

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

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What Ever Happened to Worldliness?

BY BRAD K. GSELL

AS A TEENAGER IN A FUNDAMENTAL CHURCH IN THE 1970S, we often heard messages against the "sin of worldliness." Rock 'n Roll music, long hair on men, dancing, the peace symbol and anything which even hinted of being influenced by the Hippie movement were condemned. Evangelist Hal Webb* came to town and many of us teenagers took heed to his powerful preaching and read his companion books—*Why Not?* and *Why So?*—which challenged young people to live godly Christian lives and avoid the snares of the world.

Thirty-five years later we see supposedly conservative pastors and par-

ents taking their young people to secular theme parks hosting Contemporary Christian concerts—of the sort we were warned against. Many churches have allowed their congregations to be segregated along the lines of "traditional" and "contemporary" worship, and smaller churches have adopted "blended worship" practices. Christians of all ages attire themselves in clothing which would have been considered shockingly immodest or disrespectful a few decades ago, and come to church dressed no differently than they would when going to the beach. In their younger years, Christians who refrained from the then-modern dance when they were young, now seem to yawn when their own children participate in the same.

* Not to be confused with the Rev. Hal Webb, a member of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, whose powerful preaching has also been greatly used of the Lord.

The Fight

BY ELLIS C.H. JOHNSON

The Christian life is a constant fight against sin. Even the Apostle Paul gives an account of his fight against sin in Romans 7:19-25: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

The Christian's fight against sin is part of the sanctification process. Question 35 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks "What is sanctification?" The answer: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness." Sanctification is not an act. It is a work—a process—a fight. One evidence of your salvation is if you are fighting sin. Not fighting sin is an evidence of being a sinner.

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"DON'T BE A Legalist!"

BY MARK W. EVANS

The term *legalist* is often used incorrectly as a misguided epithet against those who seek to live a godly Christian life apart from the world. It would do us well to take a look at what legalism really is—from a Biblical perspective—and what it is not.

Biblically speaking, there are two different ways that the term is used. The first usage refers to those who trust in works to attain acceptance with God, such as the false teachers among the Galatian Christians in the days of the Apostle Paul and such as the teachers of the Federal Vision among conservative, Presbyterian denominations in modern times. They both corrupted orthodox Christianity by adding works to faith in order to attain justification. The Bible clearly reveals that this *legalism* is heresy. Justification is by faith alone, without works (cf. Galatians 1:8,9; 2:16). Sometimes, Fundamentalists are called legalists and charged with being pharisaical because they supposedly trust a list of “do’s and don’ts” in order to make themselves acceptable to God. There may be such creatures, but it is rarer than these accusers imagine. Many precious saints of God conscientiously separate from worldly practices, not to earn merit with God, but to escape temptations and to bear a witness before an ungodly world. In this regard, Fundamentalists seem more faithful to the teachings of the Reformation than some of their Reformed critics.

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* 99:6 states the following rule as necessary to keeping the Ten Commandments: “That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbid-

den or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Not only are God’s people required to obey the Ten Commandments, they are required to avoid “the causes, means, occasions, and appearances” of sin, and all “provocations thereunto.” Surely, the Lord’s people, who are trusting in Christ alone for

Many precious saints of God conscientiously separate from worldly practices, not to earn merit with God, but to escape temptations and to bear a witness before an ungodly world.

salvation, are not *legalists* because they avoid even the appearance of evil.

The other use of the term *legalist* concerns the error of creating sins not warranted by the Bible. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* XX:2 states: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of

conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.”

In this second sense, a legalist is one who requires submission in matters of doctrine, worship, government, or discipline not warranted in the Scriptures (cf. *The Solemn League and Covenant* (1643), section I). This Biblical truth of the Reformation condemns numerous modern practices of the professing heirs of the Reformation and qualifies the practitioners as legalists. Modern Reformed leaders have difficulty staying on the old paths of Reformed doctrine — injecting man-devised innovations into worship; distorting the government of Christ’s Church; and avoiding righteous, ecclesiastical discipline. However, these intruders into the sacred offices of Christ’s Church escape the label of *legalist*. Instead, they apply the label to those crying in the wilderness, condemning worldly practices which shred the Church’s testimony and open the door to spiritual malignancy.

In 1847, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina, created a firestorm. Among his flock were prominent citizens and statesmen. General James Shields, a military celebrity, visited the city and occasioned events that deeply disturbed Palmer and the church’s elders.

The session’s minutes of December 22 reported: “It was brought to the notice of the session that at a public ball given recently in compliment to General Shields, four of the members were in attendance, besides the children of several other members; also at a fair recently held by the order of the Odd Fellows, raffling was countenanced and participated in by several members of the church. The object of this meeting of the session was to confer as to the best method of arresting this comparatively new tide of evil influence setting in upon the church.”¹

If modern, conservative Presbyterian clerics were present at this session meeting, it is likely they would have entered a written protest, pronouncing that the pastor and elders were legalists. However, the session, not having the benefit of these modern interpreters of God's Word, believed that the Bible granted sufficient warrant to warn the congregation. During the meeting, Palmer submitted a paper testifying against the evils of raffling and dancing, along with other evils, and requested that the document be read from the pulpit. After lengthy discussion, the matter was postponed to allow time for further reflection. The session met again on December 24th and expressed agreement on the principles set forth in the paper, but the majority could not agree to its public reading. Palmer immediately resigned, "giving as his reason that his conscience would not permit him to be the pastor of a dancing church." The session met again on December 25th, re-examined the paper, made some amendments, and reversed their previous decision. The following Lord's Day morning, the paper was read from the pulpit. It began with the session's statement regarding Presbyterian Church government and the obligation of "delivering its testimony as a court of Jesus Christ, against such errors in doctrine and practice as are likely to prevail among the people committed to their oversight."

After testifying against raffling and explaining that there is no difference between raffling and gambling in principle, the session gave its witness concerning dancing and other evils: "[T]he session delivers its testimony against fashionable worldly amusements, such as dancing parties, balls, the theater, the race course and such like. It may be difficult to draw accurately the line of demarcation between the lawful and unlawful pleasures of the Christian. We believe that this is wisely left in

If modern, conservative Presbyterian clerics were present at this session meeting, it is likely they would have entered a written protest, pronouncing that the pastor and elders were legalists. However, the session, not having the benefit of these modern interpreters of God's Word, believed that the Bible granted sufficient warrant to warn the congregation.

doubt, in order to test the piety and spiritual knowledge of the Lord's people. Yet there is one obvious principle which covers the whole case. Christians are witnesses for God, and among other things they must testify concerning the vanity of this present evil world. But if they participate in the chosen pleasures of the world they do it at the expense of that testimony they must bear for God. The amusements specified above are moreover the acknowledged badges of a worldly profession, in some sort the sacraments of allegiance to him who is the prince and god of this world. In this view Christians cannot share in the same without in so [doing] denying Christ.

"The session, too, is constrained to think that promiscuous dancing between the sexes is a practice injurious and tends to immorality, and should be in every possible way discountenanced. Satisfied of the Scripturalness of these views, the session wishes to be understood that the giving of balls and dancing parties, and attendance upon them, together with the theater, the opera, and the race course, will be regarded as serious offences against the order and purity of the church, which require the exercise in some one of its forms of a wholesome discipline."²

The concluding paragraph consisted of Scriptures woven into an exhortation to the congregation:

"In the delivering now these conclusions which they have carefully weighed, the session would most earnestly and affectionately exhort their fellow Christians to remember whose they are and whom they serve—that being redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, they should glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which are God's. Let us strive to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Since we profess to be 'children of light,' let us 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.' 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.' But rather let us 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' in this present evil world, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' looking for and hastening unto the day of God, when the Son of Man shall be revealed to be glorified in His saints.' And to, 'as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy and upon the Israel of God. Amen.'³

Who was Benjamin Morgan Palmer? Was he a legalist? At the age of 25, he was the successor of the renowned theologian James Henley Thornwell at Columbia Theological Seminary. He left Columbia, South Carolina, at the age of 38, to begin his pastorate of 46 years at the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. He served as the first moderator of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America. His love for souls, bold stand for the Gospel, and fearless defense of moral righteousness deeply affected the entire

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"DON'T BE A LEGALIST!"

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state of Louisiana. Benjamin Morgan Palmer was no legalist. He was a faithful servant of the Lord. The real legalists are those who compromise the doctrine, worship, government, or discipline of Christ's Church and remain silent concerning the "causes, means, occasions, and appearances" of sin and "provocations thereunto."¹

¹Thomas Carey Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), p. 93.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

³*Ibid.*, p. 97.



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THE FIGHT

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A great illustration of this fight is Joshua's struggle against heathen nations as the Children of Israel entered into the Promised Land. Joshua is commissioned by God in Joshua 1:1-9. In Joshua's time, God's people Israel were fighting against Satan's people; and we fight against Satan himself in our time. There is no rest from this fight; no treaty. This is war—a war that does not end until we are forever with the Lord. And the older we become, the more intense the fight. Why? Because hopefully we know God better, and therefore we know ourselves better.

In Joshua 1, we will explore four aspects of this fight against sin: first, our enemy; second, our weapon; third, our Captain; and fourth, our victory.

1. Our Enemy, Satan, is Powerful.

The Lord warns Joshua in verse 9: "be not afraid, neither be thou dis-

mayed [terrified]." Satan strikes our hearts with fear. He confuses us. He discourages us. He deceives us. He causes us to doubt our salvation.

Joshua is warned that this can happen to him. He no doubt remembered his former mission to spy out the land. He remembered the false report most of the spies brought back, and how the heart of Israel melted from fear. O the power of Satan and sin!

Joshua no doubt also remembered Ai. It was after the great victory over Jericho, and Achan coveted after and hid some desirable things he had found. Israel lost the first battle against Ai, and Achan and all his family were stoned to death and burned.

We remember the power of sin in the lives of others. We remember how anger overpowered the great leader Moses; how lust overpowered David, "the man after God's own heart"; and how greed overpowered Ananias and Sapphira in the exciting days of the early church.

And we remember how our chronic sins overpower us—the besetting sins—the sins that so easily cause us to stumble, and make us wonder if we'll ever be done with them.

Our enemy Satan is powerful. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). You and I, in our own strength, are no match for Satan. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). If the great Apostle Paul struggled as he describes in Romans 7—if Paul's flesh was weak—what about you and me? We surely must often pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).



We are at war every moment of every day. We are in the heat of battle all the time. And our enemy Satan is powerful. Satan will destroy us and our testimony if he can.

Our enemy Satan is powerful, but ...

2. Our Weapon, Obedience to God's Word, Is More Powerful.

In verses 7 and 8 of our text, we read, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Obedience is more powerful than mighty armies. In sports, the best defense is a good offense. I learned in the Marines that the key to winning a battle is superior fire power.

Obedience to God's Word is the key. Remember how the Apostle Paul wanted with all his heart to obey God perfectly in Romans 7? The Holy Spirit puts that desire in us when we are saved. Matthew 5:6

says, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

Obedience to the Bible is our weapon. “Obey My Word,” says God over and over again throughout the Bible. Obedience is the test of true conversion, but not perfect obedience. True Christian obedience is the desire to obey, the desire that’s put in our heart by the Holy Spirit at conversion. It is the constant trying to obey, and the constant confession of our failure to obey. Obedience proves our love for the Lord. In John 15:14, Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” The *Children’s Catechism* Question 4 states, “How can you glorify God? By loving Him and doing what he commands.”

In Ephesians 6:17 we read, “And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.” Our enemy Satan is spiritual and tries to get us to disobey God. He never rests. Satan tries to

keep us from the Bible. But our weapon is also spiritual—obedience to the Word of God by the power of God within us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Remember Jericho, the huge mighty walled fortress? Joshua 6:1 says, “Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.” Jericho was defeated by Israel’s obedience to God, not by Israel’s might. Zechariah 4:6 says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.”

Our weapon is obedience to God’s Word. It’s so simple, yet profound. It’s fundamental—basic—but difficult because of Satan’s constant onslaught. So, we must know the Word by reading it consistently, by reading it every day. It is better to go without a meal than to go without God’s heavenly manna. We must hide God’s Word in our heart that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). We must try with all our

heart to obey God’s Word. We must keep our weapon sharp and ready. It is our only protection against sin. “And take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).


When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He defeated Satan with Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). Quoting God’s Word against Satan will help keep us from sin, and the angels will minister to us as well. We will often fail to resist Satan, for he is so much stronger than are we. But we will often be successful, because our God is stronger than Satan.

Be strong and of good courage. For though our enemy is powerful, our weapon is spiritual and more powerful and our God who loves us dearly is all-powerful.


We don’t have to be weak. We don’t have to fail the Lord. We don’t have to sin. We can fight a good fight for the glory of the Lord, winning

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Chile Disaster Relief



Several have contacted us desiring to contribute to help earthquake victims in Haiti and Chile. We have no direct contacts in Haiti. However, the Rev. and Mrs. Paul Durand, missionaries under The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, work in Concepción, Chile, close to the epicenter of the earthquake there. Rev. Durand is a minister in Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church.



The Durands report that a number of the Bible-believing Christians with whom they work in Molina, Constitución, Ranchillo, Coihueco, Los Angeles, Pinto, Cauquenes and Chillán have had their houses destroyed. Large numbers also had much destruction as furniture toppled, dishes fell out of cabinets, and so forth.



Redeeming the Time will accept donations which will be administered by the Durands for disaster relief. **100% of funds donated will be sent for the intended purpose.** If the Lord lays this on your heart, please make your check payable to *Redeeming the Time* and mark it for “Chile Disaster Relief.”

photos by Paul Durand

THE FIGHT

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more and more battles against Satan. The war has been won by our Lord Jesus Christ, who has crushed the head of the serpent by His death on the cross (Genesis 3:15).

Our enemy Satan is powerful, our weapon (obedience to God's Word) is more powerful, and ...

3. Our Captain Is the Sovereign Lord Himself.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.... Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:5,9).

Later, Joshua saw the Lord in Joshua 5:13-15: "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho,

that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said Nay, but as captain of the Host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

"If the sovereign God is our Captain, victory is assured!"

Let us notice two things about our Captain:

A. He is always with us.

Verse 5 says, "I will be with thee." God with us means that His

power is with us. God says in Psalm 50:15, "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." In Genesis 18:14, God asks Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

When Joshua fought the Amorites, God made the sun and moon stand still. Joshua cried unto God, and God heard him. And God will hear our cry to Him, and He will help us against our enemy Satan. Jesus promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

The second thing about our Captain is ...

B. He is working out His will in us.

Joshua 1:5 says, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." He will never leave us, even when we leave Him, like we often do temporarily, when we sin. It may feel like it, but we can rest in the assurance that He has not forsaken us. Remember what happened after Ai defeated Israel. Achan was punished because of his covetousness. God will also discipline us for our sin, because he loves us. "For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Proverbs 3:12).

When it looks and feels like God has failed us and forsaken us, perhaps He is convicting us of sin because He will not allow us to continue in sin. If we are true Christians, we are not able to continue in sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [continue in] sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot [continue in] sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). Or, perhaps God is teaching us something about Himself. Perhaps He is preparing us for greater service. We probably don't know what's going on, but we do know that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Our Captain is the sovereign God of the universe. He is always with us and He is working out His



O Fundamentalista!

O Fundamentalista, a new monthly magazine in Portuguese has commenced publication under the editorship of the Rev. Ken Olson. Rev. Olson is a member of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church. He and his wife, Ira, are missionaries to Brazil under The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Please be in prayer that God would use this publication throughout Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking areas to promote a strong stand for the cause of Christ and His Word.



Famine relief food, donated by the readers of *Redeeming the Time*, being distributed in western Kenya through the efforts of Dr. and Mrs. Howard Carlson and Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Carlson of Go! International.

will in us—even through our sins (though we are responsible for our sins), and through His loving discipline for our sins. If the sovereign God is our Captain, victory is assured! We may lose many battles, but by the grace of God we are assured of winning the war.

Our enemy Satan is powerful, our weapon (obedience to God's Word) is more powerful, our Captain is the sovereign Lord Himself, and finally ...

4. Our Victory Is Assured in the Lord.

"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them" (Joshua 1:6). Victory was assured to Joshua because of God's promise, and victory is assured to us because of God's promise. Victory is ours. We are not losers—but victors through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our victory is assured because God is our God, and our enemies are His enemies. Our fight is His fight—and He always wins. Satan has been defeated by the cross of Christ. God says in Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under law, but under grace." And again, in Isaiah 25:8: "He will swallow up death in victory...."

Joshua 24:1-13 shows that God gave Israel victory. In verse 13, God says, "And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat." As God gave Israel victory, so will He give us victory—victories in battles, and ultimately in the war. It was the promised land for Israel and heaven for us.

Our victory is assured. The saved shall overcome unto the end of this life. Revelation 21:7 says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

We are engaged in a fight. But the fight is not against sin our master. The fight is against indwelling sin that has been defeated and would like to be master again—but can't, except temporarily. Why? Because "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Our victory is assured in the Lord if we are truly saved. But if you are not in the fight, you cannot have the Lord and sin too, because He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

God speaks to us through Joshua. "Be strong and of a good courage." For though our enemy is powerful—and we are no match for

him—our weapon (obedience to God's Word) is more powerful, our Captain is the sovereign Lord Himself and our victory is assured by our great Captain, our Lord Himself.

We don't have to be weak. We don't have to fail the Lord. We don't have to sin. Hear God speak to us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful,

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REDEEMING THE TIME

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WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO WORLDLINESS?

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Who is right and who is wrong? Was I subjected to purveyors of “legalism” and “pharisaism,” and those who would infringe on “Christian liberty” — as many would be quick to charge? Or, is there an escalating capitulation to “worldliness” in the church of Jesus Christ? Is worldliness just a matter of the heart, or should we be concerned by external practices as well?

A Great Change Has Taken Place

No matter how you would answer the questions in the last para-

circles we don’t even have any view of worldliness. And you can see that with the rise of the church growth movement in the extremes, the seeker sensitive movement in the extremes, the desire to be relevant, etc., Evangelicalism has its own version of the liberal tendency. And many people are taking on modern ideas, modern practices, without a thought, and it is absolute folly....”

The Rev. Peter Masters, who presently pastors the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, where the famous Charles Haddon Spurgeon once preached, concurs: “When I was a youngster and newly saved, it seemed as if the chief goal of all zealous Christians, whether Calvinistic or Arminian, was consecration.

still in their hearts. Years ago, such brethren would not have been baptised until they were clear of the world, but now you can go to seminary, no questions asked, and take up a pastorate, with unfought and unsundered idols in the throne room of your life. What hope is there for churches that have under-shepherds whose loyalties are so divided and distorted?”

What has caused these “old objectives” to be “swept aside”? Many modern-day evangelicals, who have already compromised in many other areas, now teach with great certitude that worldliness is ONLY an abstract matter of the heart, and it is impossible to make judgments about many externals. Also, many in pres-

But, when a man becomes a Christian, there is a tremendous change. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Romans 6:12,13, says: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

The Word of God calls those saved by the blood of Christ to holiness and a rejection of that which is evil. Romans 6:6 says: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with

worldliness as “all sinful lusts in general ... libidinous looks as well as the vanity which delights in pomps and empty splendour ... pride or haughtiness; with which is connected ambition, boasting, contempt of others, blind love of self, headstrong self-confidence.”

Romans 12:1,2, says: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The obedient child of God is to deny “ungodliness and worldly

are “the only infallible rule of faith *and practice*” (emphasis ours). The constitutions of nearly every Presbyterian body in America state that the Scriptures are “the only infallible rule of faith *and manners*” (emphasis ours). None can deny that “practice” and “manners” involve our outward actions. In fact the Scriptures are the “rule” which measures everything in our hearts, our minds and our actions as believers.

Those who warn concerning the proper use of such things as music, dress and recreations are often sneered at and harshly derided as being examples of an aberration of rather recent origin—a misguided “Fundamentalism.” Such claims, however, lose all credibility when one examines

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

graph, there is no doubt that a great change has taken place. In 1978, Richard Quebedaux released his book *The Worldly Evangelicals*. He stated: “An increasing number of evangelicals—left, center and right—no longer consider the traditional revivalistic taboos to be mandatory. When young people were converted in the Jesus movement, many of them simply did not give up their former habits, practices, and cultural attitudes—drinking, smoking, and characteristic dress and language. They only modified them.” This observation from more than a quarter of a century ago shows the seed of much of the problem we face today. Many of those from the Jesus movement now hold positions of great influence in the evangelical world.

Social critic Os Guinness, being interviewed by Michael Deaver in 2008, stated: “When I came to Christ, evangelicals had a high view of worldliness.... But now in some

Sermons, books and conferences stressed this in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2, where the beseeching apostle calls believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, and not to be conformed to the world. The heart was challenged and stirred. Christ was to be Lord of one’s life, and self must be surrendered on the altar of service for Him. But now, it appears, there is a new Calvinism, with new Calvinists, which has swept the old objectives aside.”

Masters continues: “Worldly culture provides the bodily, emotional feelings, into which Christian thoughts are infused and floated Biblical sentiments are harnessed to carnal entertainment.” Speaking of younger Reformed pastors in Great Britain, Masters states: “When you look at their ‘favourite films,’ and ‘favourite music’ you find them unashamedly naming the leading groups, tracks and entertainment of debased culture, and it is clear that the world is

ent-day Reformed circles teach that to apply Biblical principles to anything not SPECIFICALLY forbidden in the Scriptures is to be guilty of the sin of adding to the Scriptures. Are they right? After all, the Bible indeed teaches that worldliness has its root in the heart of sinful man, and Revelation 22:18 spells out God’s punishment on any who would dare to add to His Word.

What Does the Bible Teach About Worldliness?

Just as man believeth with “the heart” (Romans 10:10), so worldliness has its root in the heart. Following the Great Flood, God stated in Genesis 8:21: “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Paul tells us that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22). “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God” (James 4:4b). “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

The Bible commands us: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). John Calvin here describes

lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

Fundamentalist Legalism or Historic Christian Practice?

The Bible is not just a theoretical book. In Romans 8:13, following Paul’s account of his own struggles, he writes: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Here Paul speaks of “the deeds of the body.” One would be hard pressed to say that this is JUST a matter of the heart. In Luke 6:45, we read: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil.” This clearly speaks to what comes forth EXTERNALLY!

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* says that the the Scriptures

the Scriptures and the ubiquitous examples throughout church history of Biblical principles being applied to specific external cultural practices.

Some will be quick to argue that these are all just a matter of each person’s “Christian liberty,” spoken of in the Bible. However, Paul warns the Galatian Christians: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh...” (Galatians 5:13). There are certainly some who attempt to add rules to God’s Word, but it has been my experience that many times those most agitated about “Christian liberty” are those seeking to justify their worldly living.

Early church fathers spoke plainly concerning such things. Clement of Alexandria (c.150 - c. 215 AD) wrote: “Let the women wear a plain and becoming dress.... And let the garments be suited to age, person, fig-

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ure, nature, pursuits. For the divine apostle most beautifully counsels us to 'put on Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the lusts of the flesh.'" Chrysostom (c. 347-407 AD) wrote: "Where dancing is, there is the devil." Many church councils spoke to these issues. The Fifty-Third Canon of the Synod of Laodicea (364 AD) stated: "Christians when coming to weddings must not caper [jump about playfully] or dance; but dine or sup decently as becomes Christian people."

John Calvin, commenting on 1 Timothy 2:9-11, complains that men wear feminine clothes, and women wear men's clothes. Calvin also warns against immodest dress, and against modest dress which displays "bravery" [showiness] and "pomp."

Martin Luther praised the Christian women in Germany who dressed differently from the "women who walked about with neck bared all the way to the middle of the back. This was immodest dress."

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* Question 139 says that the Seventh Commandment forbids "lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays," and "immodest apparel," among other things.

Scottish minister James Durham wrote *The Law Unsealed* in the 1600s. Concerning the Seventh Commandment, he wrote: "And certainly men's minds are often infected with lascivious thoughts, and lustful inclinations, even by the use and sight of gaudy and vain clothing; and we will see light, loose, conceited minds discover themselves in nothing sooner than in their apparel, and fashions, and conceitedness in them."

Beloved Puritan commentator Matthew Henry wrote concerning Proverbs 7:10: "The purity of the heart will show itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women

feature a specialty

Style

CAROLINA LIVING

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Girls will be boys

BY SAMANTHA CRITCHELL
Associated Press

Fashionable women would do well to raid their men's closets come fall, judging from the looks shown on a recent day at New York Fashion Week.

Menswear influences were everywhere during the week of previews.

Reproduced here is part of the "Style" section of the *Charlotte Observer* (2/18/10). Instead of following such styles, the Christian must remember that the Bible clearly teaches that men and women are to dress differently from each other (e.g. Deuteronomy 22:5 and 1 Timothy 2:9).



professing godliness." Concerning Titus 2:3, he wrote: "keeping a pious decency and decorum in clothing and gesture, in looks and speech, and all their deportment, and this from an inward principle and habit of holiness, influencing and ordering the outward conduct at all times."

Puritan minister Cotton Mather, in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* [*The Great Works of Christ in America*], wrote concerning John Eliot, the famous missionary to the American Indians: "His apparel was without any ornament, except that of humility.... And seeing some scholars once he thought a little too gaudy in their cloaths, *Humiliamini, Juvenes, Humiliamini* ['Humble yourselves, my young friends,

Humble yourselves'], was his immediate compliment unto them.

"...But the apostle tells us, 'Nature teaches us that if a man have long hair, 'tis a shame to him;' where, by nature, can be meant no other than the difference of sex, as the word elsewhere is used.

"Thus, Mr. Eliot thought that for men to wear their hair with a luxurious, delicate, feminine prolixity; or for them to preserve no plain distinction of their sex by the hair of their head and face ... and most of all, for ministers of the gospel to ruffle it in excesses of this kind; may prove more than we are well aware displeasing to the Holy Spirit of God. The hair of them who professed religion, long before his death,

grew too long for him to swallow; and he would express himself continually with a boiling zeal concerning it, until at last he gave over, with some regret complaining, ‘The lust is become insuperable!’”

Concerning the use of intoxicating beverages, the Presbyterian Church repeatedly urged total abstinence. In 1830, the General Assembly declared “That this Assembly earnestly recommends to all persons for whose spiritual interests it is bound to consult that they favor the formation of temperance societies on the plan of entire abstinence.”

Southern Presbyterian leader Robert Dabney warned against novels which revelled in crime and sinful activity: “Novel-reading is the murder of time, and on this simple ground every mind which professes to be guided by religious principles is sternly challenged by God’s authority to forego it. ‘Redeem the time.’ ‘The night cometh.’” Dabney quoted a poem to make one of his objections: “Vice is a monster of so frightful mein / As to be hated, needs but to be seen; / Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, / We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

In 1877, the Southern Presbyterian Church General Assembly stated: “The Assembly has uniformly discouraged and condemned the modern dance, in all its forms, as tending to evil, whether practiced in public balls, or in private parlors.”

J.C. Ryle, Anglican Bishop of Liverpool in the 1800s, wrote: “That to look at horses running at full speed is in itself perfectly harmless, no sensible man will pretend to deny. That many plays, such as Shakespeare’s, are among the finest productions of the human intellect, is equally undeniable. But all this is beside the question. The question is whether horse-racing and theatres, as they are now conducted, in England, are not inseparably bound up with things that are downright wicked. I assert without hesitation that

they are so bound up. I assert that the breach of God’s commandments so invariably accompanies the race and the play, that they cannot go to the amusement without helping sin.”

Concerning lawful recreations, Ryle compares them to “healthful medicine in small quantities,—downright poison when swallowed down in huge doses.”

The Free Presbyterian magazine, Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, January 1897, stated: “The subject of dress is one that calls for attention in the times in which we live. It is admitted on many hands that society is at present on the down grade, and it is quite apparent that the downward movement is not confined to the region of the invisible, but appears openly in a variety of forms. One of these forms, we think, is excessive adornment in dress. So widely prevalent has excess in this direction become that not only are light and profane worldlings distinguished for the vanity of their attire, but also many people who are members of the churches, and profess to follow Christ. Now, this ought not to be. In fact, vain attire does not become the man or woman of common sense. How much less does it become those who profess to be dead to the world and its follies and alive unto God through Jesus Christ?”

Presently, the Free Presbyterian Church of North America officially calls on its members to voluntarily abstain from “alcohol, sensual dancing, gambling, and ‘the pleasure crazes of the world.’”

Our own Bible Presbyterian Church in 1944 passed the following statement: “In conformity to the Word of God, and without adding thereto any rules binding the conscience, we do hereby urge our membership to lead a holy life separated from worldly sin. We hold that the participation in games commonly used for gambling sets a snare for our young people, introducing them

to gambling associates and leading them in this evil practice. We hold that the patronage of the commercial theatre is not conducive to the development of the spiritual life. We hold that the promiscuous familiarity between the sexes in modern society in the modern dance and in other modern social customs sets dangerous temptations before the young. We also desire to declare that we deem it wise to pursue the course of total abstinence with regard to alcoholic beverages, and also tobacco; and furthermore we are unalterably opposed to the modern saloon, and the liquor traffic in general. We urge all ministers and Christian leaders among us to discourage these and other worldly practices among the Lord’s people, and to give their testimony uncompromisingly against all forms of sin.”

Innocent and Meaningless Externals?

Some in earlier ages tried as well to excuse ungodly behavior by claiming that externals are not what really matter. Godly Christian leaders were not convinced, and were quick to expose the fallacy of the argument.

John Bunyan, of *Pilgrim’s Progress* fame, minced no words: “The attire of a harlot is too frequently in our day the attire of professors [believers]; a vile thing, and argueth much wantonness and vileness of affections.... Doth a wanton eye argue shamefacedness? Doth wanton talk argue chastity? And doth immodest apparel ... a made speech, and mincing gaits, etc., argue mortification of lusts?...”

The Free Presbyterian magazine, Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, January 1897, stated: “Now, a word or two as to objections that are sometimes raised when plainness of dress is advocated. Some say, ‘Oh, if the heart is right, one’s dress does not make much difference. We should be engaged chiefly in examining our

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hearts.’ To this it may be replied that it is invariably a sure proof the heart is wrong in important respects when vain attire is indulged in, and also that in the large majority of cases it is a real sign that the heart is not right at all.”

John Calvin stated that many women dress as they do to “draw men’s eyes to them, and to have men stand gazing at them.” Calvin fails to be deterred by those who might protest innocence. He continues: “And if this affection and perverse desire were well purged, no doubt women would deck themselves modestly, and we should see no more of these disguisings....”

Bishop J.C. Ryle wrote: “I entreat all professing Christians to remember this, and to take heed what they do. I warn them plainly that **they have no right to shut their eyes to facts which every intelligent person knows** [emphasis ours], for the mere pleasure of seeing a horse-race, or listening to good actors or actresses. I warn them that they must not talk of separation from the world, if they can lend their sanction to amusements which are invariably connected with gambling, betting, drunkenness, and fornication. These are the things ‘which God will judge.’—‘The end of these things is death.’ (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 6:21.)”

John Owen, in a treatise on “Perilous Times,” states: “The habits and attire of the world are the things wherein the world doth design to show itself what it is. Men may read what the world is by evident characters, in the habits and attire that it wears. **They are blind that cannot read vanity, folly, uncleanness, luxury, in the attire the world putteth upon itself...** [emphasis ours]. We have mixed ourselves with the people and have learned their manners.... If we will not be differenced

from the world in our ways, we shall not long be differenced from them in our privileges. If we are the same in our walkings, we shall be so in our worship, or have none at all.”

Concern for Children

One of the greatest concerns of Christians of all ages has been that their covenant children would come to Christ and avoid the snares of the world. William Bradford, in his *Of Plimoth Plantation*, tells us that the Pilgrims’ desire to go to the New World was “Not out of any new-fangledness, or other such like giddie humor ... but for sundrie weightie & solid reasons....” He continues by saying that that which was “lamentable, and of all sorrowes most heavie to be borne, was that many of their children, by these occasions, and ye great licentiousness of youth in this countrie, and ye manifold temptations of the place, were drawne away by evill examples into extravagante & dangerous courses ... tending to dissolutnes & the danger of their soules, to ye great greefe of their parents and dishonour of God. So that they saw their posteritie would be in danger to degenerate & be corrupted.”

Puritan minister Thomas Shepard wrote a letter to his son upon his admission to Harvard College. Oh that Christian parents today would communicate the same to their children. Shepard wrote: “Remember therefore that God looks for and calls for much holiness from you; I had rather see you buried in your grave than grow light, loose, wanton, or profane....”

Shepard continues: “Look that you lose not your precious time by falling in with idle companions, or by growing weary of your studies, or by love of any filthy lust, or by discouragement of heart that you shall never attain to any excellency of knowledge, or by thinking too well of yourself, that you have got as much as is needful for you when you have

got as much as your equals in the same year.... And therefore, though I would not have you neglect seasons of recreation a little before and after meals (and although I would not have you study late in the night usually, yet look that you rise early and lose not your morning thoughts when your mind is most fresh and fit for study), be no wicked example all the day to any of your fellows in spending your time idly....”

An anonymous work from the 17th century, entitled *New England’s First Fruits*, states concerning the newly founded Harvard College: “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3), and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all such knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only gives wisdom, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of Him (Proverbs 2:3).

“That they eschewing all profanation of God’s name, attributes, word, ordinances, and times of worship do study with good conscience, carefully to retain God and love of His truth in their minds, else let them know that (notwithstanding their learning) God may give them up to strong delusions, and, in the end, to a reprobate mind (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12; Romans 1:28).

“That they studiously redeem the time....

“None shall under any pretense whatsoever frequent the company and society of such men as lead an unfit and dissolute life.”

In Proverbs 13:20, we are told: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Bishop Ryle states concerning this principle: “Health is not infectious, but disease is. As a general rule ... the good go down to the level of the bad, and the bad do not come up to the level of the good.”

First Steps Lead to Destruction

Some seek to live as close to the edge as they possibly can. The affections of the heart desire to be as close to the things of the world as possible. The Word of God counsels young people to run in the opposite direction! Paul counseled Timothy: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Bishop Ryle states: “If parents teach young people that there is no harm in the first step, they must never be surprised if they go on to the last.”

Ryle continues later: “It is not open sin, or open unbelief, which robs Christ of His professing servants, so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any article of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil, and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol: they must have the world.... Hundreds will be found to have ... got out of the right course through the seductions of the world, and ended their voyage in shallows and in misery. It is a sorrowful story to tell; but, alas, it is only too common. I cannot wonder that St. Paul says: ‘Come out and be separate.’”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon stated well the utter folly of seeking to

Should we be encouraged when Disney's Hollywood Studios™ sends ads to church youth directors advertising an event where “19 of the most popular acts and most powerful voices in rock, pop and gospel Contemporary Christian music take the stage at Disney's Hollywood Studios™ during Night of Joy!”? Don't be deceived! The world has discovered that there is big money to be made from worldly Christians.

live as close to the world as possible without getting burned: “The course of rebellion against God may be very gradual, but it increases in rapidity as you progress in it; and if you begin to run down the hill, the ever-increasing impetus will send you down faster and faster to destruction. You Christians ought to watch against the beginning of worldly conformity. I do believe that the growth of worldliness is like strife, which is as the letting out of water. Once you begin, there is no knowing where you will stop. I sometimes get this question put to me, concerning certain worldly amusements, ‘May I do so-and-so?’ I am very sorry whenever anyone asks me that question, because it shows that there is something wrong, or it would not be raised at all. If a person's conscience lets him say, ‘well I can go to A,’ he will very soon go on to B, C, D, E, and through all the letters of the alphabet.... When Satan cannot catch us with a big sin,

he will try a little one. It does not matter to him as long as he catches his fish, what bait he uses. Beware of the beginning of evil, for many, who bade fair to go right, have turned aside and perished amongst the dark mountains in the wide field of sin.”

Robert Dabney wrote of the tragedy of a young man who left his godly home and fell prey to the devil's snares: “The sinful pleasures and affections of his home are now all too mild to suit his palate, debauched with the fiery flavor of vices.” Sin dulls the senses and brings dissatisfaction with the simpler pleasures of godly living.

The true child of God is not going to begrudgingly follow the path of righteousness. 1 John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,” or burdensome. The

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Francesca Battistelli
Meredith Andrews

Saturday:
Francesca Battistelli
Brock Gill
Satellites & Sirens
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Psalmist wrote: “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97). Psalm 1 tells us that the righteous man has his “DELIGHT” “in the law of the Lord.” Let us run from sin and be truly happy in the Lord!

Follow Godly Examples

Some may protest that the line is not always clear. What may be aligned with the sinful pleasures of the world in one age, might simply be “out of style” in another age.

In response to such a question, Puritan William Perkins, in his treatise “Concerning the Seventh Commandment,” in *The Order of Salvation and Damnation*, stated: “To set down precisely out of God’s word, what apparel is decent is very hard; wherefore in this case, the judgments and practice of modest, grave, and sincere men, in every particular estate, is most to be followed and men must rather keep too much within the bounds of measure, than to step one foot without the precincts.”

Bishop J.C. Ryle similarly comments: “Finally, in all doubtful cases let us find out what the conduct of the holiest and best Christians has been under similar circumstances. If we do not clearly see our own way, we need not be ashamed to follow good examples. I throw out these suggestions for the use of all who are in difficulties about disputable points in the matter of separation from the world. I cannot help thinking that they may help to untie many knots, and solve many problems.”

Conclusion: A Call to Holiness

The key to this whole subject is found in such verses as 1 Peter 1:15: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Matthew 6:21 says:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If we recognize that we are “strangers and pilgrims” in this present world, we will not be enthralled with the counterfeit delights the world has to offer.

Bishop Ryle states: “To cherish an abiding conviction that what we do not see is just as real as what we do see, and ten thousand times more important,—this, this is one way to be conquerors over the world.”

Ryle further states: “An habitual readiness to let children of the world see that we are guided by other rules than they are, and do not mean to swerve from them,—a calm, firm, courteous maintenance of our own standard of things in every company,—all this will insensibly form a habit within us, and make it comparatively easy to be a separate man. It will be hard at first, no doubt, and cost us many a struggle; but the longer we go on, the easier it will be. Repeated acts of confessing Christ will produce habits. Habits once formed will produce a settled character...”

J.C. Philpot, editor of the *Gospel Standard*, in the middle of the 19th century, wrote: “You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world; it is not your element—it is not your home. You are in it during God’s appointed time—but you wander up and down this world a stranger ... to its company, to its maxims, to its fashions, to its principles, to its motives, to its lusts, to its inclinations, and all in which this world moves as in its native element.”

Mr. Spurgeon, preaching at Exeter Hall on Sunday, March 25, 1860, stated: “... how is it possible for us to honor Jesus Christ, while there is no difference between us and the world? I can imagine that a man may not profess to be a Christian, and yet he may honor his Master, that however is a matter of imagination. I do not know of an instance, but I cannot imagine a man professing to be a Christian, and then acting as the crowd acts, and yet honoring Christ.”

Spurgeon continued: “Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church’s history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus: ‘In this age men could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended.’ Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.”

In his book *The Soul Winner*, Spurgeon states: “I believe that one reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church.”

True happiness is found in godly Christian living. Those who indulge in all the pleasures of the world are rarely happy. Look at the Hollywood stars, many of whom are involved in nasty divorces, drug and alcohol addiction, and various forms of immorality. Thomas Brooks stated well: “A little of this world will satisfy one who is strong in grace, much will not satisfy one who is weak in grace, nothing will satisfy one who is void of grace.”

Let us joyfully “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). May we join in song with John Newton, the great hymn writer:

*Saviour, if of Zion’s city I,
through grace, a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in thy Name:
Fading is the worldling’s
pleasure, All his boasted pomp
and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion’s children know. •*



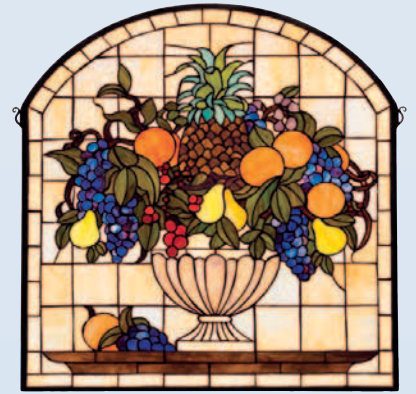
Mr. Brad Gsell is an elder and minister of music of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, and Vice President of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22,23

Gentleness

by Brad K. Gsell



In Galatians 5, the Apostle Paul describes for us the fruit which is to be found in the life of every Christian. This is the sixth in a series of articles which will discuss these characteristics of the Christian life.

In the last issue, we mentioned that the fruit of the Spirit are not isolated, but rather overlap and flow from one to the other. We pointed out in 1 Corinthians 13:4 that “charity” (love) is longsuffering. The next phrase in this verse says that love is also “kind.” The word used here is a form of the same Greek word translated “gentleness” in Galatians 5.

As in all of these virtues, God perfectly contains and displays them within Himself. Indeed, we must remember that these are the “fruit OF THE SPIRIT” (emphasis ours)! They emanate FROM God. This Greek word for “gentleness” is often used in the Bible to describe God’s dealing with mankind. Ephesians 2:7,8 says: “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his KINDNESS toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Matthew Henry describes “gentleness” as “such a sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be entreated when any have wronged us.” It has been a joy in my Christian life to

have had opportunity to observe great men of God who were just as happy to be with those of lower station as with those of great prestige.

Kenneth S. Wuest, in his *Galatians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, states that “Gentleness ... refers to benignity and kindness, a quality that should pervade and penetrate the whole nature, mellowing in it all that is harsh

**“And the servant of
the Lord must not
strive; but be gentle
unto all men....”**

(2 Timothy 2:24)

and austere.” It is “kindness,” “goodness of heart,” “gracious[ness]” (W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

English commentator J.B. Lightfoot states that gentleness is: “a kindly disposition towards one’s neighbours,’ not necessarily taking a practical form.... [gentleness] is potential [goodness].” This is something which comes from God. It is not so much action as it is a way of life, a disposition. Paul tells Timothy: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men...” (2 Timothy 2:24). Paul says that when he was in Thessalonica he was “gentle among [them],

even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The child of God should be known as someone who is kind; someone who cares; someone who understands the infirmities of mankind and seeks to offer a willing ear, a steady hand, and ready help. He is understanding and patient with those who have a harder time understanding, need more time than usual to accomplish a task, or have a hard time dealing with some of the pressures of life.

The *Pulpit Commentary* states that the Greek word used for “gentleness” “etymologically means ‘usable-ness’” and “seems to signify more distinctly ‘sweetness of disposition,’ ‘amiability,’ ‘a compliant willingness to be servicable to others.’” A man who is “gentle” is one whom God can use in a mighty way and who can be of great service to others. Let each of us seek from the Lord a greater measure of gentleness to be used in His service. •

The Good News...

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”

(Ephesians 1:6,7).

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THE FIGHT

Continued from page 7

who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." And again, in Hebrews 2:18, "For in that he [Jesus] himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour [deliver] them that are tempted." Remember Joseph! He resisted the devil. Remember Daniel! He resisted the devil. And we can too.

We can fight a good fight for the glory of God, winning more and more battles against Satan. Because the war has been won by our Lord Jesus Christ, who has crushed the head of the serpent by His death on the cross (Genesis 3:15). And 1 Corinthians 15:57 assures us, "...thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

John Newton wrote the following poem describing his personal fight with sin. May we ponder these words as we conclude this article:

*'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His—or am I not?
If I love—why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
who have never heard His name!
Could my heart so hard remain,
Prayer a task and burden prove,
Every trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Savior's love?
When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Filled with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?
If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mixed with all I do!
You who love the Lord indeed,
Tell me—Is it thus with you?*

*Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall;
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?
Could I joy His saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorred,
Find, at times, the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?
Lord, decide the doubtful case!
You who are Your people's sun,
Shine upon Your work of grace,
If it is indeed begun.
Let me love you more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not loved before,
Help me to begin today!*



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