

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Volume 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

September 1977

Number 81

Led by the Spirit

By Harold Turner

Recently we received a letter from a person who inquired about women preaching the gospel publicly in the presence of men. The person's concern seemed primarily centered upon the statement of Romans 8:14, which states, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." His question was, "Does the Spirit of God lead women to preach publicly in the presence of men?"

That the Spirit of God leads the Christian in his service to God is a fact that few believers would attempt to deny. But how the Spirit leads us today is where the problem arises. We are led by the Spirit, but how?

Let's observe first some things about the Spirit's leading in the Old Testament. In 2 Peter 1:20-21, the apostle Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." From this we learn that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were written as the prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit. They did not write their own interpretation of what the Spirit revealed to them, but wrote as the Spirit directed them. The people to whom the message was written received not the message of the prophets, but rather the message of the Spirit of God. That message was intended to guide their lives into ways that were pleasing to God. Now, when the people responded to this message and followed it, were they not being led by the Spirit? But how was the Spirit leading them? Was it not by the message he inspired and guided the prophets to write? The Spirit led them through the written word.

But, does this same principle apply for us today? In Acts 1:2 we learn that after Jesus returned to heaven, "He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." These men (the apostles) first preached this message to the people by mouth. In Acts 2:4, when the apostles received the Holy Ghost, they began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. When the people heard this message they were pricked in the heart and questioned what to do for the forgiveness of the sins with

which the Spirit, through the apostles, had charged them. Through Peter, the Spirit instructed them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and they that gladly received his word were baptized. The Spirit had led them to salvation. But how? Through the preaching of the apostles.

After publicly and privately preaching the word of the Spirit, the apostles put that same message in written form. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, the apostle Paul stated, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." How had Paul received these commandments? In Galatians 1:11-12 he wrote, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now, how did Christ reveal this message to Paul? In Ephesians 3:1-5 Paul tells us that he received the message by revelation of the Spirit, and that he wrote that message so that when others read it they would know what was revealed to him. So the message written by the apostles was directed by the Holy Spirit. The message then was not that of the apostles, but rather that of the Spirit of God. Notice in Revelation chapters two and three, John was instructed to write a message to the seven churches in Asia. The closing statement of each letter was, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." How did the Spirit speak to the churches? Was it not through the written word? The Spirit is the author of the Bible. He guided the writing of both the Old and New Testaments. He speaks to all of us alike through this written word. He leads us all alike through this written word. For this written word is the message of the Spirit to all believers. For me to be led by the word is to be led by the Spirit.

In John 16:13 Jesus assured the apostles that they would receive all truth. The total and complete revelation of God's truth would come through the apostles. There are no new revelations. Everything that God wants us to know has been revealed through his inspired writers of the Bible. The Spirit has

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THE PRESENT DISTRESS

By Cliff Stewart

At the time Paul wrote the first letter to the church in Corinth they were undergoing some "Present distress" (7:26). Whether these troubled times were local and temporary, or of such general nature as to involve the whole church is not stated. But the precedent conditioned upon the "present distress" would be applicable whenever and wherever such conditions existed. The character of the distress of which Paul spoke was such that one unmarried would be spared the trouble in the flesh and cares shared by those who were married (7:28; 32-33). Therefore, Paul gave this inspired advice and recommendation, that those who had sufficient power over their own body as to be content unmarried, would, because of the present distress, be better off unmarried.

How much of what is taught in 1 Cor. 7 is to be modified by "the present distress"? Were the mutual responsibilities incumbent upon husbands and wives in verses three through five limited to only such times of distress? "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." (7:10-11). Is this to be applied only to the "present distress"? Does the widows liberty to marry whom she will: "only in the Lord" (7:39) refer only to the time and conditions under which Paul penned these words?

Efforts are made to set aside the principles governing the marriage relationship taught in 1 Cor. 7 by the argument that this was all said in view of local and temporary conditions and should not be generally applied today. However, Paul made the statement under considerations in view of only one question: i.e. should one be married or single? Because of the "present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be." To be what? Single! (The general rule was that it is not good for man to be alone, Gen. 2:18.) But if one elects to become married, then in spite of distressing circumstances, he is to be governed by God's laws concerning the married state taught in this chapter. The "present distress" is misapplied when extended beyond the one question to which Paul applied it: in view of existing circumstances should they seek marriage.

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What Is Your Life?

By Lavern Stewart

James answers this question in this way, "For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth." (James 4:14). He used a figure of speech, called a metaphor, meaning that life is like a mist or fog that disappears quickly. Further, James teaches that we cannot know what will happen tomorrow, whether or not we will be alive, or if alive whether or not we will be able to take care of business. If we can not know what one day will bring, then certainly we can not know what a year will bring. We must know that if it is God's will for us to live till the next day or the next year we will do so, James 4:15. To further emphasize our dependance on God for our lives, notice Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being;" In the 90th Psalm, the writer says that our lives are soon cut off; therefore, we must count our days as important, and know that during these few days we are to acquire wisdom.

We must not waste time. If we do, then we are wasting our lives. Let us learn to live today. All of the past days are beyond recall, and days of the future may never come to us. According to Paul, in Second Corinthians 6:2, the present, not the past or the future, is the important matter. Serve God today! Be happy serving your fellow-creatures today.

One life showing the way is better than ten tongues trying to tell it."

"It is a lot easier for a fellow to love his enemies than to make them love him."

"Some folks aren't interested in anything unless it's none of their business."

Violence And Christianity

By Clovis Ragsdale

The ever increasing amount of violence in our present day is of growing concern to the leaders and citizens of our country. Christians have ever been concerned about violence because of its sinful nature. History records the ebb and flow of this scourge. We seem to be entering a period of time where violence is on the increase.

Let's notice three periods of time in Biblical history when violence was very great. First in Genesis 6:11-13, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come up before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Only Noah and his immediate family survived this purging of the earth of violence.

The second period of violence is during the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were localities where sin and violence became so great that God wiped them from the face of the earth.

The third period where violence abounded is mentioned in Romans 1, where Paul tells of man's wickedness in the time of Christ. The world at that time was full of idolatry and perversion. During this time Christ came into the world and began teaching new doctrines and standards to remove violence from the lives of all who would follow him.

God condoned some violence in times of old. The children of Israel were commanded on occasions to destroy their enemies, even to the killing of women and children. However, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a time when God's people would be less violent. In the 53rd chapter he revealed the nature of the coming Christ. He was to be meek like a lamb, and would think of others before himself. When Christ came he taught his followers to love others as they loved themselves. In the past man had been taught to love those who loved in return, but Jesus said that his followers must even love their enemies. Furthermore, he taught that we should turn the other cheek and to go the second mile. Paul instructed the Galatian Christians in Gal. 6:10, to do good unto all men, and especially to one's brother in Christ.

The Christian life is to be a life of non-violence. We are to teach this way of life to our children and to our neighbors. We are to practice this in our business and in all associations with our fellowman. If enough people will heed the teachings of Christ, we may be able to stem the tide, if not the world is in for some perilous

Topical Bible Lessons

By Harold Turner

INTRODUCTION:

1. 2 Timothy 2:15, To properly understand and apply God's word, we must do what?
2. Hebrews 8:6-13, Into how many covenants (testaments) is the Bible divided?
3. Hebrews 9:11-22, With what were these testaments dedicated?

WHAT WAS THE FIRST COVENANT?

1. Hebrews 8:9, The first covenant was made when God led the people out of what land?
2. 1 Kings 8:9, 21, Upon what was this covenant written?
3. Exodus 34:27-28, What was written upon two tables of stone?
4. Deuteronomy 4:13, Of what did this covenant consist?

WITH WHOM WAS THIS COVENANT MADE?

1. Deuteronomy 5:1-3, Did God make the first covenant with anyone other than the Israelites?
2. Exodus 34:27-35, Through whom did God give the first covenant?
3. John 1:17, Is the first covenant called "the law"?
4. Romans 2:14, Did the Gentile nations have the law?
5. Ephesians 2:11-12, Was the covenant, which was given to the Israelites, given to the Gentiles?

WHY WAS THE FIRST COVENANT GIVEN?

1. Galatians 3:19, The law (first covenant) was added because of what?
2. Romans 3:20; 7:7, This covenant gave the people a knowledge of what?
3. Galatians 3:24-25, This covenant was a schoolmaster to bring the people unto what?

times. Indeed the Scriptures teach that before the end of the world there will be difficult times. Paul so stated in 2 Timothy 3:1. The 24th chapter of Matthew and portions of the book of Revelations seem to predict a great period of wickedness just before the end. Hopefully with the concerned efforts of Christians, violence can be held down, and the world spared the horrors of mass violence.

Married, Divorced, Remarried And Baptized—What Then?

By Dan Jenkins

The condition of those who come to obey the gospel having had several marriages is a problem that confronts every congregation. Almost every person who engages actively in personal work has come across the situation where one who is now living with someone other than his first wife wants to become a Christian and asks advice about what he should do regarding his present marriage. If rather than asking about this marriage the man informed us that he was a polygamist we'd have no problem advising him. If he were living in a homosexual "marriage" (now legal in two of our states) we'd again have no problem. However, we are not confronted by these latter situations but are confronted by the first, one now living with a second or third wife, and many false teachings are being circulated about what the Bible teaches about this matter.

One idea finding wider acceptance today is the idea that what the Bible has to say about marriage and divorce is directed only to Christians and those not children of God are not subject to this teaching until after they obey the gospel. The result of this teaching is that one becomes married to whatever wife he has when he obeys the gospel. The primary problem with accepting this idea is that most of the arguments advanced supporting it are simply assertion! Where does the Bible convey such an idea? Would one get the idea that what Jesus teaches about marriage applies only to Christians by His words, "whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery?" (Matt. 5:32). Would one get the idea that Bible teaching is reserved only for Christians from Paul's words, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband?" (Rom. 7:2). Would the words of Jesus in Matthew 19 lead one to believe that Divine instructions on marriage are for Christians only? "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Men today say "Only Christians," the Bible says, "Whosoever."

If the Bible teaching about marriage applies only to Christians then a very interesting question for those who affirm this is, "How can one not a Christian be guilty of adultery?" Paul's words to the Corinthians show that aliens can be guilty of adultery. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor

adulterers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you . . ." (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). If they did not violate the verse previously cited, what passages did they violate? Let those who affirm that the Bible teaching on marriage does not apply to non-Christians show how the Corinthians had been adulterers before they were Christians.

Look again at Matthew 19 where the Bible describes a wife who has been put away and remarried as guilty of adultery. Now suppose that the one she has married is not a Christian. If the teaching is true that the non-Christian is not accountable to the law of God he commits no sin, but she commits adultery. Is such feasible? Now take the illustration one step further. Suppose that she recognizes her sin and at the same time her husband obeys the gospel and becomes a Christian. What are the actions each must take according to the view that marriage laws apply only to Christians? She has violated Matt. 19:9. She has married another and lives in adultery. He has never been in adultery, either before or after his baptism; what are both of them to do? The idea advanced by some is that he is now married to her by virtue of his baptism, but what about her? If she is right now, then her adultery is changed into marriage by his repentance!

To see how wrong the above idea is, change the illustration this much. Let them both be Christians before the marriage and notice the contrast in actions most all would demand. I suppose the moral of such a story would be that if a woman plans to commit adultery it is to her advantage for her to make sure her "husband-to-be" is not a Christian; for then she later can turn her adultery into marriage by having him obey the gospel! Can you believe that any would accept this view? Yet more and more there are those in the church who believe that what Jesus taught about marriage applies only to Christians. As such beliefs become more widely spread more and more congregations will be filled with "Hollywood-type" marital situations.

Who can commit adultery? "Whosoever shall put away his wife . . ." Who can commit adultery? "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart." Who can commit adultery? Some say, "Only Christians," the Bible says, "Whosoever."

When confronted with the Biblical evidence showing that what the Bible says about adultery it says to all men, some will take a different approach. In order to deal with a most unpleasant situation (what to tell those living with a second or

third mate who want to obey the gospel) some teach that when one who is living in adultery becomes a Christian the blood of Jesus through baptism "changes" the adulterous relationship into a marriage sanctioned by God.

They recognized the force of the statement in 1 Cor. 6 that some of the Christians there had been guilty of adultery before their conversion. (Again we say to those who affirm that the alien sinner is not subject to Bible teaching on marriage, "What verse did they violate to be guilty of this sin?") Note how Paul's statement shows that aliens can commit adultery. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you . . ." They were guilty of adultery before their conversion! But, it is argued, Paul goes on to say, "Ye are washed . . . sanctified . . . justified . . ." and these words show that though they had been guilty of adultery God's grace in saving them has made it possible for them to continue to live with their present mates. None doubt that God's mercy removed from them the guilt of all their past sins, but does it necessarily follow that their adultery is now a marriage?

The argument is also advanced in words like this, "The blood of Jesus has cleansed such a man from all of his sin and has changed that which before was wrong into that which is now acceptable. Does not Paul say, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." Surely you do not deny that the blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse him from all his sin!"

To help us see this matter more clearly note that adultery was not the only sin those in Corinth had been guilty of before they were washed. Verse nine shows that some had been homosexuals before they were washed, sanctified and justified. Honestly now, what should be the course of action that these homosexuals should take when they became Christians? Would any affirm that such could maintain any homosexual relations they had before they became Christians? If not, why not? Using the "logic" now used by some in relation to the man in an adulterous relationship could not we say, "The blood of Jesus has cleansed such a man from all of his sins and has changed that which before was wrong into that which is now acceptable. Does not Paul say, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called?" Surely you do not deny that the blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse him of all his sin!"

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Married, Divorced, Remarried And Baptized—What Then? (Cont.)

If one must cease homosexual practices after he becomes a Christian, why must he not also cease his adultery? If one can continue in his adultery why can he not also continue in his homosexual practices? Can we not see that the two cases are parallel in nature and the "logic" that justifies the one must also of necessity justify the other?

The same argument can be made for the other things listed in 1 Cor. 6. Before the Corinthians obeyed the gospel they had been thieves. Could they continue being such when they became Christians? They had been worshippers of idols, could they continue this after their baptism? They had been covetous, could they continue in this? They had been drunkards, could they continue in this? They had been extortioners, could they continue such dishonesty? If they could not continue being idolaters, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards or extortioners by what process of logic can any affirm that they could continue to be adulterers?

Another way to see this truth clearly is to note the figurative usage of the term adultery in the Old Testament. Several times, particularly in the book of Ezekiel, God's relation to His people is spoken of as a marriage and their unfaithfulness to Him is spoken of as adultery. On many occasions they were caused to repent by the preaching of the prophets. When they repented what do you imagine they did with their idols with whom they had been guilty of adultery? Could they keep them? To make the situation even more parallel suppose that a pagan Gentile became converted to Judaism. Just what do you suppose he would have had to do with his idols? Does anyone believe it would be right for the converted pagan to keep his idols? If we can see the course one must take in reference to spiritual adultery why can we not see the course regarding actual adultery is identical?

What is truly amazing about this is the ease we have in understanding the matter if the adulter is already a Christian. I personally know of no one who affirms that a Christian who marries into an adulterous relationship can remain in such if he simply will "repent" of it. If almost everyone can see the course of action to be taken by this man, why can they not see what course should be taken by the non-Christian in the same situation? If one admits God's law of marriage applies to the non-Christian as well as the Christian then does it not follow that if the blood of Jesus would make it right for the non-Christian to keep a second or third wife, that same blood would make it right for the Christian to do the same thing? If one states that the non-Christian did not know about God's law and therefore there is a difference to

be made, then it would follow that the Christian who does not know God's teaching when he marries into an adulterous relationship would be allowed to keep a second or third companion! Truth is not determined by whether one knows the law of God but by whether one is under that law! Settle first the question, "Does God's law of marriage apply to all men," (Matt. 19:9 says, "Whosoever," what verse says, "Only Christians?") Then whatever the Christian who violates it should do is the same thing the non-Christian should do!

When confronted with the force of the above teaching the only other place for one who seeks to justify the adultery of the non-Christian to go is to appeal to the future of the children of a second marriage. An appeal to such in the first place is to acknowledge that Divine teaching cannot justify the adultery and thus one resorts to an emotional argument as proof. At best such arguments are a weak basis for one to build his future on. Fortunately the Bible does comment about this matter. In Ezra's day the people had formed marriages that violated God's law for them and children had resulted from these marriages. To those who ask about the children of an adulterous marriage and whether their presence should change the course of action for those who have violated God's teaching in entering into these marriages we point you to the words of Ezra's day. "We have trespassed against our God and have taken strange wives of the people of the land, yet there is hope concerning Israel. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." (Ezra 10:2, 3). The presence of children cannot change what God says about marriage and divorce.

Led by the Spirit (Cont.)

warned that if any person preaches a gospel other than that preached by the apostles, he is to be accursed, Galatians 1:8-9. No person is led by the Spirit of God to do anything contrary to what has been revealed in the written word.

Now, does the Spirit lead women to preach the gospel publicly in the presence of men? The Spirit has stated in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." And again in 1 Corinthians 14:34, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." This is the Spirit's message to women. They are not authorized or led by the Spirit to preach publicly in the presence of men. Women are not authorized to occupy the leading role in the church.

Women were not selected to be apostles, elders, deacons, or preachers in the early church. There is no authority for such today. While women have an important role to fulfill in the work of the Lord, they are not led by the Spirit of God to do what God has authorized men alone to do.

The Spirit leads men to salvation through the same gospel that the apostles preached as they were guided by the Spirit of God. He leads us in Christian service by the same message that the early Christians received. There is no miraculous leading of the Spirit today. Only by the written word does he lead us today. That word is perfect to thoroughly furnish us unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is the rock upon which life can be built to withstand all storms (Matt. 7:24-25). In Acts 20:32, Paul said that this word is able to build us up and to give us an inheritance in heaven. It is our perfect guide for Christian living. May we learn to follow this message of the Spirit.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Agnos	\$ 5.00
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A member of the church	40.00
O. E. Warren	5.00
Mrs. Willie Roberts	2.00
Mrs. Owen Mansfield	5.00
Herbert & Wilma Cozort	5.00
Clyde & Delphia Smith	4.00
A member of the church	10.00

Handwritten notes:
 7/27/2017
 10/1/2017
 10/1/2017