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The Besetting Sin of Israel

Clovis Ragsdale

Many pages of the Old Testament are taken up with a detailed account of the history of God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. They were the direct descendants of Abraham. These people were able to continue their identity in spite of captivity in a foreign land and in an ordeal in a wilderness land for forty years. Their sins and their moments of triumph are openly catalogued by the inspired writers for the generations of the ages to read and meditate upon.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 10:6 of the things that happened to the Israelites were written for our ensamples or as an admonition for us today. Because human nature changes little over the centuries, the sins that were most common to these people will likely be the ones that will still plague men today.

The sin of murmuring, tempting their leader, and fornication are some of the sins listed as being practiced by these people. However, the sin of idolatry seemed to be the besetting sin of the Hebrew nation. They were guilty of this mistake over and over again. When Moses went up on the mount to receive the Ten Commandments, what did the people do but make themselves a golden calf and worship it. After settling in Canaan we hear of them worshipping the God's of the heathen inhabitants that were left in the land.

Their insistence in worshipping false God's finally led to the overthrow of both the northern and southern kingdom. They had been warned by the prophets that God

would not always tolerate their worshipping of other Gods. Had he not said in the very first of the commandments that, "thou shall have no other Gods before me." but were to worship Jehovah with all their heart, mind, strength, and soul? Had he not said that he was a jealous God?

The problem of idolatry is with us yet today. Maybe we do not worship golden calves, the sun, or the moon, or stars, but we still have things that mean more to us than God. Money, pleasure, position, may be some of the things which could be our idols of today.

God allowed the Israelites to be carried off into captivity, where they lost their freedom, prestige, dignity, and their homeland. The loss of our hope for a home in Heaven is the result for us today when we put other things ahead of Him.

How can we be sure that we put him first? There are several ways. Attending all the services of the congregation suggest interest. Living a clean pure life is indicative of one who puts God first. Being active in the work of the church helps to keep God uppermost in our hearts. The giving of time and talent will help protect us from the tendency of drifting away from God and into idolatry. In time of prosperity Israel would almost always drift away. With the material prosperity of our age Christians can expect to experience a difficult time. It is so easy to be carried away in the wave of worldliness which is sweeping over our country. Our young people, especially, have so much that is tempting for them to think and remain close to God. May we ponder well the mistakes of another people in an age long gone, and may it be the means of helping us to escape making the same mistakes in our time. How well we are able to cope with this problem will deter-

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You may not be able to give your children everything, but you can give them a standard of value, a rule of conduct, a purpose, a vision and an example.

mine where we will spend eternity. We must not let the besetting sin of Israel become the besetting sin of God's people today.

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CHURCHES OF CHRIST
IN THIS AREA**

**EDITORS:
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Do We Need a New Gospel for a New Age?

Orbie Robbins ..

This is a modern age, and for that reason some say we must not have an old fashioned gospel.

Others say this is an up to date world. If people and the things people use don't stay up to date, the world will pass them by. They say we must have an up to date gospel.

They say time does not wait for anybody. It leaves behind those who do not keep step. Again they say, this is a changing world. Nothing remains the same.

Men are always changing things. The style of clothes changes. Political ideas change. Scientific theories change. Religions revise their creeds, and their ideas of conversion change.

Now let us notice some things that have not changed. Man's temporal needs have not changed. He still needs food, clothing, and shelter. Human nature has not changed. Sin has not changed. Eve and her temptation resulted in sin. The three avenues through which she was tempted are: the lust of the flesh; lust of the eye; and the pride of life. Christ was

tempted in the same way. Men today are also tempted in the same way. Since she has not changed, why should the remedy change?

The devil has not changed. He was present in the Garden of Eden, and in Job's time. Today he walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. 5:8. That's why Paul said, "Be not ignorant of Satan's devices." 11 Cor. 2:11. One of his devices is in trying to destroy our faith in the word of God.

Another device is: the transforming of himself as an angel of light, and his ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. 11 Cor. 11:13-15.

The gospel was not designed for a change. Gal. 3:19. The law of Moses was for one race of people — the Jews, and it was temporary. The gospel was planned for all eternity. Eph. 3:10, 11. The church is to stand forever. Dan. 2:44,45.

A new gospel would contain no new truth. Jn. 16:13. The one we have furnishes us unto every good work. 11 Tim. 3:16, 17. It contains all that pertains unto life and godliness. II Pet. 1:3.

The gospel always works when tried. The early church was the greatest organization that the world has ever seen. The early church was the greatest force for evangelizing the world that we have ever seen.

The gospel changes the character of men. For example Peter and John, Lk. 9:54. It changed the murderers of Christ. Acts 2:32, 37. It sustained the early Christians in death. Stephen, Acts 7 and Paul 11 Tim. 4:6,8. It saves us eternally in the world to come. Rev. 22:14.

Therefore, the gospel should not be changed. The curse of heaven rests upon the man or angel that would attempt to change it. Gal. 1:6, 9. It will abide forever. Mt. 24:35. The blood of Christ still saves. Rev. 1:15. I Jn. 1:7. It is applied in the same way today. Rom. 6:3, 5; Acts 22:16.

The Christian life is taught in the golden rule, and exemplified

in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Another gospel could not save. Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:11, 12. Eternal life is a gift. Rom. 6:23. God gives it on condition that we please Him. Rom. 9:19, 24. We cannot change those conditions.

In conclusion let us consider the importance of the gospel. We will be judged by it. Rom. 2:16; Jn. 12:48. Since we will be judged by it, we need to obey it. I Peter 4:16, 17. The great invitation is to all who will accept and obey, and then live it. Mt. 11:28, 30.

Have you accepted this invitation? Your acceptance or rejection will determine where you shall spend eternity.

THE ART OF HAPPINESS

You can't pursue happiness and catch it. Happiness comes upon you unawares while you are helping others.

The philosophy of happiness is pointedly expressed in the Old Hindu proverb, which reads, "Help thy brother's boat across, and lo! thine own has reached the shore."

Happiness is like perfume — you can't spray it on others without getting some on yourself!

Happiness does not depend upon a full pocketbook, but upon a mind full of rich thoughts and a heart full of rich emotions.

Happiness does not depend upon what happens outside of you but what happens inside of you; it is measured by the spirit in which you meet the problems of life.

Happiness is a state of mind Lincoln once said: "We are as happy as we make up our minds to be."

Happiness doesn't come from doing what we like to do, but from liking what we have to do.

Happiness comes from putting your hearts into your work and doing it with joy and enthusiasm.

Happiness does not come from doing easy work, but is the afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of a difficult task that demanded our best.

The New Birth - -

By Grady Reaves

Ye must be born again, are words spoken by Christ, in his conversation with Nicodemus, a Jewish ruler. (Jn. 3:7) Nicodemus was made to marvel because the Lord had said to him, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:3) Nicodemus could understand the physical birth. Being a Jew he was under the old law. When Christ said ye must be born again, implies that one has been born once before. Nicodemus did not understand that Jesus was speaking about the new law, and his spiritual kingdom (the church) which was soon to come into existence. That we must be born into, by the new birth. Therefore the question, can a man be born again when he is old, by the birth of the flesh. Jesus makes it very clear, when he said. Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:5)

The old law was soon to pass away. Paul tells us, Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (Col. 2:14) When Christ died on the cross, the old law died also, it being nailed to the cross. The new law came with the Spiritual king-

Happiness grows out of harmonious relationships with others based on attitudes of goodwill, tolerance, understanding, and love.

Happiness comes from keeping constructively busy.

Happiness is found in little things: a baby's smile, a letter from a friend.

The master secret of happiness is to meet the challenge of each new day with serene faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God" and we prove our love to God as we give help and encouragement to our fellow men.

—Selected

dom (the church) on Pentecost. (Acts 2) At that time the new birth become binding to all people who had reached the age of accountability. The new law includes both Jew and Greek.

The new birth does not come about in a haphazard way. But by the ordained plan, that pleased God. (Eph. 1:5) The one that pleased God then, is the only plan that pleased him today. Christ became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him. (Heb. 5:9) To be born again, we must obey his plan. First we must have faith by the word of God. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17) We must hear and observe all the word teaches about the new birth, in order to walk by faith. We cannot be born again otherwise.

We must believe, (have faith) But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb. 11:6) The word IMPOSSIBLE rules out salvation without faith. In the same manner the word of God includes Repentance. Christ speaking: I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3) Faith that comes by the word of God will bring about repentance. We will be willing to turn from the former things of this life.

Confession is one of the steps in first principles, or the new birth. The Eunuch confessed that he believed Christ to be the Son of God. (Acts 8) Confession is to be from the heart, but made known by the mouth. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom. 10:10) Christ speaks to us, Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 10:32) In these scriptures we learn we are to believe in our heart that Christ is the Son of God. And that we are to confess the same before man.

If the new birth stopped with confession, where would the water

spoken of in John three and five come in. Again let us hear the word of God, that produces our faith. As Christ went to the grave and was raised to a new life. So must we be buried in baptism and raised to a new life in Christ. Paul makes this very clear. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (Rom. 6:3-5) In baptism we put on Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal. 3:27) Here is the only place in the law of Christ that tells us how we put on Christ. We know the word is speaking of water baptism from the example of Philip and the Eunuch. (Acts 8) Also Peter tells us, Speaking about the Ark. Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doeth also now save us. (1 Peter 3:20-21) Water bore the Ark up with the eight souls saving them from the flood. We are buried by baptism in water and raised to live a new life. The old life buried

with its sins, raised to walk a new life.

The above are all found in the word of God. That is all that is found to bring about the new birth. To add something more would be to add to the word of God. To leave out one of the commands would be to subtract from the word of God. In other words it would be to say that God has some commands that are not binding. God simply did not give one commandment that was not essential. The above commands constitutes the new birth. Will you obey the things of the new testament, being then born by the water and by the spirit, living the Christian life until death; that you can live with God, Christ and the heavenly host in the after while.

How Many Religions ?

Richard England
Mammoth Spring, Ark.

We continue to be flooded by literature, advertisements, and state ments which support the idea that we, being free people of the United States, have the right to any kind of religion we desire. As far as the laws of the land are concerned, THAT IS CORRECT. It is good to live in such a system of society that we may have the freedom to function in any field as we please, as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others. Yet, living in such a country where we are given the freedom to follow any religious beliefs we desire to accept does not give us assurance that just any religous belief, regardless of its origin, will produce the desired ersults. The government does not, and is not in a position to give a guarantee that all these different religions of our country will save one from eternal condemnation. God himself has given us the right to choose what, who, how, when, and why we worship. But, He did not tell us that we could be saved by worshipping just any object in any fashion, any time, for any personal reason. He told us we have the choice, yes: but he also told us the outcome of whatever choice we might make.

The word "religion" comes from a word which originally meant to "bind back". In our use of it, it means to bind back to God. Man is pictured as falling away from God. This is done by man sinning. What ever effort is made on the part of man to renew his former relationship with God is called "religion". All such efforts are not effective, that is, they do not all produce that desired effect. Whatever it may be that brings the desired effect (whether it is one way or many), is TRUE RELIGION. It is not a system which makes men think they have attained something they have not. It is TRUE.

Now the question comes, how many TRUE RELIGIONS are there? First we make the statement that any religion which would cause one to worship anything or anyone besides GOD is false. God has given us the message that to worship any besides Him is sinful. With this, all readers of this paper will readily agree. Second, in worshipping God, it cannot be done in just anyway WE might devise or choose to do so. The Bible is full of examples of people who worshipped God, but did so in an unauthorized fashion and were rejected. Such is the case of Cain, Nadab and Abihu and the children of Israel on many occasions.

That which we do religiously is that which we have been taught. Paul said that if any preached (taught) any other gospel (doctrine, teaching or message) than which eh taught, they would be accursed. (Galatians 1:8,9) That which we have been taught we believe. That which we believe is our faith. Paul said there is "one faith". Jude says we are to "earnestly contend for THE faith" Jesus prayed that all who would follow him would "speak the same thing".

There is then, only one TRUE RELIGION planted in the hearts of men today. It is that which is taught in the New Testament. to teach, believe, or practice any other is to violate the law of God.

Garments of righteousness never go out of style.

It doesn't require a trained nurse to nurse a grudge. Hell is simply remoteness to God through persistent sin.

Do not be driven to prayer; practice prayer as a privilege.

The man who thinks only of saving himself still needs saving.

Stepping heavenward is simply following the plain path of duty, which always leads upward.

Focus attention on present duty — the task in hand. Divine commands are written in the present tense.

If you can see no sign post on the way - a "Thus-Saith-the-Lord"

News and Notes

Brother Grady Reeves has consented to write for the paper. Brother Reeves preaches full time for the Welcome Hill congregation.

David Albright preaches for English Bluff each third Sunday and Sunday night. David is attending Crowley's Ridge Christian College.

Richard England attended the Freed-Hardeman lectureship the first week in February.

We would like to have the meeting schedules of as many of the congregations as know the exact date of their meeting.

— you do not know where you are going. — You are lost.

The criticisms we hear concerning a fellow man often reveal more clearly the character of the critic than the character of the one criticized.

Some men desired to divide Jesus' natural body. Do you desire to divide his spiritual body, the church? Very earnestly are we admonished "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

"My little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21) You can guard or keep yourself from idols (false gods) only by keeping the true and living God in the forefront of your affections (Matt. 22: 37, 38).

Non-Christian: "I consider every man guilty until he is proven to be innocent."

Christian: "I consider every man innocent until he is proven to be guilty."

DUCK HIM AGAIN

Jim was down by the river bank watching the parson baptize his friend Sam, in the icy water. When the preacher raised Sam to the surface of the water Jim asked him: "Is the water cold, Sam?" "Noooo-oo-o," chattered Sam. "Better duck him Again, preacher," advised Jim, "He hasn't stoppec' lyin' yet!"

- via Salem Bulletin.