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The Moral Problems We Face

By Harold Turner

A little over ten years ago an article was published which had been written by the late Senator John McClelland. In this article he stated, "Within the next 24 hours, in our United States of America 25 people will have been murdered, 56 women, or perhaps girls of tender age, will have been forcibly raped, 305 armed robberies will have been committed, 505 aggravated assaults will have been inflicted, 1,265 automobiles will have been stolen, 1,925 major thefts will have been committed, and over 3,000 burglaries will have occurred. Over 7,000 major crimes are committed in this country every day, day in and day out, Sundays included, for crime takes no holidays."

Another writer, discussing the moral situation of our country, wrote, "More than 15,000,000 copies of girlie magazines are bought every month by a gullible public. Three billion copies of all kinds of salacious literature are sold annually, enough to fill to overflowing five buildings the size of the Empire State Building. The sale of smut in this country is 20 times more than all religious publications combined. The pornographic industry grosses approximately five-hundred-million dollars a year. Seventy-five to 90 percent of all pornographic literature ends up in the hands, and therefore minds, of our young people."

Numerous other statistics show that crime and immorality are constantly on the increase. The moral standards in our nation, and even among many religious people, have been compromised and lowered. Practices and words that once would have shocked the major part of our society are now openly displayed on TV.

Such reports as those mentioned above make us wonder just how long the God of heaven will permit such wickedness to continue. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

But what is even more shocking is why this so-called Christian nation permits such to happen. Over one-half of our nation professes to be associated with some religious body. Since 1940 it is reported that church membership has grown 76 per cent, but during the same

time crime has increased more than 128 per cent.

Our country has long had the reputation of being a Bible believing nation, which was founded upon laws largely based upon the moral precepts of the Bible. But many things have changed radically. For example, in 1777 our Congress voted an expenditure of \$300,000 to buy and distribute Bibles throughout the country, but recently our Supreme Court handed down a decision which even forbids Gideons to give away Bibles on public school property.

While these reports may be alarming, we still believe that America is the greatest and best nation on earth. However, this does not justify the crime and immorality, and neither should it cause us to be indifferent about the situation. There are causes for the decline of moral principles, and there are things we can do to make our nation a better society.

Some of the causes rest upon the shoulders of our religious society.

First and foremost, there is a great difference between professing a religion and practicing Christianity. While much of today's religion centers around social reform, the great need is teaching repentance and reconciliation with God, involving respect for and obedience to his moral laws.

Another weakness is that in conviction among many religious people. Church people have been content to go along with the crowd rather than to stand up and be counted for their conviction in God's word. Such infirmity has allowed the constant increase of immorality to take place.

Another weakness is seen in the irrelevancy of preaching, which has drawn people's attention away from the Bible. Many preachers have minimized sin or ignored it altogether. The fundamental subjects of the Bible are sin, our accountability for sin, repentance of sin, the cross of Christ, our need for obedience to the gospel, and the judgment of God, and etc. These subjects have lost their popularity among many preachers.

Is That All There Is?

By Mike Warner

We go to work and we come home. Those of us who are more fortunate make our regular pay checks. We pay our bills and struggle to get ahead. The most fortunate among us do manage to get a little ahead and are able to acquire more and better "things".

The women who don't work and go through the same routine as the men, stay at home and have their own routine. They wash, iron, cook, wash dishes, clean house, and care for children.

We take great delight in our children and in watching them grow up. We worry about their morals and the influences and pressures that are on them today. We lose contact with them and then worry when they express ideas and opinions that are foreign to our own.

We all continue in the routine of our work-a-day worlds, somehow convinced that all our problems could be solved if we had just "a few more dollars" or a few more "things". In the back of our minds is the unshakable conviction that somehow, in some way, everything is going to turn out alright.

We pursue "happiness" through entertainment with a fervency unmatched in the rest of the world. A large portion of our incomes goes toward the continued seeking of this "joy" that we are sure can be attained - though we somehow never quite seem to reach it.

But, is this all there is to life? The routine, the grind, the continual search for a fulfillment and a satisfaction that we are unable to identify or attain? Do we not feel deep down within us an emptiness, a longing for something more meaningful?

The "something" that is missing from so many lives today is God. "Man cannot live by bread alone!" Man was created to live in this world WITH God! The life without God will continue to be unfilled and unsatisfying and, basically, unhappy. Regardless of the effort put forth and the front put up, the non-spiritual person will be found living a life that is only half a life. And he will continually hear the question in his own mind, "Is this all there is?"

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**FULTON COUNTY
GOSPEL NEWS**

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Be Thou An Example

By Ordell Heavin

In I Tim. 4:12, the apostle Paul instructed a young preacher to be careful to guard his influence as a Christian. Even in the Old Testament days, people of God were to live in such a manner as to lead their neighbors to Jehovah (Zech. 8:23).

When people can tell that we "have been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13), they will desire to see Him (John 12:21). In the past few years, it seems to me that members of the church have overlooked the impact of their conduct upon others. It is certainly true -- though sad -- that in the realm of modesty and morals, many professing Christianity have conducted themselves just like the world. Though our Lord made it clear that his servants "are not of this world." (John 15:19) The apostle Paul said that we must be new creatures, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17). When so much worldliness abounds in our lives, we will truly have a difficult time winning souls for Christ. We are reminded in I Tim. 4:12 to be an example in several ways, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." This shows that we must influence members of the body of Christ the same as those outside of Christ as we pursue a closer walk with God. Let's notice each of these in which we are to be an example.

We are to be an example in word and manner of life. In Matt. 12:36, 37 Jesus taught that our words will either condemn or justify us at the judgment. The book of Proverbs informs us that words properly spoken paint a beautiful picture. In Prov. 18:21 we learn that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Truly we must guard our speech. In Col. 4:6 we are taught, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer every man." The decisions we make each day soon fashion our eternal destiny. Our reputation is generally based upon our style or pattern of conduct, as the world about us views our emphasis in life. To be a genuine example of righteousness we must display, over a period of time, an every day loyalty to our Lord.

We are to be an example in charity. Self-interest is the opposite of true love for God and our fellow man. Charity seeks the opportunity to do good even

when we would like to retaliate. In no other way can Christ be seen in us more clearly than when we love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us. Because of the world's influence it is rare indeed to see love one for another in practice. For, unselfish love is ever ready to serve others. Look at what Paul taught in I Corinthians 13 about the way love is expressed and controls the Christian life.

We are to be an example in spirit. To be an example in spirit would obviously include bearing the fruit of the spirit - "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. 5:22-23.) It is truly wonderful to find a spiritually minded person living the example spiritual life. So many are too busy with self-interests to study the Bible, pray, and share the gospel with others.

We are to be an example in faith. The Christian is to walk by faith. (2 Cor. 5:7) In Hebrews 11 we learn the blessing and influence of trusting obedience as expressed in the walk of faith by such great men as: Able, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Joshua and others. The faith of these great heroes still influences others today in faithful service to God. Our faith is strengthened through out study and obedience to the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

We are to be an example in purity. Purity means undefiled, to be holy, clean, chaste, unmixed with evil. Purity of action proceeds from the heart that is clean in thought and motive. In Phil. 4:8 we are told to think upon things that are pure. When the inside is pure it will express itself in outward purity. A life that is expressed in purity is a great influence to both Christian and sinner.

Let us awaken to righteousness and true holiness, and be the kind of influence that is becoming of the gospel of Christ. And let us constantly put away from ourselves those things that may cause a bad influence for the cause of Christ. Be thou an example.

"It is easier to raise a storm than to calm one."

"We usually tell the faults of others because it takes less time than to tell our own."

The Moral Problems We Face (Cont.)

One other final cause, though numerous others could be mentioned, is that of the hopeless division of the churches. Religious division is a result of lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. Jesus prayed that all believers be united as ONE, that the world might believe in him. (John 17:20-21.) Jesus recognized that divisions among professed believers would result in many disbelieving in him. Divisions cause confusion and disrespect for the Lord himself. J. Edgar Hoover once said that religious divisions in America was one of the greatest curses of our nation.

Our only hope is to shake off this spiritual laxity and get back to the Bible for moral and spiritual values. We must hold up God's word as the only guide and hope for a better society. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:14-15.)

Improving our moral situation will never be done on the mass movement basis, but by beginning with the individual. Each one of us must strive for moral improvement. Are you willing to be an example and leader in moral improvement? Let's each determine to get back to the Bible moral values and principles, and thereby improve and preserve our nation.

"Too bad that some of these talks that come straight from the shoulder couldn't have originated a little higher up."

The Need for More Salt

By Clovis Ragsdale

Very early in his sermon on the mount, Jesus made a statement concerning those who would become his followers. He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matt. 5:13) It was a common practice of Jesus to use things well known to the people to teach many of his great lessons.

We all understand that salt is used mainly for preserving food and making it taste better. However, if salt is not properly cared for it will lose its power and taste, and become worthless. Jesus used this illustration to show that his people would be able to save souls and present a way of life that would make for a better society for all. While it seems that by nature our society is wicked and violent, Christianity combats this way of men, and just as salt works to keep food from spoiling and becoming useless, so the Christian works to improve our society.

In our present day there is a great concern about the amount of crime, immorality, greed, and a lack of concern for others. This concern is shared, not only by Christians, but by the general public and leaders of our nation.

Our government is often burdened and inefficient because of the type of people who carry out its duties. The judicial system is overloaded because of so much crime, which is brought on, to a large degree, by the youth of our land. This is not to say that older people do not commit crimes, but statistics show that our youth commit the majority of law violations. In effect, our nation is suffering from a lack of salt to produce a sane and safe society for its people to live in free from the danger of violence. Morality has sunk to the depth where many seem to choose to live like, or below, that of animals.

Realizing the problem leads to the question of what we can do to solve the situation, at least to some degree. Sin has always been in the world, but in varying degrees of intensity. What we are seeing now is a worsening of the amount of sin. We hate to think of what it will be like if it becomes much worse.

Recently an influential educator made a plea on national TV for parents to take more time to explain to their children, at a very early age, the difference in things that are right and things that are wrong. He was referring to social behavior, especially in the schools, where education is being hindered by rebellious students. It is a known fact that a child's character starts developing even before

kindergarten age. This places the responsibility on the home, even ahead of the church, and especially ahead of the public schools. The failure of parents to properly teach their children is the basic cause of the problem.

The church can and does play an important role in producing more salt. But it is limited because it can only reach those who will attend and accept Christ as the center part of their life. The church is better prepared today, than in the past, to teach children, and to give more attention to this need. However, God designed marriage and the home for the purpose of replenishing the earth. Solomon said, in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." We have seen exceptions to this rule, but it will work in the vast majority of cases. Too, the apostle Paul stated, in Eph. 6:4, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This command is given by inspiration, and should be practiced as well as any other.

We would like to encourage non-Christian parents, who want to raise their children to be useful and dignified citizens, to accept the teachings of Jesus, and take their children to Bible school and worship while they are young. Here they can associate with the true "Salt of the earth". It not only will pay dividends in this life, but even more important, it will make possible a home in heaven, which will be populated by the true "Salt of the earth."

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Why I Attend All Services of The Church

By Mac Layton

I go to every service of the church because JESUS IS THERE. "Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) Jesus has never forsaken an assembly, and I want to be like him.

I go to every service of the church because I AM MADE STRONGER. Power is given in worship to live a nobler life. There one is fortified against falling away. There is the sweetest fellowship on earth. There souls are prepared for heaven. There strength is given to bear the burdens of life. WHY should I want to miss ANY service?

I go to every service of the church because GOD WANTS THE CHURCH TO GROW. The church always grows when members put God first by loyal attendance. Since the church is the saved, the growth of the church means salvation of the lost. Here is a way all can help in the finest work on earth.

I go to every service of the church TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE. Many are looking my way and following in my steps. INFLUENCE is either good or bad - there is no middle ground. ANY hour the church meets, my influence is with or against Christ. IF I attend, it is for the Lord, WHEN I neglect a service, my influence is for Satan.

I go to every service of the church TO PROVE MY LOVE AND GRATITUDE. So boundless was the love of Jesus for the church. He gave his life for it. IF I would be his disciple, I must also prove my love. Since God has given me a multitude of blessings, which I do not deserve, it is indeed a small sacrifice to return a few hours in public worship. One who truly loves God does not ask if he must attend all services. His love compels him to. If I show love to God by attendance, I show lack of love by absence.

I go to every service of the church TO OBEY GOD. The Bible says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." (Heb. 10:25) The first Christians met weekly and often daily (Acts 20:7; 2:45; 19:9). Any service where the Bible is taught, prayer is made, and God is worshipped, is good, and, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17) If it is good to be present for all services, it is bad to be absent from them.

I go to every service of the church TO PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:33) Jesus said the church must be first to the Christian, even before seeking food, clothing, and

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Topical Bible Lessons

By Harold Turner

INTRODUCTION:

1. Matthew 16:18, What did Jesus promise to build? _____
2. Matthew 16:18, Is the church of human or divine origin? _____
3. Ephesians 5:25, For what did Jesus give himself? _____
4. Acts 20:28, What did Jesus purchase with his blood? _____

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHURCH:

1. Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18, 24, How is the church pictured in these Scriptures? _____
2. Ephesians 5:22-33, 2 Corinthians 11:2, How is the church pictured in these Scriptures? _____
3. John 10:14-16, Acts 20:28, How is the church pictured in these Scriptures? _____
4. Matthew 16:18-19, Colossians 1:13, How is the church pictured in these Scriptures? _____
5. John 15:1-8, How is the relationship between Christ and his followers pictured here? _____

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH:

1. Acts 2:47, Can one be saved outside and apart from the church? _____
2. Ephesians 2:16, In what are we reconciled unto God? _____
3. Colossians 1:13-14, When delivered from sin, of what do we become a part? _____
4. John 15:5-6, Can we be fruitful unto God apart from being a branch in the true vine? _____
5. Ephesians 5:23, Of what is Christ the Saviour? _____
6. I Corinthians 15:24, When the end comes, what will Christ deliver to the Father? _____

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH:

1. John 17:20-21, Did Christ pray that all believers be united as one? _____
Why? _____
2. I Corinthians 1:10, Does God approve of divisions? _____
3. Ephesians 4:4, How many bodies does Christ have? _____

4. John 10:16, How many folds does Jesus have? _____
5. Romans 7:1-4, How many brides does Christ have? _____
6. I Corinthians 1:10-13, Is Christ divided today? _____

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH:

1. Matthew 16:18, Since Christ is both builder and owner of the church, would it be appropriate to refer to it as Christ's church? _____
2. Romans 7:4, We are married to Christ; would a wife honor her husband by wearing another's name? _____
3. Romans 16:16, What term does Paul use in referring to local congregations of the church? _____

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH:

1. Acts 2:47, Did these join the church after being saved, or did the Lord add them by saving them? _____
2. Acts 2:37-41, What did these do to become members of the church? _____
3. From these Scriptures, is there a distinction between being saved and becoming a member of the church? _____

Why I Attend All (Cont.)

drink. Nothing could be so important as being a faithful member of the Lord's church.

I go to every service of the church because IT IS SAFE TO DO SO. All who forsake an assembly wonder if they sin, but I know I am perfectly safe in attending EVERY service. Yes, dangerous risks are taken in forsaking ANY assembly of the church. Christ may return in that hour, death may come, a life of neglect may begin, and others may be lost by a bad example.

I go to every service of the church TO ABOUND IN THE LORD'S WORK. A true Christian wants to do ALL he can rather than as LITTLE as he can. Even after doing all possible, I am still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). Since the assemblies of the church are vital in the Lord's work, I must abound in attendance. "Finally, my brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58) I want to go to heaven, don't you?

Sparing The Rod

By Wayne Stewart

"He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth his son chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13:24) Is this fact or fiction? It is apparent that in this generation the philosophies of parents concerning child rearing has greatly changed over that of ten or twenty years ago.

It is alarming to note (perhaps due to new ideas of Child Psychologists) that many parents now days refuse to administer discipline to their children for fear of giving them some kind of "Psychological complex". Equally annoying to me is the fact that many parents, when forbidding their children to do something, feel as though they are compelled to give them an in-depth explanation of the various reasons why the child may not engage in whatever the activity may be.

It is disheartening to see many Christian parents who accept the wisdom of men over the words of inspired writers of both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament book of Proverbs deals extensively with the discipline of children. It is here that God has recorded the above words, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth his son chasteneth him betimes." And again in Prov. 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Apparently, God knew that children would do things for which they need to be punished, hence, God has given instruction as to how the parent may help the child.

Brethren, let us accept the words of God rather than the wisdom of men. Perhaps then we will see more of our children actively engaging in the work of the Lord, and less of them expressing indifference toward God and his church.

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