log-jammed? I thought that defense attorneys, prosecutors and judges were supposed to be seeking truth and justice. Maybe I am naive in believing that, but American courts should major in looking out for

the welfare of all, including criminals or those accused of criminal activity. Until that occurs, the American people will continue to have little respect for our court system and the personnel who administer the system.

Do the people in our court system know the preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America? In case they have forgotten, let me remind them and you. "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and to our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Did you pay attention to the expression, "establish Justice?" Do you honestly believe the rights of the people of Cannon County were established and protected when the lawyers and judge allowed plea bargaining by Charley Brandon? You would think his crime was only slightly more serious than spitting on the sidewalk. The people directly involved in the case of Charley Brandon were not the only ones who have a perverted view of justice. Did you know that some of his supporters appeared on television and said they would vote for him again if he ran for public office? Their attitude reminded me of a case in West Tennessee. The sheriff was convicted of taking male prisoners out of jail, supposedly for work in the county, and then raping those men. There were a number of people who said they still supported him and would vote for him if he wanted to be sheriff again.

I wish time permitted a full discussion of justice as taught in the Bible. But I shall read just a few passages that deal with the topic. I do need to remind you that sometimes the King James Version translates the Hebrew by the word "judgment" where other versions use the word "justice." In every case, I shall use the word "justice" rather than the word "judgment." The first verse I shall read uses both words in the King James Version. God said concerning

Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). Most modern versions render the Hebrew: "They shall keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice." Has God changed his mind about justice among men? Does he not expect the same of us as he did of Abraham?

The law of Moses that came several hundred years after Abraham lays great stress on justice. Please listen to these verses. "You shall not pervert justice of the poor in his cause" (Ex. 23:6). "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, who regards not persons, nor takes reward: he executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love therefore the stranger: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Dt. 10:17-19). "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not respect persons, neither take a bribe: for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise, and perverts the words of the righteous" (Dt. 16:19). There is much more in Deuteronomy, but I shall turn briefly to the great prophets of the old covenant.

The prophet Isaiah uses the word "justice" twenty-six times. Please listen. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, plead for the widow....How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of justice; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers" (Isa. 1:17-18, 21). God almighty through the prophet Isaiah pronounces a series of woes on the people of Israel. God pronounced those woes on Israel for a number of reasons. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but behold bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry of distress"

(Isa. 5:7).

By the time Jeremiah came on the scene, the nation of Israel had become so wicked it was on the brink of being exiled in Babylon. God promised to pardon the nation if they could find one man who was just and sought the truth. "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any who executes justice, that seeks the truth; and I will pardon it" (Jer. 5:1). God pled with his people. "Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord" (Jer. 9:23-24).

The fearless prophet Amos delivered these stirring words to the people of God. "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph....But let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:14-15, 24). I close with the words from the prophet Micah. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:6-8)? Would to God that judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and all others would learn these lessons from God's book!



Chapter 15

Death With Dignity

When the United States Supreme Court made abortion legal on demand, leaders in the prolife movement expressed fear that legalizing abortion would lead to infanticide, to suicide and to euthanasia. Abortion supporters called such arguments "scare tactics" and sought to convince the American people that the argument of the prolife people was invalid. Some of the people who were on the fence thirty years ago about the morality of abortion had doubts that abortion would lead to the killing of newborn babies, old people and those who are mentally and physically handicapped. Now many of those who have enthusiastically supported abortion are just as enthusiastic about infanticide, euthanasia and suicide. Some of the books encouraging "death with dignity" have become national bestsellers. The slippery slide argument regarding abortion has reached its fulfillment in American society. Is the situation likely to get better in the near future? I wish I could answer in the affirmative, but I have serious doubts about it, although I intend to use my voice to oppose all attacks against the sacredness of all human life. Please listen carefully to today's study on "Death with Dignity."

The stimulus for today's lesson was a letter to the editor of **The Tennessean** (Saturday, December 29, 2001). The article has the title, "Ashcroft's views will deny death with dignity." The author is a self-identified member of the nation's second largest killing organization, the Hemlock Society. The largest killing organization is Planned Parenthood. The author of the letter to the editor accuses our government of seeking to become "big brother." He affirms that Attorney General John Ashcroft, a firm believer in the sacredness of all human life, is seeking to eliminate the "death with dignity" law in the state of Oregon (p. 14-

A). Is our government really “big brother” when it seeks to prevent the senseless killing of human beings, even those people who are critically ill or permanently comatose? Perhaps some examples will help us see the human side as well as the divine side of this topic.

Sometime during the 1980s I was in a gospel meeting at Salem, Indiana—a few miles north of Louisville, Kentucky. The preacher asked me if I would accompany him on his visit to a nursing home. I do not remember how many people we visited that day, but I shall never forget one person. She was a beautiful woman who appeared to be in her eighties. She was comatose and had been for several years. She had three daughters. The daughters took turns staying with their mother around the clock. The daughter who was there the morning we visited the nursing home was so cheerful and so solicitous of her mother’s welfare. She held her mother’s hand and told her how much she loved her. I have no idea if the mother understood one word her daughter said, but I was touched by the tenderness of the daughter. I have often thought about that situation. Would it not have been more merciful for the mother and for her daughters if the daughters had called some of the Hemlock Society members or perhaps Dr. Kevorkian and had their mother euthanized, like we sometimes euthanize dogs or cats? Why keep old people alive when they are non-productive and very expensive for their families or for the government? The financial and emotional burden can often be oppressive. Of course, the real concern for Christians and for other moral people is: What would God have us do under those circumstances?

In 1981 when I began preaching for the Scotts Hill Church of Christ at Scotts Hill, Tennessee, I was told about a woman who was in the hospital at Lexington, Tennessee. At the time, the woman was 102 years old. She was about as frail as anyone I had ever known. She weighed about 75 pounds, but her mind was very sharp. On my first visit to

see Grandma Goff, she told me that the hospital personnel were not feeding her properly. That very morning, she said, the nurse had brought her boiled eggs for breakfast. I told her that Molly had given me the same breakfast. Grandma informed the nurse she wanted bacon and eggs or ham and eggs or sausage and eggs. The nurse told her that the doctor did not want her to have that kind of breakfast. She said to the nurse: "You go get the doctor." The doctor came to Grandma's room and asked, "What is the trouble?" Grandma told him what she wanted for breakfast. He told her that ham and eggs or bacon and eggs were not good for her. She then said to the doctor: "I have been eating pork and eggs for 100 years and they have not hurt me yet." The doctor turned to the nurse and said, "Go get her some bacon and eggs." Grandma Goff lived another six years after I first met her. I preached her funeral when she was 108 years old.

Why allow a person like Grandma Goff to live when she could not work, could not walk, could not even feed herself and was a financial burden to society? What purpose did she serve or did she serve any purpose? I make no claim of having a direct line into the mind of almighty God on such matters, but I know this: Grandma Goff was a tremendous example of faith and patience and hope to her family, to the personnel at the nursing home and to me. I hope as I near the end of my days on this earth that I can have the same attitude she possessed. I profited greatly from the six years I knew her and I loved her dearly. She furnished a perspective on old age I had never fully known before.

In 1983 Jeff Lane Hensley edited a book with the title, **The Zero People** (Ann Arbor: Servant Books). The book includes chapters by Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States, John Powell, a Roman Catholic priest, John T. Noonan, professor of law at the University of California (Berkeley), Malcolm Muggeridge, a highly

respected British author and critic, George Will and others. The chapter that touched my heart most deeply had the title, "On Being Alive," and was written by Sondra Diamond. Sondra Diamond was born with cerebral palsy. The dictionary defines cerebral palsy as follows: "a disability resulting from damage to the brain before or during birth and outwardly manifested by muscular in coordination and speech disturbance." Incidentally, cerebral palsy must not be equated with mental retardation.

When the doctors discovered Sondra Diamond's disability, they advised her parents to put her in an institution and go on with their lives. The doctors said that Sondra would never walk or talk or hear or do what other children do. Fortunately, for her and for humanity in general, Sondra's parents were unwilling to accept the verdict of the doctors. Sondra was not able to walk. She is not able to dress herself, toilet herself or write. She says her secretary does her writing for her. She says the natural assumption is that the physically handicapped would be better off dead. Sondra tells of being burned over 60% of her body. The doctors at the hospital where she was treated felt there was no point in treating her because of her disability. Would you like to know what Sondra Diamond does for a living? She is a professional counselor in private practice. She writes and lectures widely on the problems of the disabled.

Sondra tells of an article that appeared in **Newsweek** magazine. The article was written by Doctor Raymond S. Duff and Dr. A. G. M. Campbell of Yale-New Haven Hospital and Yale University. The article reported that those two doctors were allowing babies with birth defects to die by deliberately withholding essential medical treatment. The doctors believed that the children they allowed to die could never enjoy quality life—whatever that means. In fact, the doctors referred to those children as "vegetables." The article in **Newsweek** angered Sondra Diamond, as it should have angered everyone who read it. She wrote a

blistering letter to the editor of the magazine. These are a few of her words: "I'll wager my entire root system and as much fertilizer as it would take to fill Yale University that you have never received a letter from a vegetable before this one, but, much as I resent the term, I must confess that I fit the description of a 'vegetable' as defined in the article 'Shall This Child Die?'" She thinks—and I agree—that from a standpoint of meaningful humanhood—she has surpassed the two doctors who wrote the article for *Newsweek* (pp. 225-226).

The author of the letter to *The Tennessean* admits to being a senior citizen and a member of the Hemlock Society, the organization that sponsors death with dignity legislation. He agrees with the abominable Hemlock Society that old people—and younger ones as well—ought to be able to select the manner and the time of their deaths. He hopes that eventually more states, including Tennessee, will pass laws like the one in Oregon. Euthanasia—the killing of the old and disabled—would eliminate suffering and the financial and emotional hardship on families. He accuses Attorney General John Ashcroft of imposing his religious views as well as his political beliefs on the people of Oregon. He says the Attorney General ought to devote his time to more pressing problems. He also says he resents the Attorney General's intent and tactics. He has written to the Attorney General's office in Washington and to his Tennessee representatives (p. 14-A).

The term, "death with dignity," is an oxymoron. There is no such idea as death with dignity. There is nothing dignified about dying. Knowing that a person's life is ending and his soul is passing into eternity is a tragic event. Death brings an earthly end to our communication with friends and loved ones. It was at such an occurrence that our Lord—the Prince of life—wept when his friend Lazarus died. John comments about our Lord's reaction to the death of Lazarus: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). John further comments: "When

Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came to her, he groaned in his spirit and was troubled.... Jesus therefore again groaning in himself comes to the grave" (John 11:33, 38). The word "groaning" is the kind of language used of a horse when he snorts in anger. None of this sounds as if death can be dignified.

Did you know that an inspired apostle called death an enemy? Paul affirmed that Jesus must reign "until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Can you imagine the arrogance of those who take it into their own hands to kill people just because they are old or physically or mentally handicapped? Since when do mere mortals have the right to play God? Man is a creation of God and only God has the authority to take lives. It is true that God has given human governments the right to execute those who commit vicious crimes, such as murder and rape, but that must be done in accord with God's directions. We are not free to kill people arbitrarily.

The Psalmist David speaks of God's creating man. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my unformed substance; and in thy book all my members are written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psa. 139:14-16). Since men are not the ones ultimately responsible for our being on earth, they do not have the right to end their own lives or to give that responsibility to physicians.

The significance of all human life in the sight of God is outlined in our Lord's instructions to the men who were sent on what we correctly call "the limited commission." Jesus assured his apostles that God would be with them regardless of the enemies they had to face and the

persecution they had to endure. "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows" (Mt. 10:28-31).

The letter writer accused Attorney General Ashcroft of imposing his religious views as well as his politics on the people of Oregon. The voters in Oregon endorsed killing patients with the approval and assistance of medical doctors. The physician-assisted suicide law would allow the patient and his family to hasten the death of terminally ill patients. Just suppose the terminally ill patient is comatose – whether permanently or otherwise – and the family members want his possessions. Do you understand the temptation for both family members and doctors to hasten the person's death, especially if the family members promise the doctor a financial reward? There are no doctors who would agree to that kind of arrangement, are there? If you think there are no doctors who would agree to end the terminally ill patient's life, you are blind to human nature. I am convinced that the vast majority of doctors would be offended at the mere mention of ending a person's life for money, but there is no doubt there are doctors who would. If you think I might be exaggerating, I shall prove that I am telling the truth.

In 1999 James Stewart – not the actor – wrote a very disturbing book with the title, **Blind Eye** (New York: Simon and Schuster). The book became a **New York Times** bestseller. The front cover of the book explains: This is "the terrifying story of a doctor who got away with murder." The doctor's name is Michael Swango from Quincy, Illinois. He earned his medical degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois. Wherever Swango went – either as a medical student or as a doctor – he left a trail

of very sick or dead people. He employed various kinds of poisons to kill patients and others. The FBI estimates that Swango may have killed as many as sixty people in Illinois, in Ohio, in South Dakota, in Africa and in other places. Experts estimate there may be as many as 18,000 rogue doctors in the United States—18,000! That is about 5% of medical doctors in our nation.

Is anyone so naive as to believe that Michael Swango would not assist in illegal suicides? He killed dozens of people, even people who were not terminally ill. He murdered severely handicapped. It was not legal in any jurisdiction where he lived and practiced medicine. He did not receive any money for killing patients. Do you think such a doctor would hesitate to kill if thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars were involved? Swango seemed to kill just for the joy of killing, like other serial murderers. He also idolized serial murderers like John Wayne Gacy and Ted Bundy. He certainly would not hesitate to kill if the price were right.

The Netherlands could rightly be called "the killing fields." 5,000 people are euthanized every year in Holland alone, oftentimes without the consent of the patients. A substantial number of Dutch citizens carry a card that reads: "Do not kill me." I have spent only one night in a hospital in my entire life. How very uncomfortable I would have felt if I had known there were doctors or nurses like Michael Swango in that hospital. Old people and handicapped people will shun hospitals and doctors like the plague if the Hemlock Society succeeds in convincing the nation that we ought to legalize mercy killing. Nobody would be safe under those circumstances. A number of years ago a Mr. Gilbert walked into the living room of the Miami home he and his wife had occupied for a number of years. His wife had Alzheimer's disease. He took a 9mm German Luger and pumped three bullets into his wife's body. He was arrested and convicted of murder. The court gave him twenty-five

years for his vicious crime. He was seventy-five years old at the time of his conviction. He was released from jail after serving just five years—five years for killing his own wife! One of the news programs interviewed then-governor Bob Graham and asked him about the killing. He described the killing as an act of love. My plea to you and to others is very simple: Please do not love me that much.

If there were ever a person on earth who seems to have a reason to take his own life, it was the patriarch Job. The Bible tells us that Job was blameless, upright and one who feared God. He turned away from evil (Job 1:1). Tragedy of unimaginable proportions struck this good man. The Sabeans took all of Job's cattle and his donkeys and killed the servants who were tending to them. A fire of God fell from heaven and burned up his sheep and the servants who were taking care of them. The Chaldeans took all of Job's camels and slew his servants. Job's sons and daughters were enjoying a feast at the oldest brother's house when a great wind from the wilderness struck the four corners of the house and killed all Job's children. "Job tore his clothes, shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said: Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:14-22). Later Job was afflicted with boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. But Job did not seek to relieve his misery by taking his own life. God gave him his life; only God had the right to take it from him. It is contrary to the will of God to take innocent life and to advocate doing so. The Hemlock Society and similar organizations cannot come from God almighty. That leaves only one place of origin.

Chapter 16

The Pleasures Of Sin

One of the most foolish observations preachers or others can make is to assert that there is no pleasure in sin. If there were no pleasure in sin, why would anyone be so foolish as to engage in it? If God slapped a man down every time he took the Lord's name in vain, the man would soon learn to keep his mouth shut. If a woman were immediately caught and punished when she stole an item from a store, she would be reluctant to steal. If a politician were kicked out of office every time he told a lie, we would either have more honorable people to serve us or we would have none. If none of the foregoing activities were pleasurable in some sense, intelligent people would avoid them like a plague. But people keep on taking the Lord's name in vain, stealing and lying. So contrary to what I heard a preacher say, "There is pleasure in sin."

Hebrews 11 provides a long list of heroes of faith—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and others. All of these were men who took God at his word and obeyed him. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place that he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose architect and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10).

Did all these heroes of faith have an easy time in serving God? Did they encounter any difficulties in their journeys of faith? A careful reading of Hebrews 11 and of the text from the Old Testament on which this great chapter is based will show the many dangers and troubles they faced. Since they completely trusted God and walked

according to his instructions, they serve as powerful examples for God's children in every age. "For whatsoever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

One of the Old Testament heroes of faith was Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver. The author of Hebrews gives the following brief summary of his life. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb. 11:23-29).

The story of Moses in Hebrews 11 has many powerful lessons that Christians should learn. For example, the parents of Moses hid him three months and "were not afraid of the king's commandment." They knew the king's commandment was morally wrong. They were not going to commit sin against God, even if it meant their own death. Should it surprise anyone that Moses had the same attitude toward the Lord's will? Moses left Egypt, "not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, and Moses are wonderful examples for those who face troubles and heartaches from an oppressive government like Egypt's.

Today I shall discuss with you the expression found

in Hebrews 11:25: "The Pleasures of Sin." You know from reading the life of Moses in the book of Exodus that he faced a very difficult choice. Since he was the son of the Pharaoh's daughter, the wealth and power of Egypt were readily available to him. At that time Egypt was the most powerful and wealthiest nation on earth. Some historians believe Moses might have become the next Pharaoh had he chosen to do so. Instead, he chose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." By using your imagination, will you think of what you might have done under similar circumstances? It would not have been easy to give up all the grandeur and glory of the famous Egyptian empire to identify with slaves.

Exodus tells us of the hardships the Hebrew slaves had to endure in Egypt. The slaves worked long hours, had shoddy food to eat, could not devote themselves to their families or to their God and often died from exposure to the elements. Nobody knows for sure the name of the Egyptian pharaoh, but most of the pharaohs were hard taskmasters. The following are significant words. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people. Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falls out a war, they join unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore did they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses" (Ex. 1:8-11).

Moses had to know what he was getting into when he left a life of luxury in the Egyptian palace and joined his brethren in the mud pits. Just because he had been a crown prince of Egypt did not mean he would receive favored treatment under the whip of the taskmasters. So why would an intelligent man give up all the treasures of Egypt? Worldly people may have difficulty understanding Moses'

motivation, but he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Like Abraham, he "looked for a city, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10).

In our text from Hebrews 11, the inspired writer says Moses chose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). The expression, "suffer affliction with," means to encounter adversity along with someone else. That expression correctly describes the burdens the Israelite people had to carry during their stay in Egypt. The people of God suffered enormously because of their enslavement in a strange land. Moses sacrificed his high position in Egypt to become a slave along with his people who had been slaves in Egypt for more than four hundred years. Because Moses fully understood what it meant to be in bondage, he became an ideal leader for the nation of Israel. He led them out of bondage to freedom in the land of Canaan.

Our emphasis today is on the term, "pleasures of sin." Everyone ought to know – both from reading the scriptures and from personal observation – that there are pleasures in sin; otherwise, human beings would not engage in sinful activities. When we see handsome young men and beautiful women cavorting around a pool, drinking, attempting to seduce others into sexual promiscuity, using drugs and participating in other illegal and immoral practices, they appear to be having a good time. They do not act as if their drinking, using other drugs and committing fornication are great burdens. They seem to be enjoying themselves to the fullest extent possible.

Sexual immorality unquestionably has great appeal to millions and millions of Americans. That ought to be evident by the number of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, by the spread of venereal diseases, by the enormous number

of abortions in our country and by the strains and stresses of unhappy marriages that are often related to sexual promiscuity. If there were no pleasure in the sin of premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexuality and incest, why would people risk so much grief and sorrow to engage in these activities? Why would they betray their families, flaunt the very will of God and violate the law, if there were no pleasures in sexual sin? It is ridiculous on the part of preachers, parents and others to tell young people, "There is no pleasure in sin." Of course, there is pleasure in sin. But there are some aspects of sexual pleasure outside the bonds of holy matrimony that many either ignore or believe they can escape: venereal diseases, unplanned pregnancies and other heartaches. Tragically, the State of Tennessee has one of the highest rates of syphilis in the United States. I do not know the number of AIDS cases in Tennessee, but I know there are some, just as there are in all American states. When individuals are afflicted with any of the sexually transmitted diseases, they are bound to reflect on the activities that led to their debilitation. While they almost certainly enjoyed their sexual contacts, the results are often disastrous. Do they ever say to themselves, "I should not have committed these transgressions against God and against my fellowmen?"

There are liberal theologians in our country who do not preach that sex outside the marriage relationship is sinful. John Shelby Spong does not believe that premarital sex is always wrong, although he seems to oppose extramarital sex. Joseph Fletcher, the infamous situation ethicist, maintains that adultery is not wrong unless it hurts one's partner, one's self or someone else. There is a major problem with Fletcher's view: No one in the universe can know when a given act will hurt one's partner, one's self or someone else—except the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). God alone knows the ultimate effects of our behaviors. His word regulates our sexual

conduct.

Did you notice in my reading from Hebrews 11:25 the full expression, "the pleasures of sin for a season?" The New American Standard Bible renders that expression, "the passing pleasures of sin." Most translations acknowledge the temporary nature of sin. They do not deny that sinful conduct can be pleasurable; they say it is fleeting. Solomon wrote very plainly on this topic. "Whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks good sense: he who does it destroys his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away" (Prov. 6:32-33). The very next chapter in Proverbs says, "He goes after her (that is, the immoral woman), as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, and knows not it is for his life" (Prov. 7:22-23). The New Testament makes this truth even more emphatic. The sexually immoral shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). But if this world is all there is, what difference does any of this make in the long run? Why not eat and drink "for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32)?

Drinking, as every American knows, is one of the most widely practiced vices in our nation. The vast majority of Americans drink beer or wine or stronger alcoholic beverages. I am not boasting when I tell you that I have never tasted either wine or beer. I have tasted whiskey, but just one time. When my younger sister was suffering from polio, the doctor recommended that my parents give her a little whiskey with some rock candy in it. I drank a spoonful of liquor and thought it was going to burn my insides out. My uncompromising attitude toward all alcoholic beverages was formed in my childhood home. My parents literally despised strong drink because of the consequences they had seen in the lives of their family members and friends.

I know people—and I am sure you do—who live to

drink. Their greatest pleasures in life are related to strong drink. They get up in the morning wanting a drink and go to bed wanting a drink. They cannot live happily through the day without some form of strong drink. Do they enjoy their drinking activities? If they did not, why would they drink? Drinking is expensive. It involves great dangers in the workplace and on the highways and in other places. If there were no pleasure in drinking, surely sensible people would not drink.

One example of the tragedies that occur many times each day because of strong drink should educate us to the great evils of beverage alcohol. **The Tennessean** (Thursday, January 4, 2001) published an article with the title, "Driver cries for boy she killed." The article tells of a 38-year old woman in Nashville, Tennessee, who received a 12-year sentence for running over and killing a 9-year old boy. She was driving under the influence of beverage alcohol. She apologized to the parents of the 9-year old, but that does not assuage the grief the parents have experienced in the loss of their child. She addressed the dead child. "Even though I never knew you, I love you....I wish you could come back, even though I know you never will" (p. B-1).

When the police arrested the young woman, they said she was staggering and smelled of alcohol. She registered .16% on a blood-alcohol test two hours after the accident. The woman was indicted on aggravated vehicular homicide. Two times before in the city of Memphis she had been convicted for drunken driving. The prosecutors in Nashville allowed the woman to plead guilty to the lesser charge of vehicular homicide which carries a sentence of 12 years. Please answer in your own mind the following questions. When that young woman started her life devoted to strong drink, do you think she ever intended to become a drunk? Is there any doubt in your mind that she enjoyed drinking—either because she liked the taste of alcohol or because she liked the effects? Do you believe she ever intended to run

over a little 9-year-old and snatch him from his parents' loving arms? Do law enforcement personnel and judges share some of the blame for such tragic accidents when they permit lawbreakers to plead lesser crimes? If the woman had never been arrested before for drunk driving, she still should have had to pay the maximum penalty for killing a child. But allowing her to plead a lesser crime when she he been convicted two times before for the same offense makes absolutely no sense. Is it any wonder that millions of Americans have no respect for the law? Do you now understand why the inspired writer spoke of enjoying the pleasures of sin **for a season**? Aristotle who lived almost twenty-four hundred years ago was much wiser than many Americans. This outstanding philosopher observed: "The man who sins when drunk should be punished twice over, once for sinning, once, for being drunk." What would Aristotle have said had he lived during the time when people drink and drive 5,000-pound automobiles?

My friends, there is a law that we ignore at our own peril. The law is very simply stated in Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8). Many of us shorten this passage by saying, "You will reap what you sow." The eighth century B. C. prophet Hosea expressed the same truth in these powerful words. "They have sown to the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7). We cannot avoid having to pay for our sins. We may not receive the reward in this life, but God will condemn us in the world to come. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). We may trample under foot the laws of men, but God will hold us accountable for our behavior.

Our study today brings to mind an observation we

often hear from policemen, judges and other citizens, and that is, "Crime does not pay." The truth is: that is not true. What we should say is, "Crime does not always pay." But everyone who has his head on right knows that hundreds of thousands of criminals steal, rob, commit murder, rape and engage in other reprehensible acts and never have to pay. The vast majority of criminals are never caught, even in the very best police jurisdictions. The ones who are caught are not usually convicted or if they are convicted, they are allowed to plea bargain. In one case, a man was driving under the influence of alcohol. He killed some people while he was driving on the wrong side of the highway. The prosecutor and judge permitted the man to plead that he was driving with an expired license. A man from Carrolton, Kentucky, killed almost thirty people while he was driving under the influence of alcohol. The judge sentenced him to sixteen years—sixteen years. He was released before he had served his time.

Before President Clinton left office, he pardoned 140 criminals. Some of these people had been public officials—police officers, congressmen and senators. When a prominent rich man can refuse to pay millions and millions of dollars in taxes, escape to a foreign country and then be pardoned for his crimes, it can be understood that we are not a nation that believes in obeying the law. And does it make sense to say, "Crime does not pay?" Of course, crime pays—if you have powerful lawyers, spineless prosecutors and judges who permit the lawyers to control the courtroom. But a day of reckoning is coming.

I close today with the reading of two verses from Hebrews 11. "By faith Moses, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:24-25).



Chapter 17

Hatred

Most of us know – both by observation and by divine revelation – that hatred of one’s fellowmen is an abominable and destructive attitude. Hatred can and does eat at the very essence of our humanity. In addition, it often erupts into the most inhumane and violent acts, as ought to be evident from the dragging to death of a Black man in Jasper, Texas. Observing what occurs every day in Palestine between the Jews and the Palestinians gives us some understanding of hatred. Tragically, we can also know by reading our daily newspapers and watching the evening news on television the harm hatred does to our society.

While our Lord did not use the word “hatred” in the following verses, there can be no doubt of his meaning. “You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (that is, empty-headed or good for nothing) shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Mt. 5:21-22). You probably recognize the preceding passage as being a part of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. Will you please listen further to these excerpts from that great sermon? “You have heard that it has been said: You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them who love you, what reward have you?

Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the publicans so" (Mt. 5:43-47)?

As you know, if you watch newscasts on television or read newspapers, the subject of hate has received an enormous amount of publicity over the last several years. There are literally hundreds of web sites on the Internet that promote hatred of other races, nationalities, political parties and religious groups. Many of these web sites are operated by such radical organizations as the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups. Those web sites promote violence against Blacks, Jews, Communists, and anyone else those groups do not like. The fact that children operate some of the web sites ought to be troubling to all Americans. The viciousness of those children can hardly be imagined. It shows what their parents and other leaders in their communities are doing to the next generation. Will the hatred in the hearts of the children erupt into rebellion and violence, as occurred in Littleton, Colorado? There can hardly be any doubt about it.

The Oklahoma City bombing was the natural fruit of the kind of hatred being encouraged on the web sites on the Internet and in other places. Oddly enough, after the Oklahoma City bombing, president Clinton severely criticized some of the conservative talk show hosts. He seemed to want to blame them and other conservative people for the tragedy in Oklahoma City. He and other liberals did not blame gun owners. I am amazed that they did not. They seem to want to attribute all the violence in our nation to gun manufacturers and to gun owners. When they use such poor judgment, they are fueling the hatred of the patriot movement, the militias and white supremacists. Governmental leaders in many cases have created an atmosphere where hatred flourishes. Armstrong Williams, a syndicated talk show host, explains why many Americans have joined anti-government organizations.

Various governmental agencies, such as, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms have broken into houses without having warrants. They have virtually destroyed homes and businesses and have caused severe bodily injury. Williams says that the Clinton administration has caused a deep and legitimate concern among many decent Americans. Incidentally, this quotation from Armstrong Williams and many similar quotations from reputable people can be found in Richard Abanes' very disturbing book, **American Militias: Rebellion, Racism & Religion** (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996). Every concerned American ought to buy and read the book by Abanes. It would help all of us to understand how and why the hate groups are formed and the damage they do to our nation.

Howard L. Bushart, John R. Craig and Myra Barnes have written a book on many of the hate groups in America. Their book has the title, **Soldiers of God: White Supremacists and Their Holy War Against America** (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 1998). Many of the leaders in the Ku Klux Klan and in other white supremacist groups claim to be Christians. Some of the members of those groups deny hating anyone. But they believe that the white race is the true Israel of the Bible and will use virtually any means to sustain that thesis (p. 14). I recommend that you read this book also.

The United States government, some state governments and some colleges and universities have gone too far in seeking to regulate hate speech. Americans are being prosecuted for speaking out against Jews, Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities. I strongly oppose hate speech—the kind of speech that denigrates others for their race or religion. Christians cannot be faithful followers of Jesus Christ and engage in such hatred of others. But no government and no other organization can stop hate. Are we not trampling on our Constitution when we attempt to

do so?

Many liberal theologians and politicians strongly oppose the Klan, the white supremacist groups, the militias and the so-called Patriot movements. But they seem not to care when some black leaders spew out hatred for those they dislike. Jesse Jackson, a professional rabble-rouser, has accused the United States Supreme Court of bringing about a coup d'état in its decision about the 2000 presidential election. If he thinks his observations are helpful to our nation, he has a different definition of helpfulness than most of us have. In addition, he is providing fuel for the fires of racial hatred among Klansmen, white supremacists and the Aryan Nation—not that these groups need any extra push toward their un-American and unchristian attitudes and actions. Al Sharpton, Maxine Waters and Charles Rangel express thoughts that are just as bigoted as those of many of the Klansmen and white supremacists. Whatever their motivation, they are guilty of fostering hate among many Americans.

Are you aware that some black leaders deny that blacks can be racist? They argue that since blacks have been the objects of discrimination it is not possible for blacks to be racists. That is utterly and inexcusably ridiculous. Will you please listen to the definition of racism from **Webster's Third New International Dictionary**? Racism is "the assumption that psychocultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decisively from one another which is usually coupled with belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and its right to domination over others." Does it make sense to argue that blacks are not capable of these attitudes and actions? All people can be racists, but racism is not excusable on any basis. It is a grievous sin since all people are made in the image of God and equally valuable in his sight. Peter's declaration at the house of Cornelius helps us to understand the sinfulness of racism. "Of a truth I perceive that God is

no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he who fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts 10:34-35).

It may come as a surprise to you that God actually requires hate of his people. The longest chapter in the Bible — Psalm 119 — speaks at length of hating ungodliness. For example, the inspired Psalmist wrote: "Through thy precepts, I get understanding: therefore I hate every evil way" (Psa. 119:104). The Psalmist does not specify what evil ways he had in mind, but any student of the Old Testament can easily discover what evils God hated and what his people were supposed to hate. Is there any doubt in your mind that both God and the Psalmist hated idolatry? The Jews angered God at the waters of strife. The people of God failed to destroy the nations, "concerning whom the Lord commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood" (Psa. 106:32-38). God hated idols and his people had an obligation to hate what he hated. Every student of the Old Testament knows that God hated all forms of sexual immorality. God commanded his people: "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). The book of Proverbs exalts the sexual relationship in marriage. Solomon exhorted husbands: "Let your fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of your youth. Let her be as the loving hind and the pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and be ravished with her love" (Prov. 5:17-19). In the very next chapter of Proverbs, God expressed his disapproval of sexual immorality — any and every kind of sexual immorality. "Whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding: he who does it destroys his soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall

not be wiped away" (Prov. 6:32-33). Does God hate the adulterer? Absolutely not! But he hates adultery. Should not Christians hate adultery? We must hate every evil.

Does the term "false way" include false doctrine? Are New Testament Christians supposed to hate the doctrines and commandments of men? Jesus Christ does not use the word "hate" in the following verses, but you know from his words that he hates all false doctrine. "You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:7-9). God hates the doctrines and commandments of men, but he also hates hypocrisy. He hates any idea or concept that separates men from him and his kingdom.

God hates any doctrine that removes human responsibility in becoming a Christian and in remaining a faithful Christian. Take, for example, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. God does not and cannot approve of that Calvinistic doctrine because his word completely destroys it. One verse from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount refutes once for all the idea that men have nothing to do in their salvation. "Not every one who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). If you can harmonize the word "do" with the doctrine of grace alone, you can do what no one else has been able to do. Who can misunderstand these powerful words from the book of James? "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looks into the perfect of law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer,

but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (literally, in his doing) (Jas. 1:22-25). The truth of the matter is: A man does not have to hear or do if he is saved by grace alone. Grace alone means man has no responsibility, either to hear or to repent or to be baptized or to obey any other command. How can we keep from hating and opposing all false doctrine and immoral conduct?

One troublesome group in the first century was called "the Nicolaitans." They are mentioned in Christ's letters to the churches in Ephesus and in Pergamos. We have no idea who the Nicolaitans were or what they taught, but the Lord said concerning them: "This you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). "So you have also them who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15). Some scholars believe the Nicolaitans were named after Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, one of the seven men chosen to serve the Grecian widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). There is absolutely no basis for that view. Some theologians have speculated that the Nicolaitans were antinomians, that is, they did not accept any law as binding on them. But, I repeat, we do not know who the Nicolaitans were nor what they taught.

We do not have to know who the Nicolaitans were in order to learn a lesson from Revelation 2:6, 15. Their doctrine and their deeds were so abominable that God hated their teaching and their conduct. Whether the Nicolaitans were antinomians we have no way of knowing. But we do know that men who despise the law of God will be brought under eternal condemnation in the final judgment. Two brief excerpts from **Humanist Manifestos I & II** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973) will show how some men and women have rejected God's law and have brought the curses of God on their heads. "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational" (p. 17). The word "ethics" means the science of right and wrong, good and evil. The word "autonomous"

literally means self-law. The book of Judges in the Old Testament characterizes that attitude in this way: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). In other words, the people paid no attention either to God's law or to man's law. Every person made up the law as it pleased him.

The word "situational" means that nothing is right or wrong within itself; it all depends on the situation. Is it wrong to commit adultery? The situationist responds: "It all depends on the situation. If in committing adultery, the person does not hurt his partner or himself or someone else, then the act of adultery is not wrong." Is it wrong to lie? It all depends on the situation. If you lie to hurt someone, lying is wrong. But if you lie to help another, then lying is right and honorable. Is that what the Nicolaitans believed and practiced? I do not know; nor does anyone else. But we know that such ethical beliefs and practices are an abomination in God's sight and in the sight of good men. God hates all evil, including atheism, agnosticism, secular humanism and all other forms of unbelief. Do Christians have any choice about hating what God hates and loving what God loves? What does it mean to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16)?

You have often heard the expression, "Hate the sin but love the sinner." Within the media and in other segments of American society, there are those who make fun of that idea. But a careful examination of the life of Christ should convince honest people that we can hate the sin and love the sinner. John 4 tells of Christ's meeting with a woman of Samaria. Our Lord asked the woman to call her husband. She explained that she had no husband. Jesus said to her, "You have answered well when you said, I have no husband. For you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband" (John 4:16-18). If there were any anger in our Lord's voice, we certainly are not able to detect it. But you and I both know that Jesus hated adultery and

all other forms of sexual immorality. While he hated the sin, he did not hate the sinner. In fact, he continued to speak with her about the differences between the worship of the Jews and that of the Samaritans (John 4:22).

Is it easy to hate the sin and love the sinner, especially if that sinner has personally affected you? If your neighbor has lied against you or stolen your property or committed some other sin against you, you may be tempted to strike back in anger at him. We must learn the attitude of Christ in his dealing with all sinners. We must oppose all sin, but we must never give up on trying to win the sinner to Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins. What if God treated us like we often treat those who sin against us? He would simply wipe us off the face of the earth. God is "longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). I am not going to tell you that hating the sin and loving the sinner is always easy, but it is the way Christians are supposed to live.

One other observation needs to be made before our time expires. We are supposed to hate every evil way, but we must not be hateful in our manner of opposing evil. Jesus strongly condemned some of the Jews for not accepting him, even though his words had been authenticated by his deeds (Mt. 11:20-24). He concluded his criticisms of the Jews by saying: "Come unto me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto you souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). Should we not develop the same loving attitude Jesus exhibited to the Jews?



Chapter 18

How Important Is Character?

If you were hiring a man or woman to handle your business affairs, what would be uppermost in your mind? You unquestionably would want a person who knew your business or who had the ability to learn it, who was skilled in dealing with your customers and other employees and who knew the laws governing your business. But would there be other requirements? What personal traits should you seek in an employee? Does the person's character have any bearing on the reliability of an employee? What if the worker were a compulsive liar, a drunk, a drug user, a thief or a lazy person, would that make any difference to you? On the other side of the equation, what kind of employer should you seek? The questions I have raised today boil down to one other question and the one I shall discuss with you today. "How Important Is Character?"

I am fully aware that character alone is not our only consideration in choosing our doctors, in searching for employees or employers, in buying our automobiles and in deciding for whom we shall vote in local, state and national elections. There are morally good men who know little or nothing about running our state or nation. They may be as honest as the day is long, but as ignorant as sin about political offices. Some school teachers are model citizens, but lack the knowledge and the ability to teach our children. So while character is of vital importance in every job, in every profession and in all other phases of life, it is inadequate in many situations.

Did you know that the King James Version of the Bible never uses the word "character," although it uses many words which relate directly to character, words such as, virtue, honesty, righteousness and integrity. Other versions of the Bible use the word character. Instead of

using the word "virtuous" in Proverbs 12:4 and 31:10, some versions use the word "character." The King James Version reads: "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4). The New American Standard Bible translates the Greek by the word "character" rather than by the word "experience."

Many of you, no doubt, have heard the following contrast between reputation and character. Reputation is what people think you are; character is what God knows you are. Dr. Os Guinness's new book, **When No One Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image** (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2000), records these well-known words: "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny" (p. 13). Former president Eisenhower, according to Dr. Guinness, lists the following as essential qualities of a great leader: "vision, integrity, courage, understanding, the power of articulation and profundity of character" (p. 15). Dr. Guinness believes—and so do I—that "character is central to good leadership"—in the home, in the school, in the church, in business and in the nation (p. 15).

But what is character? Dr. Guinness argues that character consists of three basic ideas: core, consistency and cost. "Core" pertains to what one is inwardly—the very essence of one's being. This quality of character often becomes evident when one is under stress and pressure. "Consistency" means one strives always to do what is right. Some writers have called this attitude "habits of the heart." "Cost" relates to what one is willing to sacrifice to live by his convictions. Paul outlines what Christians may have to endure in their commitment to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-28). He also provides his reasons for not giving up when life seems almost unbearable. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which

is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding weight of eternal glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Dr. Guinness concludes: "Character, then, is what we are when no one sees but God" (p. 16).

I read these words to you a few minutes ago. "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." I shall analyze these wise observations in our study of the importance of character. This traditional saying emphasizes the influence of our thinking on our actions. "Sow a thought, reap an action." Some Hollywood producers, directors and actors seem to think that people's thoughts have no bearing on their behavior. But the man in the street has enough good common sense to know better. Most of us know that our thoughts determine our actions. To deny that fact is to fly in the face of the almost universal experience of the human race. How can intelligent people deny it?

Even if we fail on our own wisdom to understand how one's thinking influences his conduct, we should pay attention to the wisdom of God as revealed in the Bible. King Solomon, whose thoughts were often centered on wine, women and song, fully understood the dangers of not thinking as God thinks. He urged his readers: "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Watching sexually oriented television or movies has led many people—both young and old—to pursue a life of depravity. Incidentally, movies do not have to be as vulgar and sleazy as "The Jerry Springer Show" or the "Howard Stern Program" to cause people to have thoughts that will lead them into degradation and debauchery and eventually to eternal damnation—if they do not repent. MTV probably has done as much as any other element in our society to put dangerous and destructive thoughts into

the impressionable minds of our children. It glorifies illicit sex, violence and other unhealthy attitudes and actions. Do the owners of television stations feel any obligation to raise the moral tone of our nation? Are they willing to sacrifice the welfare and lives of our children just to make a fast buck? Of course, the station owners and program directors are not the only ones involved in MTV, ungodly movies and suggestive television programs. Parents must know what their children are seeing and where they are going. In addition, community leaders, including preachers, have an obligation to protect the morals of our young people. Many of us are guilty before God for allowing our nation's morals to sink to the level of barnyard animals.

I grew up, as did many of you, listening to country music. My father played a banjo and two of my brothers played guitars. Most of the songs fifty years ago dwelt on family, country and church. Many of them still do, but some country songs promote adultery, drinking and other evils. Why not go back to the music of Eddy Arnold, Jim Reeves and Marty Robbins? I cannot imagine Eddy Arnold's singing "One Has My Name, the Other Has My Heart" or similar songs. Songs—good or bad—have an influence on individuals' thinking. As a nation, we have an obligation to make sure our songs contribute to good thoughts and hence to good character.

How can Christians listen to or allow their children to listen to songs that teach values that are the very opposite of biblical values? Our courts have ruled that the government cannot regulate speech—whether on radio or on television or in the movies, although it is attempting to do so in passing so-called "hate speech laws." What could possibly be worse in the eyes of liberal politicians and theologians than censoring movies, television, music and books? But there is someone who can and must censor what their children see and hear—parents, that is, if they care about the moral values their children imbibe. Tragically,

some parents are too busy with their own interests to care about what their children learn from the popular media. Then they wonder why their children drink, get into trouble with the law and have babies out of wedlock.

Three verses from Paul's epistles show just how important thinking is in building character. The apostle urged his faithful brothers at Philippi: "Let this mind (or thinking) be in you, which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Why should Christians think on truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, virtue and praise? Are these attitudes and attributes just to be an exercise of the mind? If we think and meditate on these qualities, we tend to incorporate them into our actions. Paul's powerful advice to the Colossian Christians has a direct bearing on our attitudes. "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with God. When Christ shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

"Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit." Most of us know that regular actions become habitual. For example, my family of orientation and my family of procreation always made a habit of going to all the services of the local church. Attending services was much more than a habit at our homes, but it was a habit. On the other hand, many families have a different habit— not attending. The word "habit" is not used in the King James translation of the following verse, but there is no doubt about the author's meaning. "And let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the

manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

The New American Standard Bible uses the word "habit" instead of the word "manner." So does the New Revised Standard Version. Dr. A. T. Robertson's volumes, **Word Pictures in the New Testament** (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932), comment on the word translated "manner" or "habit": "Already some Christians had formed the habit of not attending public worship, a perilous habit then and now" (volume 5, p. 412). As you can understand from Dr. Robertson's comments and from your own experience, habits can be good or bad. If our habits are good, they help us to build for time and for eternity. If they are bad, they can lead us to eternal condemnation.

Millions of Americans have formed the habit of drinking alcoholic beverages. When they started drinking, they almost certainly never said, "I intend to keep on drinking until I become addicted to alcohol." But alcohol has very strong addictive qualities. I cannot really explain it, but some drinkers never become addicted, although no one ever knows for sure he will not. I had one member of the church to tell me he would never allow alcohol to get control of his life. He was either ignorant of the power of alcohol or he was dreaming. More than 20,000,000 Americans are alcoholics, including several million women and teenagers. The damage alcohol addiction does to individuals' bodies, to their homes and to our society can never be measured in this life. No wonder Solomon wrote: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

The use of tobacco is also very addictive. Smoking and related uses of tobacco may kill as many as 400,000 persons per year. But everybody in the nation who can read his newspaper knows tobacco is dangerous to one's body and highly addictive. So why in the name of common

sense do lawyers and judges use the law to punish the tobacco companies for selling a drug that everybody knows is deadly? People choose to smoke knowing it can kill. The American people have known that for a half-century or more. When will the lawyers begin to sue the liquor manufacturers for making and selling beverage alcohol? Is it possible the lawyers and judges are being bribed by the liquor industry? Maybe they are unwilling to kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

As Christians, we should form a whole spate of good habits, such as, attending all worship activities of our local congregations, reading and studying our Bibles everyday, speaking kindly to all with whom we come in contact, including our family members, taking some responsibility for the atmosphere of our nation, working hard at our jobs and professions and helping our young people to grow into decent men and women. We should also work at eliminating our destructive habits. None of this is necessarily easy, but it is the right way to live to find fulfillment in this life and to prepare for the life to come.

Habits, according to the traditional saying, form character. Dr. Os Guinness's book contrasts the contents of two popular magazines between the period 1890-1910 and later dates. The two magazines are **Ladies Home Journal** and **Good Housekeeping**. Between 1890 and 1910 thirty-three percent of the articles dealt with character. By 1920 the number had decreased to 3% (p. 18). Today articles on character have almost completely disappeared. Why are there no articles or very few articles on character in these very influential magazines? Could it be that the editors and writers have no idea what constitutes desirable character? Have they joined a major contingent of academic scholars, liberal theologians and entertainers who deny the existence of absolute truth? If absolute truth does not exist, then trying to define character is an impossible task.

In the words of the traditional saying, we sow character

and reap a destiny. Our standing before God in the judgment will rest on the character we have formed. Is that not what Paul meant when he wrote: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:6-11). Our thinking and acting have formed our character by which we shall be judged in the last day. Does that mean we have earned salvation through our own goodness? It simply means that God is saving us by the plan he instituted. Obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ is absolutely essential for our salvation.

As I bring this study to a close, I need to make a few observations. There are no greater needs in modern society than people with good character. That is true of the men and women who are running for public office as well as all other Americans, Peggy Noonan, a speechwriter for President Reagan, says, "In a president, character is everything." She argues that a president does not have to be brilliant, or clever or know all there is to know about foreign policy. "But you can't buy courage and decency, you can't rent a strong moral sense." Even if the president has vision, but lacks character, he cannot be the kind of president our nation needs.

What Peggy Noonan has said about President Reagan should be true of every American. Character is everything in husbands, fathers, wives and mothers. Tragically, many young women have married men who were handsome or rich or popular and then waked up to the fact that they

were married to scoundrels. Young women, which would you prefer – a man who always tells truth, works hard for his family and lives his beliefs or a handsome man who has no moral values? Handsomeness wears off, but character remains.

I have counseled with young men and older ones who married beautiful women only to learn they had married a pretty face that lacked character. Every marriage counselor and preacher could furnish you with dozens of examples of the heartaches such foolish choices have caused. I am not denigrating beauty, but warning you that physical attraction alone does not furnish a very solid foundation for marriage. These wise words from Solomon ought to be helpful in choosing the right kind of wife or husband. "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion" (Prov. 11:22). Proverbs 31 describes what many have called "the ideal woman." Will you listen to the way the scriptures speak of that woman? "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies....She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.... Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in the time to come....She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness....Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:10, 12, 25-26, 30). Would you say that such a woman has the kind of character necessary to be a good wife and mother?

Chapter 19

Margaret Sanger: A Modern Jezebel

Do you know why modern parents, especially Bible-believing parents, do not name their beautiful little daughters Jezebel? I am sure most of you know, but just in case you do not, I will tell you a little about this infamous reprobate. The Bible provides this information about Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jereboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings who were before him" (1 Kings 16:29-33). The name "Asherah" was known among ancient people as a goddess of fertility. All kinds of sexual perversions were performed in her name.

It would be unscholarly and illogical to blame Israel's idolatry on Jezebel, even though she was a worshipper of Baal and probably introduced Baal worship into Israel. After all, king Ahab could have resisted her bringing idolatry into the nation. But knowing her penchant for violence he probably was afraid of her. She vowed to kill the great prophet Elijah and would have killed anyone who crossed her path, that is, if she had been able to. The wickedness of Jezebel is legendary among students of the Old Testament.

Would to God that our country had never experienced a woman so wicked as Jezebel! But unfortunately, some American women are just as heartless and cruel as the monster Jezebel. I have time today to discuss with you just one of those women: Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned

Parenthood or more properly Planned Un-Parenthood. I had been doing research on Margaret Sanger and had planned the very near future to do some studies on her evil influence. But **The Tennessean** (Friday, December 31, 1999) spurred me to step up my schedule. So I am asking you today to think with me for a few minutes about "Margaret Sanger: Modern Jezebel."

The Tennessean published a special section of the paper on the "Turn of the Century." On the front page of that section the paper listed the "Top 12 People of the Century." Among the twelve top twelve people were Muhammed Ali, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Jackie Robinson, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and Margaret Sanger. I wonder what kind of standard the editorial staff of **The Tennessean** used to name Elvis Presley, a notorious drug user and womanizer, Marilyn Monroe, a well known purveyor of flesh and Margaret Sanger, one of the most notorious women of any century—"Top Twelve People of the Century."

The Tennessean attempted to justify their selection of Margaret Sanger by affirming that modern women are deeply indebted to Margaret Sanger for pioneering birth control in our nation. Is that all the editorial staff of **The Tennessean** knew about Margaret Sanger? Oddly enough, an editorial in the same paper (Thursday, December 30, 1999) urged the Atlanta Braves to "Send Rocker to showers" (p. 10-A). Nothing John Rocker said compares with the venom spewed out by Margaret Sanger. She was a racist, a socialist, a Theosophist and in general an abominable woman.

One of the reasons Margaret Sanger founded Planned Parenthood was to promote eugenics. The word "eugenics" literally means "well born or high born." The eugenics movement both in the United States and in Germany was designed to improve the human race by controlling who could have children and who could not. Adolf Hitler wanted

only the fittest German youth to marry and produce children which would result in the master race. In addition, he promoted the elimination of the unfit. Hitler's eugenic program was so blatantly anti-semitic that many Americans opposed or at least would not support the eugenics project in the United States. Now millions of Americans believe that all handicapped persons should be aborted—if the handicap is discovered before birth—or killed after they are born.

Dr. George Grant of Franklin, Tennessee, has written two outstanding volumes dealing with Planned Parenthood and Margaret Sanger. His first book on the subject has the title, **Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood**. (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1988). This book is a devastating critique of Planned Parenthood. His second book, **Killer Angel: A Biography of Planned Parenthood's Founder, Margaret Sanger** (Franklin, TN: Ars Vitae Press, 1995), deals altogether with Margaret Sanger's beliefs and behavior. Every prolife person in the world needs to read this biography of Margaret Sanger. It should convince every reasonable person that ideas do have consequences. When we begin to denigrate any person, it will have repercussions throughout society. Dr. Grant says that Margaret Sanger may have been responsible for the deaths of two and a half billion people worldwide (p. 3).

In harmony with her eugenic ideas, Margaret Sanger, asserted, according to Dr. Grant: "The government of the United States deliberately encourages and even makes necessary by its laws, the breeding—with a breakneck rapidity—of idiots, defectives, diseased, feeble-minded and criminal classes. Millions of dollars are expended by our state and federal governments and by private charities and philanthropies for the care, the maintenance and the perpetuation of these classes. Year by year money is expended...to maintain an increasing race of morons which threatens the very foundations of our civilization" (pp. 79-

80). So much for the compassion of the founder of Planned Parenthood and those who share her morbid views!

One of the main goals of the eugenics program was the limiting of the spread of inferior races. Incidentally, in this respect Margaret Sanger was thinking on the same plane as Charles Darwin, the modern popularizer of organic evolution. Like Darwin, Margaret believed that Blacks were inherently inferior. Dr. Grant says she targeted what she called "ill-favored" or "dysgenic races," including "Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, Fundamentalists and Catholics" (p. 73). She organized a "Negro Project" which was designed to reduce the number of Blacks being born, particularly in the South. Her aim, according to Dr. Grant, was to enlist a number of Black ministers, preferably with social service backgrounds, and with engaging personalities to encourage Blacks to be more diligent in using birth control. Dr. Grant quotes her as saying: "The most successful educational approach to the Negro is through a religious appeal. We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the Minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members" (p. 74).

Before we go further in our examination of the life and philosophy of Margaret Sanger, let us pause long enough to emphasize the Bible's teaching on the sacredness of all human life. Every person—whatever his race, or color, or national origin, physical or mental condition is precious in the sight of almighty God. All human beings—men, women and children, including the unborn—are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). I am reminded of a question Paul, raised in his great letter to the Romans. "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. 3:29-30). Am I abusing the scripture when I ask: "Is he the God of white, able-bodied, mentally capable people

only? Is he not the God of the whole world, including people of color, mentally and physically handicapped and all others? If he is not the God of all, how can he be God at all? The Bible continually emphasizes that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).

Emma Goldman, a notorious Communist, served as Margaret Sanger's mentor in moral values. Goldman introduced Sanger to the writings of Havelock Ellis. Ellis was grossly immoral and wrote a seven-volume set of books entitled **Studies in the Psychology of Sex**. These books by Ellis stirred the lustful appetite of Margaret Sanger. Goldman also introduced Sanger to the sexual favors of Ibsen, Tolstoy, Voltaire, and Kropotkin. According to Dr. Grant, Sanger decided that she needed freedom from her husband that she needed liberation from every phase of "Christianized capitalism." That included emancipation from the strict bonds of matrimony (pp. 34-35).

Margaret Sanger was involved sexually with a number of prominent people. That probably was her reason for denouncing marriage as "a denerate institution." She opposed sexual modesty as "obscene prudery." Dr. Grant says that she started the publication of a paper entitled, **The Woman Rebel**. In one article in that paper, she argued that "rebel women claim the following rights: the right to be lazy, the right to be unmarried mothers, the right to destroy...and the right to love" (pp. 46-47). Dr. Grant says that Margaret Sanger's bed became the playground for H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Arnold Bennett, Arbuthnot Lane and Norman Haire—all Fabian uppercrust (p. 61).

Even though Margaret called marriage "a degenerate institution," she married J. Noah Slee, a legitimate millionaire and a conservative church-going Episcopalian. She had a prenuptial agreement that she could come and go as she pleased with no questions asked. Dr. Grant says she entertained friends in her home behind closed doors. Her husband would have to telephone her from the other

end of the house in order to have dinner with her (p. 90). Any man who would make such an agreement has to have mental or emotional problems or both.

It is very disturbing that some of America's richest foundations—the Rockefellers, the Fords and the Mellons—made generous grants to her notoriously evil projects. In addition, she gained the favor of Eleanor Roosevelt and Katherine Hepburn. She also counted as supporters Julian Huxley, Albert Einstein, Nehru, John D. Rockefeller, Emperor Hirohito and Henry Ford. Later in life, she gained the endorsement of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. Dr. Grant says she had the support of arch-conservatives like Barry Goldwater and arch-liberals like Margaret Mead (p. 94).

Those who have studied the topic carefully know that when men and women reject the God of the Bible, they do not believe in nothing; they will believe in about anything. She was involved in the occult, attended seances and engaged in Eastern meditation. She even sought to learn the mysteries of Rosicrucianism and Theosophy. As she grew older and in poor health, she became more deeply involved in occultism. By the late 1940's, she was addicted to alcohol and other drugs. She died on September 6, 1966, almost on her eighty-seventh birthday (Dr. Grant, p. 96).

There is much more I would like to say and which needs saying about Margaret Sanger, a modern Jezebel. But I want to close today with some important observations. New Testament Christians do not oppose Margaret Sanger's work because she supported birth control, at least, I do not. When I was teaching marriage and family classes at Freed-Hardeman University, I spent several days every semester discussing birth control with the young people in my classes. I listed the various kinds of birth control devices which are available and talked with my students about the advantages and disadvantages of each. I strongly objected then and do now to intrauterine devices because it is almost universally

agreed that they are abortifacients. In other words, they do not prevent conception; they cause abortions. I also objected to the so-called "morning after pills." They too are abortifacients.

The influence of Margaret Sanger has not been beneficial--either to individuals or to the country as a whole. As much as anyone in the twentieth century, she has promoted sexual promiscuity. She had the morals of barnyard animals. The tragic part was that she had an international platform to promote her immoral views. It can be said of her what the Lord said about a Jezebel in the church at Thyatira: "She teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:20). Margaret Sanger's perverted ideas about human sexuality have no doubt resulted in many broken homes, troubled young people and older people and sexual dysfunction in general.

Her endorsement of virtually every kind of sexual conduct has almost certainly brought about hundreds of thousands--if not millions--of deaths. I am not speaking specifically of her support of abortion. Those people who have followed her advice--even if they did not even know her name--have contracted sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. The number of people who have died as a result of her ungodly views cannot be calculated this side of eternity. But every honest person would have to admit that the toll of lives has been considerable. Will God hold her accountable for the disease and death which Margaret Sanger has fostered? You know he will. The Jezebel of ancient times was no worse than the modern one--Margaret Sanger.

Some of Margaret Sanger's hatred of Christianity came from Christianity's restrictions on sexual behavior. The Bible clearly condemns premarital sex, adultery, incest, homosexuality and such like. In fact, Paul affirmed that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Margaret Sanger, Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis and similar radicals do not want God or

anyone else interfering with their sexual conduct. Rather than bringing their lives into harmony with the will of God they simply deny the will of God or even the existence of God. They remind me of the Gentiles in the first century. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28).

What Margaret Sanger did not know or did not care to admit is that God's restrictions on sexual conduct are designed to help us live more productively, more joyfully and more healthily. When young men and women or older men and women are sexually promiscuous, they do not and cannot find the satisfaction happily married couples enjoy. Besides, millions of young men in America are impotent. Many psychiatrists believe that sexual promiscuity has contributed to the rash of impotent cases. And as I mentioned a few minutes ago, sexually transmitted diseases have claimed the lives and the welfare of millions of young people. AIDS is wreaking havoc in the 18 to 24 age bracket. The Lord wanted to prevent such tragedies and so confined people's sexual outlets to their lawful mates. Any sexual contacts outside the marriage relationship are sinful, destructive and stupid, at least from a scriptural viewpoint.

I am not recommending that you become a Christian to avoid the many tragedies associated with sexual misconduct. That would be pragmatism. I am urging you to obey the gospel because that is what God wants you to do. He is concerned about your earthly behavior and wants you to enjoy eternal life in the world to come. If you are not a Christian, will you not obey him today and become his child? If you are a Christian but have wandered away, will you not come back to him? Did you know that it is better "not to have known the way of righteousness then, after, you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to you" (2 Pet. 2:21)? I beg you with all my heart to live for Jesus.

Chapter 20

Psychic Detectives

Many of the cable television stations for years have been advertising the services of psychics. The stations are giving publicity to these frauds and fakes so the stations can make money. Do the station owners and managers care nothing about the damage they do to the lives of those who patronize these deceivers? Psychics have no supernatural knowledge of the situations they describe. They are good guessers and know how to deceive people into believing they have a direct pipeline into the mysteries of the universe. They know they are misleading people, but care more for the money they make than for the welfare of their constituents.

Approximately three years ago a young wife and mother disappeared from her home in Nashville, Tennessee. The Nashville police, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies have worked diligently to find the young woman. Apparently all the news services and the various investigative agencies are convinced that she is dead. Many Nashvillians are convinced that her husband had something to do with her disappearance, but no one has been able to prove that. I have difficulty believing that young mother would stay away from her children and from her parents—if she were alive.

During the week of May 3, 1999, one of the reporters on WSMV, Channel 4, in Nashville, interviewed a so-called "psychic detective." I listened carefully to all of the interviews. I am thoroughly disgusted that anyone of reasonable intelligence would consult such pagan sources for any reason. The heathen psychic asserted that the young woman was violently pushed down a flight of stairs in her home. She said the police would discover clues of the woman's death on the staircase. The police foolishly

investigated and found nothing. Are the Nashville police so incompetent that they overlooked such obvious clues in the woman's house? If they are that incompetent, they need to fire some detectives and hire some new ones.

I am absolutely amazed that any intelligent, educated person would pay any attention to a psychic—whether a detective or otherwise. I cannot say this too emphatically: The woman psychic knows nothing—absolutely nothing—about the disappearance of the Nashville woman. She is taking the news media, the police department and others on a goose chase. I know the Nashville police are desperate to locate the missing woman and to find her killer—if she is dead—but no one should behave so stupidly as to consult a psychic. Police officers who have little enough good sense to listen to a psychic have no business being policemen. Police chiefs and detective supervisors who allow it to happen are disqualified to hold their positions. I am embarrassed and ashamed that such foolishness and heathenism could occur in my home state or elsewhere. Consulting psychics, witches, fortune tellers, diviners and trance mediums is abomination in the sight of almighty God.

So why would a great television station like WSMV hire a woman who claims to be a psychic detective? Could it be that Channel 4 has such a strong desire to boost its ratings? **The Tennessean** (Monday, May 24, 1999) hints that this was the case. **The Tennessean** quotes one of their media judges as saying, "That was one of the most reprehensible things I've seen on local TV news in the last five years." She wondered if the TV station was hard up for news (p. 4-A). **The Tennessean** contacted the psychic detective who claims she has a 90% success rate in helping the police. The station paid the fraud \$320 per day plus expenses. If she is so successful in finding bodies and in solving crimes, let us just fire the detectives in our various police departments and hire psychics.

I do not like to accuse anyone of lying, but the woman psychic has not been successful in 90% of the cases she has been called in to solve. She has not been successful in one. If she had, she would have furnished documentation of her success. She may have guessed correctly in one or two cases, but her so-called "psychic abilities" have not helped her in solving one case—not one. Don Aaron, spokesman for the Nashville Police Department, admitted that the psychic's information had not helped, "but the police were not going to be closed-minded enough not to follow up on any potential lead" (p. 4-A). If you will pardon a technical term: That is pure folderol. If I were a police spokesman, I would have been embarrassed at that statement.

Simon Hogart is an award-winning journalist who has been writing about the so-called "paranormal" for fifteen years. Mike Hutchinson has been collecting books, magazine articles and other information on the paranormal for twenty years. These two men joined forces in writing a book with the title, **Bizarre Beliefs** (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1995). Their book includes chapters on UFOs, Alien Abductions, Astrology, Fire Walking, Dowsing and such like. One whole chapter is devoted to "Psychic Detectives" (pp. 101-109). These authors insist that it is "almost certainly true that no psychic has ever given the police information which has led to a missing person—or their body—being found, or to a crime being prevented, or a criminal arrested" (p. 101).

Hogart and Hutchinson raise one point which needs to be pursued further. If psychics have supernatural ability—which they believe they do—why do they not use all their time to prevent crimes? If they have information about a lost person or a crime, surely they know what person is going to commit a crime. Could they not do the human family a great service if they informed the police about a crime before it is committed? If their talent comes from God almighty, as most psychics claim, surely they can use

it for preventive purposes. Could psychics have seen the recent tragedy at Littleton, Colorado? If they cannot predict such events, their abilities are of little value. If they know and do not tell someone, they are hardhearted and irresponsible. They do not know because they cannot know.

Many of you in my audience probably remember the murders of young black men in Atlanta. Twenty-six young black men were killed. **The Sunday Mirror**, an English newspaper, notified the Atlanta police of a well known English psychic, Frances Dymond. According to Hogart and Hutchinson, the psychic affirmed that the young men were being killed by a team of racists, the leader of which was an older man who worked with Black children in a park-like surrounding in Atlanta. Oddly enough, the Atlanta police said they would take notice of the psychic's information. When Wayne Williams was arrested and charged by the police with the murder of the young men, the killing ceased immediately (p. 102). And yet people have so little reason they think psychics have some ability from beyond this world to provide information. I do not want to be misunderstood, so let me say very plainly: They are all frauds.

The Yorkshire Ripper was a "notorious British mass murderer." The British police spent six years trying to find the vicious criminal. In addition, the manhunt cost the government between \$8,000,000 and \$10,000,000. One of England's better known detective psychics is Nella Jones. An article in **The News of the World** said that when the police could not solve a crime, they called on Nella Jones. The truth is, Mrs. Jones did not know anything about the Yorkshire Ripper. In fact, every psychic in England missed the identity of the Yorkshire Ripper. If they are tied in to the supernatural realm, how do they explain their misses? They cover them up and act as if they have provided valuable information.

Some of you may know the name James Randi--a

magician--whose stage name is The Great Randi. He has exposed fakes and frauds of all kinds--including Peter Popoff, the infamous charismatic healer. James Randi contacted Scotland Yard--one of the most famous police units in the world--and asked if psychics had ever been of any service in solving crimes. Hogart and Hutchinson quote Scotland Yard as telling Randi: "We never go out of our way to seek psychic help, and no psychic has ever cleared up a single case for us." The Los Angeles Police Department conducted tests to ascertain if psychics could be any assistance in solving crimes. The LAPD reached this conclusion: "The data provided no support for the belief that the identified 'sensitives' could produce investigatively useful information. Additionally, the data also failed to show that the psychics could produce **any** information relating to the cases beyond a chance level of expectancy" (pp. 108-109).

Hogart and Hutchinson provide a chart outlining the various ways five psychics pictured the infamous Yorkshire Ripper. His name was either Johnnie or Ronnie, Cecil or Cyril. His name was actually Peter Sutcliffe. They thought his age was between 31 and 45. He was thirty-two years old. Doris Stokes said his hair was mousy/dark and covered his ears. A right parting covered a bald patch. Kay Rhea said his hair was straight and dark. The psychics said he lived either at Tyneside or Wearside. His address includes Berwick or Bewick, He lives with his sister and family. He actually lived in a 4-bedroom detached house in Heaton, Bradford. These are just a few of the misses the psychics made (pp. 108-109). With that kind of information the police should have caught the culprit in a day or two. How inexcuseably ridiculous to appeal to any form of divination! A policeman would do just as well to consult his child's teddy bear.

What does the Bible say about consulting such pagan sources? The Bible leaves absolutely no doubt about the

seriousness of the sin of approaching fortune tellers, diviners and such like. I have time to give you just a few examples. As the Israelites were preparing to cross the Jordan River and enter the land God had promised to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, God himself gave the following instructions: "When you are come into the land, which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." What were those abominations which were prevalent among the heathen nations? "There shall not be found among you any one who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer" (Dt. 18:9-11). What would happen to the Israelites if they did consult these pagan sources of information? God could not make his prohibitions any plainer. "For all who do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be perfect with the Lord your God. For these nations, which you shall possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so" (Dt. 18:12-14).

All of the pagan practices outlined in Deuteronomy 18 are supposed to predict the future or to control the future. One might understand why those who did not know God or who had rejected his will would appeal to divination, soothsaying, magic and such like, but how could the people of God do so? How could king Saul consult the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:8-14)? What is especially troubling is for those who call themselves Christians to go to fortune tellers, psychics and channelers. My father used to say: If these people have any knowledge of the unknown, they have received it from Satan. The truth is, they have no such knowledge. They are deceivers of the worst sort. Their

deceptions are very destructive in the long run.

As I was preparing this transcript, I listened to Katherine Crier on one of the Fox channels. She had a young man on her program who claimed to be a psychic. Katherine is a former judge and a very intelligent person. I cannot understand why she would have a psychic on "The Crier Report" and why she did not show how utterly foolish, unscientific and unreasonable psychics are. He appeared to know the background and the interests of the people who called the program, but he is a fake and a fraud, as are all psychics. Why do television and radio stations give any publicity to these frauds?

If the psychics know so much about the future, why do they not get rich by gambling, except in their case, it would not be gambling. If a man knows which horse is going to win, he is not gambling when he places money on that horse. Psychics should be able to know the number which would win the lottery. They would not have to guess or put their money on the wrong number. They would know. Do you know what psychics and similar deceivers say in response to what I have said about gambling. They say they do not use their God-given talent to make money. That would be using their ability for selfish reasons. Anyone who believes that will believe just about anything. If they are not interested in money, why do the psychic detectives charge so much for their services? The so-called "psychic detective" who came to Nashville charged WSMV \$320 per day plus expenses. That means she made \$1280 in just four days. That is not bad pay for four days, especially for someone who knows nothing and can produce nothing. Some of our doctors and other professionals do not make that kind of money.

My friends, nobody can know the future and nobody can control the future. We do not need to know what the future will bring. What we do need to know is what God demands of us. You do not have to consult a psychic or a

fortune teller to learn that Bible believers have been blessed with sure knowledge—knowledge which will get us successfully through this life and give us the assurance of life eternal. The apostle Paul explains: “But continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, completely furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

I believe one of the reasons many in our nation appeal to the heathen sources I have mentioned today is their ignorance of God’s will or their rebellion against it. No Christian could ever consult those sources which God has so strongly condemned. But even if the Bible had not spoken so plainly against these deceivers, we ought to be able by our own good judgment to avoid them. When they make predictions which do not come to pass or when they give false information, we ought to know they are not reliable. Yet thousands of Americans continue to pay attention to false prophets, such as, the late Jeane Dixon, Edgar Cayce and others. And both Dixon and Cayce claimed to be Christians.

God’s word and God’s word alone tells us what God expects of us and what our final destiny will be. I urge you to study the word diligently and to obey it implicitly. The word of God commands us to believe in Jesus Christ—not in some psychic or New Age guru. It also commands us to repent of our alien sins and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. When we have obeyed the gospel, we are to worship our Lord every Lord’s day, work for the conversion of our acquaintances and others, grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ and help those who are in need. You do not need a psychic to provide guidance in these matters. The Bible is sufficient for Christian living.

May our God help us to avoid heathenism, paganism and superstition and rely on the inspired word of God. May he also help us to be informed about these destructive practices and to speak out against them. Our nation cannot afford to pay any attention to these fakes and frauds.

Chapter 21

The Legalization Of Prostitution

Some talk show hosts like Phil Donahue and some syndicated columnists like Ann Landers have been agitating for the legalization of prostitution. As much as decent, God-fearing people oppose such sleazy practices, I can understand why some of the talk show hosts and syndicated columnists have been urging the legalization of prostitution. Many of the talk show hosts and syndicated columnists have already prostituted their talents. So what is the big deal if they promote the legalization of sexual prostitution? Many of the talk show hosts and syndicated columnists have the morals of barnyard animals. They are simply acting in harmony with their moral values or lack thereof.

The Tennessean (Sunday, June 27, 1999) published Ann Landers' column on prostitution. The title of the article by Ann Landers is "Prostitute thanks Ann for her open-mindedness" (p. 2-F). I make it a practice never to read any of Ann Landers' columns. They almost never uphold the morals which are absolutely essential to the smooth functioning of society. They sometimes advocate the most abominable behavior. I know she has a right to promote whatever values she espouses, but I do not have an obligation to read what she writes. Occasionally, however, someone will give me one of Ann Landers' columns and ask me to read it. That is what occurred in the present instance.

Ann Landers and her twin sister Abigail Van Buren come from a Jewish background. I have no idea if they are Orthodox, Reform or Conservative Jews. But I know this: Most Jewish rabbis and their constituents would not agree with Ann Landers about legalizing prostitution. If Ann Landers has any respect for her Bible—the Old Testament—

how could she fly in the face of the explicit teaching of scripture? If she does not believe any of her Bible, she should be able to open her eyes and know how absolutely foolish prostitution is. It has no redeeming qualities—none. No civilized nation and no clear thinking person could ever approve of it.

After Ann Landers wrote her column approving prostitution, she received a letter from a woman who identified herself as "Marjorie in the West." She commends Ann for having the courage to run a letter from a Nevada prostitute. She wondered if any of Ann's client newspaper caught flak for publishing the letter. She calls herself a "Nevada Sex Worker." She says she enjoys her job and expresses gratitude to the state of Nevada, in its infinite wisdom, for providing a place for her to exercise her skills. The brothel in which she works is licensed by the state of Nevada. The brothel entertains as many as 150 men in every three-week working period. She praises Ann for acknowledging the need for the legalization of the work prostitutes do (p. 2-F).

"Courage" is not the right word to describe Ann Landers' approval of prostitution. The right word is "stupid." How could anyone who has any respect for the family, for the moral values of the nation, for the sacredness of all human life or for the welfare of the women involved in prostitution approve of legalizing one of the most destructive and immoral kinds of behavior known to man? If Ann Landers wants to exhibit courage; she needs to vigorously oppose all evils, including prostitution, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, divorce and such like. If she did that, would she lose any of her client newspapers?

Newspaper people, generally speaking, are knowledgeable about this world. They read enough and observe enough to know what is occurring in almost all communities across the United States. How can publishers, editors, columnists and other employees of the newspapers

allow articles such as the one by Ann Landers to appear in their papers? News professionals cannot be unaware of the enormous evil prostitution—whether legal or illegal—does to the communities where it is allowed. They know it does enormous harm to the very moral fiber of our nation. Will newspaper personnel have the courage to publish only such articles which strengthen families and individuals? The majority of Americans have more sense than Ann Landers and the ones who published her articles, but what effect will prostitution have on young people who are confused about their own sexual feelings and longings? What if they act on the suggestions and proposals of people like Ann Landers? Would that make America a better place in which to rear our children? Anyone who thinks so needs to reexamine his values and attitudes.

The woman who wrote Ann Landers calls herself a “Nevada sex worker.” The scriptures and right thinking people have different words for describing her vulgar behavior. Anyone who knows what the Bible teaches knows both the woman and her customers are guilty of fornication. Do you know what the Bible says about all forms of sexual immorality and that includes prostitution? It is not possible the scriptures can be misunderstood on this topic. They may not be accepted, but they cannot be misunderstood. Please listen to Paul. “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Even Ann Landers ought to understand those statements, although it is unlikely she cares what Paul wrote.

The woman says she works at a licensed brothel in Nevada. Nevada is the only state in the union which legalizes prostitution. Do the governor, the legislature and the people of Nevada care nothing about the moral

atmosphere of their state? Do the people of Nevada have no shame? Do they not know they are destroying lives, setting bad examples for their young people and undermining what the churches of Nevada are doing or ought to be doing? I wonder what the preachers in Nevada say about this corrupt practice. They may be like one preacher who moved to Las Vegas several years ago. He said he would leave the judging of such matters to God almighty. I wonder if that Las Vegas preacher ever read these words: "For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God....And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:5, 11). How did the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and his apostles deal with sexual immorality—all sexual immorality? Do we think we can do better than they?

The book of Proverbs deals extensively with prostitution. Solomon gave this advice to young men. "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with you. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them upon your fingers, write them upon the table of your heart. Say unto wisdom, You are my sister; and call understanding your kinswoman" (Prov. 7:1-4). Why did Solomon lay so much stress on filling our minds with God's word and being diligent in keeping God's commandments? Solomon explains: "That they may keep you from the loose woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words" (Prov. 7:5). Now please listen carefully to what inspiration says about the dangers involved in prostitution. "For at the widow of my house I looked through my casement. And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man without any sense, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way of her house. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night; and behold, there met him a

woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house. Now is she without, now in the streets, and lies in wait at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face and I have found you. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with love. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone on a long journey. He has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him" (Prov. 7:6-21).

When a man has so little sense as to listen to the words of a prostitute, what will it do for him? Solomon adds; "He goes after her immediately, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hastes to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life" (Prov. 7:22-23). If Ann Landers had read these words from her own Bible, would that have made any difference in her support for the legalization of prostitution? Does she care nothing for the young men and older ones who endanger their lives by visiting prostitutes? Does she care nothing for the women who ruin their lives in one of the most foolish endeavors in which women can engage? The influence of an Ann Landers or a Phil Donahue has caused the breakdown of many lives. They will have to give an account for their conduct in the final day when all men will be judged.

One man wrote to Ann expressing appreciation for her column on prostitution. He says he is a disabled man who visited prostitutes regularly. In his younger years, he had tried to establish relationships with girls, but always

failed. From age 30 to his current age of 70 he has visited prostitutes. He says it is an outrage to jail a woman simply because her crime is prostitution (p. 2-F). As you can readily discern from the author of the letter, morals have absolutely nothing to do with his actions. He makes no attempt to justify his immoral conduct. His only concern seems to be his immediate gratification. When a person approaches moral values and behavior from this man's viewpoint, nothing can be condemned as being wrong. What if the man sought his fulfillment from under age girls or boys? Would it be right just because it met his needs?

Most civilized countries of the world have outlawed prostitution. The reasons are not difficult to find. The leaders in those countries know the damage prostitution does to the family. How can men and women build strong homes when the husband and father visits a prostitute? How could any woman trust a man who engages in sexual intimacy with another woman, whether a professional prostitute or otherwise? Incidentally, nations whose people do not embrace Christianity – even to minor extent – almost always oppose prostitution.

Everybody knows how diseased many – if not most – prostitutes are. Long before the advent of AIDS, prostitutes carried gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia and other venereal diseases. I know medical science has been some help in slowing down some of these diseases, but prostitutes still are infected with these diseases, some of which are deadly. How foolish governors, legislators and other leaders would be to legalize a practice which is so damaging to men's and women's health!

AIDS in our country has been spread primarily by homosexuals, but that is not true in most parts of Africa. The majority of the prostitutes in Africa are HIV positive and are spreading AIDS in alarming numbers. Over the next ten to twenty years, millions of prostitutes and their customers will die from AIDS. And yet some people in our

country are agitating for the legalization of prostitution. Are we so naive or foolish that we do not understand the dangers to our nation?

Did you know that God almighty chose the term prostitution to depict his people's unfaithfulness to him? The King James Version of the Bible uses the words "whore," "whoremonger," "whoredom" and "whoring" dozens and dozens of times. Most of the time these words were used of Israel's seeking other gods. Please listen to a few examples from the Old Testament. God warned the Israelites about turning from him to Molech, one of the false gods of the Ammonites. "I myself will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he has given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land close their eyes to them when they give of their offspring unto Molech, and not kill him: then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people" (Lev. 20:3-5).

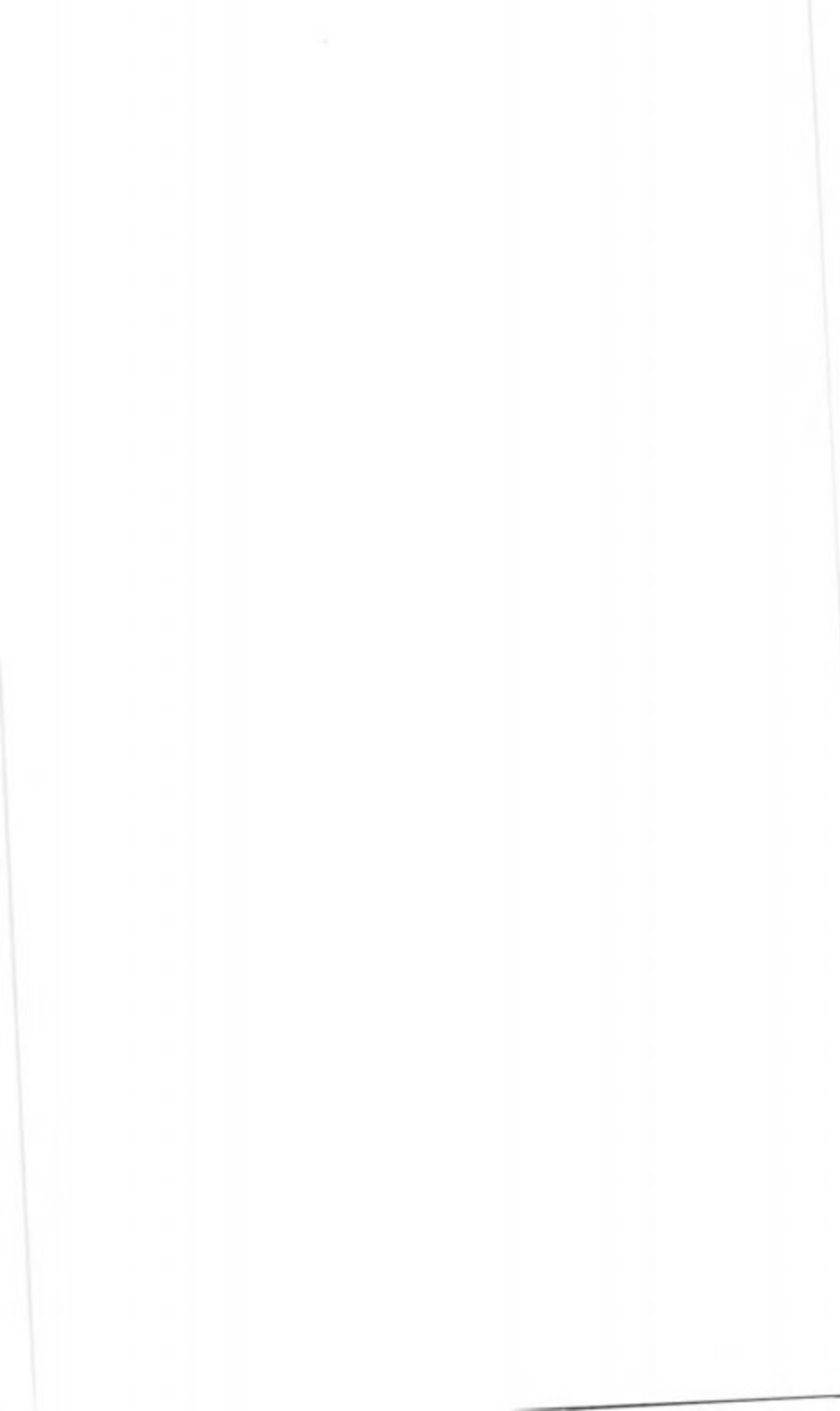
The prophet Ezekiel came on the scene in Israel at the time of the Babylonian exile. He knew what had brought the Israelites nation to its knees. These are his words, "Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters, whom you have borne unto me, and these have you sacrificed unto them (that is, the heathen gods) to be devoured. Is this of your whoredoms a small matter, that you have slain my children; and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? And in all your abominations and your whoredoms you have not remembered the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and were polluted in your blood... You have built your high place at every head of the way, and have made your beauty to be abhorred, and have opened your feet to every one who passed by, and multiplied your whoredoms" (Ezek. 16:20-22, 25).

One of the keys to understanding the beautiful little book of Hosea is the word "whoredom." God's people had played the harlot under every green tree and on every high hill. That means they had engaged in idol worship all over the land of Israel. God instructed the prophet Hosea; "Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord" (Hos. 1:2). Later Hosea said to the Israelites. "For they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord, Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart....Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love shameful ways" (Hos. 4:10-11, 18).

Could any behavior be worse than men's and women's turning their backs on God and serving idols? Jeremiah spoke of idolatry when he wrote: "Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, says the Lord, For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:12-13). God himself called idol worship "whoredom." Why did the Lord use that kind of language? He must have thought of prostitution as being one of the most abominable kinds of behavior. If prostitution deserved to be legalized, would our God have called idolatry "prostitution?"

My friends, there are a number of reasons why people like Ann Landers and Phil Donahue endorse prostitution. It is obvious they have no respect for the teachings of scripture. In addition, they have no basis for determining what is right and what is wrong, except their own personal wishes and preferences. They have no absolute standard for judging men's behavior. So they are like the Jews in the days of the judges. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

I leave you today with this question: Are Americans going to listen to Ann Landers or Phil Donahue or will we fashion our lives after the inspired word of God? If there is no judgment to follow death, does it really matter what we choose? But there is a judgment. You and I will be there.



Chapter 22

Everybody Is Growing Stupid

Today (February 13, 1999) as I prepare this transcript for broadcast throughout the United States, I grieve for my country, for our families, for the wife and daughter of the president, for the churches of America, especially for those churches which have sat idly by and said nothing about the grave moral and spiritual evils which afflict our nation. I am deeply troubled because the young people in this great country have been betrayed by the most powerful man in the world, the president of the United States. I never dreamed the day would come when I would be embarrassed and humiliated by our president, by the United States Senate and by thousands in the national media. I hang my head in shame that these tragedies could occur in a nation which has prided itself on being "Christian." After such immoral behavior on the part of many prominent people, is it possible for God to bless America?

The United States House of Representatives debated the behavior of President Clinton, decided his conduct warranted a trial in the Senate and sent managers to present the facts they had discovered about the president. Many of the senators had made up their minds even before they heard the evidence. They would not have convicted the president regardless of his deeds. When one has made up his mind, why introduce confusion by examining the facts? Incidentally, the facts were not even debatable. They were admitted by many of the senators, including the venerable Senator Robert Byrd from West Virginia. I heard Senator Byrd admit on television that the president was guilty. Having an inappropriate sexual relationship with an intern, misleading the American people, his own staff and his family about it, constitute a serious breach of man's and God's laws. And yet the president was not punished for his

deception, lying and perjury. In fact, the Senate of the United States has tacitly endorsed all of the president's ungodly and illegal behavior. I know some of them probably would object to my language, but there really is no doubt about what they have done. If we do not oppose ungodliness, we give our approval to it. We cannot sit on the fence and pretend we are against evil. We are either for goodness and right or we are for their opposites. There is no Mr. In-Between.

Hugh Downs was asked about the president's behavior. He said it was just a matter of glands. How utterly and inexcuseably ridiculous! Our sexual misconduct does not originate in our glands; it comes from our minds. Solomon wrote; "Keep your heart (or mind) with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). If the president had had his mind on doing the nation's business, being faithful to his wife, being an example to America's young people and not bringing shame on our nation, he could have avoided conduct which has dragged this country through months and months of embarrassment. The great book of Proverbs puts all of this in the proper perspective. "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in your heart; neither let her take you with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned? So he who goes into his neighbor's wife; he who touches her shall not be innocent. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry. But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. But whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding: he who does it destroys

his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though you may give many gifts" (Prov. 6:23-35).

I have no doubt Solomon had witnessed many of the destructive effects of adultery. He had to know of his own father's grievous sin with Bathsheba. David had not only committed adultery with Bathsheba; he had murdered her husband to cover up his sin. Would the senators who condoned the adultery, lying and perjury of our president also have condoned the adultery and murder by king David? Do the American people who see no wrong, at least, no serious wrong with the president's inappropriate sexual behavior with a twenty-one-year old intern see any wrong with David's abominable conduct? Those who think the president does not deserve removal from office for his great sins certainly are not overly concerned about God's explicit condemnation of such ungodliness. Do Americans have no respect for God, for his laws regulating sexual contacts and for his commands not to lie?

My friends, all of this reminds me of an incident which occurred in Austro-Hungary many years ago. Don Feder's book, **A Jewish Conservative Looks at Pagan America** (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1993), says that Emperor Joseph of Austro-Hungary was required to sit through a two-hour opening session of parliament. At the time the emperor was in his eighties. At the conclusion of the parliamentary session, the emperor shuffled to the podium and uttered one single sentence in Latin: **Totus mundus stultizat**. The translation reads: "The whole world is growing stupid" (p. 226). If recent polls are to be believed, at least, the majority of Americans are growing stupid.

Hundreds and hundreds of examples could be given to show that our nation is growing stupid, at least, from a spiritual and moral viewpoint. Margaret Carlson's article,

"The Clinton in Us All," in **Time** (December 28, 1998-January 4, 1999), illustrates my theme, "Everybody Is Growing Stupid." She demonstrates beyond dispute why she has been so completely biased in favor of president Clinton and against anyone who reproaches the president for his adultery, lying, perjury and obstruction of justice. She claims few problems with the easy commandments, such as, coveting another's spouse, killing anyone and honoring a day of rest. But she thinks anyone who too strongly opposes lying probably is just being hypocritical. She says she knows honesty is the best policy, but she seems to be happy with the second-best policy in some circumstances. Incidentally, is "honesty the best policy" good moral philosophy? Are we honest because it is the best policy or are we honest because it is right?

Margaret Carlson's article, like her comments on various talk shows, exemplifies Emperor Joseph's observation, "Everybody is growing stupid." The very title of the article, "The Clinton in Us All," is an insult to the millions of truth-telling, God-honoring men and women in the United States. Is she implying that there are no honest people in our nation? She even believes (or says she does) that president Clinton remains so popular because most of us are like him (p. 94). If that is true, we are much further down the road to decay, degradation and depravity than any of us have ever imagined.

The Tennessean (Saturday, February 13, 1999) published an article with the title, "Clinton winds up the biggest winner." The article calls Monica Lewinsky the biggest loser. Who would want to date this young woman? If she ever becomes a wife, a mother and a grandmother, what will her acquaintances and family members remember about her? I am not saying God will not forgive her nor that we should not forgive her, if she asks for forgiveness, but she will be remembered for as long as she lives and even longer for one thing—a sleazy relationship with a world

class adulterer. Personally, I wish no one had to go through such torture. Regardless of her subsequent behavior, she will be tied forever with one kind of conduct—sexual immorality.

The article also calls America's children losers. I agree with that assessment. Will the president's liason with Monica Lewinsky have any impact on young people's attitudes toward the men and women who serve in political offices? Are our young people going to think that all our congressmen, senators, governors and other public servants should be excused for behavior which would land them in prison and cause them to have to pay heavy fines? Will our young people lose respect for our elected representatives as they did for certain religious leaders who committed adultery and lied to cover up their sins? Will America's young people be tempted to justify their own sexual immorality by mentioning the president's name and the senators acquittal of his serious crimes? Anyone who thinks they will not has not spent much time with young people, especially with very bright young people.

The Tennessean asked a number of Middle Tennesseans: "Now that the impeachment is over, who do you think are the winners and losers?" Quotations from five people are given. One young man very perceptively observed that the people who want to teach their children what it means to be moral are the losers. Why would we acquit a president for doing things which send other people to prison? He very wisely says that nobody wins. Then he adds: "I think it changed our entire outlook on what's right and wrong in this country" (p. 12-A). The young man who gave these answers is thirty-six. Have you noticed how many of our fine young people were totally opposed to president Clinton's sexual escapades while most of the older people seemed not to care too much? Maybe just the older people are growing stupid.

I suspect that some in my audience are probaby saying,

"A preacher of the gospel should not use the word 'stupid.'" Frankly, I think the word is inappropriate, except under extreme circumstances. And then, we should apply it to behavior rather than to individuals. I am speaking in this lesson about stupid conduct—not stupid people. When Margaret Carlson of *Time* says there is a little Clinton in all of us, that, dear friends, is a stupid remark, at least, from a scriptural viewpoint, but Margaret Carlson is not intellectually stupid. Morally she is on the wrong side, but she apparently is quite bright. But being mentally capable has nothing to do with being morally and spiritually right.

Are you aware that the word "stupid" is never used in the King James Version of the Bible? Some of the biblical expressions, such as, foolish, lacks understanding, lacks good sense, are found in the word of God, but the word "stupid" does not appear in the King James Version. However, the word does appear in most modern versions of the Bible. I shall provide the King James reading and then tell you how other versions render the original languages. For example, the King James reads: "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (Gal. 3:1)? The New English Bible reads: "O stupid Galatians!"

The Greek word rendered "foolish" in the King James Version and "stupid" in the New English Bible is *aneotos*. The word appears six times in the Greek New Testament and means not applying the mind. The word involves senselessness, an unworthy lack of understanding. In the King James the Greek is translated "fools," "unwise," and "foolish." The word does not refer to the person who is incapable intellectually of grasping the truth of God's word, but to the person who willfully and deliberately turns aside from understanding. Jesus called the disciples on the road to Emmaus "fools and slow of heart" (Lk. 24:25).

The King James Version records Paul's advice to

Timothy in this way: "But they who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9). The word "foolish" in this verse could be rendered "stupid," but is not so rendered in any version I have in my library. However, the word is translated "silly" in J. B. Phillips' translation of the New Testament.

Paul's second letter to Timothy includes this wise admonition: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes" (2 Tim. 2:23). The Greek word translated "foolish" is not from **anoetos** but from **moros** from which we get our English word "moron." The same word is used in this warning to Titus; "But avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Tit. 3:9). In both of these passages, the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version and the Contemporary English Version translate the word "stupid."

All the modern versions I have use the word "stupid" in numerous passages in the Old Testament. That is particularly true of Psalms, Proverbs and Jeremiah. I shall choose an example from each of these books. The royal psalmist wrote: "A brutish man knows not; neither does a fool understand this" (Psa. 92:6). The New Revised Standard Version has the word "stupid" instead of the word "fool." I shall read four verses from Proverbs where most of the modern versions have the word "stupid." "He who is void of wisdom (or stupid) despises his neighbor: but a man of understanding holds his peace" (Prov. 11:12). "A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping" (Prov. 19:13). "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding (or stupid)" (Prov. 20:30). "Surely I am more brutish (or stupid) than any man, and have not the understanding of a man" (Prov. 30:2). In several of the modern versions, Jeremiah uses the word "stupid" five

times. I shall read three verses from Jeremiah 10. "But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities....Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.... For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered" (Jer. 10:8, 14, 21). Every time the word "brutish" is used in the King James Version the New Revised Standard Version has the word "stupid." It is my considered judgment that the word "stupid" in the passages I have read to you brings out more precisely the meaning of the original text, especially for the modern reader.

But is not the word "stupid" an insult to the sensitive consciences of modern men and women? The truth is: Millions of modern men and women, including many within various religious groups have the same attitude, commit the same sins and refuse to repent, just as did the people of Jeremiah's day. Anyone who thinks otherwise has been asleep longer than Rip Van Winkle. All one has to do to confirm that many of us behave with utter stupidity is to read your daily paper, watch the evening news on television, read books by reputable scholars and keep his eyes open to what is occurring in his own community. If our eyes are not closed and our ears not dull of hearing, we cannot avoid seeing the stupid behavior of many of our fellow citizens.

My friends, it gives me no pleasure to have to speak about the foolish, brutish and stupid behavior of some Americans. I would much rather speak about the graciousness of our God and the sacrifice of his Son. But if I want to have the approval of God, as did David, Solomon, Jeremiah and Paul, I must speak out against the evils which are corrupting our youth, disrupting our homes, and destroying the very fabric of our country. Some in my audience may be offended by my use of the word "stupid,"

but I have an obligation—as do all preachers who would be faithful—to preach the whole counsel of God. I cannot refrain from preaching the truth, even if it hurts the feelings of some of my hearers. But I am confident no other kind of preaching will turn our country back to God. We cannot be mealy-mouthed and make much impression on our people. So, I urge you to pray for me as I prepare and present these biblical lessons. And who knows whether we are sent to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Chapter 23

Everybody Is Growing Stupid #2

A few months ago, my older son Doron and his family were visiting with us at Fayetteville. Doron and I were sitting in our den talking about some of the behavior which is destroying our country. My comment was, "That (whatever kind of behavior it was) is plain stupid." My three-year-old grandson walked over to my chair and said, "Grandy, you should not use the word 'stupid.'" Doron explained that I was not speaking of people but of their conduct which may not have made much impression on my grandson. I am sure Doron and his wife Kathee had been teaching their children not to refer to others as stupid. They are certainly right to do so. But there are kinds of conduct which deserve to be called stupid. I shall give you several examples very shortly.

The word stupid never appears in the King James Version of the Bible, but it is used in several modern versions. I shall take time to give you a few examples. The King James Version reads: "For he sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others" (Psa. 49:10). The Revised Standard Version uses the word "stupid" instead of "brutish." "So foolish (or stupid) was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee" (Psa. 73:22). The prophet Jeremiah wrote of God's people: "For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish (or stupid) children, and they have no understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22).

If you listened carefully to these passages, you know the Bible writers were not speaking of the intellectual ability of God's people. They were showing how utterly foolish men and women are when they reject God's grace and trample under foot the word of God. The author of Hebrews

does not use the word "foolish" or the word "stupid" in the following passage, but it does indicate just how hard-hearted and brutish people are when they reject God's only way of saving men. "He who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, do you suppose, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28-29, 31).

There were many Jews under the old covenant who forsook the way of the Lord and turned to idols. Tragically, Christians have also turned their backs on their God. Peter wrote concerning such Christians: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog has turned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). I am aware that Calvinists teach that Christians cannot fall away, but Peter did not know that, as these verses very clearly indicate.

I have at my disposal books and articles which demonstrate beyond dispute that many Americans, including influential university professors, theologians, politicians, business people and ordinary people are morally and spiritually stupid. For example, **The Tennessean** (Saturday, February 6, 1999) published an article with the title, "Should modern life divorce itself from marriage?" The subtitle of the article was, "Philly psychologist sees irreconcilable differences." The article was written by William

R. Macklin of Knight Ridder News Service. Macklin quotes Nancy Saunders, a Philadelphia psychologist, as saying that "traditional marriage" is a failing relationship incapable of binding couples in a lifetime of love and equality. She thinks a long-term committed marriage is best for the rearing of children, but favors eliminating traditional marriages. She supports the custom-designing of marriages to fit each couple (p. D-1).

In case you may be tempted to think this radical and stupid idea is new, let me assure you it is not. The late Dr. Margaret Mead, one of America's most influential anthropologists, traveled all over the world doing research on human origins and behavior. Her travels took her to some of the most primitive areas in the world. She said there were two ideas she found in every culture—belief in a higher power and some form of marriage. The primitive tribes may have embraced polytheism (belief in many gods) or monotheism (belief in one god), but they always believed in some god. They also had some form of marriage: polygamy (many marriages), polygyny (one man with many wives), polyandry (one woman with many husbands or monogamy (one marriage). But there was always some form of marriage.

In her 1966 book, **Male and Female**, Dr. Mead suggests that we may need to find or invent some new way for human beings to relate to each other. Marriage no longer seems to work. She proposes that marriage be arranged in two stages: personal or individual marriages and parental marriages. The first stage would be for five or ten years. At the end of that time, the marriage could be abandoned or it could be renewed. If the couple wished to continue their marriage, they could enter into the second stage: parental marriage. From that time on they could have a traditional marriage. The first five or ten years would provide an opportunity to discover if they were compatible. If they were not, they could simply separate and no harm

be done.

Dr. George O'Neill, an anthropologist at City University of New York and his wife Nena expressed some of the same stupid concepts in their bestselling book, **Open Marriage** (New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1972). The O'Neills affirm that "the patriarchal marriage system of the Jude-Christian tradition, based on an agrarian economy, is imply outmoded today" (p. 22). They further foolishly say, "Given the existing marriage format, which is untenable, is antiquated, is obsolete, it is difficult to chide them for their unwillingness (to test their commitment)" (p. 25). Incidentally, Nena O'Neill wrote a later book, **The Marriage Premise**, in which she said that the thesis she and Dr. O'Neill had sought to prove was not necessarily true—a very revealing admission, in my judgment.

Can you imagine the arrogance and stupidity of a lowly human being's challenging the wisdom of God almighty? When God had created the Adam, he said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help suited to him" (Gen. 2:18), God created the woman and brought her to Adam and said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The Lord Jesus Christ endorsed what God the Father had revealed about the man and the woman (Mt. 19:3-9). God's arrangement should not be questioned by human beings. His way is always best.

Like most preachers, I have worked with troubled marriages most of my adult life. I know the heartaches and problems which arise in many marriages. But are we so foolish as to want to throw overboard what God himself has ordained? What we must do is to teach our children what God expects of them. Obviously, we have not been doing that too well. In addition, we must have leaders from the White House down to our local communities who model for young people the kind of marriages which God himself

could approve. Rather than destroying the institution of marriage, let us work at making our marriages what they ought to be and can be.

Even more foolish than the article in *The Tennessean* (if possible) is Judith Rich Harris's new book. **The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turnout the Way They Do** (New York; The Free Press, 1998). I have hundreds of books on marriage and family, childrearing, human sexuality and related topics, but none more stupid than the one I have just mentioned. The introduction to the book was written by Steven Pinker, professor of psychology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Dr. Pinker says that Judith Harris demonstrates in her book "that parents don't matter. What matters, other than genes, is the child's **peer group**" (p. xi of the Introduction). According to Dr. Pinker, "children are the products of evolution." They determine what they become.... "Nature surely did not design children to be putty in their parents' hands" (pp. xii-xiii of the Introduction). Dr. Harris's book is stupidity gone to seed.

Along the same line as the book I have just mentioned is one by Dr. Helen E. Fisher, research associate in the department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History. Dr. Fisher's book has the title, **The Anatomy of Love** (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992). Dr. Fisher asks, "Why adultery?" She answers, "From a Darwinian perspective, it is easy to explain why men are—by nature—interested in sexual variety" (p. 87). Even divorce seems genetically determined, according to Helen Fisher, "Perhaps this restlessness," she says, "is driven by currents buried in our human psyche, profound reproductive forces that evolved across eons of daily mating throughout our shadowed past" (p. 109). "The human animal," Dr. Fisher asserts, "seems built to court, to fall in love, and to marry one person at a time; then, at the height of our reproductive years, often with a single child, we divorce; then, a few years later, we remarry again" (p. 115).

The Bible and good common sense have a much better explanation for human sexual escapades. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

Is it possible that hundreds of thousands of our young people have become convinced that sexual predatory conduct is embedded in our genetic makeup? Incidentally, Dr. Fisher says she is not "advocating infidelity or desertion," but her evolutionary explanation for sexual unfaithfulness to one's marriage vows will almost certainly lead some people to justify their ungodly behavior by explaining that it is in their genetic makeup. They may not believe it, but it certainly sound like a good justification for adultery. If sexual promiscuity is programmed into our very being by thousands of years of evolutionary development, how can we be held accountable for our philandering? Right-handedness and left-handedness are written into our genes. Is sexual immorality in the same category? Are men and women unfaithful to their married partners because of their animal ancestry? If Dr. Fisher is right, we cannot call adultery or any other kind of sexual conduct "stupid."

You surely cannot be unaware of what is occurring in the little town of Jasper, Texas. John William King is being tried for dragging a black man to death behind a pickup truck. And what was the grievous sin of the man who was so brutally and stupidly killed? He made the mistake of being born black. The killer was "full of hate" who hoped to encourage the organizing of white supremacist groups, such as, the Ku Klux Klan, and other race-hating groups. My friends, if this is not stupid behavior, I would not know what it would take to make it stupid. I have to admit that I do not understand how anyone could hate so viciously. I have to wonder what churches in Texas were teaching

before this inexcuseably violent incident. Were they teaching their members about God's love for all men, that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35)?

There are few kinds of conduct which are more stupid than gambling. And yet virtually every state in the union has legalized this very evil and very destructive behavior. Governor, legislators and others are far more concerned about enriching the state's treasury than about preserving our families and the moral values of our nation. Political leaders and others ought to know the enormous damage gambling does to every segment of society, but especially to the poor. Rich people did not get rich by being stupid enough to risk their financial welfare on lotteries, horse-racing and casinos. Besides, gambling stimulates the very worst attitude in human beings—greed. In fact, it is built on greed. In addition, it brings into our states the very worst kinds of criminals. It leads to murder, to suicide, to robbery and to virtually every other crime known to man. I know the arguments political leaders use to justify gambling, but not one of them makes sense. Are we going to contaminate our communities, destroy thousands and thousands of homes and endorse criminal activities in the name of getting rich from gambling? Are we so stupid we cannot see the evils, we are creating and perpetuating?

The Tennessean (Friday, February 12, 1999) carried an article with the title, "Gun makers found liable in shootings." A federal jury in New York City established guilt for several gun makers because some people misused them in committing crimes (p. 14-A). I have more than a passing interest in this story for many reasons. For fifteen years my wife and I owned some sporting goods stores in North Georgia and in Middle Tennessee. During those fifteen years we sold between 20,000 and 25,000 guns of various kinds—handguns, rifles and shotguns. Besides, I grew up in a home where guns were kept and used, primarily for hunting. I am offended and angered when

judges, juries and prosecutors lay blame on the manufacturers or the distributors of guns. Such decisions show how absolutely unreasonable some of our courts are.

Many times more people are killed by beverage alcohol than by guns. Many of those killed by guns were killed by people under the influence of alcohol. If we are going to hold the manufacturers of guns accountable for their misuse why not hold Jack Daniel, Miller Brewing Company and other makers of strong drink accountable for the damage alcohol does? Unfortunately, that will not be done because the legislators drink too much beverage alcohol. Many of them behave stupidly under the influence of alcohol. I strongly support punishing those who misuse guns, but I am opposed to punishing the companies who make them, unless they make shoddy merchandise which hurts those who use it.

Do we preachers ever act in stupid ways? It is extremely troubling to have to admit that we do. For example, when a preacher or a priest is involved in sexual immorality, is that not stupid behavior? One of the leading evangelical theologians in the world—a man of enormous learning and linguistic accomplishments—recently left his wife of many years for a young woman. I must have at least ten of this man's books in my library. His books and lectures have been very helpful to me. I am disappointed for his denomination, for his family and for the religious world in general for this man's stupid behavior. You may resent my calling it that, but you know it is. When Jerry Falwell said that the antichrist was in the world and he was Jewish, his remarks were not very smart. He has apologized for his foolish remarks, but as one Jewish rabbi in Nashville said: Dr. Falwell still believes it.

I could do many more lessons on the topic I have discussed with you today, but I shall have to wait until another time. My purpose in speaking on the topic, "Everybody Is Growing Stupid," was to shake all of us out

of lethargy and indifference. Too many of us—including millions who call themselves Christians are going about our business as if everything is alright with the world, to quote the words of Robert Browning. But everything is not alright with the world. We are living in a world when a thousand stupid things occur everyday, I plan to do something about it. Will you join me in a crusade against stupid behavior?

Chapter 24

Everybody Is Growing Stupid (No. 3)

Several months ago on this radio program I spoke on the topic, "Everybody Is Growing Stupid." I began the first of those lessons by reading a statement from Don Feder's book, *A Jewish Conservative Looks at Pagan America* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1993). Don Feder, a prominent Jewish syndicated columnist, tells of an incident involving Emperor Joseph of Austro-Hungary. The emperor was eighty-years-old and sat through a two-hour session of the parliament. At the conclusion of the parliamentary session, the emperor shuffled to the podium and uttered one single sentence in Latin: **Totus mundus stultizat**. Feder says the Latin sentence means: "The whole world is growing stupid" (p. 226). If recent polls can be believed, the majority of Americans are growing stupid.

I pointed out in those earlier lessons that the word "stupid" is never used in the King James Version of the Bible. The King James uses words like "brutish," "foolish," and "sottish." One example from Jeremiah's great prophecy will illustrate how the word is used. "For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish (or stupid) children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22). As you can readily discern, the Israelites are not accused of being intellectually dull. They were morally and spiritually perverse. They were similar to the Gentiles in Paul's day. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21-22). The last part of verse twenty-two could be rendered: "They became morons." The English word "moron" comes the Greek word translated "fool."

Some of you – perhaps many of you – have listened to Dr. Laura Schlessinger on her syndicated talk show. I have listened to her a few times and generally agree with what she says, although I often disagree with the way she says it. She can be as harsh as anyone I have ever heard, but maybe some of her callers deserve it. Dr. Laura has written two books using the word “stupid”: **Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess up Their Lives** and **Ten Stupid Things Men Do to Mess up Their Lives**. Dr. Laura is not a Jew, but she and her family have been converted to Judaism. I will say this about Dr. Laura: She has strong moral convictions and is not afraid nor ashamed to express them. Even if I occasionally disagree with Dr. Laura, I admire her courage in responding to some of her callers.

Frank Ritter is an editor and columnist for **The Tennessean**. His articles in **The Tennessean** are usually right on the money. On Wednesday (September 8, 1999), he wrote a splendid article on the topic “Spewing hatred at whites and Jews only cements the divide.” Ritter correctly criticizes vicious racists like Louis Farrakhan. Ritter says that Farrakhan once “suggested that Blacks who oppose him should not be permitted to live.” Frank Ritter wonders—and so do I—why responsible black leaders are not condemning the racism which Farrakhan and his lieutenants are spewing out (p. 9-A). When men and women—whether black or white—speak disparagingly of people of other races just because they belong to another race, they are behaving stupidly. If we are ever going to have peace and harmony in this so-called “melting pot,” we must learn to love and respect one another, regardless of race or color or national origin or economic status. I applaud Frank Ritter for his perceptive and courageous writing.

One of the great principles on which our nation was founded was justice. Christians above all people on this earth ought to believe in and promote justice. Every committed Bible student knows how strongly the word of

God stresses justice. God demanded of His people under the old covenant: "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17). The word "judgment" should be translated "justice," as it is in all the modern versions with which I am acquainted. Isaiah's younger contemporary, Micah, raises a number of vital questions relating to what God expects of his people. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Please listen to Micah's inspired answer to these questions. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8)?

The King James Version of the Bible never uses the word "justice" in the New Testament, but it does use the word "just" (*dikaiois*) which is the equivalent of the Old Testament word "justice." Two verses from Matthew refer to Jesus as a just man. "When he (that is, Pilate) had sat down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him....When Pilate saw that he could not prevail, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; you see to it" (Mt. 27:19, 24). Being a just man means living according to the will of God and not bringing the judgment of God on our heads.

Do the courts of the United States seek justice for all people? Almost any daily newspaper will give you many examples of our almost total disregard for justice. On Wednesday, September 8, 1999, **The Tennessean** published an article with the title, "Plea bargain spares ex-HUD

secretary from trial, jail term," Former HUD Secretary, Henry G. Cisneros, pleaded guilty of lying to the FBI about money he paid a former mistress. Cisneros will pay \$10,000 dollars as part of the plea bargain, but will not be jailed or face probation. The United States government spent \$9 million dollars investigating Cisneros and let him off with a \$10,000 fine. Is there anyone—except Cisneros' lawyer—who thinks what the government did is just? If Henry Cisneros had been an ordinary "Joe" like you and me, do you honestly think he could have plea bargained his serious crimes to a \$10,000 fine?

But the president of the United States can escape punishment for committing adultery, lying to a grand jury and obstructing justice, why not his secretary of Housing and Urban Development? The president's crimes were far more serious and all he got was a slap on the wrist. Oh, I know the president was fined in the Paula Jones case, but his rich friends apparently paid his fine. Maybe his rich and unscrupulous friends will also pay Cisneros' fine. Is there anyone who cares about the moral values of public officials or are we all growing stupid?

A few years ago, a professional educator in Nashville founded a private school for gifted children. She took the money parents had paid for their children to attend the school. She used the money to make a down payment on a very expensive home in one of the most prestigious communities in Nashville. Of the \$814,000 she raised for the school she spent \$79,000 on supplies the school needed. You would think that such a thief would spend at least 25 years in prison and be held accountable for the entire \$814,000 she swindled from the parents of the children. She has been given two-and-a-half years in prison and ordered to pay \$139,119 as restitution. Can you believe that a judge who has any interest in justice would have so little regard for the law and for the people who have been cheated? The woman had pleaded guilty to twenty counts of fraud, but

was given 2 1/2 years in prison—two-and-one half years! That, dear friends, is a little less than two months for every case of fraud.

Almost always after every famous trial, the winning lawyer will speak with reporters and others and say, "This just shows that our legal system works." How absolutely ridiculous! It shows in too many cases that prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges have done all within their power to prevent the system from working. Prosecutors often manipulate the witnesses and the evidence to get a conviction. Some defense attorneys will allow their clients to lie—knowing they are lying—and not stop them from doing so. Some judges lose control of the proceedings and allow either the prosecutor or the defense attorney to control the court. When one observes what occurs in our courtrooms across the country, it makes him wonder if the whole legal system is stupid. Is there nothing to American people can do to change the court system in our nation? Is it possible that many criminals do not fear the law because they know they can manipulate the courts?

Everyone in Middle Tennessee is surely aware of the trial of a suspected multiple murderer. He has already been convicted of killing two people, but is being tried for the murder of others. His attorney has demanded that his client be given a competency test. The defense attorney will use the insanity defense to try to keep his client from dying for his vicious murders of several people in Clarksville and in Nashville. I want to make a statement that I hope you will never forget: The insanity plea is insane! It makes absolutely no sense. And yet defense attorneys use it and the judges allow them to get away with it. It is a thoroughly stupid way of trying to get people free from punishment which they deserve. Of course, if I were a murderer or other vicious criminal, I would look for a conscienceless lawyer to plead my case.

I am aware that both the prosecution and the defense

lawyers rely on psychiatrists and psychologists to determine the sanity of the criminal. The truth is that no man alive can tell the thoughts and motivations of a man who killed several people two years ago or two hours ago. Of course, lawyers often respond to my criticism by saying: "But you are not an expert in the law." That is true and I make no pretence of being an expert in the law. But one of the things I can do rather well is read. And I have read extensively on the so-called "insanity plea." The truth is: When psychiatrists and psychologists are called to testify either for the prosecution or for the defense attorneys, neither knows what he is talking about. Another sad fact is: many of them are anybody's dog who will hunt with them. They will in too many cases testify where the pay is the greatest. Does that mean that all psychiatrists and psychologists are behaving stupidly when they testify in court that the accused man or woman is crazy or not crazy? No, but it does mean that courts place too much faith in professionals who have no idea about what they are saying. Unfortunately, they are paid well for their services—sometimes as much as \$1500 per day. That is not bad for someone who does not know what he thinks he knows. No wonder great numbers of Americans have no respect for our legal system.

Did you know there are hundreds of thousands of people who appeal to psychics to obtain advice about their love life, about their financial situation, about political candidates and about other vital matters? The scriptures unequivocally condemn such activity. God forbid the Israelites from having any dealings with diviners, enchanters, witches, wizards and necromancers. "For all who do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you" (Dt. 18:10-12). While psychics are not specifically mentioned in these verses, there can be no doubt they are forbidden for God's people.

The beautiful and talented Dionne Warwick regularly advertises the services of psychics. She gives the impression that the psychics can help you with whatever problems you face. **The Tennessean** reported September 8, 1999, that five men dressed as repairmen broke into Dionne Warwick's house in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. They tied up her brother and her housekeeper and took about \$53,000 in cash and other valuable items. The robbers attempted to steal a gold record, but could not remove it from the wall. Neither Dionne Warwick's brother or her housekeeper was hurt. A few questions on this unfortunate incident are in order.

Why were the psychics unable to warn Dionne Warwick that thieves would break into her house and steal her valuables? If they are not any help on such matters, how can we be sure they can give us information about other matters? If psychics have inside information about the future, why do they not get rich on the stock market, playing the roulette wheel in Las Vegas, betting on horse racing, buying the exact lottery ticket and gambling on sporting events? You know why they do not. They have no inside information. They are deceivers and frauds. Their behavior and that of their gullible supporters constitute utter stupidity. There is absolutely no doubt that God would accuse such people of behaving stupidly. If consulting psychics is not a sign of moral and spiritual poverty, I would not know what is.

The Cleveland, Ohio, newspaper. **The Plain Dealer** (Monday, August 30, 1999) published an article entitled "Anti-temperance crusader." The subtitle to the article is "Ohio tycoon pours out money to get right to drink in the Bible belt." Ralph Q. Anderson, a multi-millionaire Ohio tycoon, apparently gets very upset when he returns to his hometown of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and can find nothing to drink. He has even hired two college professors to find a way to legalize liquor in his home county. He says he does not drink at home, but when he goes out to eat he has

to have a drink. Just before he launched his campaign to legalize strong drink at Harrodsburg, he donated \$100,000 to the Harrodsburg Baptist Church (pp. 1-A, 8-A).

Just because a businessman has made millions does not mean he always acts with good judgment. Does he know or does he care about the thousands and thousands of people who die on our highways because someone behaved stupidly by drinking and driving? And someone had to behave stupidly by legalizing beverage alcohol in the first place. What is puzzling about the incident I have just described is that it is happening at about the same time the young man at Carrollton, Kentucky, is being released from jail for having killed twenty-seven people. Do all those deaths mean nothing to a man like Ralph Anderson? Does he care about the human toll from drinking? Does he realize that about 50% of all serious crimes are committed by people under the influence of alcohol? Does he know the detrimental influence drinking has on families in our nation? Are a few drinks of liquor while Anderson is visiting Kentucky so vital he has to have liquor legalized in his hometown? If Anderson's behavior is not morally stupid, what would he have to do to make it stupid?

There is a way that all men and women can cease acting stupidly. We can renounce our commitment to sin and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. That does not mean that Christians will not occasionally behave in sinful and foolish ways, but believing in Christ and walking in the light will bring us into a covenant relationship with God, help us to be better neighbors and friends, and prevent our destroying ourselves by living for Satan. If you are not a Christian, obey the Lord today.

Chapter 25

Partial Birth Abortions

While I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, I predict that the abortion controversy will never cease unless one of two things happens: Either the government will pass regulations forbidding abortion, except to save the life of the mother, or prolife people get discouraged and quit fighting for the lives of innocent little babies. From a financial--if not from a moral--viewpoint, abortion will surely be stopped sometime in the future. We cannot continue to kill 1,500,000 babies each year without suffering severe financial problems. How, for example, are the children who survive going to be able to keep our social security system operational? The system is already in trouble, but will inevitably get worse unless we cease destroying our future wage earners.

Maybe those who are prolife will be able to convince the majority of the American people that abortion-on-demand is an unmitigated evil. Abortion has unquestionably desensitized many Americans to the value of all human life. Many of the vicious crimes in our nation are almost certainly related to the our loss of respect for human life. Are we going to restore God's view of human beings? We can only do that if churches and families teach what the Bible says about the sacredness of all human life. David a long time ago wrote: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well" (Psa. 139:14). Human beings are the handiwork of God almighty. Can we continue to destroy what God himself values?

Of this you can rest assured: Prolife people are not going to cease fighting abortion. Some may get discouraged and drop by the wayside, but there will always be others to take their place. The fight against abortion is not the so-

called "Christian right" agenda, although many in the media, in academic circles, in liberal politics and religion would like for people to believe that ridiculous position. Right-to-life groups are not trying to restrict anyone's legitimate freedom, but we do not want to see our nation destroyed because of the immorality of abortion, euthanasia, infanticide and suicide. We know that all these evils are related. Where abortion proliferates, euthanasia, infanticide and suicide cannot be far behind. Derek Humphry and Jack Kavorkian prove that observation.

All forms of abortion are gruesome, violent and inexcuseable. It is difficult for me to imagine a greater evil in any nation. But by far the most inexplicable and thoroughly disgusting form of abortion is euphemistically called either "partial-birth abortion" or "late-term abortion." The Tennessee Right to Life organization has provided a description of what actually occurs in partial-birth abortions. "Guided by Ultrasound, the abortionist grabs the baby's legs with forceps. The baby's leg is pulled out into the birth canal. The abortionist delivers the baby's entire body, except the head. The abortionist jams scissors into the baby's skull. The scissors are then opened to enlarge the hole (in the baby's head). The scissors are removed and a suction tube is inserted. The child's brains are sucked out causing the skull to collapse. The dead baby is then removed."

If you are not near nausea by this description of what takes place in these late-term abortions, I would not be able to understand your resistance to such horror. Such heartless treatment of a dog or cat or horse would land the perpetrator in jail and should. And yet in Planned Parenthood clinics and in hospitals across our land, this procedure occurs on a regular basis. According to the supporters of abortion, this kind of abortion is very rare, but they know they are not telling the truth when they make those assertions. Obviously, it does not occur so often as some other forms of abortion, but it is not rare. Even if it occurred one time

per year or one time per century, it would tell us about the moral values—or lack thereof—of all those involved.

The Star News of Hendersonville, Tennessee (Wednesday, October 30, 1996) published an advertisement sponsored by the Tennessee Right to Life committee. The advertisement had the heading, "What the Nurse saw..." Part of the advertisement reads as follows: "In September, 1993, Brenda Pratt Shafer, a registered nurse with thirteen years of experience, was assigned by her nursing agency to an abortion clinic. Since nurse Shafer considered herself 'very pro-choice,' she didn't think this assignment would be a problem. She was wrong.

"This is what Nurse Shafer saw:

"I stood at the doctor's side and watched him perform a partial-birth abortion on a woman who was six months pregnant. The baby's heartbeat was clearly visible on the ultrasound screen. The doctor delivered the baby's body and arms, everything but his little head. The baby's body was moving. His little fingers were clasping together. He was kicking his feet. The doctor took a pair of scissors and inserted them into the back of the baby's head, and the baby's arms jerked out in a flinch, a startle reaction, like a baby does when he thinks he might fall. The doctor opened the scissors up. Then he stuck the high-powered suction tube into the hole and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby was completely limp.

"I never went back to the clinic. But I am still haunted by the face of that little boy. It was the most perfect, angelic face I have ever seen" (p. C-8).

I believe I have an obligation to ask you some penetrating and provocative questions. How can the doctor who vowed first to do no harm ever participate in this unnecessary, unholy, unreasonable and inexcusable operation? Any doctor who thinks he can justify this abominable evil is hereby challenged to do so. No wonder millions of Americans no longer trust their physicians and

have turned to alternative therapies. I have no respect for most of these alternative therapies, such as, therapeutic touching, iridology, reflexology and other ridiculous treatments, but I can understand why many of us no longer respect some doctors as we once did.

Doctors who perform any abortion—except the save the life of the mother—are sinning grievously against God and against the human family. Their only excuse—at least, from my viewpoint—is making money. Many doctors make hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars each year by specializing in killing babies. They may deny that what is in the mother’s womb are babies, but they know better. So do all other right-thinking people. But, at least, they are getting rich performing abortions. What causes mothers to have their babies aborted? They are not getting rich engaging in their nefarious business. Do mothers not know that God is behind the conception which occurs? Do they not understand that they are interfering with God’s plans? I am especially disturbed that any mother could have her baby aborted by partial-birth abortion. If they know what is going on in such abortions—and they have to know—how can they live with themselves and their God after such brutality?

Millions of Americans claim to be Christians. They attend church services regularly and participate in the activities of those churches. I am aware that many of these churches care precious little about the Bible. In some cases, they do not even pretend to follow the Bible. But what about the millions of Americans who claim to be evangelicals or fundamentalists or conservatives? If these Americans would take a stand against abortion and vote their convictions on election day, we could make radical changes regarding abortion and other evils in society. Tragically, many evangelicals are leaning toward liberalism and even toward postmodernism. A substantial number of evangelicals no longer believe in absolute truth. If there are no absolutes, how can abortion or infanticide or euthanasia

be absolutely wrong? Is that the reason many evangelicals are not speaking out uncompromisingly against this great evil?

There is one rather surprising aspect of the partial-birth abortion controversy: The majority of our United States representatives and of our senators oppose partial-birth abortion. They even voted to ban it. But a man who claims to be a Christian vetoed what the House and Senate had done. Is he wiser than the majority of both houses in the United States Congress and the vast majority of the American people--both Democrats and Republicans? Or is he repaying a debt to the Women's Liberation Movement, the National Teachers Association, Planned Parenthood and other radical groups in American society? Whatever the case, I am sick at heart that our president approves of one of the most horrible ways any human being can die.

But is not partial-birth abortion very rare? As a matter of fact, it is not. One estimate of this particular procedure was 500 per year. As I have already noted, this type of abortion does not happen so often as saline abortions, or the evacuation-type abortions, but it occurs many times each year in our country. One American doctor, Dr. Martin Haskell, has performed over 1,000 partial-birth abortions. In a tape-recorded interview with **American Medical News**, Dr. Haskell said, "I'll be quite frank: most of my abortions are elective in that 20-24 week range....80% are purely elective." That means, dear friends, that 800 of the abortions performed by Dr. Haskell were merely for the convenience of the mother. Her life was not in danger. She just did not want to have the baby.

The Right-to-Life advertisement says that some defenders of this procedure make false claims that anesthesia given to the mother kills the baby before the procedure. But the American Society of Anesthesiologists says anesthesia given to the mother does **not** kill or harm the baby--and it does not reliably protect the baby from pain (p. C-8). If the anesthesia did kill the baby before it is aborted, would that

make the procedure less objectionable? Those who engage in partial-birth abortion would still be guilty of shedding innocent blood. Among the things which God hates are "hands which shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). Are those who cause the suffering and death of innocent people prepared to explain their ungodly behavior to the God who will judge them in that final day?

Dr. Haskell, from whom I have just read, says that 80% of all partial-birth abortions are purely elective. But the overwhelming evidence shows his figures to be incorrect and misleading. Dr. Pamela Smith, Director of Medical Education in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago, has said, "There are absolutely no obstetrical situations in this country which require a partially delivered human fetus to be destroyed to preserve the health of the mother." Dr. Haskell says that 80% of partial-birth abortions are purely elective. Dr. Smith says 100% are purely elective.

If the facts I have presented to you today are not disturbing, it may be that your conscience has become so seared that it no longer functions. There are several reasons why the conscience ceases to function or ceases to be effective. The author of Hebrews accused his readers of being "dull of hearing." They had apparently been members of the church long enough they should have been teachers. Instead, they needed to be taught again the fundamentals of the faith. They should have been mature, but they were still babies in the faith. They had to take milk and not strong meat. "But strong meat belongs to them who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

Many in our culture seem to think there are no absolutes. If there are no absolutes, then whatever men and women choose to do cannot be absolutely wrong. If it is convenient for the mother to abort her baby or to kill it after it is born, how could anyone object since there are no

absolutes? Oddly enough, those who claim there is no absolute truth or that we cannot know it will call for a holy war against those who attempt to interfere with their practices--whether sexual or otherwise. If there are no absolutes, then those who attempt to stop the practice of abortion are not absolutely wrong.

And how do we go about stopping the abortion holocaust which has taken the lives of 35,000,000 babies since the infamous Roe v. Wade decision by our Supreme Court? It is my deep conviction that the solution cannot be political, at least, not in the foreseeable future. But there are solutions to moral and spiritual problems about which many in Washington have no knowledge. Let me suggest some ways to fight against the evils of abortion and not just partial-birth abortions. Churches which oppose abortion must have the courage to speak out against it. Do we not realize that silence can be sinful? What if Jesus and his disciples had chosen to be silent about the evils of their day? What if preachers, priests and rabbis had attacked the evils being perpetrated by the Nazis? Some of them may have done so, but there were not enough of them to stop the Holocaust. If all the churches in Germany had had the courage of a few of them, history would have been entirely different. Millions of Jews would be living today and the blot of Nazism could have been avoided.

You may belong to a church which does not oppose abortion or does not speak out against it. In that case, you can use every opportunity to talk with fellow church members or neighbors about the unspeakable tragedy of killing our babies. A massive movement of concerned individuals could change the moral and spiritual atmosphere of our nation. Will you take advantage of every opportunity to oppose all evil--not just abortion?

Prayer is not a substitute for doing good works and speaking out against evil, but it is a powerful means of changing our world. James writes, "The effectual fervent

prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas. 5:16). The Revised Standard Version renders that passage: "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects." In his poem, *Idylls of the King, the Passing of Arthur*, Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." How can Christians neglect to pray in view of these great truths?

Paul lived, preached and wrote during the reign of the Roman Caesars, many of whom were as wicked as any leader can be. He knew firsthand how oppressive and vicious the Roman rulers were, and yet he encouraged Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). Have we specifically prayed that God would overrule the politicians who favor the destruction of millions of our future generations?

I am not saying that the people for whom you vote in the local and national elections will have no bearing on our moral values, including our attitude toward abortion. But I am saying that the ultimate solution to our moral and spiritual problems is not political. Churches and individuals who oppose any kind of evil must have the courage to teach what the scriptures say on any given topic. We must pray that God will rule in the affairs of men. But his rule in our nation may relate to how we vote on the people who represent us in our state houses and in Washington.

I am convinced God wants to use his people to make ours a better world. He wants us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world—not just to convert the lost to Jesus Christ—but to improve the communities where we have to live and rear our children. Do you want your children to grow into maturity with no sense of the sacredness of all human life? What kind of world would that be?

Chapter 26

The President's Example For Young People

Much of my adult life has been devoted to working with children and young people. I began my teaching career in 1948 at Benton High School in Benton, Kentucky. I spent four years as a teacher and as an administrator at Georgia Christian School, Valdosta, Georgia. After being out of the classroom in private business for more than twenty years, I became a professor of Bible at Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tennessee. I taught at Freed-Hardeman until my retirement in 1993. But even during the years I was not teaching in high school or in college, I was working with young people in churches in North Georgia and in Tennessee. I became a teacher because I wanted to help boys and girls develop into useful and successful men and women. I am eternally grateful that God blessed me by enabling me to work through more than fifty years with thousands of young people.

I am confident most of us know that young people need to become God-fearing, society-altering and church-enhancing citizens. Their greatest need as they grow into maturity is having good parents—parents who are there for them through all kinds of situations. That truth is evident from this extended excerpt from William J. Bennett, John J. Diulio, Jr. and John P. Walters' book, **Body Count: Moral Poverty...And How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). These distinguished scholars explain what they mean by "moral poverty" "The poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach the young right from wrong. It is the poverty of being without parents, guardians, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, clergy and others who habituate children to feel joy at others' joy; pain at others'

pain; satisfaction when you do right; remorse when you do wrong. It is the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach these lessons by their own everyday example, and who insist that you follow suit and behave accordingly. In the extreme, it is the poverty of growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent and criminal adults in a practically perfect criminogenic environment—that is, an environment that seems almost consciously designed to produce vicious, unrepentant predatory street criminals” (pp. 13-14). How I wish every parent, preacher, teacher and political leader in our nations would read the book, **Body Count!**

I know very little about Dr. John Diulio and Dr. John Walters, but I have been listening to Dr. Bennett and reading his books for several years. I know Dr. Bennett believes—and these other men probably believe also—that children must be taught the word of God—if they are going to develop a sense of right and wrong. God commanded the Israelites: “You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Dt. 6:5-7). Learning how to discern right and wrong does not occur accidentally. Parents, teachers, preachers and others have to make a conscious effort to teach children. “And, and you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture (or discipline) and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

If you listened carefully to the excerpt from the book, **Body Count**, you no doubt noticed the emphasis on teaching by example. The authors said. Moral poverty is “the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach these lessons by their own everyday example, and who

insist that you follow suit and behave accordingly" (p. 14). Do you agree with these men about the importance of example? Must young people see good examples if they are to have high moral values? Both the Bible and human experience confirm the necessity of having good examples—and not just for young people—but for all of us. Jesus told his disciples, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you" (John 13:15).

I was blessed, as I hope most of you were, with parents who practiced what they preached. My parents believed that Christians should attend every service of the local congregation, unless providentially hindered. Although my father was an avid hunter all his life, he did not think hunting was a providential hindrance. Rain, snow and stormy weather did not prevent our attendance at the worship services. How absolutely useless it would have been had they taught us to attend the services of the church and then stayed away for any little excuse! The church was extremely important to my parents. All eleven Claiborne children profited from their example.

My parents were scrupulously honest in all their dealings with others. One of my younger sisters contracted polio and cost my parents thousands and thousands of dollars. There were times when my Father could not pay his doctor's bills, but he always paid them when he got the money. He taught us not to gamble—not even on marble games or on punch boards at our local grocery store. He believed that gambling on horses was no different from gambling on marbles. More money was involved, but the principle was the same. When he borrowed an item from a neighbor, he always returned it on time. If he broke it, he repaired it. How can we forget the example our godly parents set for their children?

Did you know that some of our school teachers drink alcohol and use other drugs? And yet they have the audacity to tell their students not to use drugs. Some of our teachers

use gutter-type language and engage in sordid affairs with the opposite sex or with with the same sex. Trying to hide these facts from students is wasted effort. What kind of people will our children and young people become when they know how immoral and dishonest some of their teachers are? School boards which hire such reprobates ought to be ashamed of themselves. They are destroying the very people they are supposed to be helping.

Religious leaders are obligated to be examples of what they preach. Paul exhorted Timothy; "Let no man despise your youth; but be an example of the believers, in word, in, conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Paul gave similar advice to other young men: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works; in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed" (Tit. 2:6-8).

One of the great tragedies of our generation is the number of preachers and other religious leaders who have sold drugs—even in the church buildings—engaged in sexual activities with members of the church and sexually abused boys and girls. According to Marie Fortune's book, **Is Nothing Sacred?** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989), one preacher had been sexually involved with forty-five women in the congregation where he was working (p. xiii of the Introduction). Six of the women brought legal charges against the preacher for sexual misconduct with counselees and employees.

When such a preacher speaks against sexual immorality, or any other kind of sin, what do the young people—and older ones—think of him? They almost certainly make fun of him behind his back or even to his face. But that is not the most serious aspect of a preacher's hypocrisy. Thousands of young people have engaged in all forms of sexual immorality because they have had the wrong example

or faulty teaching. Do such preachers bear any of the responsibility for the number of out-of-wedlock babies, the proliferation of various social diseases, the 1,500,000 abortions which occur every year and the disdain with which many young people look on churches?

What kind of example has our president been for the young people of America? Will the moral values of America's children and young people be elevated by his admission of sexual indiscretions and by his deceiving his family, his associates and the American people? When you realize who the people are who see nothing wrong—at least, seriously wrong—with his behavior, does that cause you any concern for America? Larry Flynt, whom some legislator called “pond scum,” has used his vast network and his wealth to poison the atmosphere surrounding the president's impeachment. If the feminists support any person or cause, you be must very careful about that person or cause. Betty Friedan, the illegitimate mother of the illegitimate Women's Liberation Movement blames the tragic situation in our country on a bunch of dirty old white men.

Carl Rowan, one of the most biased journalists in the world, says that “history may end up portraying Clinton as martyr.” A martyr to what? To sexual infidelity, to lying, to perjury, to deceiving everyone concerned? We normally use the term “martyr” of men and women who have died in good causes, like Stephen who died for his faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 7). This old world has been guilty of killing some of the best men and women who ever lived, but so far as I can recall, none of the martyrs paid with their lives for lying, committing adultery and perjuring themselves. Will history end up portraying Richard Nixon as a martyr? And what about former GOP Senator Bob Packwood? Robert L. Livingston, who resigned because of sexual misbehavior, said to a group of feminists which included Betty Friedan and Eleanor Smeal: If Bob Packwood had been caught in similar circumstances with a young intern, you would have

had his head." Is a president permitted to engage in adultery when senators, representatives, governors and other leaders are removed from office because of it? And what about Gary Hart? Were the news media right in exposing his sexual misconduct?

In *The Tennessean's* regular column, "Brad about you" (Wednesday, December 23, 1998), there was a brief article entitled "Allen says Clinton scandal is silly, sad." Woody Allen certainly is an expert on sexual immorality. He said, "We have a good president who is being persecuted by the extreme right for having an affair with a consenting adult. Which by the way, his wife seems to accept.... It's made the United States the laughingstock of the world and our political atmosphere entertaining, silly and sad" (p. 3-A) Just for the sake of argument, we will concede that Woody Allen is right in all his assertions. What would that have to do with anything? Does that make the president's behavior right, a good example to America's young people, the kind of behavior we have a right to expect from governmental leaders? Woody Allen's moral values hardly rise to those of barnyard animals. His view of any activity would be colored by his opposition to that which is right and good, especially any idea which comes from New Testament Christianity.

A letter to the editor of *The Tennessean* (Monday, December 21, 1998), affirms that "We're slipping into moral decay." The author of the letter mentions having heard a caller to some radio talk show say, "I know he (the president) has the morals of a junkyard dog, but I am going to vote for him anyway" (p. 14-A), Maybe the person making such an unreasonable and ridiculous statement does not have any children. But is he or she not concerned about other people's children? Are we not disturbed when leaders—whether political, religious, business or otherwise—violate the teachings of scripture and of our American Constitution? Tragically, many people who support the president and

other adulterers do not know what the Bible says or could care less. Could any of this explain why millions of America's young people and older ones have the morals of a junkyard dog?

Numerous surveys of young people show that many of them cheat on examinations, use alcohol and drugs on regular basis, drive after they have used alcohol and other drugs, engage in sexual promiscuity, kill their babies when they learn they are pregnant and engage in other unconscionable acts. One letter to the editor of **The Tennessean** (Monday, December 14, 1998) suggests handling the Clinton affair like Jesus would. He says that "lying about a private sexual matter does not an inveterate liar make." He thinks lying does not constitute a threat to our country, the office of the presidency or the future morality of our children (p. 16-A). Is the letter writer do naive as to believe that young people do not notice what political leaders do in their personal lives? Will they not use his abominable behavior to defend their own lying and sexual immorality? It makes one wonder if the letter writer has children or has ever worked with children.

The letter writer concludes his letter by recommending that we be a little more humane. **Webster's Third New International Dictionary** defines the word "humane" to mean: "compassion, sympathy, or consideration for other human beings or animals" (p. 1100). What would we have to do if we treated the president more humanely? Does it mean we ought to overlook his sexual indiscretions and his lying and his perjury? Most Americans—including the members of his own party—believe he committed the crimes with which he is charged. Being humane means knowing and confessing our own weaknesses and sins, but it must not mean not holding men and women accountable for their actions. Failing to condemn sinful acts, such as, adultery, lying, perjury, does not mean we are being humane. It means we are being irresponsible, irrational and

immoral. We need to remember these words from Paul's letter to the Romans; "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things (that is, fornication, murder, deceit, haters of God and so on are worthy of death, not only that do such things), but have pleasure in them who do them" (Rom. 1:32). Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth teaches the sinfulness of adultery, theft, covetousness and such like. Paul asks, "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11)?

My friends, nothing in this lesson today was intended to disparage men and women in public office who have their share of human frailties. We know both from experience and from the scriptures that there are no perfect peoples-either in politics or religion or elsewhere. The scriptures teach what most of us recognize as a universal principle, although there are some who seem to want to deny it. Paul wrote: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The tense of the verb "come short" is present middle indicative and means continues to come short of the glory of God. Dr. Charles Williams renders the Greek: "For everybody has sinned and everybody continues to come short of God's glory."

We are not expecting presidents, congressmen and governors to be perfect. There are no such creatures. But we are expecting them to be honest, truthful, and decent. When they fail in manifesting those qualities-and we all do-they should be open with the American people, admit their blunders and promise to do better. They should not have to be coerced into apologizing. They should not use their friends and associates to try to justify their behavior. They must not seek to destroy their political enemies.

There are many reasons why Americans should be disturbed because of the president's wanton behavior, but none is more critical than his malevolent influence on America's children and young people. All adults must think

seriously of the welfare of our children. God will surely hold us accountable if we fail to do so. I shudder to think of the Lord's judgment against our nation if we do not repent of our ungodliness.



Chapter 27

Is Character An Issue In American Politics?

Did you know that the word "character" is never used in the King James Version of the Bible? The Greek New Testament uses the word **charakter** one time but it has nothing to do with our English word "character." The Greek word was derived from **charasso** which means to cut into, to engrave. Then it came to mean a stamp or an impress. The Hebrew writer used the word in speaking of Jesus Christ. According to Hebrews, Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory, "and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). The term, "express image," is from the Greek **charakter**. The American Revised Version renders the word "the very image." The New American Standard Bible translates it "exact representation."

While the King James Version of the Bible does not use the word "character," all Bible students know the emphasis the word of God places on character. Who can doubt that Jesus had the building of Christian character in mind when He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth....Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:5, 8)? Would Jesus Christ have us believe that the character which God would approve would include the so-called "Golden Rule?" "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophet" (Mt. 7:12). Everyone of the New Testament epistles was designed to enable us to develop genuine Christian character. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Wherefore put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another....Let him who stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his

hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him who needs" (Eph. 4:25, 28). The same apostle wrote: "But sexual immorality, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints....For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:3, 5).

I am aware that America is not a theocracy—not really a Christian nation—and never has been. But does character not matter when we are choosing men and women to be public servants? That issue is addressed in a new book, **Character Is the Issue: How People with Integrity Can Revolutionize America** (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), by the Honorable Mike Huckabee, Governor of Arkansas. Incidentally, prior to Huckabee's becoming governor of Arkansas, he had spent twelve years as a Baptist preacher, including two years as the president of the 450,000-member Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Governor Huckabee also founded two religious television stations and a religious marketing and communications company.

When Bill Clinton resigned the governorship of Arkansas, he was succeeded by Jim Guy Tucker, the lieutenant governor of Arkansas. On May 28, 1996, Governor Jim Guy Tucker was convicted on federal charges of fraud and conspiracy. Governor Tucker promised the people of Arkansas that he would resign but changed his mind. Mike Huckabee commented: "Keeping your word is a sacred thing in Arkansas" (p. 16). Many Arkansans were very angry. When they saw Tucker, "people booed, screamed and shouted, 'Liar!' 'How could you?'" (p. 17). Governor Huckabee thinks that one of the problems we face in America—not just in politics—is denying that there are any moral absolutes. If there are no moral absolutes, then engaging in lying, fraudulent activities and conspiracy are not always wrong—maybe inadvisable or inexpedient—but not wrong.

In order for us to examine the question of character more closely, let me paint some word pictures of cheating, lying, stealing and such like. Would you say that the following incident has anything to do with character? A school teacher here in middle Tennessee took obscene pictures of himself with school equipment and then circulated them on the Internet. The principal of the school was shocked that one of his teachers would engage in such conduct. The teacher was eventually released from his job as a coach and as a teacher. Is it your judgment that the teacher lacked character—that he was an inappropriate role model for his students and for the community? If you were a superintendent or a principal and you learned that a prospective teacher had taken frontal pictures of himself and then placed them on the Internet, would you consider his behavior as involving character? Would you hire such a man in your school? I know this: the high school at Benton, Kentucky, where I began my teaching career would not have allowed such sleazy conduct. They would have thought that character was an issue—was **the** issue in hiring teachers.

The Tennessean (Friday, December 12, 1997) printed a front page story about former HUD secretary, Henry Cisneros, considered one of the rising stars in national politics. Cisneros was indicted on twenty-one counts of lying to the FBI and of obstructing justice. A federal grand jury also charged Cisneros and his former mistress of conspiring to obscure the FBI's background check for Cisneros for secretary of Housing and Urban Development (p. 1-A). Should character have entered into the hiring of Henry Cisneros? It may not have been possible for the FBI to learn as much about Cisneros as they needed, but I am asking if character should enter into the hiring of cabinet officers, professional civil servants and federal judges? If men and women in government are going to be dealing with billions of dollars, does it matter what their morals are? If they have previously demonstrated dishonesty,

unreliability and greed, will that make any difference with how they discharge their duties in public office?

The FBI has generally been highly regarded by most Americans. We know there are no perfect men and women; so we are not surprised when one agent of the FBI or the CIA or the Secret Service betrays his country and his organization by accepting bribes, by inventing evidence to indict a criminal and by withholding information which might free someone. But we are always disappointed when any of those things happen. Recently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation promoted a lab supervisor who had deliberately changed some lab reports. Some of the officials in the FBI apparently tried to cover up the deed so that the department would not look so bad. Do you see any need for hiring FBI agents whose character is unimpeachable? If the administrators of the FBI, including the director, Louis J. Freeh and US Attorney General Janet Reno, knew about the wrong doing of the lab supervisor and did nothing about it and even tried to act as if nothing were amiss, would that have anything to do with character? If there is any organization on earth whose personnel ought to be honest, fair and unbiased, it ought to be our police departments—whether on the local level, in our states or in Washington. The United States is not a banana republic and our people ought not be harassed, abused and threatened.

An article in **USA Today** (Tuesday, November 12, 1996) reported that fraud is on the rise. John Watts, Jr. from Los Angeles completed his prison term for dealing in cocaine. A little over a year after he was released from prison, he opened a home health care business and bilked the federal government out of \$1,500,000. Another health care provider, Robert 'Jack' Mills, was convicted of defrauding Medicare of more than \$1 million, including charging for jewelry and for membership in the country club (p. 1-A). If the federal government or the state

governments maintain that character is not an issue, how can they consistently indict men like John Watts, Jr. and 'Jack' Mills? What if any of those criminals decided to run for public office, should their conduct have any bearing on whether we vote for them? Tragically, some convicted criminals have been elected to office. Does character not matter in business, in education, in family relationships? If we can overlook serious character flaws in politicians, why not in these other areas?

Let us not forget the desperate need for character in athletics. Jim Harrick, one of the winningest coaches in UCLA basketball history was fired for recruiting violations and for turning in false expense accounts. The university offered Harrick the option of resigning or being fired. He would not resign; so Chancellor Charles Young fired him. Harrick thought he was unfairly treated. He accused UCLA of making the offense far more serious than it actually was. Should a coach who violates recruiting regulations and gives false reports of his expenses be fired? If character is of little or no value in politics, why should it be of greater value in sports? Tragically, many of our major universities have been cited for serious offenses. They have lied to the NCAA; they have paid money illegally to recruit basketball and football players; they have encouraged their players to be dirty in various games. If that is not a violation of good character, why do the NCAA and the law get involved? Why do we have regulations in sports which govern misconduct? The reason is very plain: Character is **the** issue.

Many of you older people in my audience remember Gary Hart's affair with a young woman. He wanted the American people to believe his affair with the young woman would have no bearing on his ability to be the president of the United States. During the time all of this was transpiring in our nation, I preached a radio sermon on the question, "Is Adultery a Legitimate Political Issue?" Many in the media, in academic circles and even in liberal

denominations argued very vigorously that adultery was not a political issue. The only thing that matters is the ability of the president to run the country. We should not be concerned with politicians' private lives. But that is a very shallow and foolish approach to moral values. If a man beats his wife or abuses his children in private, does that have a bearing on his character? If he smokes marijuana or uses crack cocaine in private, surely his character would be affected. You do remember that Judge Ginsberg was rejected for a seat on the Supreme Court because he smoked marijuana? Should character ever be considered when a man or woman is being considered for the Supreme Court or a Federal District Court? If character is not important in elected offices, why should it be in an appointive office?

If you want to know just how important character is in a ruler, turn to your Bibles and read about the kings of Israel and of Judah. The Bible provides information on many of the kings of Israel. That information should help us in deciding what place character ought to have in the rulers of any country. Ahab was an immoral ruler. He committed about every evil you can imagine and some you probably cannot. On one occasion, he aided and abetted the murder of an Israelite by the name of Naboth. He had tried to purchase Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth would not sell it because it was his inheritance. Jezebel hatched a plot to make her husband's wishes come true. She hired men to lie about hearing Naboth blaspheme the Lord. Blasphemy in Israel was a capital offense. Naboth was killed and Israel's king was morally responsible for it. Is it your judgment that character did not play a prominent role in the death of Naboth? Was character an appropriate concern in this ungodly incident?

The Bible describes Ahab as one of the wickedest kings who ever lived. And then the Bible says, "And besides all of this, he married Jezebel." If you read the story of Ahab, you would think he had done all the evil possible. But

nothing he did had a more detrimental effect on the nation of Israel than marrying a worshipper of Baal. She was to a great extent responsible for the idol worship which turned the people away from their God. The idol worship of the Jewish people also influenced their moral values. Adultery, sacrificing babies to idols and other gross evils often accompany idol worship. There is one thing for sure: The character of Ahab and Jezebel almost destroyed the people of God.

Maybe some of our liberal politicians and media personnel are ready to concede that taking a man's vineyard by subterfuge and having the man killed are wrong. But those kinds of activities are of a different nature than adultery. We must not, these liberals explain, think that adultery has any bearing on a ruler's ability to lead his people. Adultery, according to such thinking—or lack of thinking—is not a political issue. What a leader does in privacy is none of our business. I have heard this statement so much it makes me sick at my stomach. Of course, adultery influences character and character is the issue of American politics.

When politicians are guilty of sexual immorality, the first thing they normally do is lie. They lie to their wives, to their children and to the American people. Do you remember what I read to you a few minutes ago? "Wherefore put away lying, speak every man the truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25). I know, dear friends, about the separation of church and state, but do we want civil rulers, school superintendents, state troopers and parents lying? Would you think a school superintendent had a flaw in his character if he lied to his principals, his teachers, the parents and the students? If we expect a school official to come clean with the people, why do we expect less of a politician? Lying is lying whether by parents or preachers or others.

When a man marries—at least in all the cases I have ever known—he promises his wife that he will be faithful

to her until death separates them. If he will not make that promise to her and she marries him anyway, she will likely get what she deserves. I am aware that some adulterers may not lie to cover up their abominable behavior, but most of them will. Can you imagine the great damage on the innocent spouse? Think also of the great disappointment a child feels when his father has committed adultery and then lied about it. Does that have anything to do with character? My friends, you know it does, regardless of what anyone says. How can honorable people ever think otherwise?

Obviously, there are more ways to betray a wife than by committing adultery. A man can become involved in illegal activities, such as, dealing in drugs or killing for hire. He can betray his wife by becoming a drunk or spending the family's income on gambling. All of these are serious breeches of the marriage contract and of our moral values. But a man's betraying his wife by being sexually involved with another woman or another man is absolutely devastating. Every preacher knows that because he has had to try to put families back together when it happened. I have known some women who threatened to take their own lives or who actually did so when they learned of their husband's infidelity. And you tell me that character is not an issue-political or otherwise.

My friends, a man may not be qualified for office even if he has never betrayed his wife and family by committing adultery. He just may be ignorant or hold the wrong political views or show in other ways that he is incompetent. But no man-may I repeat-NO man-who has been guilty of being a philanderer should be elected to any public office. If a man's wife and children cannot trust a man, why do the rest of us think we can? Will you please remember these words from king Solomon? "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. 16:12)?

Chapter 28

Sexual Exploitation

Some of the most--if not the most influential--people in my life have been school teachers. Although all of us may have some difficulty deciphering our motivations for many of the choices we have made in life, I am convinced that I became an English major in college and later taught English for a number of years because of four great English teachers--two in high school and two in college. I adored the teachers as persons and respected them for their knowledge, for their interest in their subjects and for their interest in me. Because of my deep love for these teachers, I worked hard in their classes and profited greatly by my experiences.

I am always saddened when I read or hear about a school teacher who has betrayed his profession and his students by illegal or immoral conduct. One teacher took frontal pictures of himself, and circulated them on the Internet. Another school teacher and coach used illegal tactics in recruiting players for his basketball team and turned in inflated expense accounts to his university. These are just two examples of what occurs regularly in some of our schools in the United States. While I am disturbed by such sleazy behavior, I am not surprised. If school teachers have been taught in the colleges and universities they attended that nothing is wrong or right within itself, what do you expect of them? If there are no moral absolutes, these ungodly and inexcusable acts cannot be condemned. We might say we do not like them, but we cannot oppose them as always being wrong.

You cannot be unaware--unless you have been asleep for the past several months--that a school teacher in Seattle, Washington--a thirty-four year old woman--had an affair with a thirteen-year-old boy. My friends, you heard what

I said, did you not? A thirty-four old mother of four had an affair with a thirteen-year-old boy. The school teacher who is now thirty-five had a baby by her little boy lover. She was arrested, tried for statutory rape and sent to prison for seven and one-half years. She spent very little time in prison. One condition of her early parole was that she would have no more contact with the boy who had fathered her child. Recently the police caught her and the boy together. She has now been sent back to prison to serve her seven and one-half year sentence. She may be eligible for parole after five years.

The boy's mother takes care of the baby which was fathered by the thirteen-year-old boy. She said recently: If the boy and the woman and are still in love when the woman gets out of prison and want to get married, she will welcome them into her home. Does the mother have no shame? Is it any wonder a teenage boy would get sexually involved with an older woman when his mother has the moral values of barnyard animals? Of this fact I am absolutely sure: My parents would not welcome into their home a woman who had raped their little boy. What is the world coming to when a thirty-four year old school teacher rapes a boy and the mother does not go up in smoke?

In situations like the one I have just described, there are always victims. A middle aged woman cannot engage in sex with a thirteen-year-old boy without having a detrimental effect on that boy. He will have a warped view of sex which may make it difficult if not impossible for him to have a satisfying sexual relationship with a wife. She may well have destroyed his ability to find fulfillment with someone his own age. My friends, when an older woman or an older man, takes advantage of a very young person, it is sexual exploitation. It steals that person's youth from him or her. It takes away the young person's childhood. And that is grossly evil.

Can you imagine the hurt of the husband and children

whose wife and mother brought unspeakable shame on them? The husband has moved with his four children to Alaska. He recently said, "She basically abandoned, finally, her children and her family and everyone." According to the father, the four children are painfully aware of their mother's actions. The couple's oldest son is thirteen and is baffled by his mother's stupidity.

What kind of memories will those four children have of their mother? When they remember—and they will all their lives—that their mother deserted them so she could satisfy her lusts with a thirteen-year-old boy—what kind of view of motherhood in general will they have and of their own mother in particular? The mother must not have been bothered by any of this or she would not have become involved with a boy considerably less than half her age.

Oh, I know what many Americans say, "We only go through life once; so grab all the gusto you can get." If this life ends our existence, I could not find fault with such thinking. In other words, why deny one's self any pleasure if we do not have to stand before God in the judgment to give an account of our behavior? Although the woman's behavior was and is illegal in every state in our nation, illegality does not matter if there is no final judgment. You could be caught and sentenced to jail for a while. But chances are you will not be caught. If you are caught, you probably will not go to jail. If you do go to jail, the sentence will probably be very short. But there is a God and he will judge us for our works—good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

The husband of the woman and the father of her children must be absolutely devastated that his wife of several years left him for a boy. Even if he marries again—which he probably will and has a right to—his life can never be the same. He will likely suffer as long as he lives because of his wife's abominable behavior. I feel genuinely sorry for that husband and for those four children.

The teenage boy does not bear the guilt that the older

woman does. I do not know how the two of them — a thirty-four-year-old school teacher and a thirteen year old boy — ever decided to get involved sexually. What did she do to seduce the boy? If he made the moves on her, did she not have enough maturity to say no to a little boy? We adults are supposed to protect our children—whether they are ours in the home or ours in the school room. It just simply staggers the imagination that his could happen in a civilized nation.

But what if we reverse the roles and have a thirty-four-year old male taking advantage of a thirteen-year-old girl? Oddly enough, there would probably be less publicity and anger if this were the case. Somehow we expect males to be more sexually aggressive. We have a tendency to excuse that kind of conduct on the part of a male. The old double standard has not died in the United States. There are still male predators—even in high places—who exploit those who work under them.

In our nation we have done a great amount of talking about sexual harassment. You know such talk makes no sense at all when a little 6-year-old boy in North Carolina is suspended from school for kissing a little 6-year-old girl, I just cannot imagine the stupidity of a school principal or superintendent who has so little judgment. If the boy had been sixteen, that would have been a different matter—but six-years-old? And what about the administrator who suspended a five-year-old for sexual harassment? Do you understand now the detrimental influence the women's movement has had on our culture? I am not denying that both boys should have been corrected. But to suspend them for sexual harassment borders on insanity. No school superintendent or principal should be allowed to serve in our public schools if he or she has demonstrated such unreasonable behavior. They are harassers—harassers of little boys who may never outlive the abuse of those principals or superintendents.

What the law may define as sexual harrassment may not cover all the exploitation which occurs in American society. When a man thirty years older than a young woman has sex with her, he is taking advantage of her. That is especially true if he is in a position of power and prestige. He may not actually have to pressure young women to have sexual affairs with him, but his position of prominence makes him guilty of sexual exploitation. Many politicians are in a position to take advantate of young women and older ones too. Some of these older men have absolutely no shame when they have slept with dozens of young women.

I am not a regular listener to Rush Limbaugh. I might listen more but time will not allow it. Occasionally I do listen to him when I have to drive somewhere for an appointment. On Thursday, February 12, 1998, Rush was asking callers to discuss adultery and lying of public officials. A young woman called to say, "I don't care. We have no right to interfere with a politician's private life." She even asserted that men and women in their fifties and beyond ought to have more sex—even with people other than their spouses or significant others. Rush asked what would happen in our country if everybody were unfaithful to his or her spouse. She said, "There would be a lot more happiness in the world if this were true." She thought people ought to be allowed to have all the sex they could get.

Oddly enough, the young woman who called Rush claimed to be a good moral person. Rush has a way of putting people in their places. He said very bluntly: "You have no morals at all." It probably would have been better if Rush had said, "You have the morals of animals—not decent human beings."

Apparently, there are millions of Americans who could care less if their public officials commit adultery, lie about it and cover up their immoral conduct so long as the economy seems to be doing well. My friends, it is not the economy that matters—regardless of the foolishness of

American politicians—but the moral values of the American people. Did you know that Israel suffered many of her greatest tragedies when the people prospered financially? One example from the Old Testament will have to suffice. When the Lord led the Israelites across that great and terrible wilderness and prepared them to enter into the land of promise, he reminded them of what he had done for them. "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, and the fat of kidneys of wheat; and you did drink the pure blood of the grape." When the nation was so prosperous, what happened to them? "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; you waxed fat, you grew thick, you became sleek; and he forsook God who made him, and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation" (Dt. 32:12-15).

Another example of people's becoming rich and trusting in their uncertain riches is the church at Laodicea. The city of Laodicea and the surrounding countryside produced fine wool and made expensive clothes from the wool. They also manufactured a fine eyesalve called "Phyrgian powder." These products from Laodicea had made some of the Laodiceans rich. These are their very words: "We are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). Do you know what the Lord said about that church? "You do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Their great economic prosperity had not contributed to their moral and spiritual welfare.

The United States is currently experiencing a period of economic growth, although in many cases people actually have less discretionary money to spend than they did ten years ago. That has meant that both husbands and wives

are having to work in order to meet their living expenses or the husband is having to work two jobs to make as much as he did at one job a few years ago. So while more Americans are employed today than in several years, we may not be that much better off financially. But even if we were enjoying the best economy in the history of the world that does not mean we have more moral people, more stable homes and stronger churches. There is much more to living than making and having money. We must be concerned about being a righteous nation.

When we witness immorality like I have described in our lesson today, there is a very vital question which ought to come to mind. What are we going to teach our boys and girls about sexual purity and fidelity when they hear about sexual promiscuity of many prominent leaders—and not just political leaders but religious, educational and social leaders as well? What influence do moral reprobates in our local communities, in our state houses and in Washington have on the values of our young people?

All of this is tremendously troubling. But the most troubling aspect of our moral situation in the United States is the silence of many of our religious leaders. It is not in all cases that these leaders approve of politicians' straying from their family responsibilities. They probably disapprove of sexual immorality on the part of politicians—especially conservative politicians. But so many of them have swallowed the liberal line they would think they are traitors to the cause of liberalism if they spoke out against such evil. Please do not hold your breath, dear friends, until these liberal churchmen speak out against the moral evils of our nation. Many of them lack the moral courage to express any sentiment which is not politically correct.

I have not approached the topic today from a partisan position. It does not matter to me if the adulterer is a democrat or a republican, a member of some ultra-liberal denomination or a member of the church of Christ.

Immorality is immorality wherever it is found and good people have a sacred obligation to stand by the word of God and to expose error and ungodliness. God will hold us accountable if we sit on the sidelines and say nothing.

But adultery on the part of prominent leaders is not just a national disgrace; it leads men and women, boys and girls into eternal damnation. Paul's words in the Ephesian letter cannot be misunderstood. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God....And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of these which are done by them in secret" (Eph, 5:3-5, 11-12). And some in our nation think we can prosper when these kinds of conduct are rampant.

I close with a plea to all of you who are listening—but especially to the preachers in my audience. Use your time and your talent to make a difference in the moral climate of our great nation. Could we reach the point when it is too late to speak out? Besides, who knows whether God has called you to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Chapter 29

America's Crime Problem

It is virtually impossible to read a daily newspaper or watch the evening news on television without learning about some of the most vicious crimes human beings can commit. A few examples of some of these senseless acts of violence will serve as an introduction to our lesson on "America's Crime Problem." **The Tennessean** (Saturday, February 21, 1998) published an article with the title, "Six teens plead guilty to murder." The article concerned the six Kentucky youngsters—ages 15 to 21—who killed Vidar Lillelid, his wife Delfina, their daughter Tabitha and seriously injured their 2-year old Son, Peter. Peter was shot through the eye but survived and is doing well.

The Lillelid's were from Holland and had attended a Jehovah's Witnesses' convention at Johnson City, Tennessee. The young hoodlums from Eastern Kentucky saw the Lillelid's at a rest stop near Baileyton in northeast Tennessee. They shot three of them in cold blooded murder and tried to kill 2-year old Peter. And what did the Kentucky youngsters hope to get from the Lillelid's? Were they hoping to get a bundle of money from the people they shot? According to an article in **Lexington, Kentucky, Herald-Leader** (Friday, April 18, 1997), one of the women confessed her attachment to Satan. She claimed the spirits started talking to her when she was just two years old. She was instructed to "incite rebellion among the youth of the world" (pp. B-1, B-3).

All six of the young people involved in the murder of the Lillelid's pled guilty to avoid the death penalty. My purpose today is not to discuss the morality or the advisability of the death penalty, but if any people ever deserved to die for their brutal deeds, the members of the Satanic cult from Kentucky deserved to die. Their crime

was an unspeakable evil. They not only murdered three innocent people; they left a little boy who will never know his father or mother or sister. How can judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys live with their consciences when they allow such dreadful behavior to go without adequate punishment?

The Tennessean (Saturday, July 5, 1997) reported that a man who was bleeding from several gunshot wounds summoned the police to his house. He died soon after the police arrived but not before he had told the police that his sons had shot him (p. 1-A). The paper did not say why the boys shot their father, but neighbors said they had heard loud arguments coming from the home. I can imagine that a father might be so cruel to his children that they would have to leave home, but I cannot imagine sons' shooting their father—even if he deserved to be shot. Do you ever wonder where young men and women and older men and women learn such cruelty?

According to **The Tennessean** (Wednesday, June 25, 1997), a teenager gave birth at her high school prom and then returned to the dance floor. She had strangled her baby and left it in a plastic bag in the bathroom. The young woman now faces murder charges, although prosecutors say they will not seek the death penalty. I can understand the prosecutors' reluctance to seek the death penalty. The young woman could have gone to almost any abortionist and had the baby killed legally. If she had done that, neither the young woman nor the abortionist would be facing murder charges. The baby was a 6-pound, 6-ounce boy who lived after the birth. The cause of death was listed as "asphyxia due to strangulation and obstruction of the external airway or orifices" (p. 8-A).

Did you know that teenagers sometimes kill so they can take the flashy car accessories from the ones they kill? All across the United States, police are reporting that people are being killed for their custom wheels. Some of the custom

wheels are gold-plated and can cost as much as \$4,500. One policeman in Los Angeles calls them "death rims." Los Angeles authorities report that as many as ten people are killed every year so that the killers can take the fancy wheels. **The Tennessean** (Friday, November 24, 1995) told of a young man who was sentenced to die for killing his cousin's three-year old girl while stealing a set of gold-plated wheels (p. 12-A).

The Nashville Banner (Monday, July 7, 1997) gave some very disturbing statistics about the rise of juvenile crime in our country. A wealthy businessman from Indiana was shot by a fifteen-year old boy who wanted the fancy rims off the businessman's car. Juvenile Court Judge Kenneth Turner of Memphis says that "these punks will pull a gun and shoot you in a minute with no concern whatsoever for the consequences" (p. A-3). In 1996, 1,467 youngsters statewide were found guilty of violent offenses, including homicides, assaults, robberies and rape (p. A-3). The violent crimes by young people in Tennessee included 682 aggravated assaults, 305 aggravated robberies, 104 robberies, 81 criminal homicides, 72 rapes, 55 aggravated rapes and 140 other sex crimes. The crimes I have listed do not include "property crimes," such as, theft, vandalism, burglary, arson, forgery and such like. Nor do they include drug possession, drug sale, evading arrest, weapons in school and similar crimes (p. A-3).

These tragedies can be multiplied a thousand-fold, but our main concern today is: What can be done to stem the rising tide of crime in the United States or is it hopeless case? Will you please give careful attention to some suggestions? Maybe if our elementary and high schools, our colleges and universities taught their students that there are no absolute moral values it would help to curb the crime we hear about every day. Obviously, I am offering this suggestion with tongue-in-cheek. Actually, we are already teaching our people--both young and old--that there

are no absolutes. I wish that were not true, but all of us who keep up with what is happening in our world know it is true. Even religious leaders are guilty of such irresponsibility.

George Barna's book, **What Americans Believe** (Ventura, CA: Regal) includes a national survey of Americans' attitudes toward religion and moral values. Barna asked thousands of people across the United States if they believed in absolute truth. Fewer than 30% of our young people believe there is such an entity as absolute truth—fewer than 30%! Sixty-six percent of the American people have doubts about the existence of absolute truth. Almost two-thirds of Evangelicals, Catholic and mainline churches think absolute truth may not exist (p. 83). Dr. Allan Bloom's bestselling book, **The Closing of the American Mind** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), says that the only absolute for most college students is that there are no absolutes. He says they cannot defend their beliefs intellectually, but hold to such beliefs dogmatically. According to Dr. Bloom, college and university students have only one enemy: "The man who is not open to everything" (pp. 25-26).

If George Barna and Allan Bloom are right--and there really is no doubt about it--what is wrong with killing others to steal their fancy automobile accessories? If there are no absolutes, why were the six young people from Eastern Kentucky arrested for killing the Lillelid family? Is killing innocent people always wrong? If it is, maybe we should take a more careful look at abortion, at infanticide and at physician-assisted suicide. Do I have to tell you what the word of God teaches about the taking of innocent blood? The book of Proverbs list six things the Lord hates, yea seven which are an abomination in his sight. One of these is "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16-19). One of the reasons God allowed Nebuchadnezzar and the mighty Babylonian army to carry his people captive is

described in these words: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths" (Isa. 59:7).

Maybe if we encouraged the networks and the cable stations to show more violence it would satiate the appetites of those who are prone to commit serious crimes, such as, murder, rape and armed robbery. Michael Medved's classic study of **Hollywood versus America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values** (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992); describes some of the movies which are being shown in movie houses across the nation. In the movie, **Lethal Weapon II**, Danny Glover kills two thugs by holding a nail gun to their temples and puncturing their skulls. "I nailed 'em both," he says with glee (p. 189). Medved said that a 12-year old girl was interviewed after seeing the movie, **Total Recall**, and thought it was funny that people were getting shot in the head (p. 189). Is it possible that the six Kentucky murderers thought it was funny to see the Lillelid's die from being shot? Was it funny when two sons shot their father to death here in Middle Tennessee?

I am aware of the opinions of some social scientists, psychologists, psychiatrists and others who think that what one sees or hears has no bearing on his or her conduct. So what if children and teenagers get a kick from watching Bruce Willis decapitate a bad guy in the movie **Hudson Hawk**? The movie, **Cape Fear**, is filled with beatings, murders, facial mutilations, attempted rapes, burnings, blinding and sliding in pools of blood. The man who made the movie, **Cape Fear**, told the **Los Angeles Times** that the picture was about a man who wants to get revenge. And it's a lot of fun (Medved, p. 191). Daniel Linz, a professor of psychology at the University of California in Santa Barbara, says concerning violence on television and in the movies: "The consensus among social scientists is that very definitely there's a causal connection between exposure to

violence in the media and violent behavior" (Medved, p. 183). I agree with Dr. Lenz about the connection between violence in the media and violent behavior, but there is no consensus. In fact, there may not be a near-consensus.

Do you remember the furor over Vice President Quayle's comments about the television program, "Murphy Brown?" Dan Quayle said very simply, "Murphy Brown is not a good role model for American girls." Many in the media, a number of liberal politicians and even some theologians spoke of Dan Quayle as if he were the devil personified. They could not believe—or did not want to believe—that the rise of single parenting in the United States constituted a threat to the stability of our nation. The attack on Dan Quayle was obviously politically motivated. Many of those who thought Quayle came out of the Dark Ages—including Candice Bergen, the president of the United States and others—have now said that Dan Quayle was right. In fact, Barbara Whitehead, an American journalist who is not exactly conservative, wrote an excellent article with the title, "Dan Quayle was right." Of course, he was right. Anyone who has bothered to study the matter carefully knows Dan Quayle was right. I am amazed and deeply troubled that anyone would even begin to question the absolute necessity of every child's having two parents—just as God ordained.

But does having just one parent have a bearing on juvenile crime? I read to you a few minutes ago a brief excerpt from **The Nashville Banner** (Monday, July 7, 1997). The article has the title, "Juvenile crime numbers drop in '96, but trend still up" This article by Woody Baird of Associated Press makes this disturbing observation: "One telling statistic notes that more than 80 percent of the children sent to juvenile courts in Tennessee in 1996 came from single-parent homes" (p. A-3). Is it not time, dear friends, that we begin to campaign in the nation—especially in the churches—to show how damaging single-parent families are? Can we afford another generation reared by

one parent only? Do Americans think they can trample under foot God's plan for the home and not have to pay the consequences?

Maybe if churches took a more tolerant attitude toward crime and immorality our young people would not get so involved in crime. My friends, many churches have been doing that for years and look where we are today. When a church decides there are no absolute values, that church will not have a very beneficial effect on the young or the old. Dr. Victor Paul Furnish teaches in the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Dr. Furnish's book, **The Moral Teaching of Paul** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), denies that we can find "clear and specific answers to our particular ethical questions" in the writings of Paul (p. 28). What do you suppose Paul meant when he wrote about adultery, fornication, lasciviousness and such like and then said, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21)? Do you have any difficulty understanding what Paul wrote? You may not agree with Paul, but we should be able to get some clear and specific answers to our particular ethical questions. If we fail to do so, it is our fault—not Paul's.

Bishop John Shelby Spong's 1983 book, **Into the Whirlwind: The Future of the Church** (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press), argues that Christians ought to be grateful for the "death of authority, the joy of uncertainty" (pp. 16-17). Bishop Spong insists that there is no ultimate authority that can define truth in any area for all time (p. 26). How can he advocate such foolishness in view of the claims Jesus made for his Messiahship, for his relationship to the Father, for his atonement for the sins of the world and for his glorious second coming? Are these not ultimate truths for all people for all time? What Dr. Furnish and John Shelby Spong teach flies in the face of our Lord's statement: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). In his high priestly prayer, our Lord defined

truth, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Theologians and preachers who deny the existence of absolute truth or man's ability to know it are promoting unbelief and immorality. Indirectly and sometimes directly they are contributing to the crime wave which is causing havoc in this nation. They almost certainly would deny the charge, but they are guilty anyway. They are telling young people, "We cannot be sure of any action. It may be right or it may be wrong, depending on the situation." If young people or older ones believe such God-denying and soul-condemning doctrine, they are at risk for all kinds of criminal activities. If they need or want money, they may decide it is not wrong for them to get it by robbing a store or a bank. If that means killing someone in the process, so be it. It is not always wrong. I am not saying that all who commit crime have been convinced by Dr. Victor Paul Furnish or by Bishop John Shelby Spong. Some people are just plain lawless and mean. But in the long run, the writings and preaching of religious liberals will affect people's moral values. That fact inspires those connected with the International Gospel Hour to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

If we are going to solve the crime problem in our country, maybe we should lighten up on discipline—both in the school and in the home. If we just let young people run loose without any guidance or restrictions, would they not just be naturally good? Jean Jacques Rousseau and other Romantics tried to make that argument many years ago, but they were wrong—dead wrong. In fact, we are reaping the foolishness they sowed. Many of our public school teachers were fed on Romanticism during college years and believe that children left to their own devices will be good. Any school teacher who believes that has had his head in the sand for a long time. Children must have teaching, correcting and punishing. Does that mean children

sometimes need spanking? Oh, heaven forbid! How could anyone be so cruel and hard-hearted as to spank a child? In fact, there was a letter to the editor of **The Tennessean** (Wednesday, February 18, 1998) with the title: "Paddling doesn't belong in the schools" (p. 11-A). I wonder if the writer of that letter has noticed a correlation between the amount of lawlessness which exists in American society and the ban on spanking in the public schools and opposition to spanking by parents. My friends, paddling belongs where children are rebellious, disrespectful and devilish.



Chapter 30

The Ethics Of Professional Sports

All of you in my audience know how passionate Americans are about football, baseball, basketball and other kinds of sports. Television and radio broadcast thousands and thousands of sporting activities every year in the United States. Complete sections of America's most prominent newspapers devote large sections of their papers to the preceding day's games. There are dozens—perhaps hundreds—of magazines devoted to golf, racing, tennis and such like. In all, hundreds of millions of words about sporting events are spoken or written everyday. It makes one wonder if Americans are not like the first century Romans of whom Juvenal (A. D. 47-138) said, "Two things only the people anxiously desire—bread and circuses" (Satire X, Line 80). By "circuses," Juvenal meant entertainment. Are not millions of Americans in that position today? We desire something to fill our bellies and to keep us entertained,

I want it to be plainly understood that I am not anti-sports—whatever the sports are, although there are some games in which I have no interest. I like to watch the Atlanta Braves. I even enjoyed watching the Braves when they were losing more games than they were winning. When my family lived in Dalton, Georgia, we occasionally drove to Atlanta for Braves' games. My sons still drive to St. Louis or to Atlanta to watch the Braves. I like to watch Michael Jordan play basketball, just as I liked to watch Dr. J, Larry Bird, Bill Russell and other superstars. I almost never watch an entire game of basketball or football or baseball. I sometimes watch the first few minutes of the game and then return for the last few minutes. In other words, I enjoy some sporting events, but I am not an avid fan of any of them, well, except the Tennessee Vols.

Does it bother you when you see talented sports figures behave like spoiled brats or as criminals? Can you believe that a baseball player would spit in the face of an umpire and be almost totally ignored for such moral insensitivity? He should have been driven out of baseball or at least suspended for two or three years. Billy Martin, manager of the New York Yankees on more than one occasion, kicked dirt on an umpire. Billy Martin was a talented player and manager, but he should not have been allowed to remain in baseball after such atrocious acts. Players and managers such as I have mentioned are a national disgrace to sports and to the human race.

All of us have been embarrassed at the disgusting behavior of Dennis "the menace" Rodman and I am not speaking of his outlandish hair color or his "zoot suit" clothing. If the management and players of the Chicago Bulls can live with Dennis's antics, I have no problem with them. However, I do have some serious objections to his obnoxious and violent behavior. In January of 1997 Dennis Rodman kicked a courtside photographer. Dennis was apparently frustrated when he fell into the crowd alongside the basketball court and took out his frustration on the photographer who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This was not the only time Dennis Rodman behaved like a pagan. He has misbehaved on a regular basis for several years. I cannot understand why any organization-sporting or otherwise-would keep such a person in its employment. Dennis Rodman's conduct does not help the public's image of professional sports.

The NBA suspended Dennis Rodman for eleven games and fined him \$25,000. Of course, fining a multi-multi-millionaire a few thousand dollars is of no consequence. His suspension for eleven games may have cost him as much as \$1,000,000, but that does not seem to bother Rodman too much. David Stern, commissioner of the National Basketball Association, demanded that Dennis

Rodman tell him why he should be reinstated. Mr. Stern said, "Until Dennis can provide meaningful assurances that he will conform his conduct on the playing court to acceptable standards—including not placing others at physical risk—his suspension will continue." Rodman's agent, Dwight Manley, thought the punishment was excessive and unfair. What do you expect of an agent who makes a great amount of money from each player he handles? The truth is, Dennis Rodman's punishment was much too light. He should have been arrested for assault and battery and suspended from basketball permanently. After all, he is not a fifteen-year old high school athlete.

In May of 1997 there was a bench-clearing brawl in New York City at a game between the New York Knicks and the Miami Heat. P. J. Brown of the Miami Heat grabbed Charlie Ward of the Knicks and flipped him upside down along the baseline during the fourth quarter. He claimed he had to do it to protect himself. It was inexcusable and ridiculous to witness the fighting of these grown men. Patrick Ewing, Allan Houston, Larry Johnson, John Starks and Charlie Ward of the Knicks were suspended for one game. P. J. Brown of the Miami Heat was suspended for two games. In addition to the suspensions, Brown was fined \$1,000, Charlie Ward \$6,000, Ewing, Houston and Starks were fined \$2,500 each. Eighth grade boys or girls or even high school seniors might be excused—but not twenty-eight to thirty-year old men. Fights on a playing field ought to be treated as they are in a business or on the streets of our cities. The fighters ought to be jailed and tried for senseless violence.

Latrell Sprewell who attacked and tried to choke his coach was suspended for one full year, fired from his position with the Golden State Warriors and lost his \$25,000,000 contract with the Warriors. That was not just punishment, although it probably was more than many fans wanted and certainly more than the players' union

approved. He should have been arrested, tried and convicted for his violent behavior. That is the way we treat other criminals. Why should multi-millionaire basketball players be treated differently?

Binding arbitration has been used in settling the differences between Sprewell and the National Basketball Association. The arbitrator, John Feeriek, shortened Sprewell's suspension, restored the remainder of Sprewell's contract and required the Warriors to take him back. Obviously, they will be able to trade him if they can find anyone with little enough judgment and discernment to have him. I am aware that Sprewell apologized to the coach he tried to choke, to his teammates and to the public. That certainly was a step in the right direction, but it is not adequate. Grown men do not go around choking others without having to pay the consequences—even if they are millionaire basketball players.

The Tennessean and I seldom agree on any moral issues, but as I was preparing this lesson on "The Ethics of Professional Sports," **The Tennessean** (Friday, March 6, 1998) published an editorial on the theme, "Message of Sprewell: Stars can do no wrong." One of the conclusions the editors of the paper reached is spelled out in this statement: "Player should have been charged with assault." The paper says the decision by arbitrator John Feeriek sends the wrong message to all our young people who play in any sport. The message is that you can attack your coach or your boss—if you disagree with them—and nothing much will be done. Commissioner David Stern said it best: "The answer is now well established: you cannot choke your boss and hold your job unless you play in the NBA, and you are subject to arbitrator John Feerick's jurisdiction" (p. 10-A),

But the Sprewell incident is not so serious as I have made it out to be, is it? After all, we are speaking of professional sports—not real life. The fights in hockey, in

football and in other sports are nothing more than boys getting angry and giving each other friendly punches. Anyone who thinks that has not seen the brawls which occur in every professional sport and in many amateur sports as well. Such fighting and brawling have reached the point where they must be stopped – if not by the controlling associations and players’ unions – then by the law in these states where the teams are domiciled. There are laws against violence and they must be enforced in every sporting arena in our nation. It is time that civil law put a stop to such inexcuseably foolish behavior.

Millions of America’s young people look up to famous sports figures as models. What American boy does not want to be a Henry Aaron or a Joe Montana or a Michael Jordan? They not only would like to make the fabulous amount of money these men receive—I almost said “earn” but they do not earn that money—but they would like to be in the spotlight for their achievements. When they see the powerful and famous basketball players or football players acting like rogues and rascals, what kind of example are the players for our young people? Will the influence of a Latrell Sprewell or a Charles Barkley or a Dennis Rodman elevate the moral values of America’s children and young people? Will our country experience less crime or more when these superstars are allowed to commit serious crimes and get by with it and even be glorified for it?

Would it surprise you that some pretty prominent people think Sprewell and Barkley are products of their racist upbringing? According to some sociologists, these men are not responsible because they never learned to play by the rules. The black mayor of San Francisco, Willie Brown, reportedly suggested that Coach Carlesimo of the Golden State Warriors may have deserved choking. Mayor Brown appealed to Jesse Jackson to investigate the incident. Sprewell’s lawyer, Arn Tellem, could hardly believe the actions of the Warriors and the league. Tellem said

Sprewell's punishment "was totally excessive and out of bounds of any precedent in team sports history." We expect lawyers to defend their clients, but we should expect lawyers to have better judgment and higher moral values than that.

I have no idea if Latrell Sprewell has any religious training; nor do I know if P. J. Carlesimo of the Golden State Warriors is a religious man. But would it not have been better to seek some kind of resolution of their misunderstanding before it erupted into open conflict? There are dozens of arbitration services across the United States. Surely Sprewell and Carlesimo could have afforded to bring someone to settle their differences. What if all who have difficulties in personal relationships would follow the plan Jesus gave in Matthew 18:15-17? I am aware that Jesus was speaking of members of the Lord's kingdom, but the plan for resolving personal difficulties would work in other cases. If you have a personal conflict with a brother or a friend or a family member, go to that person in private and try to settle your differences between just the two of you. In many cases--perhaps most--no further negotiation will be necessary. But if the initial contact does not work, you need to ask someone else to work with you. If that does not work, they can ask more than one person to help them. That kind of approach would surely help those who are having disagreements--whether in sports or in the business world or in the home. We all need to learn to get along as well with our fellowmen as possible. The scriptures are literally full of advice on human relationships. Will you please think about the following passages?

Perhaps no passage in all of God's book--from Genesis to Revelation--has helped people to get along better than what we commonly call the Golden Rule. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt. 7:12). I have no idea how long the trouble between Sprewell and Coach

Carlesimo had been brewing, but I get the impression it may have been some time. What if one of the men had gone to the other and said very simply, "I know we are having some misunderstanding. I want to treat you in every situation like I want you to treat me." I am not telling you that such an attitude will always remove differences, but I know it will go a long way. Obviously, the real difficulty is getting both to play by the same rules. Would it help if owners of teams, managers, coaches and other personnel would have special sessions where these matter are discussed? In some cases, they may do it, but so far there is little evidence of it,

One of the problems with people like Latrell Sprewell, Charles Barkley and other professionals is lack of self-control. Sprewell became so angry that he was dangerous. Spitting in a referee's face or kicking dirt on an umpire are evidences that someone's emotions are out of control. We expect such behavior of two-year olds, but not thirty-year olds. The Bible has much to say about self-control. The King James Version often uses the word "temperance," but the word in the Greek is self-control. Self-control is listed as one characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), Peter gives a list of graces Christians must cultivate. Among these is temperance (2 Pet. 1:6). I know these would be difficult for men and women who do not have the proper motivation to develop, but we all could do better than most of us do. Ball players, business people, family members and church members should work at incorporating good values—biblical values—into their lives,

Self-control must be exercised in every area of our lives, but none is more important than controlling our tempers. Latrell Sprewell must have become angry enough to kill his coach. In fact, he apparently tried to do it by choking him. He left the gym where they were playing and then returned to punch his coach. I know it is not easy for many of us to control our tempers. But civilized people

learn to do that or they are not welcomed in most circles. The Bible does not condemn anger in all circumstances, but it does demand that we control it. "Be angry and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath. Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27). How absolutely inexcusable it is for professionals to lose control of their temper or their tongues.

Could it be that many professional basketball players are paid so much money they believe they have complete freedom to do as they will? Many of these men act like prima donnas. They do not want anyone telling them what to do or what not to do. They need to learn that no one can live without some restrictions and that includes professional sports figures. Would it help if the men who have strong moral values and who are in control of their behavior would go to those men who are trouble makers and reason with them about their conduct? Peer pressure can often be effective—even with grown men and women.

Unless there are some changes in all professional sports and in some amateur sports, the American people may become disgusted and refuse to support these violent men. I know I have no desire to watch Latrell Sprewell or Charles Barkley or any other player-professional or otherwise—who behaves so abominably. I urge all Americans who love sports to apply pressure to anyone who refuses to live by the rules. We can make a difference if we speak out against violent athletes and if we refuse to buy tickets to their sporting events. Incidentally, that includes hockey as well as basketball and football. There is never any excuse for heathen behavior in any arena. Will you please join me in speaking against violence in sports and elsewhere?

Chapter 31

Destructive Businesses

Virtually every community in the United States has some kind of business or establishment or practice which ought to be opposed with all our vigor. Those groups are responsible for destroying lives, breaking up families and causing the deterioration of moral values among both old and young. Unless more people become concerned about these groups and what they are doing to America, we may not survive as a nation or we may not prosper as we have in the past. All one has to do to confirm this prediction is to read the inspired word of God or Edward Gibbon's books, **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire** or Jim Nelson Black's outstanding book, **When Nations Die**. All of these sources and many others delineate the reasons why great nations and civilizations end up on the scrap heap of history. God himself said, "Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

Abortuaries exist in many communities and are killing thousands and thousands of innocent babies. Those abortuaries are legal, but that does not make them moral. As much as these establishments bother me, what disturbs me most are the churches and other organizations which fail to speak out against this unspeakable evil. Many churches and parachurch groups are too busy with fellowship dinners, with promoting the politically correct philosophy and with tending to denominational trivia to speak out for the babies who are being killed. Can you honestly belong to a church or synagogue which sheds innocent blood? Do you know or does it make any difference that one of the seven activities which are an abomination to God is shedding innocent blood (Prov. 6:17)?

There is a way in most communities, although probably not in the larger ones, to stop abortion. Most

abortionists cannot make a living just by performing abortions. They have to carry on a regular medical practice. If people who oppose abortion would refuse to patronize the baby killers unless they cease their vicious business, they would have to quit killing babies or go elsewhere to do it. I am not—I repeat, I am not—suggesting that physical force or violence be used in closing abortuaries. How in the world can prolife people use murder to stop murder? The bombing of abortion clinics is just plain morally stupid. It angers all people—both those who believe in killing babies and those who fight against it. It defeats the very purpose for which the prolife movement was founded. The bombings in Atlanta and in Birmingham have seriously affected the prolife movement. There is no reasonable or moral basis for that kind of violence. There are times when violence must be met with violence, in dealing with criminals, for example, but bombing abortion clinics or shooting abortionists cannot be condoned or allowed.

Business establishments which manufacture, distribute or sell alcoholic beverages are parasite businesses and are doing irreparable harm to our great nation. They are providing and promoting the most destructive drug in the United States and abroad. Thousands and thousands of persons are dying on America's highways. When the drunk drivers are apprehended—which they seldom are—very little is done by way of punishment and practically nothing by way of rehabilitation. So long as we are getting blood money from taxes on beverage alcohol, what difference does it make how many people are killed or crippled? Did you know that hundreds of thousands of men and women have lost their licenses because of their drinking and driving, but are back on the highways as soon as they can get out of the courthouse and back into their cars? One man in Nashville killed another in a drunk driving incident and then slipped through the cracks in the judicial system until an investigative reporter discovered what had happened

and reported it on the evening news. That indicates that the powers that be are not too concerned about the deaths and property damage which result from drunk driving.

It is interesting that liquor manufacturers here in middle Tennessee produce enough whiskey to make thousands and thousands drunk, but object to their employees drinking. I do not blame them for not wanting their workers to drink. They know probably better than anyone else that drinking employees are not very efficient and are very dangerous, especially if they are working with heavy machinery or in dangerous situations. People who drink cannot think as well as those who do not. The drinkers are serious hazards in industrial plants or on our highways. Would you not be ashamed to manufacture a product which you do not want your employees using because you know the great damage it does? Can you imagine an automobile manufacturer who asks its own employees not to buy its cars because of the danger of driving its own products? But liquor manufacturers apparently do not care how much people drink, so long as their own people leave alcohol alone. In the words of the poet, "O consistency, thou art a jewel"

If those who claim to be Christians would use their voice and their vote, the slaughter on the highways caused by drunk driving could be stopped or at least reduced. But, tragically, there are too many religious leaders who drink and who lack the courage to take a stand against beverage alcohol. Some of them do not drink and are actually opposed to strong drink, but they will not provide the leadership to change conditions in our nation. They do not want to be fired by their eldership or other leaders. My friend, you do you honestly believe God will overlook your spineless leadership? Is that not the same as condoning evil? In the words of one of the ancient theologians, God not only will judge us for our every idle word but for our every idle silence.

There is a way we can put the hurt on many businesses which sell liquor—refusing to patronize those businesses. The Nashville papers reported several months ago that one of America's leading family restaurant chains was planning to begin the sale of alcoholic beverages. I have eaten at those restaurants in many different cities, but if they start selling beer or wine or other strong drinks, they have gotten the last of my business. Besides, I will speak against such practices—both from the pulpit and from our radio programs. Family restaurants have no business being in the liquor business. I will not support a drugstore or a grocery store which sells liquor. I am not going to contribute to the destruction of moral values, of our homes and of our nation. With God as my helper, I do not intend to be silent either.

There are very few evils in our world which are not in some way connected to alcohol. For example, spouse abuse is a national disgrace. Hundreds of thousands of wives and some husbands are abused every year in our country. One of the major factors driving spouse abuse is strong drink. Strong drink is also involved in the proliferation of child abuse—mental, sexual and physical. I am not arguing that all spouse abuse and child abuse can be explained by someone's drinking. The truth is, nobody knows the full extent of alcohol's influence on either spouse abuse or on child abuse, but we have some very strong indicators. Dr. William Bennett, Dr. John DiIulio and Dr. John P. Walters have provided some information on the relationship of drinking and spouse abuse. Their new book, **Body Count: Moral Poverty...and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), informs us that "alcohol-dependent male factory workers are over three times as likely to physically abuse their wives as otherwise comparable non-alcohol-dependent male factory workers are to physically abuse theirs" (p. 67). These distinguished authors also point out that 73,000,000 people have been in some way adversely

affected by alcohol. And yet theologians and other moral leaders have the audacity to defend the legalization of strong drink. Those leaders fly in the face of divine inspiration. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

America is drowning in drugs in addition to alcohol such as, heroin, cocaine and its more addictive form, crack, amphetamines, LSD, and many others. These drugs are killing many people – old and young – in almost every town and city in America. For some strange reason, our police and drug enforcement agencies seem not to know where drugs are sold and how to deal with the sellers and users of drugs. If almost every teenager and some pre-teens know where to buy drugs, why are the police unable to find the drug dealers? Could it be they are not looking hard enough to find these parasites? I am aware that when the drug dealers and users are arrested, they often are never brought to trial. Their lawyers often get them off by plea bargaining. Or they plead first offense. Both plea bargaining and pleading first offense are shameful ways of skirting the law and bringing even greater problems into our towns and cities.

According to Dr. Bennett and his co-authors, there are some cities in the United States which are making considerable progress toward ridding our nation of drugs. In Miami, Florida, Dade County officials demolished more than 2,000 crack houses (p. 171). If a city as large as Miami with its enormous drug problem can crack down on crack and on other drugs, why cannot cities like Nashville and Atlanta and Memphis do it? My friends, in many cases, it is not a matter of cannot but will not. The city fathers either do not know what is happening or do not care. I would hope it is the former and not the latter, although I am made to wonder by what I read and see.

Like alcohol—which is a drug—the other drugs make many other tragic situations even worse. For example, troubled families become even more troubled; child abuse

becomes more widespread and more severe because the abuser uses drugs; infant mortality and severely handicapped children increase when drugs are ingested by the mother; property crimes, prostitution, poverty and homelessness and school dropouts rise rapidly among drug users. These problems are not going away unless and until we make some serious inroads into the drug culture in the United States. May I urge every person who is listening today to make a concerted effort to eradicate America's drug problem with all its attendant evils?

One of elements of the drug situation in America is the fact that many of our leaders—both national and local—are from the sixties and seventies and were themselves drug users—even if they did not inhale. Midge Decter, former executive editor of *Harper's Magazine*, outlines some of the root causes of our problems in her book, **Liberal Parents Radical Children** (New York: Coward, McCann: & Geoghegan, Inc., 1975). Decter correctly says the freedoms the baby boomer generation imagined they had in the sixties and seventies were based on fiction (p. 22). A greater authority than Midge Decter wrote two thousand years ago: The false teachers "promise them liberty, but they themselves were the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19).

Many in the generation of the baby boomers and baby busters thought they could escape the laws of God and the rules of civilized society, but found themselves with conditions they could not solve. They wanted to lay aside the traditions and moral values of our country but still enjoy the freedoms which our nation has provided in greater abundance than any other nation in history. It simply does not work that way. When a people reject the very foundation that made the nation great—as has happened throughout history—they are heading for a fall. And to quote the words of Jesus at the end of his Sermon on the Mount: "Great was the fall of it" (Mt. 7:27). Are we going to ignore the lessons

of history—both sacred and secular?

Another dangerous business in many communities is gambling, although in most states some forms of gambling have to be hidden. But whether hidden or out in the open, gambling in any form is morally and spiritually destructive. I need not tell you that many homes have been destroyed and are being destroyed because someone in the family wasted the family's income in gambling. A few months ago I was in St. Louis for two nights of lectures at the West End Church of Christ. The day I arrived there was a sad and tragic story in the **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**. A young mother had gotten hooked on gambling in the sleazy casino which floats on the Mississippi River. She had taken the money with which she was to pay the mortgage on their house and had lost it all at the casino. In addition, she had used \$5,000 the family had received in a federal tax refund and lost it also. She must have been afraid of having her husband and others to learn of her irresponsibility; so she took her life. If this were an isolated incident, it would be tragic enough, but it happens quite often in our country. People lose their houses, their automobiles and other valuables through gambling. Sometimes fathers and/or mothers use the money their children needed for education and lose it all gambling. If there is anything more morally foolish than that I do not know what it is.

Many states in our nation—including my home state—either have lottery, casino gambling or other forms of gambling or they are trying to legalize them. Can you not see how utterly ridiculous it is to think people are going to get rich by playing the lottery or gambling at casinos? Obviously, some people do win occasionally, but do you want to get rich at other people's misfortune? Gambling is always wrong because it involves greed and violates our Lord's Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12). May I encourage you to vote against all forms of gambling if and when the opportunity arises? In addition, talk with your children and your friends

about the evils of gambling—all forms of gambling—including bingo, betting on sporting events and playing poker. All of these activities are abominable in the sight of almighty God. Can you imagine the stupidity of a senator or a representative or a governor who does so much damage to his state? Oh, I know the revenue argument—and even if it were legitimate—it would make no sense to support and to encourage such unmitigated evil.

There is one other dangerous business I would like to discuss before our time expires—pornography. Our word “pornography” comes from two Greek words, **porne**, meaning prostitute and **graphos**, meaning writing. Pornography, then, means writing about a prostitute. Is that the kind of material Christians ought to buy and read? It is the kind of business we should support? Tragically, there are many people who call themselves Christians who think Christians ought not to use their influence to stop the sale of pornography. They sometimes argue: Adults have a right under our law to buy and read whatever they choose. That may be true, but stores do not have a right to sell such soul-polluting material. An individual has the right to eat contaminated food, but no store has a right to sell it.

Did you know that virtually every mass murderer, such as, John Wayne Gacy and Ted Bundy, were avid consumers of pornography. Dr. James Dobson, Jr. interviewed Ted Bundy shortly before Bundy was executed in Florida for killing in a little girl from Lake City. Bundy did not lay all the blame for his destructive behavior on pornography, but he said it had an enormous influence on his perverted behavior. I am aware that Ted Bundy was not a psychologist or a psychiatrist, but he probably knew more about what motivated him to kill than they do. Pornography—even so-called “soft porn”—is very dangerous. It is unquestionably addictive for some people and it leads in many cases to sexual violence. Please do not be silent on this great evil.

Chapter 32

Kleptophobia

We have reached the point in American society where many of us accept almost any kind of behavior as being normal and moral. A substantial majority of our citizens seem not to be disturbed when men in high political offices engage in inappropriate sexual relations, try to cover up their grievous conduct by deceiving their families, their closest friends and advisors and the general public and then refuse to ask their constituents for forgiveness. Many Americans act as if these are not serious offenses and do not damage the reputation of our great country. In addition, television and other media glorify some of the most abominable sexual acts, such as, perverted sex, premarital sex, extramarital sex and senseless violence. All of these are destructive and must be opposed by right-thinking, righteous-living and God-fearing people. Do I need to remind you of Solomon's inspired observation: "Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34)? President Reagan loved to quote these words from the Old Testament: "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

Many of us attempt to justify our ungodly behavior by blaming others. Is that not what Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden? A number of prominent scholars—both legal and otherwise—have severely criticized our courts for allowing criminals to get away with the most vicious crimes by giving the silliest excuses. Alan Dershowitz, the famous Harvard lawyer, wrote an excellent book on this topic in 1994. His book has the title. **The Abuse Excuse: And Other 'Cop-outs, Sob Stories and Evasions of**

Responsibility (Boston: Little, Brown and Company). His list of thirty-nine excuses includes "Television Made Me Do It" "Twinkies Made Me Do It," "Super Bowl Sunday Syndrome" and "UFO Survivor Syndrome" (pp. 18-19). Dershowitz was not making up these stupid excuses; they have actually been offered by foolish lawyers and their equally foolish clients. Charles Sykes discusses many of the same childish and sick excuses. Sykes' book is entitled, **A Nation of Victims** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), a splendid book which I reviewed a few years ago on the Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship. I shall give you just one example from Sykes' book. When an employee consistently showed up late for work, the school district for which he worked fired him. He took the school district to court and won reinstatement. His lawyer argued that his client was a victim of "chronic lateness syndrome" (p. 3).

King Saul of Israel became infamous for blaming others for his failures. When the prophet Samuel called king Saul to account for his failure to comply with the commands of God to destroy the Amalekites, Israel's first king said, "The people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God at Gilgal" (1 Sam. 15:21). Do you remember how Samuel responded to Saul's attempt to shift the blame to others? "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 15:22-23). All of us who make excuses for our evil deeds should seriously think about what Samuel said to king Saul.

Tragically, not only do we make excuses for our ungodly living, we want the church to accept us without our making any changes in our lives. If we are drinkers or

alcoholics, we do not want to be judged for such conduct. We want the church to grant us full fellowship. If they do not, we accuse the church of all kinds of phobias, biases and discrimination. For example, let suppose just for the sake of argument that we are thieves. Even if we are not Bible students, we know in our heart of hearts that stealing is wrong. But we invent various excuses for our thievery. We may even say that some people have an inordinate amount of this world's goods. They may have gotten rich by stealing from others. So we will even things up by stealing some of their possessions. Or we may say that our families need more than we can earn for them. We resort to taking what belongs to others. But whatever our excuses, we do not want to be blamed for our sleazy practices.

Did you know that some thieves will plead either societal pressures or genetic predisposition? If you think I might be wrong about this, buy and read almost any textbook on psychology. **Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology**, edited by David G. Benner (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) has a brief section of "Kleptomania." The author of the article, J. R. Beck of the Valley Psychological Center in Carmichael, California, calls "kleptomania" "a disorder of impulse control, the failure to resist impulses to steal objects." The kleptomaniac probably does not steal because he needs the object he steals. He may give it to someone else or even return it to the store (p. 625).

The kleptomaniac almost invariably blames someone else for his perverse behavior. He may even say that God made him that way. So how can he be held accountable for acts over which he has no control? He may blame society and accuse those who oppose his actions of being guilty of "kleptophobia." You probably have never heard that word before. The reason is I have just invented it. Since I invented the word, I have a right to define it. The "klept" part of the word comes from the Greek **kleptes** and means thief. Jesus used the word in his parable of the Good Shepherd. He

said, "The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The "phobia" part of the word comes from the Greek **phobos** and means fear. The word appears forty-seven times in the New Testament and is always translated either "fear" or "afraid." For example, Paul told the Corinthians: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3).

My newly invented word "kleptophobia" means either fear of thieves or fear of becoming a thief. As you can surely understand from the thief's viewpoint, the word suggests bigotry, bias and prejudice toward those who differ from him in their attitudes toward material possessions. The thief believes he has a right to behave as his inner drives dictate. If he were born a thief or if his early experiences drove him in that direction, those who suggest he is a sinner and perverted in his desires are guilty of kleptophobia. They believe that one's property is sacred and should not be stolen or misappropriated by others. Such prejudice may actually lead the property owner to defend his possessions and to call law enforcement officers to arrest the thief. Can you imagine such kleptophobia? Cannot the rest of us bring ourselves to understand that thieves do not choose their way of life? They are born that way.

In 1996 Leanne McCall Tigert wrote a book with the title, **Coming Out While Staying In** (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press). Her book is an attempt to justify her unscriptural, unholy and destructive lifestyle. Like many others who are ashamed of their behavior and who want to gain acceptance of it, she uses a number of convoluted arguments to make her and her fellow transgressors feel better about themselves and about their conduct. She does not intend to alter her way of life, but seeks to get other people to change their views of what she does. Yet the Bible specifically and emphatically tells those who live in sin:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord almighty. Having, therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1).

The Bible never approves of any sin--never covers up sin, not even for its heroes like Abraham., Moses, David and Peter. Paul urged the Ephesians: “Let him who stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him who needs. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that you may minister grace to the hearers” (Eph. 4:28-29). Paul warned the same church: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Eph. 5:11-12).

What are Christians to do when they find themselves overwhelmed by some kind of gross evil, whether stealing, lying, committing adultery, engaging in perverted sex acts and such like? They must not make any excuses. Instead, they must repent of their sins and ask God and those against whom they have sinned to forgive them. The Old Testament prophet of the exile spoke for God when he said, “Say unto (the wicked), As I live says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways: for why will you die, O house of Israel? Therefore, son of man, say unto the children of your people. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sins” (Ezek. 33:11-12).

Leanne McCall Tigert affirms, and I agree, that God himself blessed human beings with the gift of sexuality. She errs when she endorses this loving, precious gift outside a valid heterosexual union (p. xxi of the Introduction). God's pattern for sexual relating could hardly be plainer than these inspired statements. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26). After God had created the woman, Adam said plainly, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of the man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they two shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24).

Tigert thinks churches err when their kleptophobia is a result of their poor and/or "rigid interpretive skills" (p. xxii of the Introduction). If her interpretive skills are so superior to the rest of us, why does not she share her vast learning and ability? All of us should be devoted to interpreting the Bible in a scholarly, honest and reasonable way. Our goal in interpreting the Bible should be to glean from its pages exactly what inspired writers meant for us to learn. We have no right to impose on the scriptures what we want them to say. Tragically, this has been done by many feminists—even those who call themselves "biblical feminists"—by numerous cultic groups, by liberal theologians and by others who hope to find support for their views, regardless of how perverted those views are. Whatever one chooses to call such interpretation, it is not honest. Bible scholars often refer to it as eisegesis, meaning reading into the text rather than gleaning from the text.

One of the strangest statements in Tigert's book is that the Bible is ambiguous in its judgment on sexual orientation (p. xxii of the Introduction). Is it ambiguous when it affirms that God made us male and female (Gen. 1:26)? Was Jesus uncertain about sexual expressions when he endorsed the statement I have just read to you from Genesis? The

Pharisees came to Jesus, tempting him and asking him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus answered by using the Old Testament to bolster what he said to the Jews. "Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh" (Mt. 19:3-5). Do you see anything unclear about human sexuality in these verses? What would Jesus have had to say to make clear what he meant?

Tigert says that the church of the living God cannot be completely well so long as one members suffers (p. xiii of the Introduction). That is unquestionably a true statement as can be seen by this verse: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). We as Christians are to be empathetic and compassionate to all who suffer--whether that suffering is physical, spiritual, emotional or moral. If a brother or sister has cancer or heart disease, we are to do all within our power to help. If someone has strayed from the church and gone into religious error, we are to restore our brother to Christ (Gal. 6:1). When a Christian becomes involved in alcohol or other drugs, we must help to overcome that problem. Christians who engage in premarital sex, extramarital sex or any other unbiblical and immoral form of sexual behavior, it is our duty to teach the truth on that topic and help our brothers and sisters return to Christ. We do no one any good when we call good evil and evil good, when we put sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet (Isa. 5:20). What benefit do we render those who are sick if we convince them they are not sick?

Tigert speaks of the gospel as good news because it is a gospel of liberation (p. xiii). That is certainly a true statement. Jesus unquestionably had that in mind when he said to the Jews who believed on him: "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: and you

shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Paul encouraged the Galatians: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). But are some liberation movement returning men to slavery to sin and ungodliness? Peter knew that the church through the ages would be brought into spiritual bondage by false teachers. These false teachers, Peter said, "promise you liberty" but "they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19).

So-called "liberation movements" have sprung up all over the world. Tragically, some of these movements are liberating men and women from God, his word and his Son. They want to remove all restrictions and all moral obligations. The women's movement is a supreme example of the great damage some of the movements have done and are doing. That movement seeks, at least, the radical elements do, to remove women from the duties of wives and mothers. They also endorse all kinds of sexual immorality, abortion, and other evils. A liberation movement, like Christianity, is valid when it frees people to do right, to abide by the will of almighty God and to enjoy freedom from the ravages of sin. Any other kind of liberation will eventually come to nought, especially if faithful Christians help it come to nought.

My friends, let me close our lesson today by saying as strongly as I am able: Kleptomania is wrong, whatever excuses we give to try to justify it. Opposing kleptomania may be characterized as kleptophobia, but it is not. It is a legitimate response to sin, grievous, inexcusable sin, sin which will keep one from entering the kingdom of God.

May God help all all of us to be able to discern between good and evil and to do the good and to fight the evil, even when the evil has the support of many within American society.

Chapter 33

Who Is Responsible?

Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is one of my favorite cities in the United States and has been since I began to preach in gospel meetings there in the late 1950's. I have thoroughly enjoyed my many visits to Winston-Salem and have many friends in that city. When I saw the name Winston-Salem in a recent issue of the Joplin, Missouri, newspaper, **The Joplin Globe**, I was immediately attracted to the article. The title of the article was "Jurors reject plea for death penalty." I want to review some of the facts from the Joplin paper.

A man who had been drinking and using other drugs killed two college students with his car. The two young people who were killed were students at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. If this accident were an unusual occurrence, it would be cause for grief and pain, but it happens many times daily in the United States. In fact, approximately 80 people die everyday because someone cared so little about other people's safety and lives that they would not refrain from drinking and driving. Alcohol means more to such people than the lives of their fellow human beings and even their own lives. Can you believe anyone would be so calloused and hard-hearted? Do you suppose drunk drivers have ever heard of the Golden Rule which says, "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt. 7:12)?

When the prosecution and the defense rested in the drunk driving case in Winston-Salem, the jury deliberated 70 minutes before pronouncing two life sentences on the man. The prosecutors had sought the death penalty, but the jury rejected the prosecutor's plea. The prosecutor commented: "Driving while impaired, reckless driving, cuts

across all social lines and you have very responsible people from all walks of life who go to bars and drink after work...This (verdict) will seriously make everyone stop after the first drink or the second one" (p. 1-A). The prosecutor was dreaming if he thinks drinkers generally are going to take responsibility for their behavior. Some may quit after one or two drinks, but some will drink eight or ten and get dog drunk and then drive on the highways of our nation. Beverage alcohol and good judgment just do not mix well. Shakespeare once said, "Men put into their mouths that which takes away their brains." The Bible and human experience support Shakespeare's observation.

Incidentally, the state of North Carolina can bring felonious charges of first-degree murder, punishable by death, against the drunk driver who kills, whether or not the death was intentional. Every state in the union should adopt the same law. It would not stop drunk driving, but it might reduce the deaths from drunk driving. Those who choose to drink and drive on America's highways must be held responsible for their behavior. We cannot allow crooked lawyers to plead innocence on account of the person's being drunk. Lawyers ought to be held accountable for their behavior in court.

The defense attorney in the North Carolina case blamed alcohol and drugs for his client's troubles. Obviously, alcohol and other drugs were involved, but they did by themselves create the problems the man faced. He made a choice to use alcohol and other drugs. Nobody forced him to take these mind-altering, body-destroying substances. O, I know that both alcohol and other drugs are addictive, but we choose to begin the use of these drugs—and alcohol is a drug—and must be held accountable for what occurs when we use them. Alcohol and other drugs have never made anyone imbibe them. Human beings decide what they are going to do with respect to these and then have to pay the consequences when they use them. It is wrong when a

lawyer attempts to blame alcohol and other drugs for dangerous behavior. An honorable lawyer will not stoop that low.

The drunk driver in North Carolina blamed the government for his drinking and driving. While he was in the military, he apparently had some severe physical problems, although those problems are not mentioned. He claimed that the army made his condition worse by providing him with drugs and never telling him he should not drink while he was taking his painkillers. Tragically, there are physicians—both in the army and on the outside—who prescribe too many drugs to their patients. Doctors are often guilty of making drug addicts of their patients. I know doctors who will give their patients just about any drugs the patients request. That, my friends, is a dangerous and sometimes deadly practice.

Before the North Carolina accident which killed two college students, the driver had taken drugs and had drunk two quarts of beer. Then he went to two bars and drank more beer. My friends, did you know that the alcohol in beer is the same as the alcohol in vodka or in whiskey or in other alcoholic beverages? It just takes greater volume for a man to get drunk on beer or wine coolers or on wine than on whiskey—even if the whiskey is made from some of the purest spring water in Tennessee. Alcohol, regardless of its source, makes men drunk and kills innocent victims on our highways.

My friends, I have a very serious question to ask every person in my audience today: Who was responsible for the drunk driver's killing two Wake Forest University students? O, I know the driver was responsible, but does anyone else bear some of the responsibility for those tragic deaths? Please understand that I am not attempting to shift blame from anyone who drinks and drives. If men and women drink regularly and excessively over a period of time, chances are they are going to be involved in automobile accidents—

sometimes fatal accidents. The drunk driver must never be able to plead innocence because of his drinking. Nobody made the drinker take into his body that which adversely affects his mind and hence his ability to react quickly enough to avoid an accident.

The Joplin paper reported that the lawyer for the drunk driver in North Carolina foolishly claimed: "Satan forced him to do it. Beelzebub. Alcohol...in every bottle of liquor, the devil lurks. In these pain pills he was taking, the devil lurks" (p. 1-A). A lawyer who would make such senseless arguments in a court of law ought to be disbarred from the legal profession and prosecuted for moral turpitude. Do lawyers who get charges of drinking under the influence dismissed have any blame for the great number of drunks who drive and kill? The answer to that question comes from a rather unusual source – an inmate of one of the state penitentiaries in Tennessee. The letter shows that lawyers who get their clients' charges of drunk driving dismissed are not only contributing to deaths from drunk driving on the nation's highways; they are also contributing to the unhappiness and misery of the drunks themselves. Will you please listen to this letter which appeared in **The Elk Valley Times**, Fayetteville, Tennessee, May 14, 1997? Please listen and weep for the great damage our legal system is doing in so many lives.

The letter to the editor has the title, "Prison inmate seeks community forgiveness." "I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere remorse and apologies to the citizens of my home community, Lincoln, County (Tennessee).

"During the period of time between 1988 and 1995, I was arrested for DUI in Lincoln County seven times. Following each arrest, with the help of a good lawyer, my DUI charges were either dismissed or reduced to first offense. I never served more than 48 hours in the Lincoln County jail for any of these DUI charges.

"All this time I thought I was getting away with something, but I was actually digging myself in deeper. You see, my alcoholism led to further misadventures which landed me where I am today, in a Tennessee state prison.

"In 1995, while very much under the influence of alcohol, I caused some very serious damages to three businesses in the Park City area-Lincoln Utilities Contractors, Park City Tire and Palatec. My random acts of criminal behavior against these innocent victims caused them a great deal of turmoil and expense.

"The people most affected by my infamous deeds are now my ex-wife and my two young daughters, ages six and two. The problems and embarrassment my actions has caused them goes beyond comprehension.

"Although at times it is quite difficult to bear, my incarceration has in many ways been a blessing to me. It has given me time to take a long hard look at myself and make some very much needed changes in my life, both mentally and spiritually. The changes I've made have quite possibly prevented the premature death of myself and others.

"To all those who have unknowingly had their lives in danger while I was drunk and behind the wheel, please forgive me.

"To the business owners, their employees and their patrons who had their businesses, jobs, financial security and services seriously disrupted as a result of my crimes, please forgive me.

"And to my ex-wife and my two darling daughters who may never completely recover from the emotional scarring, although it is far from being enough, I'm truly sorry and I beg for your forgiveness.

"I have wanted to write a letter of this nature for quite some time. My delay in doing so was because I didn't want the victims of my crimes nor the Parole Board to think my motive in doing so was to gain approval toward release.

Let me assure everyone that this is not the case. On April 11, 1997, the Parole Board denied my release.

"My motive in seeking the forgiveness of those mentioned comes from my sincere, heartfelt remorse and out of direct obedience to God's Word.

"Finally, to all those who have believed in my potential and support my family and me, thank you" (p. 4-A).

Do I have to tell you what great tragedies occur when men and women, boys and girls drink alcoholic beverages? And when lawyers and judges conspire to let drunks go free when those drunks have caused great damage and even killed people? Our laws regulating drunk driving must be enforced. It is an absolute disgrace when they are not.

But are lawyers, judges and other law enforcement officials the only ones who bear responsibility for death and property damage resulting from drinking and drunk driving? Do parents have an obligation to teach their children about the devastating effects of drinking—and not just drunk driving? If parents are interested in their children's welfare—morally, spiritually and physically—they should inform their children of alcohol's debilitating effects on moral decisions and behavior. Human beings under the influence of beverage alcohol often rape and murder and steal. Normally they would not engage in such behavior, but alcohol deadens their consciences and cause them to behave in ways which would be abhorrent to them if they were sober. Alcohol and spirituality do not mix. They are natural enemies. And anyone who has taken time to do any reading knows what alcohol does eventually to the human body. It particularly affects the brain, which every physician and physiologist knows. If they do not know, they need to do their home work to learn.

What part of the responsibility for the North Carolina accident do the political leaders in that state have for the deaths of those college students? Did they imagine they could legalize beverage alcohol and not have increased

deaths on the highways of their state? O I know the arguments about tax revenue from the sale of alcoholic beverages. Even if the argument were logical—and it most assuredly is not—does the tax revenue outweigh the lives of those two college students and the dozens of others who are killed on North Carolina's highways? Is human life so worthless that a few dollars revenue from alcoholic beverages is worth more than those lives?

“But,” the supporters of legalizing beverage alcohol say, “People are going to drink anyway. So why not allow the state to collect taxes from the sale of strong drink?” Have you ever thought seriously about the stupidity of such an argument? Why not say, as some in our society are arguing, that prostitution will never be eradicated. So why not tax prostitution? Or men and women are going to steal. Why not put a tax on all the property that is stolen? The tax revenue argument is absolutely senseless. Besides, does not the legalizing of any product or service give the impression that it is moral? When abortion was made legal, millions of America's young people got the impression it was and is moral. Incidentally, why do we not tax those having abortions? That would raise hundreds of millions of dollars for the states and for the federal government.

My greatest disappointment always in fighting against the sale of beverage alcohol is the lackadaisical attitude on the part of preachers and of churches. Knowing North Carolina as I do after holding many gospel meetings there, I am positive that many churches and preachers opposed the legalization of beverage alcohol. But there were almost certainly hundreds of preachers who either did not oppose the sale of strong drink or they did not have the courage to speak out against it. There are liberal preachers and churches which do not want to take a stand on any moral issue, unless it harmonizes with the liberal agenda. Some of them are afraid they will be characterized as being fundamentalists. What a horrible thing for theological

liberals! It would be better to be called a serpent than to be called a fundamentalist. But there are millions of Americans who are not fundamentalists and yet oppose the sale and the drinking of beverage alcohol. I am not a fundamentalist, although I subscribe to many of the same truths the fundamentalists believe. But I am an ardent enemy of beverage alcohol. Why am I so strongly opposed to it? My friends, I have seen what it does to families. Hundreds of thousands of families in this nation have experienced violence, deprivation, division and other evils because someone in the family drinks. Girls and boys have to endure the sexual advances of a parent because the parent drinks. The children are often embarrassed because the father or mother gets drunk and behaves like an idiot. Sometimes the children want to go away and hide from the shame of having a drunken parent.

Did the preachers in North Carolina lack knowledge about the adverse effects of beverage alcohol? If they did not know about the damage alcohol does to homes, to individuals and to the nation or if they did not know what the scriptures teach about strong drink, they should be ashamed of themselves. Solomon wrote about three thousand years ago: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Has the human race learned anything which would prove Solomon's statements to be false? The truth is: We know much more about the effects of alcohol than Solomon's generation. But tragically alcohol still causes many kinds of heartaches; it still disrupts homes; it still destroys men's souls.

You and I may not be able at this time to prevent the sale of alcoholic beverages. But we can teach our people—both old and young—about the tragedies which accompany the sale and drinking of whiskey, beer, wine and other mind-altering drugs. Let us strive to put the liquor manufacturers out of business.