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A SIX PACK, A PACK OF KOOLS AND A CHILEAN GRAPE

By Eddy Gilpin

Recently there was a great stir among peddlers of produce in this country when a couple of Chilean grapes were found to contain traces of a poisonous substance. Chemists found that the toxicity level contained in the grapes was so low that, if eaten by a child, there would be little or no visible effects. Immediately, however, there was almost a widespread panic because of the incident. Shipments of Chilean produce of any kind were refused and left docked in major harbors until some decisions could be made. Orders for fruits and vegetables from Chile were cancelled. The Chilean economy suffered devastating losses at last report because of the poisoned pair of grapes. Grocery shelves suddenly became noticeably bare of Chilean commodities in general and most grapes in particular. Boldly printed signs stating, "All Chilean Products Have Been Removed From Our Produce Section" graced the aisles of many supermarkets. Shoppers' carts were predictably void of grapes and many other normally purchased produce products as the scare was felt and the warnings heeded. Public announcements were made which advised consumers to discard recently purchased grapes. But, why? Why all the fuss over two tainted grapes?

When one walks through those same supermarkets he can find products that are even more harmful than the two infamous would-be raisins. Yet, there are no signs which warn their users of their hazards. There are no mass efforts underway to remove these items from public accessibility. There are no shipments of these products being docked indefinitely because of their potential hazards. There are no orders for them being cancelled because of their adverse effects. Those same shopping carts that are noticeably deplete of grapes contain these other destructive items. There are no public announcements concerning the hazards of these items nor advise to the consumer to discard unused

portions. But again, why? Why are some potentially dangerous products removed while others are left untouched? Why are some economies impoverished in the name of good health while others flourish as "good health" is bypassed on the road to "success?"

It seems odd to this writer that two slightly tainted grapes can cause so much turmoil while two of the greatest contributors to premature death (alcohol and tobacco) continue unscathed by those who determine whether products are harmful or not. Personally, I am thankful that such care is taken to insure the purity of foods that enter our homes that the mere threat of contamination is sufficient for drastic and immediate action. However, when items that are just as dangerous (and even more so because of the spiritual implications involved - I Cor. 6:19; II Cor. 6:16) are allowed to remain on shelves, and are even promoted and glamorized, someone should stop and ask, "Why?"

Consider tobacco products for a moment. Each year there are 29,000 new cases of oral cancer and 9,000 deaths resulting therefrom. About 70% of these cases can be traced directly to tobacco of one form or another. ¹ Tobacco contains as many as 6,000 different chemicals, including tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide (if smoked), 19 different nitrosamines, polonium 210 and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, all of which have adverse effects on the human body. ² "Cigarette smoking remains the single most important cause of preventable morbidity and premature death." ³ Every day more than 1,000 people die from tobacco related causes. ⁴ "Passive smoke" (that inhaled from another's cigarette) is thought to be responsible for some 2,400 lung cancer deaths annually, according to the National Academy of Sciences. ⁵ Yet with all this and much, much more data revealing its

detrimental and deadly demeanor, tobacco is still reserved a place of prominence in supermarkets across this country while the gargantuan killer grape is given the heave-ho. It might be humorous were it not so very tragic.

Further, why is it that alcohol (another proven killer) is allowed to occupy a great deal of space in an otherwise health-conscience public distribution center? Why, since it has now been demonstrated that brain damage "occurs progressively from the first cells destroyed by the very first drink a person takes?" ⁶ Why, since "23,500 people are killed annually in alcohol-related accidents, and 700,000 more are injured?" ⁷ Alcohol is responsible for or related to 64% of the homicides in this country, 58% of the fire deaths, 55% of the child abuse cases, 30% of the suicides and 50% of all fatal automobile accidents. ⁸ There is no wonder that the wisest of the ages said, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

Why indeed should be the question when the potential hazard from two grapes causes such widespread alarm while the potential and hazard from every tobacco and alcohol product remain undaunted by the hands of authority. Their track records have been revealed through statistics, analysis and premature tombs. How long will their onslaught continue before the voice that cries "WHY?" is loud enough to be heard?

- 1 Fincher, Jack, "Sean Marsee's Smokeless Death". Reader's Digest, Oct. 1985; p. 112.
- 2 Jarrett, Charles L., M.D., "A Christian Physician Looks at the Use of Tobacco". The Book of Exodus - Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship 1987; p. 186.
- 3 Shroeder, Steven A., M.D., Journal of American Medical Association, Vol. 250, p. 2062. (As quoted by Charles Jarrett in The Book of Exodus.)
- 4 Jarrett, loc. cit.
- 5 "Involuntary Risk - Perils of Other People's Smoke". Time, December 29, 1986.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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A SIX PACK

Continued from page one

- 6 Everett, Glenn D., M.D., Brain Damage Starts With the First Drink. Reprinted pamphlet from LISTEN, Journal of Better Living, Vol. 22, No. 12.
- 7 Blank, Joseph P., "Drinking and Dying - On America's Highways". Reader's Digest, Sept. 1985; p. 53.
- 8 Reprinted from The CLA Defender, Issue 11.

The Conversion of Lydia

(Acts 16:12-15)

By Tim Fuqua

Many today falsely teach from these verses the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart enabling one to receive the Word. The text plainly states that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. The question we need to ask is, "How was her heart opened?"

Jesus had given the apostles the great commission, in which He said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Lydia was under the great commission. Thus, it becomes clear as to how her heart was opened; her heart was opened by the preaching of the gospel that the apostles were instructed to preach. Obviously, her heart was not opened by an immediate impact of the Holy Spirit independent of and separate from the Word of God, but through the powerful gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Lydia's heart was not opened before Paul spoke; thus there is nothing mysterious or miraculous about what occurred. Her heart was opened by gospel preaching. She was converted by God's Word, for there are no conversions independent of it.

Every conversion recorded in Acts was produced by God's Word. There is not one exception to this fact. When one's heart is opened today like Lydia's was then, one will do as she did - obey the gospel, for it is God's power unto salvation.

Non-Attendance A Sin

By Gus Nichols

If one member of the local church can ignore that church and treat it as of the devil, refuse to assemble and work with members for its edification and good and not be guilty of willful and fatal sin, which if not repented of, confessed and forgiven could lead to eternal destruction, then all the members of that congregation could abandon such a church and its work and worship, destroy it off the face of the earth and not sin in so doing.

And if all members of one local church could so abandon and neglect the work and worship of that one church and not sin, then all members of all "the churches of Christ" on earth could abandon all of them, destroy all churches of Christ and not sin, and this would destroy CHRISTIANITY off the face of the earth.

Therefore it is a willful sin, which if not confessed and forgiven, will cause one to lose his soul in eternal perdition. If one can willfully ignore and abandon the work and worship of the church for one month; and if for one month, then for one year, etc. If one member could ignore the church and still be a Christian, then all could and the doors would be closed for a year.

Therefore, all members who have quit attending the service and worship of the church have quit the church, unless the absence is unavoidable. Such backsliders should be restored if at all possible. They are God's children, but sure to be disinherited and lost if they die in their sins. "Unto him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not: to him it is sin." (Jas. 4:17). And, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." (Heb. 2:3).

Those who cannot be taught and restored should be excluded from the fellowship of the church (II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:1-13). No one can be a Christian while ignoring the church which cost the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). A fish could as easily live out of the water as a child of God could live the Christian life apart from the worship and service of the church. Almost all apostasy and backsliding begins in a neglect of the worship of the church. (Heb. 10:25,26).

CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Garfield Church of Christ	\$25.00
Garfield, AR	
Viola Church of Christ	10.00
Viola, AR	
Hatfield Church of Christ	25.00
Koshkonong, MO	
Agnos Church of Christ	15.00
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Elizabeth Church of Christ	15.00
Elizabeth, AR	
Pilot Church of Christ	20.00
Mammoth Spring, AR	
Gamaliel Church of Christ	10.00
Gamaliel, AR	
Clarkridge Church of Christ	25.00
Clarkridge, AR	
Church of Christ	10.00
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INDIVIDUALS

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Myrtle Livingston	40.00
Quitman, AR	
Leo & Ruby Rickman	10.00
Pocahontas, AR	

A soft answer turneth away wrath,
 But a grievous word stirreth up anger.

Lying lips are an abomination to Jehovah;
 But they that deal truly are his delight.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;
 And he that is wise winneth souls.

A Religious Man's Conversion

(Acts 8:26-40)

By Wayne Cox

"One religion is just as good as another." This idea is prevalent in almost every religious circle of our day, and is promoted constantly by certain religious leaders in print, on television, and from the pulpit. Scores of honest and sincere individuals have been bombarded with the "join the church of your choice" philosophy and have adopted this attitude.

Does the Bible teach that one religion is just as good as another? Friends, if it does, then everyone must shout it from the mountaintops and herald it from every street corner. But if it does not, then no one has a right to indoctrinate people with even the thought of such! The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch teaches us that even some religious men need to be converted to the truth.

The Ethiopian eunuch was a religious man if there ever was one! Notice some of his great characteristics:

1. He was honest and trustworthy, being intrusted with the great treasures of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (v. 27).
2. He worshipped God (v. 27), travelling well over 1000 miles to do so. What a lesson for people today who complain about crossing the street to attend worship services!
3. He read the scriptures (v. 28), realizing the importance of study and meditation.

Now pause and ponder, "Is one religion just as good as another?" If it is, why did the angel of the Lord send Philip from Samaria (where he was having great success in converting people) some 60-70 miles southwest to an honest, trustworthy, worshipful and studious man who was already religious??? Why did Philip ask, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" if it makes no difference what one believes as long as he believes in God?

Many religious groups reject baptism as being essential to salvation. If one religion is as good as another, why did the eunuch desire to be baptized and why did Philip baptize him (vv. 36-39)? Further, why did Philip immerse the eunuch in such a remote area -- why not wait for a special "baptismal service" at some large congregation?

Truly, the eunuch was a religious man. Yet, his religion was out of date; it had been abolished at the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-16). The eunuch believed in God, but not in Christ until after Philip taught him. When the eunuch learned the truth, he was willing to obey it.

No, one religion is not just as good as another in the eyes of God. This crystal clear truth should cause each to honestly examine his religion to see if it measures up to New Testament Christianity.



"After All, It Does Say 'Sing' "

By Eddy Gilpin

Much has been written over the past few months in most, if not all, brotherhood publications concerning the innovation of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. Surely, much needs to be written, read and publicly proclaimed against such authority-denying doctrines of men. There ought to be many more informative articles presented by prolific pens concerning the authority of God's word, the silence of the Scriptures and the sinfulness of addition thereto or subtraction therefrom.

However, there is a point in all these various observations that many among the Lord's church are failing to grasp. Acapella singing is not just a good idea. It is not merely an item of controversy that the Lord saw fit to include in his word. It is not a simple matter of icing for the cake. Rather, it is a command (Eph. 5:19; Co. 3:16). It is just as much of a command as baptism for sin remission (Acts 2:38) or giving of one's means (I Cor. 16:1, 2). Yet many can be observed during the singing portion of the worship who are as silent as the tomb. As if it were an option matter, they "choose" not to participate during this period. It is not an optional matter, but rather an obligatory one. Thus, to refrain from participating is to disobey God, and thus be guilty of sin. Yes, it is that serious! After all, the Bible does say "Sing."

The elders of the congregation with which this writer works and worships have seen fit to designate the first Wednesday night of each month as "Singing Night." During this time, various songs

are sung, scripture is read and prayers are offered. Such is the custom with many congregations. It has been the experience of this writer to find that "Singing Night" turns into something mysteriously different from "other" services. Many think of this particular assembly as being a matter of take-it-or-leave-it. Most choose to "leave it." Others see this assembly as a vacation. They can stay at home and catch up on the T.V. shows they haven't seen since the last "Singing Night." They can do this as their conscience is eased because "it's only singing." Still others see this particular time as a bonus. It's like getting an extra hour in their month. They begin the first thing on the first Thursday of each month thinking about how they can best use this "bonus hour" of next month. Some use it to garden; others, to catch up on chores, others, to shop while the stores are less crowded because the denominations are "having real church."

It is rather peculiar that some of these same individuals who sit as mute as a mausoleum during the singing portion of worship and who have a "filp-a-coin" type attitude about "Singing Night" suddenly become some of the most outspoken should the occasion arise to defend acapella singing. They are quick to point out the authority of the scriptures, the rule of exclusion, and the illustration of Noah and gopher wood. And why shouldn't they be so outspoken? After all, they have been "faithful" members of the church for 30 years. Their parents were members. They grew up knowing the sinfulness of mechanical instrumental music, and learned at an early age to respect God's word as sole authority. They would be willing rather to die than to allow the use of the instrument in worship. But, to apply the command to "sing" to themselves is another matter entirely. All that respect they feign to have just might not be so prevalent.

It saddens this scribe to no end to witness those around him during worship services (who are supposed to be faithful to God) who never utter a note of praise to God nor "teach and admonish" any others in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16). These are not matters of option, but matters of obligation. After all, the Bible does say "Sing."



This is the wish I always wish,
The prayer I always pray:
Lord, may my life help other lives
It touches on life's way.

Floating Debris

By Bill Graddy

What a regrettable state of affairs to observe some Christians, especially elderly men, who are approaching the end of their lives, "foaming out their own shame" (Jude 13), among fellow members of the church. Perhaps, many of these men, had they applied themselves, could have been elders, deacons, song leaders and teachers. Instead, the "foaming of the mouth" are shameful words as mire and dirt cast ashore by the waters of the seas. (Isaiah 57:20; 2 Peter 2:18). Their swelling words are always in the negative. If they do not get their way, the "foam" rises "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end" (Deuteronomy 32:29) they would send forth positive signals trying to edify and stabilize the members. (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The love and the unity of a congregation is constantly threatened because such individuals watch as serpents trying to find new avenues upon which they can spew their venom. Rather than being reinforcement to the elders, they pout, even withhold their contribution, or threaten financial reverse, if the elders do not listen to them. (I wonder if an elder who is manipulated by such men is any better than they?) What a static and stagnant picture it is to see some men so impede the work of the greatest cause on earth! The Bible classes sometime end in frustration because these men know so little about the Scriptures. Their opinions (power and money) try to offset any good suggestions. Bible teachers do not like to see these men come to their classes because of the depression and degradation caused by flotsam and jetsam streaming from their mouths. This is an extra burden on the eldership as these will influence or dampen the spirit of others. The result, many times, is a congregation standing still, fuming and fussing, among themselves. The challenge of the elders is intense and sometimes insurmountable because of such leavening. What an unfortunate commentary when the adage is, "This congregation will not grow until we have several good funerals."

If and when the time comes because of the infirmities of the flesh and mind, that we no longer can be a positive force for good among the people of God, hopefully, we or some member of our family will see that we take a secondary role and keep our opinions to ourselves. Above all, let us not become a stumbling block to these little ones coming on behind us (Matthew 18:1-6).

All elderly people should be mature and sweet, lovable and kind, respected by all, using their last days as their best ones for the Lord whom they will shortly meet in judgment! Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. (Colossians 4:6).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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