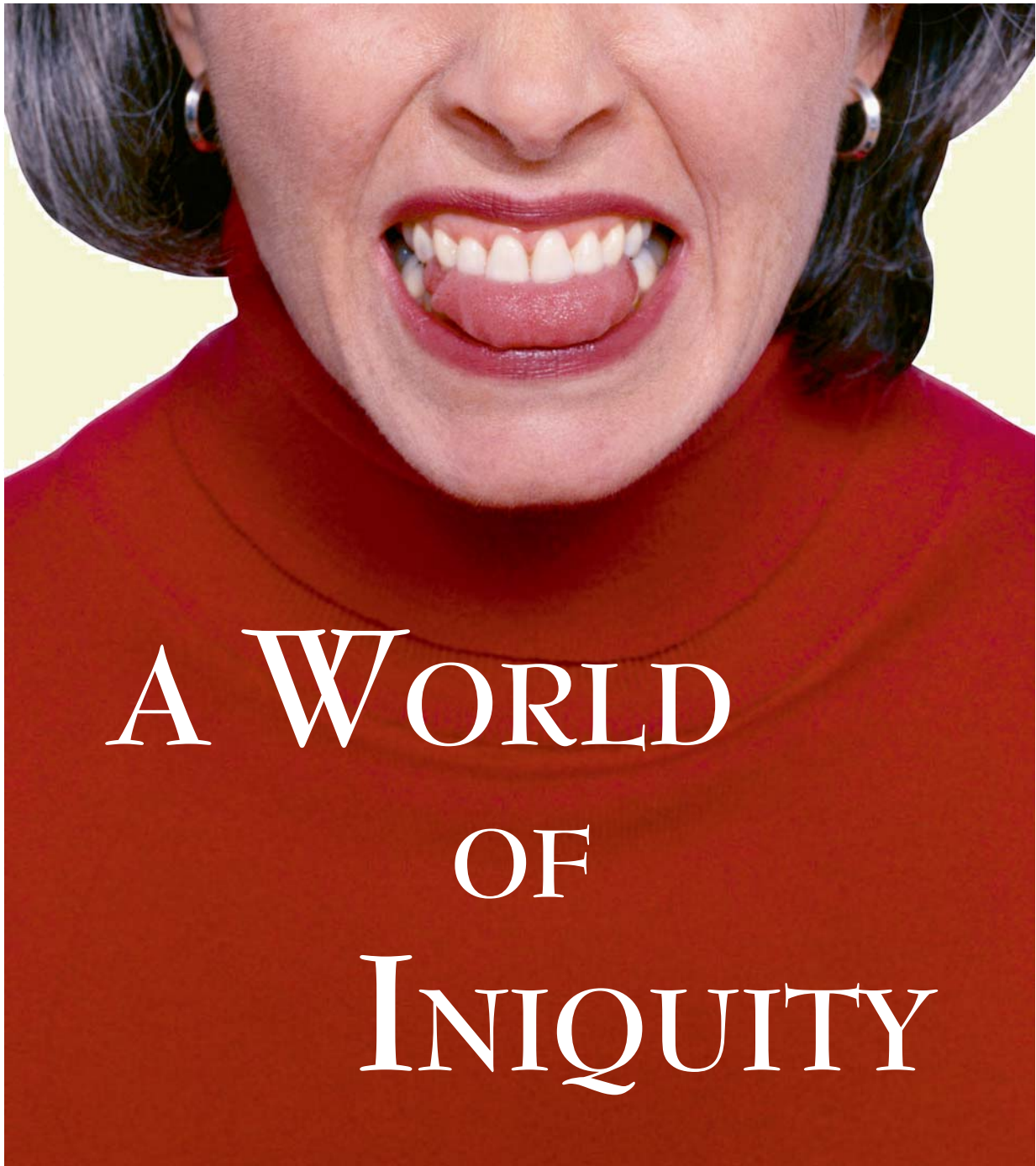


# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 6, Number 11

December 1997



A WORLD  
OF  
INIQUITY

# Forerunner

## Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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### About Our Cover:

The apostle James calls the tongue “a fire, a world of iniquity” (James 3:6). He goes on to say that “no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (verse 8). But God has called us to the life long task of learning to “bite our tongues” and control this little, but powerful, part of our body.

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### CHURCH OF THE GREAT GOD

PO Box 471846  
Charlotte, NC 28247-1846  
U.S.A.  
(800) 878-8220 / (704) 544-2100  
(704) 544-2233 fax

### Editor-in-Chief

John W. Ritenbaugh

### Managing Editor

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

### Associate Editors

Martin G. Collins & Darryl Henson

### Graphical Layout Editor

Sharon R. Onisick

### News Editor

Andy Benedetto

### Contributing Writers

David Bates, Ted E. Bowling, John F. Bulharowski, Mike Ford, Helmut J. Fraund, Ronny H. Graham, William Gray, David F. Maas, Lawrence P. Manzella, Howard E. Marchbanks, John Plunkett, John Reid, Mark Schindler, Sherly J. Togans, Jr., Charles F. Whitaker

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# THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

**T**he Talmud tells the story of a king's two jesters whose sage and pithy wisdom were the talk of the kingdom. One day, in a philosophical mood, the king sent them on an errand. "Simon, my fool, go out and bring back the best thing in the world. And you, John, go out and secure for me the worst thing in the world."

In a short while both jesters were back, each with a package. Simon bowed low, "The best thing in the world, sire!" and unwrapped his package to reveal a tongue. John began to laugh and quickly unwrapped his bundle. "The worst thing in the world, O king," and he, too, presented a tongue.

Speech is arguably man's greatest gift and at the same time his most dangerous ability. It is impossible to estimate the good it has done when great men and women have truthfully instructed and inspired others. By contrast, we cannot measure how much evil the tongue has perpetrated, for falsehoods disguised as truth have destroyed reputations and even nations.

God devotes two of the Ten Commandments to the evils of false witnessing, the third and the ninth. These seem to be broken with impunity—sometimes even by those who are aware of their application—because the drives that motivate people to break them are so powerful.

God commands in Exodus 20:16, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," but liars and lying abound. Everybody knows that marketers lie about what products can do. Books, magazines and movies feature liars of many different stripes. The media and the public have caught prominent government figures from presidents on down lying about important issues.

According to an article by Jan Mendenhall in the June/July 1997 issue of *Aspire*, college kids lie to their moms in 50% of conversations. Dating couples lie to each other a third of the time, and spouses deceive each other in about 10% of major conversations. Twelve percent of four million Americans lost their jobs for "misrepresentation." A November 1997 survey conducted by the publishers of *Who's Who Among American High Schools Students* reveals that 76% of the students listed in their publication (supposedly the elite achievers) admit having cheated. Two-thirds of these believe it is "no big deal" to cheat to get a good test grade—and 65% of their parents agree!

We use a large number of euphemisms to soften the act

of lying. Some are: duplicity, fabrication, evasion, stringing someone along, inaccuracy, exaggeration, fudging, rationalization, falsehood, "whopper," deception, misrepresentation, dishonesty, putting someone on, putting up a front and fibbing.

## An Israelite Without Guile



John 1:47 is an interesting commentary on mankind regarding this sin, which is so common that it seems to be "in the genes"! "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!'" Jesus seems pleasantly surprised. He describes a person without deceit, a simple, innocent person without subtlety, candid and sincere. Is this a compliment or mild sarcasm? Or is He saying, "Here is a genuine Israelite, one in whom is no falsehood?" If so, He means, "This is how an Israelite should be!"

Regardless, Nathanael's lack of guile impressed Jesus, indicating its rarity. Lying is such an integral part of our lives that we have coined such expressions of disbelief as "Is that so?" "Do you really mean it?" or "You don't say!" because so many tales we hear stretch credulity.

We expect politicians to be crooked, to lie, to be evasive, to use their position to become wealthy by making undercover deals with business or crime figures. We expect police officers to be "on the take" and for businessmen to give little in return for as high a cost as the traffic will bear. Corporations conspire and deceitfully hold prices on manufactured goods higher than they should be. Major multi-national corporations routinely misrepresent their products.

Indeed, those who rebelled during the tumultuous 1960s justified their rebellion as disillusionment over the obvious hypocrisies of leaders becoming wealthy from an ever-prolonged, senseless war. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson were caught openly lying at news conferences, and a strangling web of intrigue and lies caused Richard Nixon's resignation. As the trial of Oliver North revealed, people in government commonly lie "in the national interest." Referring to national interests, Winston Churchill once said, "Truth is so precious that it must be surrounded by a bodyguard of lies." We live with this, thus cynicism abounds.

A survey by the Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics reported by the *Charlotte Observer* in 1991 found:

A third of the high school students said they were willing to lie on a resume, job application or in an interview to get a desired job; about one in six high school and college students admitted they already had done so. Four of five high school students and three of five college students said they had lied to their parents at least once in the past year.

Against that backdrop, it is not surprising that the students rated honesty only moderately high on their priority lists. Barely half the high school students—54%, precisely—said being honest and trustworthy was an “essential” value to them. In fact, honesty rated sixth among their priorities, behind getting into college, getting a high-paying job, having “trusted personal relationships” and “being respected for your integrity.”

It appears that honesty is not considered an essential aspect of personal character, but a mere social nicety that can be flouted at will, just as people might lick their fingers at the dinner table with no real harm to anyone.

## National Hypocrisy



Isaiah 29:13-15 says:

Therefore the LORD said, “Inasmuch as these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.” Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; they say, “Who sees us?” and, “Who knows us?”

Hypocrisy is an oft-repeated indictment against Americans as a people. “In God we trust” and “One nation under God,” we boast. But taken as a nation, neither is true. By the thousands, citizens swear on Bibles daily in the courts, but our courts are a mockery of justice. Americans



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attend church on Sunday, but it is business as usual Monday through Saturday.

We grew up in this, and it has conditioned our approach to life. In these verses in Isaiah, God accuses His people of playing games with His truth by not facing up to its standards. Jesus quotes verse 13 in Matthew 15:8-9, and in both cases the context is strikingly similar: Deceived or hypocritical people mishandle the revelation of God. The major problem, though, is that it remains unchecked, and eventually, the deception or hypocrisy becomes set as the way of life.

## God, the Rock



Moses says of God, “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

John writes similarly about Jesus Christ, “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war” (Revelation 19:11).

Our God is a God of truth. He is the Rock, the immovable Foundation of this way of life. The Hebrew word for “Rock” indicates firmness, stability and faithfulness. What would it be like to worship a God whose “truth” changed from time to time? Could such a God be trusted? The Greek word for “True” in Revelation 19:11 means much the same thing, but it carries the additional

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We expect politicians to be crooked, to lie, to be evasive, to use their position to become wealthy by making undercover deals with business or crime figures.

Is what we believe and practice as true as God’s Word?

Thus, if we want to have a good name in the eyes of God and man, we have to recognize truth, understand it and make it a part of us by submitting to it. This is where truth in a person’s witness begins. If truth does not form the foundation of a person’s life, the witness will reflect it.

Mankind—from Adam on—has been unwilling to do this. God says our “heart is deceitful above all things and [incurably sick (NKJV margin)]” (Jeremiah 17:9). We keep lying to ourselves and others, thus our name is not good before God. It means that to have this good name, we, as God’s regenerated children, must face our vanities and stop deceiving ourselves that God will “just have to take us as we are.” We need to quit blaming our failures, problems and shortcomings on others, providing ourselves with justification for what we are and do.

Conduct is the “stuff” of which reputations are formed. Good conduct has truth at its foundation and integrity as its constant companion. From these two, a witness is produced. God wants our reputation before men to be built on His truth. Are we honestly doing this?

Proverbs 12:15 adds, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” One who perceives the truth has a force, a beauty of character, which creates a favorable impression that opens doors and accomplishes things. Would we not rather loan money to a person we know works hard and pays his debts than a person with poor work habits who defaults on his obligations?

A wise person is one who recognizes truth, understands that he must meet his obligations and submits to it. This process produces a good witness whether the obligation to truth is met verbally or behaviorally. If a person will not do this, he deceives himself that he can somehow “get away with it,” and his witness and name will demonstrate his poor character.

This principle holds true in every area of life upon which a name is built, whether in marriage, child training, employment or health. Many run from the truth about themselves. Nothing destroys a reputation quicker and more permanently than for a person to be known as a liar or a hypocrite.

Therefore, the commandment covers not only making a false witness about another or an event with the tongue, but also not bearing false witness about God by our conduct.

### Why We Lie

To make a bad witness through ignorance or weakness is one thing, but to know better and deliberately mislead surely compounds the transgression! Why do we lie? We lie to cover up; we fear that something we wish to hide will be exposed. We also lie to rise above our feelings of inadequacy or inferiority, or to lower a third party in the eyes of others. This latter reason tends to elevate ourselves in our own eyes and, we hope, in the eyes of others.

Consider the use of cosmetics in this regard. Makeup is frequently used to hide, to cover up what we consider to be inadequacies of beauty. But by whose standard are we inadequate? Are we really being a true witness of ourselves?

Proverbs 26:18-28 covers various principles about lying. Study this section with Matthew 12:34 in mind, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,” as well as James 3:6, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.” The deceitful heart is the real source of sin (Jeremiah 17:9), but the tongue conveys it to the outside world.

*“Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking!’” (Proverbs 26:18-19).*

Foolishness is never a joke when deceit is involved. A person who does such things is as insane as a person who randomly shoots into a crowd. His actions may have serious consequences, even death, though it is not his intention. God considers it no excuse to say, “I didn’t mean it.”

*“Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.” (verse 20)*  
Talebearing usually involves slander, and slander feeds



**NEVER BELIEVE ANYTHING BAD ABOUT A PERSON UNLESS YOU KNOW IT TO BE ABSOLUTELY TRUE; NEVER TELL IT UNLESS IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY; AND REMEMBER, FEAR GOD, FOR HE IS LISTENING WHILE YOU TELL IT.**

**GOD CANNOT BE FOOLED, AND LIARS SEEM TO FORGET HIS AWARENESS. WHILE THEY MIND, OR SIDE WITH, THE THINGS OF THE FLESH, THEY PUT THEMSELVES IN JEOPARDY OF REAPING WHAT THEY HAVE ALLIED WITH—DEATH.**

contention the same way wood feeds a fire. A slanderer uses falsehood to defame a reputation, which engenders conflict.

*“The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.” (verse 22)*

Human nature greedily swallows gossip. God warns here that gossip is never superficial but that we thoroughly assimilate it to become part of us. Lies about others die hard because in our vanity we are so eager to elevate ourselves while mentally putting down another.

Here is a good maxim to live by: Never believe anything bad about a person unless you know it to be *absolutely* true; never tell it unless it is *absolutely* necessary; and remember, fear God, for He is listening while you tell it.

*“Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross.” (verse 23)*

This verse to the end of the chapter speaks primarily of hypocrisy. Verse 23 describes a person who claims to be a friend yet deceitfully works against another through “clever” language. The lips “glitter,” but the heart is false. Silver dross hides the reality of a clay pot just as clever words can hide a corrupt heart.

*“He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart.” (verse 24-25)*

This continues the thought in verses 22-23, but it focuses on friendly words concealing hatred until the person sees the chance to pull the other down. He may speak graciously, but be careful! This sounds similar to the way the media approaches public figures, who are fair game for every abominable accusation, though they are unsubstantiated.

*“Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the whole congregation. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him. A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” (verses 26-28)*

These powerful words caution that one who indulges in activity like this will have his hatred exposed—and probably by the same means he has used on others!

Galatians 6:7-8 teaches us another very important universal principle that bears strongly on lying: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

God cannot be fooled, and liars seem to forget His

awareness. While they mind, or side with, the things of the flesh, they put themselves in jeopardy of reaping what they have allied with—death. We cannot treat His law with disrespect or contempt and get away with it. Just as gravity cannot be tricked, neither can God’s law. We are accountable to it whether we wish to be or not.

What we do in life, life does back to us. We cannot escape it! If we sow to death, we will reap death. If we sow to life—eternal life—we will reap life. Jesus asked, “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7:16). A hypocrite cannot fool God’s laws, only others and himself—for a while.

### Self-Deception

*Deceitful* means insincere, hypocritical, underhanded, false, dishonest, treacherous, sneaking, double-dealing, tricky, cunning and crafty. Such a person is altogether untrustworthy. As we saw in Jeremiah 17:9, our heart is desperately sick or weak, implying it knows better but deceives anyway. Who can fathom its corruption, manifested in the incessant transgression of this commandment?

We understand that human nature is a reflection of the spirit of the prince of the power of the air, whom Jesus identified as the father or generator of lies (John 8:44). Satan had so deceived himself, he thought he could overcome his Creator! Proverbs 11:9 says, “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.” Satan is a destroyer who passes this carnal attribute along to those who will follow him. Unless the hypocrite repents, he destroys himself too. That is the lesson of Proverbs 26:26-28. God will deliver the just person, however, because he yields to truth.

Proverbs 14:8 adds, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” True wisdom is skill in living, carrying with it the ability to judge present circumstances with a view of future success. The prudent person consciously follows truth. He deliberately chooses the right and thus does not walk on blindly.

Folly is senselessness, silliness or irrationality. Why? Because the person deceiving is himself deceived. He does not realize his deceit will also crush him! What profit is in this sin? God has taken particular pains to impress upon us that it will boomerang and catch the perpetrator.

Job makes an interesting statement in defense of himself after being accused of being a hypocrite by his



**IN THESE VERSES, THE APOSTLE CLEARLY STATES OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD REGARDING THE NINTH COMMANDMENT. WE SHOULD MANIFEST TRUTH IN EVERY PART OF OUR LIFE, MAKING HONEST AND DILIGENT USE OF GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFTS WITHOUT CRAFTINESS.**

friends: "If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom . . ." (Job 31:33). He is asking his friends for evidence that he has hidden the truth of his sins from himself.

It is a relevant question because it is natural to be blind to our own flaws while clearly seeing those of others. Sir Walter Scott put it this way, "O what a tangled web we weave / When first we practice to deceive." The tangled web hangs not only outside a deceiver but within him as well, and his own lies trap him so often that he begins to believe them. He tells them so often or lives them so smoothly that he loses his grip on reality like a drug addict in denial.

Proverbs 16:6 counsels, "In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil." We overcome lying because God mercifully but forcefully brings it to our attention by revealing His truth. When we submit to His truth rather than our self-deceptions, we are beginning to overcome.

Commentators suggest an alternative translation of this verse: "By loyalty and faithfulness one escapes evil." The sense is that loyalty and faithfulness to God's truth are essential elements to escaping the second death. Obeying truth does not forgive sin, but it plays a part in cleaning our minds of the garbage of bad habits lodged in our character so that we are less likely to involve ourselves in sin. God's truth says we must not bear false witness, and that must be obeyed!

Psalm 15:1-3 sets a very high standard:

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend.

David describes a person in whom is no false way at all, no pretenses, no deceit, no gossip, guile or hypocrisy. He neither makes hollow friendships nor speaks vain compliments. His heart, hand and tongue are unified in believing and practicing truth. He is faithful, responsible and trustworthy, a person of integrity because his heart is pure. Therefore, his speech and example witness of truth.

Paul writes:

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have

received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (II Corinthians 4:1-2)

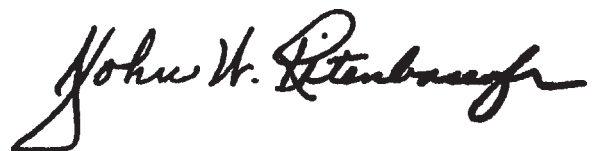
In these verses, the apostle clearly states our responsibility to God regarding the ninth commandment. We should manifest truth in every part of our life, making honest and diligent use of God's gracious gifts without craftiness.

Is our way Christ's? Can we say we have nothing to do with hidden and shameful methods and speech? He is not talking about acting with unscrupulous cleverness, but how we handle God's Word. Do we adulterate the Word which God gave us to live by and preach? Our lives should demonstrate that we present ourselves to human conscience in the sight of God. We should live our lives in the fear of God, knowing He is watching and judging our conduct.

We should be childlike and open to leave as little room as possible for people to misinterpret our motives, misunderstand our actions or twist our words from their real meaning. Does it make any difference what people think of us? Some take the approach that "I will do what I want to do, and what others think doesn't matter." This at times has the appearance of wisdom, but it matters to God. If He did not care, He would not show so much concern in His Word about being a good witness for Him and protecting our reputations or His. Much of our effectiveness as a witness depends on being trustworthy through honesty.

Brethren, keeping this commandment begins with not letting our deceitful heart trick us into doing or saying anything less than what is honest and true in God's sight. We must demonstrate a true witness regardless of what men may discern from what we say or do, or what painful harm the truth may do to our vanity.

In Christian love,



The United States government has a *Federal Witness Protection Program* to protect those who testify against organized crime when they are in danger of being killed or harmed by the accused person or organization. These witnesses provide proof—either in the form of written material or their own verbal testimony—regarding what transpired relating to the perpetrated crime.

When a person is placed in the witness protection program, the government provides him with a completely new identity. The witness, his wife and any children receive new individual names, as well as a new family name. They move into a new house in another part of the country or world, depending on the power and reach of the criminal's organization. The witness' occupation is usually changed, or they are given a new business to manage. In extreme cases, they may even have their looks altered by plastic surgery.

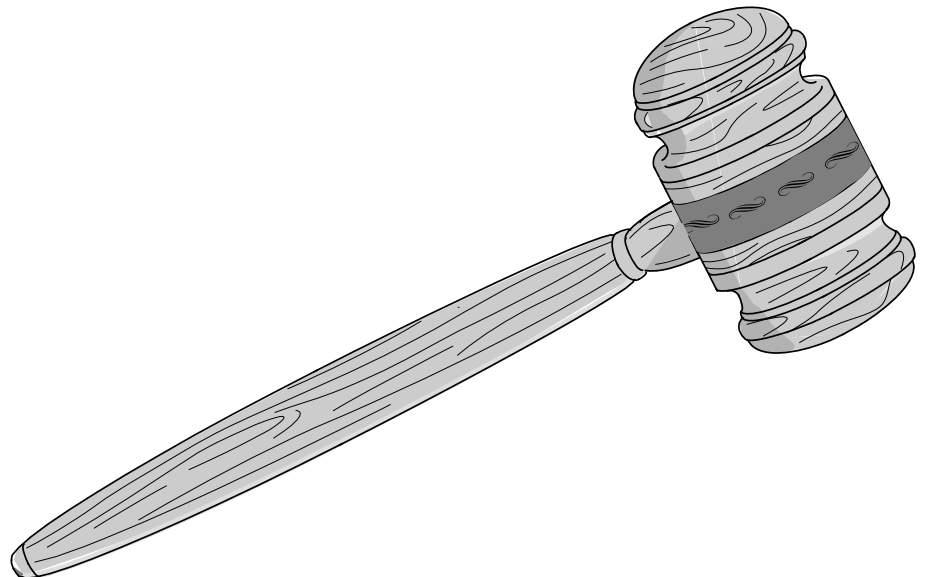
The witness' testimony is so important to the prosecutor that the government will pour a great amount of money and effort into his protection both before and after the trial. It is such an extensive program that 200 people each year enter it, and the U.S. government spends at least \$58 million per year to keep these people safe. Some estimates run as high as \$100 million yearly. Since the program is cloaked in such secrecy, no one knows for sure how much is actually spent.

Ironically, many of these protected witnesses are more dangerous than the individuals they put behind bars. Many have perjured their testimony to get into the program. It is safe to say that the character of the witnesses leaves much to be desired. At least 20 people have been murdered by individuals in the program. A Senate hearing on January 8, 1996, found that 1 of every 4 people enrolled in the program commit a crime while in it.

The witness protection program is a fiasco. The reliability and accuracy of the witnesses make their testimonies useless for true justice. *The real value of a witness depends upon the faithfulness and truth of his testimony.*



“YOU  
ARE  
MY  
WITNESSES...”



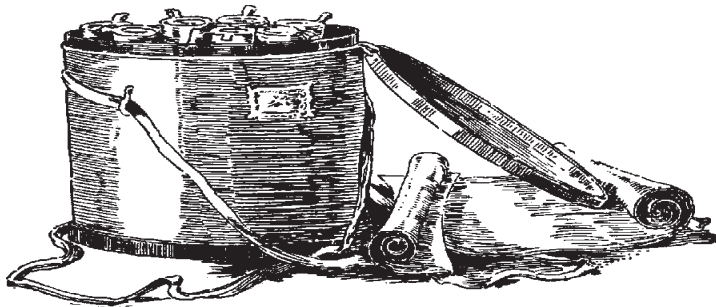
What is a witness? Today, the word “witness” is acceptable as a synonym for the verb “see,” though it is infrequently used in this way. “Witness” is preferred when one’s presence to observe an act is formal or legally necessary, or when one’s observation is likely to be the basis of subsequent testimony. For example, one *sees* a new model automobile, but one *witnesses* an accident. So a witness is one who sees an event and can report it to others.

## Old Testament Usage

In the Old Testament the word “witness” is derived from the Hebrew root word, *ed*, meaning “to repeat or re-assert.” Similar to our usage today, the Old Testament word or its compounds are used primarily in two ways:

- 1) “Witness” means *evidence* (e.g., Severe damage witnessed to the destructive force of the storm).
- 2) “Witness” means *the person who testifies* (e.g., The witness to the robbery took the stand).

The Old Testament shows several examples of “witness” meaning *evidence* or *proof*. Some witnesses were in writing. A legal divorce had to be accompanied by a written document (Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1), and in civil contracts around the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, documentary evidence was required and carefully preserved, as when Jeremiah bought the field from his cousin Hanameel (Jeremiah 32:10-16).



The Old Testament shows some witnesses were in writing. A legal divorce had to be accompanied by a written document. In ancient Israel documentary evidence was required and carefully preserved.

Some witnesses were not in writing. Abraham gave seven ewe-lambs to Abimelech as evidence or a witness of his ownership of the well of Beersheba (Genesis 21:30-31). Jacob raised a heap of stones as a boundary mark or witness between himself and Laban (Genesis 31:44, 52). The tribes of Reuben and Gad built an altar as a witness to the covenant between themselves and the other tribes (Joshua 22:10-34). Joshua set up a stone as a witness of Israel’s promised allegiance to God (Joshua 24:26-27).

In contrast, witnesses can signify evil. Idols witness to the worthlessness of the false gods they represent (Isaiah 44:9). Job claims his wrinkles witness of God’s wrath against him (Job 16:8).

The other type of Old Testament witness is *the person who witnesses* or can testify for others for legal purposes. The law generally required evidence for all its infractions and legal transactions.

Israelite law contained special conditions with respect to evidence from witnesses. At least two witnesses were required to establish any accusation (Deuteronomy 17:6). In the case of a wife suspected of adultery, evidence besides the husband’s was required (Numbers 5:13). A witness who withheld the truth shared in the guilt of the offense (Leviticus 5:1). Slandorous reports and meddlesome witnesses were forbidden (Exodus 20:16; 23:1), and the witnesses were the first executioners (Deuteronomy 13:9; 17:7).

The testimony of a witness in the Old Testament was a very serious matter. A judge was required to verify it by the testimony of at least one other witness. If a witness was found to be unreliable and false, he received the same penalty that the accused would have received had he been found guilty.

## New Testament Usage

In the New Testament, the word “witness” is derived from the various forms of the Greek word *martus*, which means “record,” “report,” “evidence given” or “testimony.” It is someone who can testify or vouch for the parties in debate. As in English, it means one who bears testimony in a judicial sense or one who can testify to the truth of what he has seen or known. As in the Old Testament, the witnesses were the first executioners (Acts 7:58), and at least two witnesses were required to establish any charge (II Corinthians 13:1). Within the church, an accusation against a minister was only received if it was from two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19).

In the New Testament, a witness takes on the more personal form of “one who attests his belief in Christ and His teachings by personal suffering.” The apostles frequently appear as witnesses of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:46-48). The faithful are called “*so great a cloud of witnesses*” (Hebrews 12:1). Revelation 6:9 speaks of “those who had been slain for the testimony which they held.”

From *martus* we get the English word “martyr,” that is, one who, amidst great sufferings or by his death, bears witness to the truth. A martyr is one who is so confident of the truth, and so upright, that he would rather give his life than deny the truth of what he has seen and known. Paul mentions Stephen’s witness and martyrdom in Acts 22:20 as an example of this kind of witness.

In the letter to the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14), Jesus Himself is referred to as “the Faithful and True Witness” (*martyr*). None of the other letters to the seven churches uses this title. Christ emphasizes His own *faithful and true* character because the Laodiceans so completely lack these two qualities. Christ’s example shows that to be a fitting witness of God, one must be *faithful and true*, that is, spiritually reliable and accurate. A true witness of God is a reflected example of the life of Jesus Christ in word and behavior.



Traditional site of the stoning of Stephen, who witnessed powerfully for God by his death. We witness for God by our everyday lives.

## Two Witnesses

In Revelation 11, during the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, John describes the Two Witnesses as having God-given power to witness and, if need be, call fire down from heaven to destroy their enemies. While they preach God's last warning to the human and demonic powers of earth just before the final Trumpet sounds, God gives them supernatural protection.

Before the start of their 3½-year commission, the Two Witnesses will already have been witnessing by their *example* and through their *preaching*. They will already be producing good works. God will inspire them to utter a specific message directed at the descendants of Israel and the rest of the world, indicting the world of sin.

Revelation 11:3 says:

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

The word "power" is not in the Greek text, which simply reads, "I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy. . . ." Paraphrased, God says, "I will grant to My Two Witnesses the right or power of prophesying during the time specified." Translators must add a word like "power," "privilege," "opportunity," or "boldness" to complete the sense in English.

The meaning is not that God would send two witnesses to prophesy, but that they are existing witnesses who receive additional gifts and powers. During that time God will give them

the privilege and the strength to proclaim the truth that they will be commissioned to communicate as His "witnesses" to mankind.

The phrase "and they will prophesy" does not necessarily mean that they would predict future events, but that they would proclaim the truth as God had revealed it. The indication here is that the Two Witnesses would publicly preach or maintain the truth before the world.

God promises protection to those who obey Him, provided it is His will. Some of the faithful are given the spiritual strength to be martyred, and others are protected from such unpleasantness. God decides for His own purpose how he wants us to represent Him. Revelation 11:5 describes part of God's witness protection program, "If anyone wants to harm [the Two Witnesses], fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies." Christ is reliable and true. Not a hair of our head is affected without His approval.

## The Church's Witness

In Revelation 12:11, John records that the saints overcome Satan by the blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of our sins, and by the word of their testimony. In the Kingdom of God, the saints will continue to be witnesses of God's way of life. We are all witnesses of something, and we continue to witness as long as we exist or are remembered.

As a unified and cumulative force—as the Church—what do we witness or testify for God?

1. We witness that He is God. Isaiah 43:10, 12 says, speaking of spiritual Israel, the

church: "You are My witnesses, . . . that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. . . . Therefore you are My witnesses," says the LORD, "that I am God" (see Isaiah 44:8).

2. We testify that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:5).
3. We proclaim that God the Father raised up Jesus to be Prince and Savior (Acts 5:30-32).
4. We show that Christ was ordained by God the Father to be Judge (Acts 10:40-42).
5. We declare that through Christ's name whoever believes in and obeys Him will be forgiven of sin (Acts 10:43).
6. We testify to man repentance toward God the Father and faith toward Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).
7. We announce the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14).

These scriptures are a summary of God's sovereignty, Jesus Christ's role and our part in God's overall plan.

We are individually and collectively to witness by our works that our God is God! Our good or bad witness is made because we are producing good or bad works. Good works will glorify God—if we are a reliable and accurate witness of His way of life.

We have a tremendous individual responsibility to witness for God by our example. As one writer put it, "Witnessing is not a spare-time occupation or a once-a-week activity. It must be a quality of life. You do not go witnessing, you are a witness."

Remember the well-known saying, "I can't hear what you are saying because your actions speak so loudly"? In this vein, Paul Gilbert expressed the right principle of personal witnessing in a poem:

You write a sermon,  
a chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do and the  
words that you say;  
Men read what you write,  
if it's false or it's true.  
Say, what is the gospel  
according to you?

—Martin G. Collins



# ANGER: SPIRITUAL DRAIN®

Most of the time an article on anger would focus upon its negative aspects.

- ◆ “For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).
- ◆ “Do not let the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26).
- ◆ “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul” (Proverbs 22:24-25).

However, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26, quoting Psalms 4:4, “Be angry, and do not sin.” At first glance, the encouragement to be angry on the one hand, and the caution to give no place to anger on the other seems a gross contradiction. But there is more to anger than meets the eye.

In the Bible both the Hebrew and the Greek words for *anger* mean nostrils, suggesting the violent, quick breathing—or even snorting—of an enraged person. “Rage,” “temper,” “wrath,” “indignation” and “fury” all cluster around this concept of rhythmically snorting nostrils. A dirt-pawing bull, glaring and snorting at a

maddening matador, comes to mind.

We can even consider anger as a godly characteristic or behavior. The Bible speaks often of God’s anger or wrath flaring out at sin. Consider God’s fury as compared to a whirlwind in Jeremiah 30:23-24:

**“Be angry, and do not  
sin. Meditate within  
your heart on your  
bed, and be still.  
Selah”**

**(Psalm 4:4)**

Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD will not return until He has done it, and until He has

performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it.

Jesus Christ executes the justice of God the Father with wrath and indignation, as we read in Revelation 19:14-15:

And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Why would God deny to us, His children, something that constitutes part of His character? Have we not been created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26)? The truth is that God did create us to express anger, and He expects us to use it. Just as sex is a good, pleasant and wholesome activity within marriage, anger has a legitimate function when the target is legitimate. An old Yiddish proverb suggests that if it is done at the right time, it constitutes

## A Ready Answer

“Be Ready Always To Give An Answer” – I Peter 3:15 (KJV)

no sin.

## Vital and Necessary

God Almighty expects us to be able to call up a supply of anger for a very specific, vital, and necessary purpose. Sometimes anger is the appropriate response to a situation, and we need to know when and how to be angry in a proper, godly way.

Some people have deficits when it comes to marshaling and sustaining anger. Having served as a Spokesman/Ambassador Club director for nearly ten years, I have had the opportunity to listen to and evaluate many “attack” speeches. Many times I had to fail the speaker because he lacked intensity. One evening I failed the speaker who had won, and deservedly so, the “Most Effective Speech” cup. At one point in his speech, he reached a fleeting peak of white hot anger, but he could only sustain it for a matter of seconds.

After the club meeting he said to me, “But sir, I’m not sure whether I could ever reach that peak of anger again.”

I told him that not only would he have to reach that point again, but he would have to surpass it. He would need to have enough of a reservoir of godly indignation, of rage and intensity, to do it over and over and over.

The scriptures contain many examples of men of God exercising, without reproach, righteous anger. Exodus 32:19-20 gives an example of Moses’ righteous indignation:

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses’ anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it with the fire and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

Yet God later censured Moses for striking the rock in anger at Kadesh (Numbers 20:1-13). Christ rebuked Peter for cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant, Malchus in the



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We need to have enough of a reservoir of godly indignation, of rage and intensity, to vent our wrath at sin over and over and over, utterly destroying it.

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Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10-11). Simeon and Levi were cursed for the anger they showed against the defenseless Shechemites (Genesis 49:5-7; see 34:25-31). It is vitally important to understand when anger is justified and good and when it is not.

### Anger’s Target

The godly purpose of anger is to consume and destroy its target utterly. Nothing was to be left. When Saul was told to destroy the Amalekites, the command was to exterminate every man, woman, child and beast (I Samuel 15:1-3). Did God command this because He hated the Amalekites? No, He wanted this to be done because He hates sin. At this point, extermination was really an act of love and mercy.

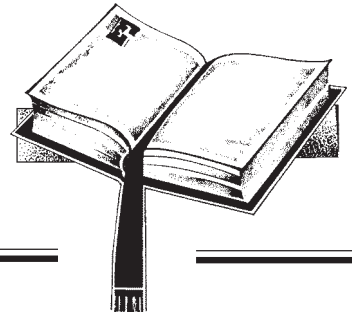
In every case in which godly wrath is exhibited, the target is sin, not people, although sometimes people get caught in it. Such people are not “lost,” just reserved for a time when conditions will be more conducive for God to straighten them out. In the Great White Throne Judgment, they will have their “day of salvation” (Ezekiel 37:1-14; Isaiah 65:20-25; Revelation 20:5a, 11-13).

We should consider anger as a kind of spiritual Drāno®. Its target is gunk, crud, or debris in the pipes. The crud in the pipes could easily represent sin, which prevents water from flowing through them. The water represents God’s Holy Spirit, which cannot flow through a person if he has crud in the pipes. When used properly, spiritual Drāno® can become a valuable aid in overcoming.

Behold the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities [crud in the pipes] have separated you from your God [His Holy Spirit cannot flow through to you]; and your sins have hidden His face from you. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

The last part of verse 2 parallels Habakkuk 1:13, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” God cannot tolerate sin. He refuses to coexist with it. He intends that we blaze with white hot anger at the sin in our life, that we take our fury out on the thoughts and behaviors that are tak-

please see page 18



## RIGHT? WRONG?

Luke writes in Acts 17:6 that the Thessalonians considered the first-century apostles to “have turned the world upside down.” This back-handed compliment means that they had “stirred up,” “excited” or “troubled” everyone who had heard the gospel of God’s Kingdom. No one could be neutral on the subject; people were either zealously for it or vehemently against it.

As the years wind down toward the twenty-first century, the world is again being turned upside down, but this time for the worse. In early America, issues were black and white, right and wrong, good and evil. Gray areas were rare, and most people considered middle-of-the-road positions and compromises as indicative of weakness and indecision. People valued strong leadership and commitment to ideals and high standards.

How times have changed! America’s recent Presidents have campaigned—and won—on centrist platforms for fear of alienating one “extreme” or another. The electorate votes for such moderates because they are “safe” and “can bring the two sides together to form a consensus.” What they get is the status quo with a drift toward gridlock and degeneration everywhere!

In such an age of compromise, the blurring of right and wrong is a certainty. Moral and ethical matters, resolved by consensus, sink toward the level of the lowest common belief in the community, self-interest. Lead-

ers “fix” social problems by commissioning inconclusive, scientific studies and boxcars of money rather than by applying common-sense solutions, particularly personal and communal responsibility. Political disputes get “hammered out” by compromise in smoke-filled back rooms. Even religious questions, whether moral, societal or organizational, bow to majority opinion and mores. Black becomes gray, and white becomes gray.

Isaiah cries out in Isaiah 5:20:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

A curse falls on those who water down standards and substitute individual preferences and ethical compromises for absolutes, leading to moral relativism and societal upset. What will happen to such people?

Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rotteness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; he has stretched out His hand against them and

stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. (Verses 24-25)

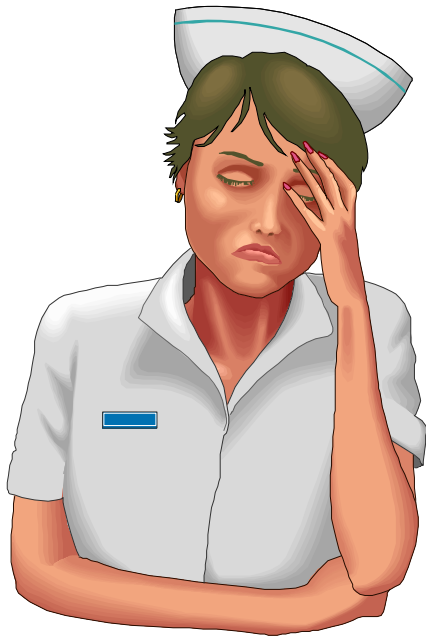
Unfortunately, this scenario awaits this nation, as the following examples in medicine, politics and religion show.

### Medical Mendacity

As far as we know, the crisis of AIDS has been with us since 1981, although blood samples from as early as 1959 show evidence of the HIV virus. Approximately 6.4 million have died from AIDS already, and since 30 million people are HIV-positive, another 13 million are expected to die by the year 2000. Although the disease can be spread by other means, the primary vehicle for the contagion is sexual contact.

Before AIDS, sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) like gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes and chlamydia—politely called “social” or venereal diseases—raged around the world for centuries. Like AIDS, these are primarily spread by sexual contact, usually of an illicit nature. Today, the Centers for Disease Control reports, 87 percent of all reportable disease is sexually transmitted!

This means, of course, that 87 percent of all disease is preventable—by keeping the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery”



Medical ethics has no constant standard on which to base its decisions. Doctors are free to choose their own version of right and wrong.

(Exodus 20:14), which includes all forms of sexual immorality. Mankind could eliminate nearly nine-tenths of all disease by changing sexual behavior to conform to the standard of God's law! Imagine the health, joy and peace this would cause!

What a breakthrough, right? Wrong! The medical establishment worldwide—except for a few “radical” countries, most of which are Moslem—utterly rejects behavioral changes in favor of the politically correct “safe sex” procedures. Dr. Ed Payne, a faculty member at the Medical College of Georgia, calls the medical community's attitude of rejection of moral values “deliberate naïveté” (*World*, November 1, 1997, p. 5). Like children, they believe that if they just shut their eyes to the underlying cause of the problem, it really does not exist.

Dr. Payne writes:

The crisis of American medicine is not tobacco, AIDS, silicone, the Gulf War Syndrome, breast or any other form of cancer. . . . The crisis of American medicine is far greater than any one of these problems; indeed, it is far greater than all of them combined, because the answers

to these problems do not come from within them, but from medical ethics. It is the same crisis that faces our culture in every other area: How do we decide ethics? That is, how do we decide what is right and what is wrong? (ibid.)

Once, the Hippocratic Oath set the standard for the medical profession. Notwithstanding its references to pagan deities, the oath prohibits abortion and euthanasia along with its dictum, “First, do no harm.” Today, this historic oath is routinely considered to be outdated, and doctors feel free to pick and choose which of its tenets they will follow.

In its absence, the medical profession respects no consistent standard of ethics. Thus, when confronted with an ethical dilemma, a doctor has three choices:

1. He can pursue his own course out of personal belief—each man for himself.
2. He can take the side of the majority of health professionals—majority rule.
3. He can find a pluralistic middle ground to please both sides—compromise.

The basic idea of right and wrong rarely arises.

What is the result? In the case of

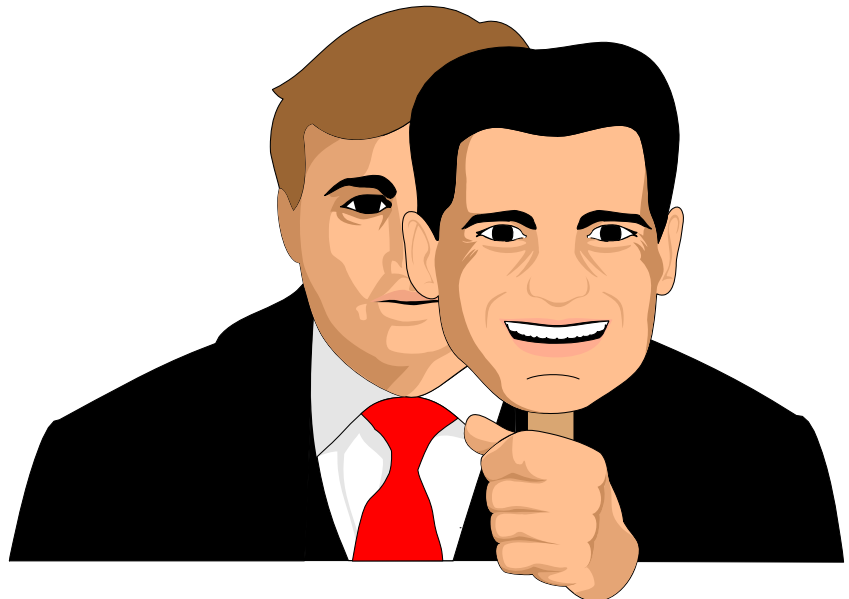
STDs, the medical establishment actually promotes promiscuity and immorality. Rather than “weigh in” on pre-marital sex, it provides sex education, condoms and birth-control pills to adolescents. To the majority of “health professionals,” homosexuality is not wrong, but unsafe homosexual sex is “at-risk behavior.” The risk is not that God will punish for sin but that a person might get a fatal disease.

Wrong becomes right, and if it is so right, their actions say, we should do more of it!

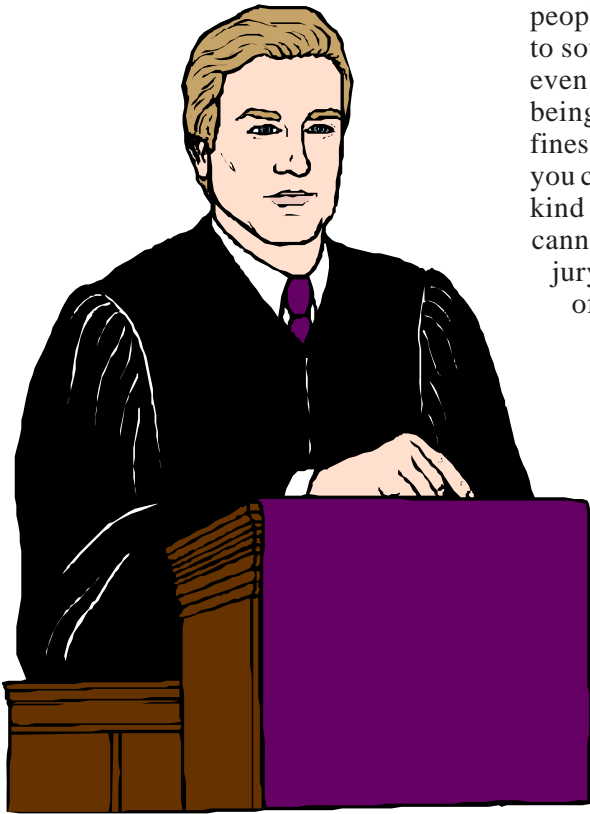
## Political Poppycock

It has become axiomatic that American politics is corrupt. Elected leaders from dog catcher to President have used their positions to influence decisions, get rich and stifle the competition. This is hardly new, but recent political corruption has taken a new twist that should be highly alarming. This twist is the claim that illegal actions are not wrong, just indictable.

The present White House, including the President, Vice President and First Lady, have all made this claim during recent scandals. President Clinton says that requesting political contributions on federal property may be contrary to the 1883 law prohibiting it, but since other Presidents have done it, he has really done nothing wrong. It is just the way



Though political corruption is hardly new, politicians now claim that illegal actions are not wrong, just indictable.



U.S. Catholic bishops recently advised parents of gay children to put love and support for their sons and daughters before church doctrine.

people the very concept appears to sound antiquated, simplistic, even repressive. There is only being indictable or subject to fines or penalties under law, raps you can beat as distinct from the kind with moral force that you cannot beat no matter what the jury says about the relevance of some obscure section of the law. . . . The silence from all our leaders on this subject—the moral rights and wrongs of what has been going on—has been total and chilling. . . . Right? Wrong? What’s that? (*Washington Post*, September 29, 1997)

What makes this especially revealing is that these elected leaders *have little or no concept of right and wrong*. They are not merely proclaiming their innocence; they sincerely have no basis for determining right from wrong! Having rejected traditional, bibli-

cal moral standards, many of our leaders have no stable moral code to fall back on. They handle each situation based on its own merits, historical precedent and their own experiences, feelings, desires and needs.

Hosea 4 speaks of such a situation:

Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed. . . . My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” (verses 1-2, 6)

Seeing the examples of the “lead-

ership” in the highest offices of the land, the general populace has begun to embrace a similar moral ambiguity. Polling data shows Clinton and Gore suffered very little in terms of popularity and approval during and after recent scandals. This indicates that Americans basically agree with their leaders’ actions. This “trickle-down” morality is having and will continue to have a disastrous effect on American society.

## Religious Retreat

To its credit, the Catholic Church has—up to this point—held firm in its stand against homosexuality, including gays in the clergy. Elsewhere it is still staunchly conservative in this area, but not in America. U.S. Catholic bishops, more liberal than the Vatican in nearly every respect, have broken ranks with Rome in a pastoral letter released on September 30.

The document, titled “Always Our Children,” advises parents of homosexual children to put love and support for their sons and daughters *before* church doctrine. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops writes that sexual orientation is not freely chosen, so parents should not repudiate their gay offspring in a society full of rejection and discrimination because such rejection could lead to substance abuse or suicide.

The letter states that the bishops recognize that multiple factors account for homosexual orientation. Homosexuality is “generally . . . experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen. By itself, therefore, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for morality presumes the freedom to choose.”

The bishops make a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity. While urging acceptance of those with homosexual orientation, they insist that sexual intercourse be limited to marriage between a man and a woman. The letter stresses that friendship as “a way of loving,” and friendship “outside of genital sexual involvement” should be an integral part of a gay’s life.

The bishops also advise priests to “welcome homosexual persons

things are done and have always been done. Al Gore made a similar statement in defense of his taking large, second-party contributions from Buddhist nuns during a campaign fundraiser. It is not wrong to take such donations of foreign money, he claims though it may be against campaign fund-raising rules. Hillary Clinton also played this game during the White House Travel Office scandal a few years ago. Without an indictment, she considered herself guilty of no wrongdoing.

They could make these claims all day, but they would not be taken seriously unless others in political leadership gave them credence. As the many investigations, inquiries, hearings, independent counsels and special prosecutors indicate, official Washington has not fought this trend. Political commentators, such as *Washington Post* editor Meg Greenfield, are beginning to take note of it:

Everything is illegal; but nothing is wrong. In fact, there is no wrong. To great numbers of

into the faith community,” “seek those on the margins,” and “avoid stereotyping and condemnations.” Finally, they write, “do not presume that all homosexual persons are sexually active.”

The letter also supports the role of gays in the church, saying that “homosexual persons have a right to an active role in the community.” Chaste homosexuals, they say, should be considered for leadership positions in the church. As one commentator writes, is this “a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell policy’ for the army of God?” (*NetRadio*, “News Editorial Feature,” October 1, 1997).

It is pure hypocrisy. It is playing both sides of the issue. It is moral compromise at its lowest ebb. Most of all, it completely ignores God’s Word on the subject. The Bible never makes a convenient distinction between “homosexual orientation” and “homosexual activity”; it simply calls homosexuality “an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), “perverted” (Deuteronomy 23:17; Judges 19:22), “uncleanness” (Romans 1:24), “against nature” (verse 26) and “shameful” (verse 27). Paul tells Timothy that the judgment of the law applies to sinners, among them sodomites (I Timothy 1:8-10). No one who remains in this condition “will inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

Religions have gone into full re-

treat on doctrines that condemn politically correct practices, and they cloak it in compassion and tolerance. What used to be soundly rejected as perverted and unspeakable evil is now routinely accepted, even encouraged, by “concerned Christians.” This fulfills Romans 1:28-32 where Paul says that once the world rejects God’s revelation, the people fall into unrighteousness and approve those who practice such sins.

## A Fixed Standard

The world’s sliding scale of ethics and morality provides a fitting non-foundation for a society enamored with limitless personal freedoms without the corresponding personal responsibility. It is perfect for people who want to feel good about themselves no matter how they live. It makes “sense” to those who see no ultimate purpose for their lives.

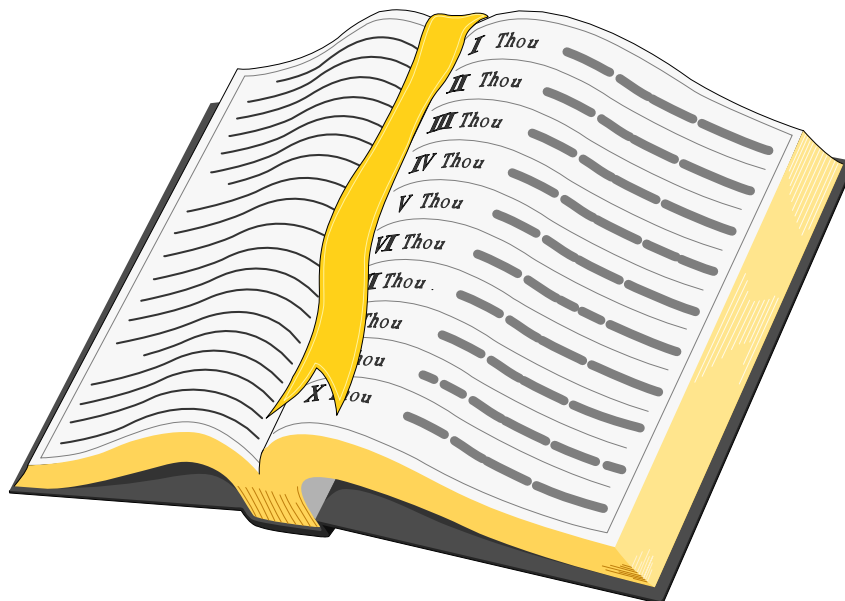
But for us, it is a slippery slope to the second death. Through His law, God has provided us a fixed standard, a pattern of approved behavior that is valid and profitable for anyone in any place at any time. We have a God who does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), and since His Word is based on His very character, it does not change either. This is the factor that allows us to have unshakable faith in Almighty God and His purpose for us.

And we need such an unshakable faith during these last days. Paul warns us in II Timothy 3:1 that our time would be “perilous” to us because of our belief in the truth of God. The apostle then lists specific attitudes (verses 2-5), many of which apply to these three examples of traditional ethics and morality being turned upside-down. Though the world continues to increase its store of knowledge, the people and their leaders are

always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further [*their successes will be short-lived*, Revised English Bible], for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. (Verses 7-9)

One day, hopefully soon, the folly of man’s misguided immorality will be revealed by the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Then, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14), and the problems will truly begin to be solved.

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh



God’s Word, based on God’s unchangeable character, is the only true standard of right and wrong. We can have unshakable faith in God and His purpose for us because of it.

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# ANGER: SPIRITUAL DRANO®

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continued from page 13

ing our lives. So says Paul in II Corinthians 10:4-6:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and *being ready to punish all disobedience* when your obedience is fulfilled.

Too many times we reserve our anger for after the sin has been perpetrated, and then, when the waves of guilt overwhelm us, we say: "I'm a dirty, low-down jerk, not fit to live! I'm a slob! I'm an idiot!" This kind of anger is not very effective in changing our sinful ways because we have already caused damage to ourselves and others. This kind of anger can be effective in helping us not repeat the sin, but is too late to prevent the sin we have already committed. So when is the best time to get angry?

The time to get angry is **BEFORE** we commit the sin—before we follow the path of destruction—before we separate ourselves from God. Then we need to pour the Drano® right on the sin, onto the behavior causing the guilt. And we should pour on the Drano® full-strength!

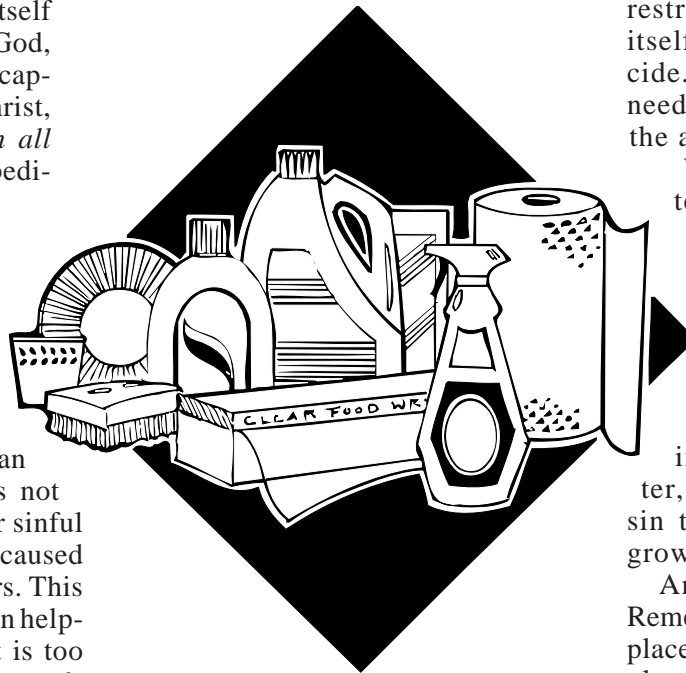
When a minister corrects a member of the congregation, of necessity a certain amount of indignation is involved, but the indignation is not directed at the person but at the sin. He must correct the person for his ultimate good, though it seems hard to take initially. Proverbs 3:12 shows that correction of this kind is done out of love: "God loves every son whom

He corrects" (see Hebrews 12:5-11).

## Handle With Care

Anger is, admittedly, a caustic substance. We read cautions all over the Drano® can:

- ◆ Never use lye with any other chemical.
- ◆ Never use lye in dishwashers.
- ◆ Never use lye with aluminum utensils.
- ◆ Harmful or fatal if swallowed.
- ◆ Causes severe burns.
- ◆ Keep out of reach of children.



God is slow to anger (Psalm 145:8); He uses it cautiously. Nahum 1:3 suggests that, though God does not quickly blow His top, He will use anger when necessary. We also need to treat anger as a controlled substance with a specific purpose. Proverbs 16:32 advises us also to be slow to anger, saying it is better than being mighty like a warrior.

Psychologists have taken a long time to discover that anger does not dissipate until it has totally and utterly consumed its target (see Proverbs 17:14). Some advise their patients to "let it all out," but Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back." Venting anger only brings in more "oxygen" to make the fire burn hotter and more de-

structively. Again, the only use for anger is to destroy everything in its path, a scorched-earth policy. This emphasizes how important a correct target for anger is.

However, anger that cannot reach and annihilate its target is turned inward, and as it was designed, it begins wreaking havoc. Physicians claim that anger turned inward can aggravate or cause digestive troubles, eye disorders, dental problems, skin diseases, hives and ulcers. It also interferes with logical thinking processes. A person who cannot find a target for his anger becomes like a rattlesnake that, if restrained, will strike its fangs into itself, effectively committing suicide. Those with unresolved angers need to focus on the sins that keep the anger boiling.

We have a long period to contemplate these things before the Passover season is upon us.

We have an opportunity to make a growth spurt as we never have before. If we would pour a liberal portion of spiritual Drano® into our spiritual pipes, adding godly anger to our character, we will flush out and clear the sin that is retarding our spiritual growth.

Anger displaces complacency. Remember, where there is anger, complacency cannot exist, and once complacency exits, repentance can enter. God expects us to use godly indignation to flush out our sins. In II Corinthians 7:11, Paul writes:

For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, *what indignation*, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Try using a little spiritual Drano® this winter to unclog the crud that has collected in the pipes. Then God can pour out His Spirit in greater measure, and it will flow through us to His glory!

—David F. Maas

# WEATHER



- ◆ Two earthquakes of 5.7 and 4.9 magnitude hit central Italy on September 26, killing 10 and damaging 4,100 homes.
- ◆ Hundreds of thousands of Alaskan seabirds apparently starved to death in recent months because of El Niño. Autopsies showed the birds had anemia, wasted muscles and no body fat.
- ◆ Windswept rains causing floodwaters up to 9 feet killed at least 22 people in Spain and Portugal. Five days of rain in Somalia resulted in 130 dead and 300,000 without homes or food.

- Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said that under certain circumstances, he would favor a pre-emptive strike against long-range missile systems that threaten Israel.
- Sheik Ahmed Yassin, a political leader of the militant Palestinian group Hamas, told the *al-Hayat* newspaper that peace with Israel is prohibited by Islamic law. However, a truce is permissible for up to 10 years to give the Muslims time to build up their strength to defeat the Israelis.

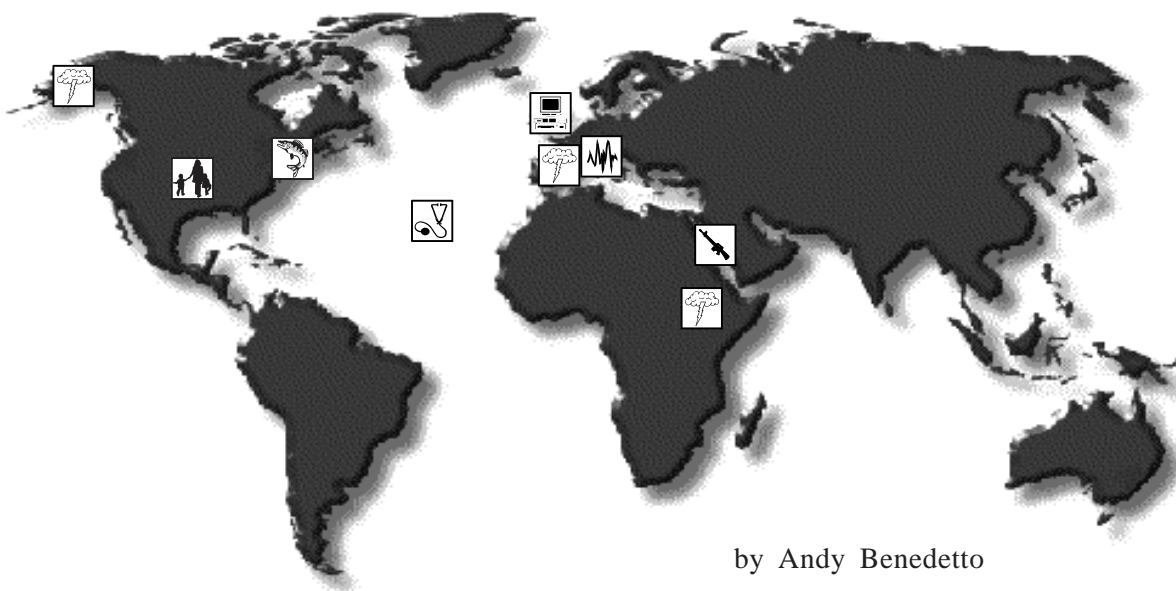


# MIDDLE EAST

## Marine Disease



A toxic organism, *Pfiesteria piscicida*, has killed more than a billion North Carolina fish, a N.C. State University scientist reports. *Pfiesteria* has also been found in Maryland, Virginia and Delaware. Laboratory workers have suffered neurological problems, and others have experienced learning and memory difficulties after contact with the cell.



by Andy Benedetto

The number of children being raised fatherless has grown 300% since 1960. This affects two of every five children. Currently, 70% of the prison population serving long sentences are men who grew up fatherless.



## FAMILY

# H E A L T H



- A 3-year-old boy died in May after contracting an influenza strain never before seen in humans. Laboratories in 4 countries identified a specimen collected from the boy's trachea as a virus called "influenza A of H4N1 strain," previously found mainly in birds.
- In the last 7 years, 400 people have contracted necrotizing fasciitis, commonly known as the "flesh-eating disease." It attacks the fascia or deepest layer of skin and irreparably destroys tissue, spreading as fast as one inch per hour. Doctors must remove skin, large muscle groups, even limbs to save a person's life.
- Researchers report that highly resistant strains of bacteria that cause middle-ear infection, sinusitis and pneumonia are twice as common as they were a year ago. The overuse and/or misuse of antibiotics are the main culprits for drug-resistant bacteria.

## SCIENCE



- British researchers are warning against transplanting animal organs into humans. They recently found two sets of "silent" viruses in pig cells, which could infect humans. Pigs are prime candidates for organ transplants as pig organs are the right size, they are bred quickly and are easy to raise. The scientists are now trying to breed virus-free pigs.
- Other British scientists have developed a frog embryo without a head, a technique that could lead to the production of headless human clones to grow replacement organs and tissue. People could have transplants "grown to order" from their own cloned cells, easing the shortage of organs for transplant. This would also eliminate organ rejection, since the genetic composition of the organ would exactly match the patient's.

# BIBLE STUDY:

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

The Ten Commandments are living, moving, active laws that are even more permanent than the laws of physics that govern matter and energy. They are automatic in their results. If we break them, we incur horrible curses, but if we keep them, we receive wonderful blessings. So it is with the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor

his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Covetousness is an insatiable desire for worldly gain and lies at the heart of where most sin originates. Of all the commandments, the tenth especially emphasizes man’s relationship to man, which is readily seen in the repeated phrase “your neighbor’s.” It protects the interests of others in seven major areas listed individually within the commandment.



1. How is covetousness involved in the process of sin? James 1:13-15. Is anyone immune to covetousness? Jeremiah 6:13. Where do wars and fights come from? James 4:1-2.

**COMMENT:** It is not wrong to want something. We can want a spouse, a house or a car, but not if it belongs to our neighbor—unless he is selling a possession, and we acquire it in a fair and honest manner. However, when “desire has conceived,” it may result in breaking any of the Ten Commandments, including covetousness, to which everyone is susceptible. Uncontrolled lust for power, land and wealth can drive men to murder, if necessary, to obtain a coveted prize.

2. Should we value our accomplishments by our possessions? Luke 12:15; I Timothy 6:6-11; Matthew 16:26.

**COMMENT:** The apostle Paul tells Timothy that “godliness with contentment is great gain” and that, instead of possessions, we should be pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Paul learned to be content in whatever state he was in (Philippians 4:11). Jesus Christ set our primary goal as seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). The inevitable result of doing this will be wonderful blessings and eternal life.

3. Covetousness is described as what spiritual sin? Colossians 3:5. After a man gathers possessions through covetousness, what does he normally do? Habakkuk 2:9; Obadiah 4; Psalm 39:6.

**COMMENT:** If we seek something contrary to God’s will, we covet. If we lust after something, it can become an idol to us, and we will serve it (Romans 6:16). The Bible associates lust with pride and vanity (I John 2:16-17). When a man amasses possessions, he feels a false sense of security because they make him feel he is superior to others. He deceives himself into thinking that calamity will not touch him, yet covetousness is never satisfied and brings on many sorrows.

4. What does covetousness produce? Joshua 7:20-21, 25; Proverbs 1:18-19; Acts 5:1-10; I Timothy 6:9-10.

**COMMENT:** Covetousness produces only negative results like theft, lying, murder, harmful lusts and apostasy. Only sorrow comes from covetousness—and eventually death,

if it is allowed to dominate a person’s mind.

5. Should a minister of God be covetous? I Timothy 3:1-3. What can covetousness cost us? I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:3, 5.

**COMMENT:** It is just as wrong for a minister to covet as it is for anyone else, and his judgment is harsher. A minister should be setting a proper example in this area for others to follow. An unqualified man should not covet the position of minister if he does not meet the biblical requirements (I Timothy 3; Titus 1). God will exclude any covetous person from His Kingdom.

6. Who delivers us from sin, including covetousness? Romans 7:22-25; 8:1-2; Galatians 5:16. What is our responsibility? Proverbs 23:4-5; 28:16; Luke 12:15; Romans 6:12-13; Hebrews 13:5.

**COMMENT:** Even the elect struggle in resisting covetousness, but God through His Spirit helps us to resist the desires that war within us. He expects us to oppose the lusts of the flesh, and promises to help us if we obey Him. It is our responsibility to present ourselves as instruments of righteousness, being careful to hate covetousness and be content with what we have.

7. What is the opposite of coveting? Proverbs 21:26; 22:9. What should we pursue? Matthew 6:19-21; I Timothy 6:10-11.

**COMMENT:** Although the tenth commandment deals most obviously with human and physical relationships, its spiritual requirement is in many ways even more rigid. Like the others, the tenth regulates the mind and heart (II Corinthians 10:5). Many people look on sin as physical action, not realizing that the holy, righteous character that God purposes to form in us necessitates that even our thoughts be completely purified and made like His (Matthew 5:8; Philippians 2:5). God is a Giver, and He gives good and perfect things (James 1:17). This is the character we must emulate.

The Ten Commandments are a complete set of principles that we can keep properly in their spiritual intent only with the help of the Holy Spirit. God uses them as the standard of righteousness by which He develops His righteous mind and character in us. We need to keep them now more than ever!