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A Nation That Obeyed Not The Lord

by Harold Turner

"Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth." (Jer. 7:27,28.)

Rebellion is a repeated and common characteristic describing the children of God in the Old Testament. In the days of Jeremiah the people willingly refused to follow God's way. In Jer. 5:31 the Lord described a horrible thing that had happened, saying, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." While this attitude may be hard for us to understand, Paul gave a similar warning for God's people under the New Testament, saying, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4.) People are inclined to love falsehood as long as it tells them what they want to hear. God's message of truth demands that we change our ways to His ways, and the selfwilled nature of man rebels at this.

The children of Israel loved the type of religion the false prophets offered them. They were allowed to "Oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed innocent blood, walk after other gods, steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely." (Jer. 7:6-9.) The lying prophets then assured them that though they had done these crimes against God they could still come and stand before God in His house and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." (Jer. 7:10.) No wonder they "loved to have it so." They could do as they pleased, and then be assured that God would overlook and forgive it all. But God warned them that they were trusting in lying words. He said, "Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for." (Jer. 3:23.) He warned them that their lying prophets were offering them false comfort and peace, saying, "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my

people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer. 6:14.)

While Israel had become excessively corrupted in their hearts, they had not completely abandoned their faith in God. They still came to the House of God to "worship the Lord." (Jer. 7:1.) What they apparently had failed to realize is that there isn't enough faith, or religion, or worship in the world to please God apart from obedience to his will. They didn't want to just completely abandon God from their lives; they just wanted things their way. Jesus said of a similar people, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9.) God has never, and will never, permit man to design his own religion, and accept it. This truth is seen in 1 Sam. 15:22-23 where Samuel told Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Because of Israel's refusal to obey the voice of the Lord, and to receive correction from him, God assured them that he would bring punishment upon them. In Jer. 5:15-17 God said, "I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel . . . And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst." He further described the people with which he would punish them, saying, "They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee." (Jer. 6:23.) Israel suffered seventy years of bondage because they refused to listen to and heed the voice of the Lord.

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"Strengthen the weak, forgive the erring, scatter rays of sunshine, assure every person of your love, then watch for happy results."

Decision Making

By Donnie F. Mangrum

In life man is faced with decisions every day. At times it seems such a burden and that one is alone in the world of decision making. But if we look at God's word we find that people have been making decisions from the very beginning of time. In Genesis 3, we read where Adam and Eve made a decision to disobey God. This decision was a wrong one, and made because of the lust they had for food and wisdom. Their decision has affected man from the very day they made it. This should serve as a lesson for us as we make decisions. Our decisions may also affect others, and even generations that follow.

Another decision made by a great person, was that of Abraham. In Genesis 22:1-13 we are told of the great faith that Abraham had in God. When God told him to offer his son Isaac, whom he loved very much, Abraham made a decision. His decision is one of the greatest of all recorded decisions concerning a man's faith in God. The same type of decision would be a most trying one today if we ourselves were faced with it. As the story goes, Abraham did as God asked him to do. In Genesis 22:12 Abraham was commended for his decision, and his son was not taken by God as the offering.

Sometimes we make selfish decisions in life. In Genesis 13:1-13 we read of a decision that Lot was called on to make. His decision was a selfish one, but at the time he made it, it looked like a very wise decision. In Gen. 13:10 we read, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where." Then in verse 12 we read, "That Lot pitched his tents toward Sodom. And the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Lot made a decision that was going to involve his family with very wicked people. In Gen. 19:1-26 some of the results of Lot's decision are recorded. It cost him the lives of some of his own family when God destroyed the wicked

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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**A NATION THAT OBEYED
NOT THE LORD**

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In Romans 15:4 Paul tells us that the things written aforetime were written for our learning. The account of Israel's failure should serve as a profitable lesson for us. No doubt at the beginning they never intended to depart so far from God. But sin has a way of gradually slipping up on us and bringing us under its control. There were three steps to Israel's fall. First, they stopped obeying the word of the Lord. Second, they refused to be corrected for their error. And third, the truth perished from them. Their religious life was based on lies and false doctrines presented to them by false prophets. And because they refused to turn from their sins and amend their ways, it became necessary for God to punish them in hopes of their repentance.

Is it possible for us to reach such a point today? Is it possible that false teachers have lied to us offering salvation in vain? Have they lied to us about having peace with God; when there is no peace? If someone were to use the word of God and show that our religious practices were not in harmony with the word of God, would we refuse correction? Have we reached the point where we will not endure sound doctrine? God warns each of us to examine ourself to see if we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5.) Only the truth can make and keep us free (John 8:32). May we "give diligence to make our calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) We must not be afraid to examine our faith and practices in light of God's word; because at the judgment this examination will take place. If we fail then, our punishment will be far worse than Israel's captivity in Babylon. Only those who do the will of God will be blessed with eternal salvation (Matt. 7:21.). Will you be among this number?

"The man who tries to keep a book account of the good he does never does enough good to pay for the binding of the book."

He Came To Himself

by W. L. Totty

In the Lord's parable of the prodigal son, when the young man went into the far country, the father was grieved, of course, as any father would have been. However, there is no mention made that any member of the family went out searching for the young man to persuade him to return to his home. You see, he deliberately turned his back on his father's house, knowing full well what he was doing. (See Luke 15:11-24.)

When his unholy living led him to the position of feeding swine and hungering so that he would have eaten the husks that the hogs ate, he did not wonder within himself why his elder brother and father or other family members did not come to warn him and rescue him from his despair.

Instead, he "came to himself" and made his own decision to return to his father's house where there was plenty and to spare.

This somewhat illustrates the passage of scripture that says when a person sins against the Holy Spirit it is impossible to renew him again unto repentance (Heb. 6:6.) The prodigal son already knew what blessings were in his father's house, but he had deliberately left the safety of that domicile and wasted what the father had given him. When one has tasted the good word of God but then deliberately has forsaken it and thereby rejected the Holy Spirit, we have nothing more to offer him. But, like the prodigal son did, he can "come to himself" and return.

Sometimes when a child of God allows himself to become embroiled in sinful acts and involved in devilish situations, knowing full well that what he has done and is doing is not in accord with the will of the Father in heaven, he wants someone to come looking for him to persuade him to return to the fold of God and to the fellowship of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

We readily admit that when we, as Christians, see a brother overtaken in some sin, it is our duty to restore such a one. However, we are concerned with the one who, in spite of all cautioning and admonition, deliberately chooses to do that which he realizes is sinful. If the guilty person then stands back just waiting to tempt his Christian brothers and to almost "dare" them to do what is right by coming to reprove him and plead with him, I am afraid it would not be with a pure heart even if he allowed himself to be persuaded to return to the fold.

The prodigal son "came to himself" and of his own accord turned back to his father's house where there was plenty and to spare. He did not stay in the swine pen, rationalizing that first it was his elder brother's duty to come looking for

him. And he did not return with the attitude: See, here I am of my own volition; you receive no credit for my decision to return to my place in my father's house; now, here I am, and I should be restored to my former position!

Rather, he came humbly asking that he be counted worthy of nothing more than a hired servant. He was not haughty of spirit.

What we all need to do when we are found in sin is to "come to ourselves," as the prodigal son did, and humble ourselves to the point that we will again join ourselves with the family of God regardless of whether we will be placed on a pedestal or told to stand in a corner. As a matter of fact, one ought to have that kind of humility of spirit in everything he does. In one of his parables, Jesus taught: "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding feast, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bid thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room." (Luke 14:8-9.) This parable is given as a model for our actions in the church.

Because the prodigal son returned humbly confessing his sin and desiring the lowest of positions in his father's family, he was given the best robe, a ring was placed upon his finger, and the father ordered that the fatted calf be killed in celebration of the one who was lost but had returned.

Whether or not any of the other Christians do what is required of them, we can never be justified in continuing in sin because someone else has not done his duty.

"The life of blessedness comes not by hoarding, but by sharing. Give, and ye shall live."

"A man discovers the real meaning of life when he becomes a fellow-worker with God."

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The Most Precious Commodity - TIME

by Robert Ball

Paul wrote in Col. 4:5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." In this text, Paul is telling how important time really is, and showing that we should use wisdom toward those who are without, that is, those who are without Christ, those who have not yet obeyed the gospel and become a member of the church.

We who are Christians should be very careful how we approach those outside the body of Christ. We may have the best of intentions, and only be guilty of being very concerned about the soul of the person we are approaching, but if we offend that person it might be a long TIME before that person will even consider talking about becoming a Christian again. This could be TIME that a person does not have; for we have no guarantee of tomorrow (James 4:14).

It is very easy to see that time is the most precious commodity in the world. It is the indispensable element in every activity, and it is necessary to life itself. Ben Franklin once asked the question, "Doest thou love life?" And then answered by saying, "Then do not squander time, for time is the stuff of which life is made." And Thomas Edison said, "Time is the most important thing in the world."

Can you name anything you can do without time in which to do it? And this brings us to one of the biggest excuses used in the world and in the church: "I DON'T HAVE TIME." How many times have you heard people say, "I should go see brother or sister so and so because they are old or have been in the hospital or sick, but I DON'T HAVE TIME."

Time passes very swiftly. Job 7:6 states, "My days are swifter than a

weaver's shuttle . . ." Time has some very unique characteristics. In all of man's knowledge and wonders of science, he cannot create one moment of time. He can't borrow a moment, and he can't even destroy a moment. Time cannot be stored up like money, brought back like good health, hurried like travel, or slowed down like work. We can only make wise or unwise use of our time.

Time is the same for everyone. Everyone will have 24 hours in every day of life, except for two days--the day of birth and the day of death. Time will last only as long as the earth remains (Gen. 8:22, Job 14:5, Psalms 31:15).

God is the giver of all the years of our lives. Job wrote, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." (Job 14:5.) And Paul said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being . . ." (Acts 17:28). It is by God's grace and mercy that we have any time at all. No portion of time can be recalled or lived over, as David pictured it in 2 Sam. 14:14 saying, "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again . . ." We often hear people say, "Boy, if I could only do that over I sure would do it differently", but this is impossible. When time is gone, it is gone forever.

Time accomplishes some things that nothing else can. It gives us the opportunity to reap what we sow. Paul said, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9.) You can plant a seed in the ground, water and fertilize it, but it still takes a certain length of time for that plant to grow. Too, time gives us the

opportunity to serve God, which he expects us to do. And when we have done something in service to God, we should not feel that we have done some great thing and be proud and boastful; because we have simply done that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:7-10.) Time also gives us the opportunity to serve others, which God also expects us to do. Jesus illustrated this in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

We have a scriptural responsibility for using time wisely. Paul wrote in Eph. 5:15-16, saying, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." We have the responsibility for an immediate response of obedience to the gospel of Christ (Eccl. 12:1, John 9:4.) There is no greater waste of time than delay. To delay obeying the gospel of Christ in becoming a Christian is not only a great waste of time, but it is also very dangerous. You are playing with the most precious thing you possess--your own soul.

The Bible states, in 2 Cor. 6:2, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Time is ever present with God (2 Peter 3:8), but we only have a limited amount of time, and we do not know what that limit is. The important thing in life is not how long we live, but what we do while we are living."

Let's look at some rules that we might use for deciding how to use our time. (1) Is this use of time seeking first the Kingdom of God? (2) Is this use of time best for the church? (3) Is this use of time for the betterment of society? (4) Will this use of time make me a better servant of Christ? Let's all think about these things, and use the time which God has given us in serving Him.

Partaking Unworthily

By Harold Turner

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:27-29.)

The word, unworthily, is derived from the Greek word, 'anaxios'. In defining the use of Greek Words, W. E. Vine, writes,

"Anaxios is used in 1 Cor. 11:27, of partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily, i.e., treating it as a common meal, the bread and cup as common things, not apprehending their solemn symbolic import." This definition seems clear in the above text. To eat and drink unworthily is to fail to discern the Lord's body while partaking of the bread and cup.

Occasionally someone will refuse to eat the bread and drink the cup because they do not feel worthy to partake. They may feel unworthy because they have not been as faithful as they should have been, or because they were in a bad mood when they came to worship, or because of some

other reason. Does the above scripture suggest that a person must be worthy before partaking? Unworthily describes the manner of eating and drinking rather than the worthiness of the person doing the eating and drinking. Who of us is worthy of the body and blood of Jesus? None of us! We have been saved by the grace of God, not on the basis of our goodness or worthiness. We partake of the bread and cup to show our remembrance of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus said, in reference to the bread and cup, "This do in remembrance of me." It was upon this that Jesus placed the emphasis.

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The Last Sermon

By Larry Corbett

We never know just which sermon will be our last one. For some, it will have been the one they heard last Sunday, and for others, it will be the one this coming Sunday. If you knew that you had only one more sermon to hear, what would you want that sermon to be?

We should not want it to be a sermon to soothe our itching ears; because this kind of preaching is full of fables and contains no soul saving message. The idea that everybody is all right is not the preaching style of the apostles. We need the word which will save our souls. Neither should we want to hear a lesson with a lot of dramatics or a theatrical performance to stir our emotions, but having no spiritual nourishment. Large flowery words of vanity and fair speeches are characteristic of false teachers; like clouds without water (Jude 12, 13).

We should want clear and plain preaching of the gospel without sparing the feelings of anyone; the kind of sermon that clearly shows us our duty to Christ. This sermon should include the plan of salvation as found in the final commission of Jesus (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47). We should want this final sermon to condemn sin and praise righteousness. We should want it to challenge us to greater love for each other (John 13:34-35); greater works for the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58); a closer prayer life (1 Thess. 5:17); a more meaningful worship life (John 4:24), and a dedicated life of purity (James 1:26-27).

We should want our shortcomings to be exposed and our sins brought before us so that we would see the need of repentance (Luke 12:2; 13:3-5). We should want it to expose things that are contrary to the will of God, such as works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

We should want the last sermon to have a strong appeal to obey the gospel; as Paul stated in 2 Cor. 5:11 "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), when Peter made such an appeal, the people responded by asking what they were to do, and Peter stated, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sin, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." If we had only one more sermon to hear we would want it to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for this would move us to prepare to meet our God.

DECISION MAKING

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city of Sodom. So as we make decisions where and how to raise our families it should not always be based only on material things. —

Moses made a decision to suffer in service to God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of being the son of a Pharaoh's daughter. Why did Moses make such a decision? Because of his strong faith in God (Heb. 11:24); In Heb 11:26 we read of the rewards that Moses saw in his decision, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." And as Heb. 11:26-33 states, Moses did all he did because of faith in God.

Actually, as we go through life, all of our decisions should be made just as Moses, that is, by faith. In Eccl. 12:13-14 is a very good thought for us to consider in our everyday decision making: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." So decisions can not be made properly without including God, the Creator of all things.

Jesus, our Savior, invites all of us to make a decision. He wants us to make the most important decision one could ever make. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30.) This indicates that all men must make a decision either to surrender to Christ or not. One can not make excuses; for Jesus will not accept such. In Luke 14:16-24 Jesus clearly defines that excuses are only a decision to reject him and all the great blessings he has to offer.

As we go through our every day life, we will make decisions. Some will be right and some will be wrong as far as material items are concerned. But only with a concerned study of God's word, with an open mind, and a loving heart can we make decisions that will satisfy our Lord. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17.) God's word is the supreme book of examples and teachings to successful decision making,

"Few things in this world are more spacious than the room we have for improvement."

PARTAKING UNWORTHILY

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Eating and drinking unworthily does not describe the character of the person doing the eating and drinking, but the attitude with which he eats and drinks. We may never feel that we have been as faithful as we should have been; because we constantly face our weaknesses and faults, but humbly recognizing our weaknesses is a blessing to us which should motivate us to strive harder to do better. The Lord's Supper is a source of spiritual strength to the Christian. The Corinthians were obviously failing to discern the body and blood of the Lord as they partook of the bread and cup, and Paul said, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Cor. 11:30.) To fail to partake of the bread and cup will leave us spiritually weak. Would you fail to read the Bible because you are weak and feel unworthy? Surely not, because you realize that you derive strength from study. We also derive spiritual strength from communing with Christ in breaking the bread and drinking the cup.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to judge and examine themselves before partaking of this communion. But, was Paul asking them to judge themselves to see if they were worthy of partaking? Look at verse 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." What does the expression, "so let him eat and drink" refer to? Does it refer to the person's character, or to the manner in which he partakes? The next verse show that if he doesn't want to eat and drink damnation to himself he must discern the Lord's body as he eats and drinks. He is to examine himself and judge himself so that he does not fail to discern, or fail to remember, the body and blood of Jesus. If he fails to remember this, he eats and drinks unworthily.

