

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MAY, 1997

OUR INNER WAR

"Sinful desires . . . war against your soul."

--Peter

"They . . . indulge in every kind of impurity,
with a continual lust for more." -- Paul

" . . . the desires of the Spirit are against the
flesh." -- Paul

"Clothe yourselves with . . . Jesus Christ, and
do not think about how to gratify the desires of
your sinful nature." -- Paul

Summer Slump? DON'T!

Every summer it strikes--the Slump. Attendance goes down, offerings decrease, it's harder to find workers to fill some gaps.

What causes it? Things like vacations, camps, loved ones who visit you and loved ones whom you visit. All these things are good in themselves, but they can become idols if we let them become **too** important in our lives. When you go on vacation, are you careful to find a good church and attend its meetings? Or if you're camping out in the wild, maybe looking down "from lofty mountain grandeur," what a great opportunity to say afresh, "How great Thou art!" and have a family church service. As you travel, you can ask the Lord to lead you to folks who need to hear what He has done for you and can also do for them.

Responsible stewards, realizing that their home church's financial needs continue throughout summer, try to give to the home congregation even when they are not there! If they miss 2 or 3 Lord's Days, they make up for it when they return. That way the preacher, custodian, missionaries, scholarship fund, and utilities don't go begging.

"Think on these things," and may we not shirk our duties nor let our love relation to our Lord cool off even slightly. George Muller, a great man of God, said he found that when he was on the road a lot, and not following a regular schedule, it was hard to keep his prayer and Bible study times as fresh and vibrant as when he was at home. He had to guard against carelessness and neglect. And if he had to, outstanding prayer-warrior that he was, how much more we need to, also! Let's determine to stay close to our Savior, folks. We need Him; and He deserves our fullest allegiance.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Jack Blaes, News

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THEME:

THAT INNER WAR

Alex V. Wilson

Sinful Desires...War Against your Soul. 1 Pet. 2:11

...A Continual Lust for More. Eph.4:19

The Desires of the Spirit are Against the Flesh. Gal.5:17

"Help--I'm being attacked!" That's the repeated inner cry of every honest disciple. For dangerous enemies continuously oppose our attempts to follow Christ.

Satan hates us. Sometimes he comes as an angel of light to deceive. Sometimes he stalks us as a devouring lion. And "the world"--ungodly society around us--works the same way. In many parts of our globe it uses threats, imprisonments and killings. In our land it uses peer pressure and ridicule. Or it entices and allures. The old hymn is up-to-date:

With forbidden pleasures would this vain world charm,
Or its sordid treasures spread to work me harm.

But our theme this month is our third foe, our "flesh" or "sinful nature." Let's survey the NT teaching on this subject. Here is *our Lord Jesus'* blunt assessment of human nature: "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts" plus a long list of evil attitudes and actions which "make a man unclean." Our polluted heart and its twisted desires are elsewhere called the flesh. *John* warns us about "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." One commentator summarizes those three as "base desires, false values, egoism." Another classifies them as "unholy desire for things one has *not*, and unholy pride in things one *has*." Ponder that.

But while the desires of the flesh are "unholy," we must not think they are always base or gross. To the contrary they often appear refined and respectable. Where the newer versions use "desire" the older ones used "lust," but in the Greek language such lusts were not necessarily bad. It's actually the word Jesus used when he told the twelve, "With desire I have desired to eat this supper with you." I like F. B. Meyer's definition of lust: "It's a desire for any of a bad thing or *too much of a good thing*." Hmmm; that could include not only Early Times Whiskey but also Kentucky Fried Chicken. Not only adultery but also wanting to be called the best preacher at the Bible conference. (Don't miss Dennis Kinlaw's article this month.) But enough of such meddling. let's return to our study.

Paul describes the unsaved as those who "indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more," and goes on to mention "deceitful desires." But he makes it clear that even the converted have evil cravings. "Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature," he writes to believers. Obviously we still have such desires, or his exhortation would not be needed. And earlier he had twice confessed and lamented that "sin dwells in me."

James agrees with what Christ, John and Paul say. "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" he asks. "Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?...You ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." *Peter* concurs in his concise-but-pregnant statement at the head of this article.

That's a unanimous verdict, isn't it? And it's validated by our experience as well. We do have a problem! And it's not just external. An inner rot plagues us, and we need to know how to find deliverance.

That brings us, gladly, to our second theme this month. The Holy Spirit. He has come to curb the flesh. To oppose its desires with His desires. To turn us rightside up and inside out, with our focus on God and others rather than self. To empower us to keep such commands as "by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body [and be] led by the Spirit of God." And, "put off your old self...be made new in the attitude of your minds...put on the new self..." And, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace."

Say, now things are sounding hopeful, after all that gloomy stuff earlier! Yes, that's another thing the Spirit loves to do. Produce hope. One of my favorite verses is Rom.15:13. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may *overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" That's so exciting let's hear it twice more, in other versions. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope" (J. B. Phillips). "Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!" (The Message).

Yes, verily, amen. And hallelujah.

[Unspecified verses quoted in the article: Mark 7:21-23; 1 John 2:15; Eph.4:19,22; Rom.13:14; 7:17,20; Jam.4:1,3; Rom.8:13,14; Eph. 4:22- 24; 2 Tim. 2:22.]

Getting Serious About Lust in an Age of Smirks

Tim Stafford

Lust is hard to speak about seriously in our era. When Jimmy Carter, running for President, told an interviewer that he had often committed adultery in his heart, the reaction in the press was what John Updike described as "nervous hilarity." "How strangely on modern ears," continues Updike, "falls the notion that lust--sexual desire that wells up in us as involuntary as saliva--in itself is wicked!"

Our modern way of handling lust is to pretend that it has no hold on us--to see it as inevitable and healthy, even fun. Is it really so? We don't have to look hard to see that lust is not nearly as frivolous as our society would like to believe.

In the first place, we don't experience it as frivolous. Let even the most mature adults get tangled in the foolishness of lust--channel-surfing for TV sex in a motel room or plotting the next meeting with someone they want to devour mentally--and they find themselves in a helpless, robotic daze. They may try to joke about it, but the lightheartedness is an act. Lust may be thrilling--like an encounter with a shark is thrilling--but it is not a laugh.

Our society is not finding lust such a laugh either. While it is hard to trace a direct connection between *Playboy* and modern social disintegration, our infatuation with lust surely has something to do with the spread of AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and divorce.

The Bible treats lust as deadly serious. Our Lord says that lust is tantamount to adultery. For Christians, that should settle it. But it is not only because of Scripture that we take lust seriously. Scripture is underlined by experience.

What Lust Is

I have spent much of the past 20 years talking and writing about sex, and I know from experience that a contingent of Christian parents and pastors would rather never mention it. When they speak of battling lust, they really mean eliminating all thoughts of sex. Essentially, they would rather teenagers never enter puberty.

The Bible, however, is frank and unsqueamish about sex. Sex is not really that big a topic in Scripture, and the Bible's concern with lust is only partly about sexual lust. In English, the word lust generally

connotes lurid sexual fantasies. It is closely associated with the mental pictures of naked bodies to which males are so typically drawn.

This English meaning of lust, however, has no equivalent word in New Testament Greek. The word translated *lust* in Matthew 5:28 (*epithumia*) means simply *desire*. On occasion, the word, in fact, has a positive meaning, as when Jesus tells his disciples that he has desired with desire (as the King James puts it) to eat the Passover meal with them (Luke 22:15). Clearly, Jesus does not mean that he has fantasized about the Passover meal, mentally drooling over the menu. *Epithumia* is not a sensual fantasy. Jesus means that he has deeply longed for the occasion.

The same Greek word is used to render the Hebrew word translated covet, as in, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exod. 20:17, NIV) Here we strike at the heart of the problem of lust, as the Bible conceives it: We want things that don't belong to us. Leave sex out of it entirely, for the moment. We are not content with what we have. We want something more--and that desire drives us.

Lust, or covetousness, is a basic component of what the Bible calls sin. All two-year-olds, and all truthful forty-year-olds, confess it: I want what I want because I want it. Nobody and nothing else figures. Jesus' comments on sexual lust fit into that. Lust shows that, in your heart of hearts, you want somebody else's sexual life. When a man lusts for a woman, he is not grateful for what God has given him. He is making himself sick thinking about what he wishes God would give him.

The psychology of lust is a simple process: It begins with an attraction; it turns quickly to dissatisfaction; it results in fixation. It leaves us ungrateful, discontented, and obsessive. When you are filled with lust--for it does indeed seem to fill you--you can have nothing in your mind but that appetite for what you lack. This is true not just of sex.

The flesh--that is, our lives without God--urgently desires many things. It wants power. It wants pleasure. It wants wealth. It wants status and admiration. None of these things is wrong in itself. And nothing would be wrong with liking these things. But desire, or lust, is more than liking. It is the will to possess. Lust turns good things into objects of worship.

And that is why lust, or covetousness, is so closely linked to another biblical word: *idolatry*. What we lust for, we worship. We may joke about our lusts, but our behavior shows a more fundamental alle-

giance. We look to our idols to give us what we need--to make our lives rich and purposeful. In our culture, an idol many people look to is the god of sexual fulfillment.

The Right to Desire

Look at the magazine covers in the grocery-store check-out line, and you will be reminded of how crazy the Biblical view sounds to modern people. The ordinary North American takes it as a given that people want things that are not theirs. Naturally a man envies his neighbor's new car. Of course a woman looks at Paul Newman and thinks how good he would be in bed. What is wrong with wanting it--so long as you don't commit a crime to get it?

In fact, we have come perilously close to embracing lust as a fundamental human characteristic--if not a right. Most discussion of homosexuality assumes this: people have a deep, helpless sexual desire for a certain kind of partner, they argue; therefore, it would be cruel and inhuman to deny them the freedom to fulfill that desire.

And deep, helpless desires are not confined to homosexuality. Nearly all desire seems deep and uncontrollable. I am not aware of choosing to desire what I desire. The Bible may tell me not to covet my neighbor's wife or house, but I don't seem to have a choice about it. I see it; I want it. I can take a cold shower, avert my eyes, avoid a second glance, even undergo psychotherapy--but in a world full of beautiful things, my desires cannot be done away with easily. They keep welling up.

Still, the Bible tells me, "You shall not covet." Jesus says, in the context of sexual lust, that if my eye causes me to sin, I should pluck it out (Matt. 5:29). Just because I can't help lust does not make it acceptable. Jesus is dedicated to bringing in another kingdom. To be his disciple, I must put lust to death. I must learn to want what he wants for me and to put away everything else.

Replacing Desire with Desire

As a boy raised in church, I learned that lust is serious. With some encouragement from other Christians, I tried to stamp out lust in the most obvious techniques of self-control. One strategy was systematically to comb my environment to remove all stimuli to lust (movies, magazines, bathing suits.) Another technique was to comb my mind to root out every lustful thought (sexual images).

Anyone who has taken lust seriously can add to the list of self-control techniques. Cold showers, exercise, staying busy, scriptural mantras; all these have been tried to push lust down. Broadly speaking, they don't work. They may keep lust at bay for a time, but they cer-

tainly do not eliminate it. The human mind is so strong it can use any raw material for lusting. (Think of conservative Islam, compelled to cover even women's faces.) And trying to root out lustful thoughts can be as futile as trying not to think of pink elephants.

Interesting enough, I found none of these techniques in the Bible. Clearly, in the New Testament, they come in second to an utterly different form of salvation.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ", the Apostle Paul write the Colossians, "set your hearts on things aboveSet your minds on things above." Only then does he continue, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry"(3:1-5, NIV).

First things first: think on things above. Salvation is offered in Jesus--in his life, death, and resurrection. He forgives us for our lusts; he justifies us from our lusts; and he sends his Spirit to sanctify us from our lusts. Life in the Spirit transforms us. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, a result of the Spirit-filled life. Paul's promise to the Galatians is clear and optimistic, if maddeningly general: Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature"(Gal. 5:16, NIV).

Walk by the Spirit? Our society is dedicated to exciting lust for commercial purposes. We are bathed daily in imaginary, electronic sexual stimulation. Against this, the Sunday school advice to think pure thoughts seems feeble, almost naive.

Yet I believe Paul is thinking less of the moment of temptation than of the lifetime of spiritual warfare. Desires do not go away simply because we want them to. They do not generally disappear like a soap bubble when we pray. They do fade into the background, however, when a greater desire replaces them. Jesus taught us to pray for that desire: Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

So the Spirit operates, planting a desire for holiness in our heart, a righteous lust that grows up and puts all other desires in the shade. A just-say-no strategy alone is never sufficient for the long haul. Scripture encourages us to say yes--yes to the way of the Spirit.

Having been buried with Christ in our baptism, we are now made alive with him by the Spirit. We therefore make our choices accordingly--to the point of becoming slaves to one another out of love (Gal. 5:13), rather than serving the self and its lusts.

When we walk by the Spirit--that is, live a full-hearted Christian life in prayer, worship, and service--we get on to better things. We apply self-control *because we desire what God desires for us*. We want

something better, something given by God himself. We desire life in Christ and all that he gives within that life.

This is the good kind of lust. A man and a woman who desire the sexual life that *has* been given--sex with a marriage partner--shows God's work in their lives. Desiring your spouse is good. This is part of life in the Spirit--desiring what God gives.

Life in the Spirit is a difficult walk on a narrow path. The finest, most Spirit-filled and devoted Christians struggle with misdirected desire. They may even be tempted far more powerfully than others, for an evil power is always at work. They make progress only in the sense that evil uses stronger and subtler means to tempt them. They may graduate from a lust for *Playboy* to a lust for power. We do not have the techniques to eliminate sin, let alone temptation, from our lives. We will struggle with it until we see Jesus.

Seeking Excuses For Our Lusts

ETHICS FOR THE NINETIES

Dr. William E. Brown

“Don't you think adultery is wrong?”

The man who was being interviewed on a national talk show shook his head and gave a pained smile.

“Hey,” he replied to the interviewer, “This is the 90's.”

Why did the people in the studio applaud? What is it about our society that makes it an embarrassment to believe in absolute truth and morality?

The trend toward personalized ethics dominates our public discourse on issues from international relations to welfare; from the adultery in *The Bridges of Madison County* to the sexual promiscuity of politicians. At the heart of this trend are three underlying assumptions which have become a part of the American way of thinking.

Morality Marches On

The first assumption is reflected in the opening example--“This is the 90's.” The common view is that morality is constantly changing with the times.

What was once considered morally wrong can now be considered acceptable because we have progressed beyond the naive morality of the past. This understanding is tied into our view of knowledge. For example, we know more about science and history than we did a hundred years ago; in fact, we have corrected many errors and misconceptions about the past.

What was held to be "true" in the past is not necessarily "true" today. The earth is not flat, it is spherical; the Battle of Bunker Hill was not fought on Bunker Hill, but on Breed's Hill; the Pilgrims did not land at Plymouth, but at Provincetown; adultery is not morally wrong, it is a personal choice.

From this perspective, the moral standards of the past are at best naive. Any person who holds that the universal standards of morality of the past are appropriate for today's "enlightened" civilization is a dinosaur, an obscurant relic of the past.

"Haven't you read Nietzsche, Freud, and all the modern new-age writers?" modern moralists ask. "They call us to move beyond the traditional forms of morality to achieve the next level of human development. Stop getting in the way of progress!"

The Devil and DNA

A second assumption is to see all human actions as a result of purely physical factors, particularly genetic. Our genetic makeup causes us to behave in certain ways or at least makes us more likely to behave in certain ways.

These actions may be different from those commonly practiced by the general population. Such actions may be called immoral by the majority as it asserts its numerical superiority over the actions of the minority. Instead of, "The devil made me do it," it is more proper to say, "The DNA made me do it."

A good example of this is found in a recently published book by Robert Wright, *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology in Everyday Life*. Wright attempts to prove that sexual promiscuity is natural because of the built-in human drive to reproduce as widely as possible.

He writes, "According to evolutionary psychologists, our everyday, ever shifting attitudes toward a mate or prospective mate—trust, suspicion, rhapsody, revulsion, wants, iciness—are the handiwork of natural selection that remain with us today because in the past they led to behavior that helped spread genes."

These conclusions are reached by weighing certain body parts of chimpanzees and gorillas and noting their mating patterns. Comparing

these findings with the widespread occurrences of adultery and polygamy in human culture, it seems natural for humans to have a biological drive toward infidelity.

Does anybody take this seriously? Of course! Wright's theory was the lead story in an issue of *Time* and most of the media reported the findings.

An Anglican bishop in Scotland criticized churches for their lack of understanding toward people who commit adultery. The Most Rev. Richard Holloway claims that humans have a God-given urge to "propagate as widely as possible." He goes on to say, "God has given us our promiscuous genes so I think it would be wrong for the church to condemn people who have followed their instincts."

My Father Made Me Do It

A third assumption claims that human behavior is the result of the social influences a person experiences. These experiences, particularly those of significant family members such as parents and spouses, cause the individual to act in a certain manner.

From this perspective, people are "victims" of their social environment and not responsible for any actions arising from that influence. While the names Menendez and Bobbit may come to mind, I am reminded of an incident in Texas not long ago. It seems Candace Montgomery confronted a friend in her home with certain accusations. As they argued, the other woman "shushed" Mrs. Montgomery because the children were sleeping.

The sound of the "shh" caused Mrs. Montgomery to remember when her father did that to her as a child. She testified that she lost control before hacking the woman 47 times with an ax. Candace Montgomery was declared "not guilty" of murder and set free.

The prevailing notion is that we are not responsible to the moral standards of others. Either their standards are naively old-fashioned or our behavior is fashioned beyond our personal control, either genetically or socially.

I am not discounting the fact that there may be genetic and social factors which influence a person's behavior, but our current approach to morality defined by moral relativism and victimization ultimately dehumanizes our culture. These assumptions locate the moral center of gravity at its lowest point: personal choice and individual preference.

Back To The Basics

How long must we put up with the horrible consequences of this approach, seen in the huge and dramatic increases in violent crimes among youth, teenage suicide, teen pregnancy and abortion? What legacy are we leaving our children? The current chaotic situation in our society will not be overcome until we replace these three faulty assumptions with two truths.

The first truth is basic: Morality, both public and private, originates in the character and will of God. If American culture continues to base morality exclusively on the foundation of "personal choice" (just watch the daytime talk shows to see this belief exploited), then by what standards can we call anything right or wrong?

The human endeavor is not to create our own morality, but to discover and live by the true morality. We do not possess the truth, it possesses us. God has spoken clearly and revealed His character and will in the Scriptures. By conforming our lives and our societies to the basic guidelines He has revealed, harmony and peace are the result. I am not advocating a theocracy or a "Christian takeover." God's moral order is revealed in the heart of every person (Rom. 2:15) and intended to guide all moral choices, personal and corporate.

The second truth is just as basic: All people are individually and personally responsible for their actions. To treat a human being any less is an indignity. Even if there are extenuating circumstances, every person has a choice either to conform to or depart from the moral law. These choices must be rewarded or punished based on God's standards, not the circumstances. For example, the Scriptures recognize that a person may steal because he is hungry, but the thief is still held morally responsible and must repay (Proverbs 6:30-31). A society does no good to itself or its people when it praises what is evil and excuses what is morally wrong.

Yes, "this is the 90's," but since Jesus Christ is the same "yesterday, today, and forever," it does not matter if this is AD 97 or 1997. God's laws do not change with the calendar. We have the opportunity to be salt and light in a world that is increasingly unsavory and dark.

[From Bryan Life. Dr. Brown is president of Bryan College, Dayton, Tenn. He will speak at the Louisville Christian Fellowship Week, Aug. 4-7.]

Lustful Looking--What it Is and Isn't

"You know the next commandment pretty well too; 'Don't go to bed with another's spouse.' But don't think you've preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your heart can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your body. Those leering looks you think nobody notices--they also corrupt." Matt.5:27,28 in *The Message* (paraphrase by Eugene Peterson)

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matt.5:27,28 NIV

* * * *

Undressing with the Eyes

Explanation of Matt.5:28: "If we only think, we will not say--as some have said--that the wrong desire is just as bad as the wrong deed. If that were so, we would be saying that it is just as wrong to have a temptation as it is to fall to that temptation. In that case we might as well fall to the temptation straight away. To have a wrong desire and to resist it cannot be as bad as to have a wrong desire and to act on it.

"This saying of Jesus has worried a great many people. What the Greek [language used in Matthew] condemns is not the person who looks at a beautiful person and has an instinctive reaction of admiration and even of desire. What it does condemn--and the Greek makes this quite clear--is the person who looks at another in such a way as deliberately to awaken and to foment desire. What is condemned is a particular kind of looking: the kind of looking which reads pornographic literature in order quite deliberately to waken desire; the kind of looking to be found at a striptease show; the kind of looking which, as the French phrase has it, undresses with its eyes the person at whom it looks.

"This does not condemn the kind of looking which comes to all of us simply because a man is a man and a woman is a woman and God made us so. It condemns the prying, peering looking which uses the eyes to foment desire." --William Barclay in **Ethics in a Permissive Society**

* * * *

My Body and Me

"You are always dragging me down," I said to my Body.

"I drag you down?" replied my Body. "What do you mean! Who taught me to like tobacco and alcohol? You, of course, with your stupid immature idea of being 'grown-up.' My taste hated both tobacco and alcohol at first, but you insisted on having your way."

My Body continued to scold me. "Who put an end to all your angry and revengeful thoughts last night? Me, of course, by insisting on going to sleep. Who does his best to keep you from talking too much and eating too much, by giving you sore throats and indigestion? Me, of course."

"Well, what about sex?" I asked.

"Yes, what about it?" exclaimed my Body. "If you and your wretched imagination would leave me alone, I would not cause you any trouble. Mind, you are unreasonable: you give me orders and then blame me for carrying them out!" --Source known

* * * *

Birdnest in your Hair?

"When I became a Christian...I began to be more conscious of committing casual, fleeting "walking down the street" adulteries in my imagination. These little scenarios were so natural I had not even thought of them as adulteries until I read that Christ said that every man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"At first I was horrified. I said to myself, 'Man, if giving up noticing good looking women is a prerequisite for getting into heaven, I know I'll never make it'....

"But as I began to look more closely at the dynamics of this almost universal experience of noticing, as a reflex action, the potential sexual compatibility of a member of the opposite sex, I began to realize what I had done. I had identified the instant (and automatic) recognition I have just described with the subsequent imaginary episode of committing adultery with the person noticed. Becoming a deeply committed Christian does not keep one from being fully aware of beauty in the opposite sex. And I do not think this recognition is in any sense sin....

"Over six hundred years ago, Thomas 'A Kempis discussed the process of succumbing to temptation with great clarity. He described a [1]coming into the mind of an evil thought, followed by a [2]strong elaborating of the thought as it is led by the thinker into the inner chamber of the imagination; [3]then a sense of delight; then [4]a perverse impulse and assenting. He points out that the only practical

place to stop temptation is at the point of seeing or recognizing, 'for the enemy is more easily overcome if he is refused entrance to the door of the mind, and resisted on the threshold at the first knock'....

"Because of the constant exposure to sexually attractive people on T.V., in magazines, and on the street, there is no way to hide as a Christian, even if one chose to. But if you really become concerned with the amount of your attention which is absorbed by lust, you can change the activity in your imagination to an amazing degree by varying your selection of books, magazines, and films. As Martin Luther put it, 'You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from nesting in your hair.'" --Keith Miller in *A Second Touch*; also quoting from *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas 'A Kempis

AFA OFFERS HELP FOR PORN ADDICTS

American Family Association is expanding its efforts in the fight against pornography by establishing a counseling resource center for porn addicts, their families and counselors.

"We want to be there for those hurting individuals whose lives are being ruined by pornography addiction," said Neal Clement, director of Outreach Services for AFA. Clement said a major component in the new AFA ministry is a telephone referral line to connect those in need to a national directory of over 300 Christian counseling organizations and pastoral counseling centers. "We want to bring sound Biblically based counseling to hurting people instead of asking them to travel a great distance for help."

In addition to helping addicts and their families, Clement said the AFA project will serve as an educational and informational resource for those counseling porn addicts. He said many pastors feel unequipped in dealing with the pornography addictions. "We hope to establish regional pornography training sessions for Christian counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists who want to be educated about the effects of pornography and the fundamentals of treating the addicts." Clement said.

"AFA has been on the front lines of the pornography battle since 1976. We have witnessed the devastating effects of pornography first hand through the numerous letters and phone calls from people who need help." Clement, who formerly worked with a drug and alcohol abuse prevention agency, said that temptation to be exposed to pornography is everywhere--from television programs, advertisements, movies, home videos, and computer bulletin boards to the more common soft and hard core porn magazines.

"I don't think the porn addict wakes up one morning and says to himself, 'I think I'll become an addict today'. It's a cunning and progressive condition that had several recognizable stages." He describes pornography addiction as at least equal in power to alcohol and other drugs. "God gave us, especially men, a natural desire for sex. This natural desire unchecked can turn into an unnatural and overwhelming compulsion that reaps devastating consequences on the addict, their families and communities. AFA wants to help."

Help for porn addicts, their families, sexual trauma victims and counselors. Call & ask for Neal Clement: (601) 844-5036.

Overcoming the Flesh's Promptings, Following the Spirit's Promptings

John R. W. Stott

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:16-25, RSV)

The theme of these paragraphs may be divided into two and entitled "the fact of Christian conflict" and "the way of Christian victory." The combatants in the conflict are the flesh and the Spirit. "The flesh" stands for our fallen condition, what we are by natural birth. "The Spirit" stands for what we become by new birth, the birth of the Spirit.

Some teachers maintain that the Christian has no inner conflict, no civil war within himself, because (they say) his flesh has been eradicated [or at least it can and ought to be, by a 2nd blessing, they claim--AVW] and his old nature is dead. This passage contradicts such a view. Certainly, as we learn to walk in the Spirit, the flesh becomes increasingly subdued. But the flesh and the Spirit remain, and the conflict between them is fierce and unremitting.

Something needs to be said about the expression used in the King James Version, "the lust of the flesh" (v.16). Unfortunately this has come to have a connotation in English which its Greek equivalent did not have. Nowadays "lust" means "unrestrained sexual desire" and "flesh" means "body," so that "the lusts of the flesh" are (in everyday language) those connected with our bodily appetites. But Paul's meaning is much wider than this. For him the lusts of the flesh are all the sinful desires of our fallen nature. His ugly catalog of fifteen "works of the flesh" puts this beyond question.

This is not to say that his list is exhaustive, for he ends it by saying "and the like" (v.21). But those he includes belong to at least four realms--sex (3 works of the flesh as specified in v.19), religion (2 more, in v.20a), society (8, in vss.20b-21a), and drink (2, in v.21b). To this list Paul adds a solemn warning: *I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things* (the verb tense shows he refers to habitual practice rather than an isolated lapse) *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Paul then records a cluster of nine Christian graces, "the fruit of the Spirit," the natural produce that appears in the lives of Spirit-led Christians. This section (vss.16-25) is simply full of the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned seven times by name. He is presented as our Sanctifier who alone can oppose and subdue our flesh, and cause the fruit of righteousness to grow in our lives.

When we examine the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in detail, it becomes even clearer to us than before that the flesh and the Spirit are in active conflict with one another. They are pulling in opposite directions. And the result of this conflict is "so that what you will to do you cannot do" (end of v.17, NEB). The parallel between this little phrase and the second part of Romans 7 is, in my judgment, too close to be accidental. Every renewed Christian can say "I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self" (Rom.7:22). That is, I love it and long to do it. My new nature hungers for God, for godliness and for goodness. I want to be good and to do good." That is the language of every regenerate believer. "But," he has to add, "by myself, even with these new desires, I cannot do what I want to do. Why not? Because of sin that dwells within me" (Rom.7:14-25). Or, as the apostle expresses it here in Galatians 5, "because of the strong desires of the flesh which lust against the Spirit."

This is the Christian conflict--fierce and bitter. Moreover, it is a conflict in which *by himself* the Christian simply cannot be victorious. He is obliged to say, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it" (Rom.7:18) or, speaking as it were to himself, "ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal.5:17, KJV).

"Is that the whole story?" some perplexed reader will be asking. "Is this all Christianity offers--an experience of continuous defeat?" Indeed, it is not. If we were left to ourselves, we could not do what we would; instead, we would succumb to the desires of our old nature. But if we "walk by the Spirit" (v.16), *then* we shall not gratify the desires of the flesh. We shall still *experience* them, but we shall not *indulge* them. On the contrary, we shall bear the fruit of the Spirit.

The Way of Christian Victory

What must we do in order to control the lusts of the flesh and to bear the fruit of the Spirit? We must maintain toward each the proper Christian attitude. That is, we must “crucify” the flesh, and “walk” by the Spirit.

1. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (v.24).

Notice that the “crucifixion” described here is something that is done not to us but by us. It is we ourselves who are said to have done it. In other words, Gal. 5:24 does not teach the same truth as Gal. 2:20 or Rom. 6:6. In those verses we are told that by faith-union with Christ “we have been crucified with him.” But here it is we who have taken action. It is not now a “dying” which we have experienced through union with Christ; it is rather a deliberate “putting to death.”

What does it mean? Paul borrows the idea of crucifixion from Christ Himself who said, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). To “take up the cross” was our Lord’s vivid figure of speech for self-denial. Every follower of His is to behave like a condemned criminal and carry his cross to the place of execution. Now Paul takes the idea to its logical conclusion. We must not only take up our cross and walk with it, but actually see that the execution takes place. We are to take the flesh, our willful and wayward self, and (metaphorically speaking) nail it to the cross. That is Paul’s description of repentance, of turning our back on the old life of selfishness and sin, repudiating it finally and utterly.

This rejection of our old nature is to be decisive. Although death by crucifixion was a lingering death, it was certain death. Criminals who were nailed to a cross did not survive. “Christians do not succeed in completely destroying the flesh while here below; but they have fixed it to the cross and they are determined to keep it there till it expires,” wrote John Brown. The Greek verb “have crucified” is in the aorist tense, indicating that this is something we did decisively at the moment of conversion. When we came to Christ, we repented. We “crucified” everything we knew to be wrong. We took our old self-centered nature, with all its sinful passions and desires, and nailed it to the cross. So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew every day this attitude towards sin of ruthless and uncompromising rejection.

As Jesus said, every Christian must “take up his cross daily” (Luke 9:23).

The first great secret of holiness lies in the degree and the decisiveness of our repentance. If besetting sins persistently plague us, it is either because we have never truly repented, or because, having repented, we have not maintained our repentance.

2. Now notice the attitude which we are to adopt towards the Holy Spirit. This is described in two ways. 1st, it is to be *led by the Spirit* (v. 18). 2^{ndly}, it is to *walk by the Spirit* (vv. 16, 25). The former expression is passive and the latter expression is active. It is the Spirit who does the leading, but we who do the walking.

The verb "led" was sometimes used of shepherd leading sheep, and of wind driving a ship. As our "leader" the Holy Spirit takes the initiative. He asserts His desires against those of the flesh (v.17) and forms within us holy and heavenly desires. He puts this gentle pressure upon us, and we must yield to His direction and control. But it is a great mistake to suppose that our whole duty lies in passive submission to the Spirit's control, as if all we had to do was to surrender to His leading. On the contrary, we are ourselves to "walk," actively and purposefully, in the right way.

As, therefore, we "crucify the flesh," repudiating what we know to be wrong, so too we must "walk by the Spirit," setting ourselves to follow what we know to be right. We turn from what is evil in order to occupy ourselves with what is good. And if it is vital to be ruthless in turning away from the things of the flesh, it is equally vital to be disciplined in turning towards the things of the Spirit. We are to "set our minds on the things of the Spirit," to "seek the things that are above" (Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:1). This will be seen in our whole way of life--in the leisure occupations we pursue, the books we read and the friendships we make and above all in a diligent use of the means of grace. We must yield passively to the Spirit's control, but we must also walk actively in the Spirit's way. Only so will the fruit of the Spirit appear.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OUR JEALOUS LUST

Dennis F. Kinlaw

[Editor's note: As earlier articles have made clear, sexual lust is not the only kind. Our strong desires to outshine others and be praised more than others--these too are lusts. They spring from pride and result in envy and jealousy. The following article is an excerpt from the book *Preaching in the Spirit*, by Dr. Dennis Kinlaw. We use it with his permission.]

The Holy Spirit is the key to effective *witness*, but He is also the key to holy *living*. When the Spirit fills us, He cleanses us too. He makes as much difference in our living as in our serving. A story from the life of Samuel Chadwick illustrates this. We were privileged to have visiting in our home a British evangelist who had been a student at Cliff College when Chadwick was the principal there. Since Chadwick's writings on prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit had deeply impressed me. I asked our visitor to tell what sort of person Chadwick was. This is the story he told:

No guest speaker was scheduled in the Thursday chapel services at Cliff College, instead the students and staff were invited to share their prayer requests, testimonies, and prayers and intercession. In one of these services, a student arose and told how he was fighting an unexpected battle with jealousy. He asked everyone to pray for him. Dr. Chadwick listened sympathetically and then recounted an experience with jealousy from this own life.

Chadwick had received an invitation to be one of two Bible teachers at a well-known conference in Britain. The other speaker was to be G. Campbell Morgan. Chadwick said, "It did not really hurt my pride to be invited to work with Morgan, since at that time he was easily the best-known preacher in the English language. I thought, What an honor to be speaking on the same program with G. Campbell Morgan! Perhaps some folks are taking notice of me!

Chadwick prepared carefully for the conference. He was mindful of the fact that he and Morgan were to speak at successive hours and were to alternate times every day.

The first morning Chadwick spoke to a large crowd in the first hour and Morgan spoke to a comparable crowd for the second. The next morning Morgan spoke to a large crowd in the first service. But when Chadwick arose to speak, great numbers of people left. The next morning Chadwick spoke to a small group first; then a large audience came in for Morgan.

Chadwick was hurt. He went to his room and knelt in prayer. "This is not fair, Lord," he said.

"Oh?" the Lord seemed to reply. "What do you want Me to do about this?"

"Well, I don't know. But it hurts. It's embarrassing."

Chadwick was not prepared for the Lord's response: "Are you sorry, Chadwick, that we've got a fellow like Morgan on our team?"

"No!" Chadwick replied. "But it hurts."

"Are you suggesting that I quit blessing Morgan?" the Lord continued.

Then Chadwick saw the truth. He found himself saying, "Forgive my attitude, Lord. No, I am not sorry we've got a fellow like this on our team, and I don't want you to quit blessing him."

That day and for the rest of the conference, Samuel Chadwick blocked out a time to pray for G. Campbell Morgan and for the success of his ministry. Chadwick said; After that I found myself going with excitement to hear Morgan each day, giving thanks that we had a fellow like that on our team." Morgan's success was now Chadwick's success because both of them were working with the same Spirit. It seems to me that this is illustrative of what Paul means when he says, ". . . All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

When the Spirit comes in His sanctifying fullness, He cleanses us of the self-interest that corrupts all we touch apart from His cleansing. He sets us free to rejoice in His work, not in ours. In fact, we find true fulfillment only in His working, no matter how or through whom He comes. This is the real liberation of Christian living, liberation from the inward bonds of self.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Alex V. Wilson

Though the Holy Spirit has received much attention in recent decades, for most of church history He was indeed "the forgotten member of the Trinity." In some places He still is.

The Holy Spirit, forgotten? Yes. In the Stone/Campbell movement's history He has by and large either been shunned or else His place in man's conversion has been hotly debated. But not much positive teaching has been given. And in the broader Evangelical world it has been about the same, at least during many periods. For instance, any textbook in theology which is still published over a century after it was written must be ranked as outstanding in influence. The works of Charles Hodge and A. H. Strong fit into this category. Yet notice a surprising blind-spot. Strong devotes barely 10 of his 1,056 pages to the Holy Spirit. Hodge's three volume set, written in 1871, totals 2,260 pages. Yet only 13 of them are about the Holy Spirit.

What an oversight! What lack of balance! How can we account for this strange phenomenon? It seems to me there are three causes of it. First is a natural reason: The Father (because of creation) and the Son (because of the incarnation) seem more real and less mysterious than the Spirit, who works inwardly and invisibly. And His name in the King James Version, "the Holy Ghost," makes Him seem--well, ghostly!

Second, there is a Biblically understandable reason for this lack of attention (though it in no way excuses minimizing the Spirit as many have done). That is, the Spirit glorifies not Himself but Christ. (Jn. 16:14.) He delights to draw attention to the Son. Like the s-u-n, which can't be looked at, but by which we look at everything else--so we can't fully understand the working of the divine Counselor, yet by Him we are enlightened regarding spiritual matters, especially Christ.

Third, there is a bad reason: Too often the Spirit has been neglected and even wrongly feared as an over-reaction to the extremism and emotionalism among some churches. It's Satan's common pendulum trick. He tries his hardest to get some churches to go overboard in one way or other in their teaching or practice, because almost always other churches will go to the opposite extreme. Thus all of them will be off-balance. Let's avoid falling for his schemes.

The importance of the Holy Spirit is seen in John 16:7. The disciples no doubt considered this statement of Jesus the most absurd He'd ever made! Listen: "*It is for your good--to your advantage--that I am going away!*" How in the world could that be true? "For if I do

not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." Think how weak, sinful, foolish and quarrelsome they'd been even with Jesus in their midst. And they'd be better off with Him gone? Yes, He assures them. It is better to have God's Spirit in your hearts than to have God's Son in your midst. (There's at least one obvious reason why this is true. Think about it.)

The Holy Spirit is indeed important. Let's see what we can learn by examining how His work during the Old Covenant era differed from His ministries during our New Covenant age.

The Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit didn't wait until the Church began before He became active. The Old Testament records a number of His ministries.

(1) The most common was His inspiring the sayings and writings of the prophets, psalmists and other spokesmen of the Lord. Over 3,000 times in the OT we read statements like "This is what the Lord says..." or "The Word of the Lord came to [Moses, or Jeremiah, etc.]." David wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue." And much later, when Paul declared "All Scripture is God-breathed [or inspired]," he was thinking as much of the OT writings as of the NT. (2 Sam.23:2; 2 Tim.3:16.)

(2) The Holy Spirit was involved somehow in creation, and is still active in the preservation and renewal of Earth and its creatures. (Gen.1:2; Psa.104:27-30.)

(3) The Lord "filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" as he led the construction of the tabernacle. (Ex.31:1-11.) God's empowering is not limited to activities like preaching and teaching.

(4) "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon," providing him with leadership ability. And at least three times we read about Samson, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power," giving him prowess in battle or times of danger. Other leaders too were equipped by Him with skill and wisdom to lead God's people; see Num.11:16-17, for example.

Now notice the case of King Saul. When Samuel anointed him king, he told him, "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy...and you will be changed into a different person" (1 Sam.10:6). What a privilege--to receive from the Most High the inner resources needed to rule the whole nation. And Saul began his reign well. But later he became guilty of unbelief and disobedience, so we read, "Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul...." (1 Sam.16:14). The rest of his reign was tragic.

David, his successor, was a man after God's own heart. But despite his intense love for the Lord, he too was frail and sinful. We all know of the sordid Bathsheba affair. When David came to his senses and repented, no doubt he remembered how God's Spirit left Saul after he defied God's commands. So when he pled for forgiveness, he added, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (Psa.51:11).

Putting all these facts together, we conclude that in Old Covenant times the Holy Spirit came upon only a few individuals in Israel (mainly prophets and leaders),--not all of God's people. Also, His coming upon them was temporary. When the assigned task was done, or if the person transgressed, the Spirit might leave. Also, His purpose was to impart special abilities to them. And in many cases the results were mainly external. The emphasis seems to be on battles won or judgments rendered or the tabernacle built, more than on personal holiness. After all, Gideon, Samson, and Saul all had glaring moral deficiencies, and even David fell extremely short of God's standards. Yet by His enabling they accomplished some great feats on behalf of God and His people.

So we summarize: During the Old Covenant era the Holy Spirit was active, but His work was (1) limited in extent, (2) temporary in duration, and (3) mainly outward in effects. That sounds as if His impact was rather puny, doesn't it? True enough; but this was not because God couldn't do any better! Rather it was part of His wise plan, and fulfilled a necessary purpose. It was to demonstrate to men their weakness and their dire need for God to do for them what they could not do for themselves.

Paul explained this later. "The law [i.e. the Old Covenant] was powerless [because] it was weakened by the sinful nature" (Rom.8:3). In other words, its failure was man's fault, not God's. Again, referring to the Old Covenant, "engraved in letters on stone" [i.e. the 10 commands], he called it "the ministry that condemns men" and "brought death." In contrast he names the New Covenant "the ministry of the Spirit...the ministry that brings righteousness." (2 Cor.3:6-9.) What a contrast. (However, these differences between the covenants should not be overstressed. Mainly it was a matter of differing emphasis. Always salvation was by God's grace through responsive faith.

Fitting in with Paul's viewpoint, the OT writers themselves looked forward to a much brighter future. Many promises were made about glorious times that lay ahead for God's people, and the Holy Spirit would play a major role in that coming golden age! His work within the depths of our hearts would be the crowning glory of the New Cove-

nant the Lord would make with His people. (Jer.31:31-34; Ezek.36:25-28.)

Promises of a Spirit-filled People

Several important OT passages foretell a time when the Holy Spirit's work among God's people would be far wider and deeper than it was during the Old Covenant era. Let's notice those scriptures.

1. Isaiah says, "The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted...till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field....Righteousness [will] live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace...." (32:14-18).

Again he writes, "Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant...For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring...." (44:2-3). And again, "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them....My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever" (59:20-21).

2. Before Isaiah's time, the prophet Joel gave the prediction made famous because Peter quoted it on Pentecost. In Joel 2:28-29 the Lord says, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." Notice the great contrast between the sparsity of the Spirit's ministry in OT times with His overflowing work to occur in the future: "I will pour out my Spirit in those days, on all [My] people"--regardless of gender ("sons/daughters...both men/women"), or of age ("old men/young men"), or of social class ("the servants and hand-maids," ASV; "even on the male and female servants," NASV). Not just prophets and rulers, but every believer would enter into these blessings.

3. Ezekiel makes similar joyful promises, stressing that the Spirit would produce not just external service but holy character, from the inside out. In one of the highest peaks of OT prophecy, the Lord says in Ezek.36:24-31, "I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land....I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God."

Those last eleven words are commonly used when God enters a covenant relation with His people.

Conclusions

Thus the future blessing and glory promised to Israel depended not only upon the coming Messiah, but just as definitely upon the Spirit of the Lord. The Messiah would reign victoriously; the Spirit would transform inwardly. These predictions set the stage for John the Baptizer's proclamation, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come [the Christ], the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit...." (Lk.3:16; cf. Acts 1:4-5). Jesus came, and by His death, resurrection, ascension and pouring out of the Spirit from on high (Lk.24:49), He inaugurated the age of the New Covenant, the greater and final covenant (Heb.8:6).

And wonder of wonders, Gentile believers like us are privileged to inherit those blessings promised to Israel. We Gentile branches have been grafted into the tree of believing Israel (Rom.11:17-24). Their Messiah is ours too. The Spirit promised to them is given to us as well, through faith in the Savior. This present era is the age or dispensation of the Spirit (2 Cor.3:3-11). When we received Christ as lord and savior, God saved us, not only "through the washing of rebirth" but also through "renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously" (Tit.3:5-6).

And no longer is the Spirit's work limited in extent to leaders and prophets, but every one of God's people is indwelt and empowered (1 Cor.12:13). No more are His visits merely temporary in duration, for our Lord gives us the Counselor to be with us forever (Jn.14:16). And though the Spirit still works outwardly as and when He chooses--equipping us to serve God--the main fruit now of His indwelling is holy character (Gal.5: 22-23). He strengthens us with power in our inner being (Eph.3:16).

What privilege! Since He has now become fully available for us, let us be fully available for Him. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph.5:19).

Autobiography of a Bible

What kind of story would a Bible in China tell about its life? Here is an imaginative reconstruction, pieced together from the notes written on the flyleaf of an actual Bible.

I came off my press in 1992, so by China's standards I was a fairly new Bible. However, since I did not come off an official press, I had disadvantages. My paper was not very thin, so I was a thick book--nearly four inches thick. That immediately gave me away as an illegal Bible. Also, my cover was cheap and made of paper, so whenever I traveled it had to be in secret.

My first trip was at the bottom of an old suitcase, down among the socks and underwear. The owner did not dare to take me out and read me on the train journey. We arrived in the north of China, and I was taken to a small house where there was a class of 16 house church leaders. They were overjoyed to see me. I seemed I was the only Bible they had there.

Perhaps because of that, I was actually roped to the table, so that no one could steal me. Then the students would arrange to read me in two-hour blocks. Even through the night, I was in constant use. They would read me with a grubby finger, often sounding out the words aloud. I heard all their emotions as they read: puzzlement, anger, joy and peace.

Copied By Hand

A year of constant use began to take its toll. I had to be refurbished twice--reglued the first time and recovered the second time. Every two months, a few women from the house churches would come and spend hours with me copying my pages. The students used to get irritated during those times because they could not read me. Around the clock the women copied me, for a week each time. They were directed to certain books. One of them copied the prophet Isaiah in a week, but mostly they copied the Gospels, Acts, Romans and Revelation.

Suddenly the school was raided. I was jerked out of my rope and carried off by a policeman. Two students ended up in jail for possessing me.

I found myself in a dark cupboard in the policeman's house. But I was not alone. He had a 15-year-old daughter who used to creep downstairs at night and read me by candlelight, right there in the cupboard. It was very cold for her. She was only in her nightshirt and her skin

often turned blue. But she read me quietly, hardly daring to breathe as she turned the pages.

On The Road

After a few months, she actually smuggled me away from there in her school bag. Perhaps she thought her father would never notice. Anyway, I was passed into the hands of a young itinerant evangelist, who treasured me as if I were a baby. He would wrap me in a plastic waterproof bag, place me in his luggage, and bicycle from village to village. He rarely had time to read me himself, but when he would preach, he would turn to a few of his favorite passages, read me, and then give a sermon. He love preaching from Romans 3, and on the parables of Jesus. He would weep as he spoke, his tears falling on my open pages in great drops, smudging the print.

But after a few months someone robbed him and I was stolen. I found myself in a house full of incense. My new owner was a Taoist priest, and for a while I lay on the altar of his ancestors, flanked by two oranges and a bag of nuts. But a visitor saw it and shrieked in horror, warning the man what trouble he would be in if others saw me.

This intrigued the priest, so he began to leaf through me. He couldn't read very well, so he invited a local Christian to come and explain some passages. A month later, I saw them both on their knees, confessing their sins to God and trusting Jesus. The next thing I knew, the altar was gone. Soon there were groups meeting in the house, mainly because I was there. I was read aloud and then they would sit and discuss the words until it was very late.

Once they took me out to the fields and when they stopped planting rice they gathered around to read me. But the leader of the work unit grew angry, grabbed me, and began to stand on me, pressing me into the mud.

To my surprise, the others rose up and threw him in the mud. But I -ruined. They took me back and tried to dry me out, but it was too late. After a discussion, they decided to burn the spoiled parts, then split me up into the remaining books, sewing each one with thread. So I became thirty-one books, instead of just one.

But that's when I lost my flyleaf, and so here my tale must end.

--from **Open Doors NEWSBRIEF**, 12/96

VOICES from the FIELDS

Martin Brooks Maputo, Mozambique May 6, 1997
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It's been an exciting few days around here. I think Susan told you about our workers feuding. One was fired and the other was afraid the one fired would contact the medicine man to work bad medicine on her family. This has been a mild form of culture shock for us. I have heard of witch doctors and even seen a few flaky people I thought might have been some, but this week we saw the fear these men and women hold over the everyday village person. We see many children and even adults wearing colored cords around their waist, ankle or wrist. This is usually an attempt to ward off evil spirits. Ancestral worship/appeasement, fear of the dead, curses and lucky charms are not just ancient history or Hollywood stories. It is all day to day life in Mozambique. If anything bad happens to the one family, curses or angry ancestors will be blamed. Worse, the innocent girl who "brought this upon the family" will be blamed. Malaria, marital problems, work related problems, any sickness and especially deaths are supposedly controlled by the medicine man or n'anga.

Last Thursday was a holiday in Mozambique. A group of churches were having their annual conferences and asked me to speak on prayer. I took George, our team interpreter, and headed into the city of Maputo. The church was attached to the minister's house. It was a small block meeting room with pictures of last year's conference taped to the walls, boarded up windows and a tin roof with numerous holes.

The first speaker spoke with a lot of energy. We would probably label him a "fire and brimstone" preacher, but my interpreter commented that "he had preached well and said he had encouraged the people to obey God." Sometimes it is tough to sit for an hour and a half of preaching when you don't understand but an occasional word. At the time of invitation, he encouraged everyone to come forward to "get the Spirit." This group is led by a man who attended a school run by the Assemblies of God of C. Everyone began praying at once. The speaker asked all the pastors to pray for the ones seeking the Spirit. I was the only white minister there and I was asked to close the time of prayer. Sometimes I find my self in settings in which I'm not entirely comfortable. I prayed in English and they said several "amens" although I don't think any of them understood English. I suppose they trusted me to say good things to the Father with which they would feel comfortable agreeing. My teaching on prayer [which was really Christ's teaching on prayer] was well received. The people laughed at appropriate times (Cross-cultural humor is really risky). The man lead-

ing the Church wants us to help teach the group's Church leaders. I'm excited about the opportunities.

Sunday afternoon Cecil Byrd and I had a meeting with one of the Zionist Church leaders. We arranged to begin classes with them in two weeks. We will start teaching from a book called "Following Jesus." It is a "basics of faith" book. And we will start studying Hebrews. In the States, Hebrews is not often considered a starting point for Bible studies. Here, the themes of Hebrews are especially relevant. As we spoke to the ministers, we noticed the colored cords hanging around their church building. Previously we had seen the blood stains from sacrificed animals. [These African churches still follow some OT practices such as animal sacrifices. But they are open to teaching by missionaries.--AVW] In our conversation, they mentioned an upcoming service where a prophetess would consult the dead to make sure a recent death of a church member was not caused by angry spirits. Hebrews should be an interesting study with these people.

In the city of Maputo they have just changed the driving laws. You know how in the States, if two people are making left hand turns, you cut across the intersection in front of each other. You can look out your front window and wave to the guy in the other car as he makes his left turn in front of you. Here, until May 5, 1997, if two cars are turning across traffic (here it's a right hand turn because we drive on the opposite side of the road) you pass the car you are meeting and turn behind the car. This works OK until a line of four or five cars wants to turn in both directions and the turning paths get blocked. When this occurs, the person with the most dilapidated car or biggest "bull-bar" bumper gets/takes the right of way. The rules just changed and the drivers are still a little uncertain as they approach the intersections.

Please keep us in your prayers as we try to get a grip on this culture and try to fit into God's plan for Mozambique.

George C. Galanis

Piraia, Greece

April 23, 1997

I greet you all in the precious name of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am very sorry for not having written to you earlier as I wanted to. The reason was that my computer was broken and I faced a lot of difficulties, such as serious illnesses.

As I studied one day my Bible, I stopped at the apostle Paul's testimony in I Cor. 2. And as I meditated there, the Spirit of God enlightened me and I understood that I badly needed to get revived by the Holy Spirit in order to live the life of the spirit and be able to preach the gospel of Christ effectively, and not in words only. Here is the passage in question.

“And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of the power of God. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (I Cor. 2:1-5).

Then I set to pray earnestly and the good Lord answered my sincere supplication. Now every time I step in the pulpit to preach, I dedicate myself to the Lord and I confess my complete inability to preach effectively with my own self and my own wisdom and request the Lord to take me under His guidance and power and use me to His honor and glory, and indeed He does, praise His great name!

A group of believers of our Church, who feel the danger of Satan’s deceit, set to pray every Sunday afternoon on their knees with the special objective of revival. We are well aware that without revival, we cannot expect progress.

Our permanent tribulation for twelve years now has been my dear wife’s health condition, which is getting worse day by day. We, however, thank the Lord that helps her to resist. Though she suffers every day with sharp pains in many parts of her body, yet she does not give up. She still cooks our meals and does some cleaning. I am afraid, however, pretty soon we will need an assistant to help my wife. Now I take her to church three times a week, but when we come back home she is exhausted.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaas

A Wonderful Conference

Ruth and I just returned from the Pepperdine Bible Lectures in Malibu, CA. Like last year, this 3-day, 4-night conference was a rich spiritual feast. Powerful expositions on the book of Philippians, heartfelt singing of both traditional and contemporary songs (3000+ voices!), and so many classes taught on a wide variety of topics that we wished we could attend 4 or 5 at once. A grace-centered spirit of fellowship prevailed. Pepperdine has always been one of the most “open”

Church of Christ schools, though fresh winds of love and acceptance are blowing in MANY places now where formerly sectarianism reigned. Many now regret the bitterness of former times.

A brother from the non-Sun. School churches led a class session. Two leaders from instrumental Christian Churches led a forum along with two Church of Christ leaders, on how we can cooperate with out violating consciences. And I led a class session on “Should Doctrinal Differences Separate

Christians? (Learning Lessons from Past "Wars" Over Prophecy)." 367 back copies of the W&W were distributed free; pray that subscriptions will result.—AVW

Recent Homegoings

May 5th Sister Ophelia Mullins began her new life in her Lord's presence, joining her beloved husband Brother Frank Mullins, Sr., after thirty-three years living apart.

Many who are now in middle-life will remember being on campus at Southeastern Christian College when she was dorm mother and how she watched and cared for them.

Awaiting the time when those who have died in Christ shall be raised and those who are alive at Christ's coming shall be caught up "together to meet the Lord in the air," are sons Frank Jr., Eugene, Earl Sr., and James; granddaughter Callie Masten, and other relations along with a host of believers.

Some W&W readers will remember Wallace Cauble who passed away on April 10 at age 95. Decades ago he ministered in the following Churches of Christ: Fisherville, Sellersburg, Highland and also in Toronto. Later he served in other churches in the Louisville area.

A Need, An Opportunity

Sonny Childs is a dynamic preacher who has blessed a number of our churches by his ministry. He also writes and publishes literature, mainly related to teenagers or family living. After shepherding a church for several years in Olney, IL, for the past year he has been travelling full-time conducting Gospel meetings, seminars, and youth events—in Ill, Ind, Ky, Penn, Ark, La, and Cal.

A recent letter says, "Our passion for this important work has not diminished although our funds to carry on have been depleted. Many of the congregations we serve are small and cannot afford to completely cover all of our necessary expenses." Without having a

sponsoring church to help carry the load, his personal savings have become exhausted as he keeps serving all who call on him regardless of their ability to give adequate support.

Brothers and sisters, here is a great opportunity to back a minister who has proved his value among us, especially with youth. It would be tragic if his ministry had to be curtailed due to lack of funds. Bro. Childs has a wife and son to support, too. He is sacrificing to serve the Lord; who else will sacrifice so they'll have adequate support? Do you say, "The Lord will meet their needs?" Amen; I believe that. But how does He do it? Through folks like you and me. What churches or individuals will meet this need?

Pray for Bro. Sonny. Write him at P.O. Box 611, Olney, IL 62450 and ask for his recent newsletter/update. Pray for his 1 weekend per month youth meetings at Sellersburg, Ind. Church. This is a great opportunity for the Louisville area youth. From June 14-19 he'll have a special seminar there: then July 11-12 will be his regulat weekend visit. --AVW

Another Great Opportunity

The upcoming "JUBILEE" is to be held in Nashville's arena, July 2-5. Max Lucado will speak all 4 nights, and other top-flight speakers will preach or teach. This will be a rich spiritual feast, including programs for youth and children as well. For more information write right away to Jubilee '97, 2706 Old Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214. Or E-mail: donelsoncc@aol.com. By the way, the theme is great: "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus."

Jennings, La., Church of Christ

Young people help others--Several of our younger children, under Bro. Greg's leadership, spent Saturday morning cleaning Joe and Esther Kibodeaux's yard. We commend them for their willing spirit. Perhaps some of the older young people would like to help also.

Visiting with us March 23rd was Bro. Dan Ford from Mitchell, IN. He spoke at both worship services, and brought his wife and three children. Dan is a candidate to work with us as our pulpit minister. Continue to pray that God will lead us in the decision we make about a minister.

Another Need and Opportunity

"Dear Brethren,

"It has come to our attention that one of our preaching brethren has a financial need. Brother Randy Coultas is the minister of Oak Grove Church of Christ. He has incurred about \$11,000 in medical bills. It is our heartfelt desire to make this need known.

"Along with your prayers we are asking for financial assistance for this young preacher and his family. The Tell City Church of Christ is willing to be used as a collecting point for your financial gifts. Please give as the Lord may lead you. May the Lord bless your generosity.

"Your gift may be sent to: Tell City Church of Christ, Attn: Randy Coultas Fund, 1206 Tenth St., Tell City, IN 47586." -- Tell City elders

Recent bulletins from Tell City Church reveal the following activities: Jail ministry every Sunday, Nursing Home Ministry, VBS, Youth Worship, Father/Son campout, National Day of Prayer, Men's Saturday (6 A.M.) devotional time, Support the Corn Project, Mother/Daughter Banquet, Young Adult Kinship, Sunnise Service, Promise Keepers, Woodland Bible Camp --work days already!!

Gallatin Church of Christ

Congratulation to Rita McBroom who was elected to Who's Who Among Universities for 1996-97. She is a psychology major graduating from Cumberland University where she is president of the Pinnacle Honor Society

Denham Springs, La. Church of Christ

We just concluded a Spirit filled meeting conducted by Don Mc Gee of the Amite congregation. We all felt a sense of revival and agreed it was one of the best meetings we have had in recent years. Denham Springs has been without a resident minister for about 4 years. The pulpit has been filled with visiting ministers and volunteers from the congregation. The Lord has supplied a spirit of cooperation and has blessed us with no loss of membership in spite of no full-time minister. We are still looking for some one to come to Louisiana and work with us. If interested, contact: Robert E. Johnston, P.O. Box 164, Denham Springs, La., 70727 or call (504) 665-5249.

Maple Manor Christian Children's Home

There was no smile on Adrian's (not his real name) face as he shuffled his feet with head bowed. His movement and pace were restricted. As he came through the door, he was met with a "Hi, how are you?" The escort with him, a deputy sheriff, did the introductions and then proceeded to unlock the shackles! Both feet and wrists were freed from their chains and he was allowed to sit and take part in the discussion that followed. Such was the entry of one of our children. Only 13 years of age with a charge of assault and breaking and entering.

We are presently looking over an application for a 15 year old boy who will seem to present quite a challenge--with a description of being physically aggressive, school absenteeism, and former shop-lifting charges. On the evaluation report is the statement: "Due to his behavior problems, he requires an on-grounds school to meet his educational needs at this time."

Another 17 year old child-- a girl--was being considered for placement after the holidays. Her educa-

tion performance dictated a need for getting a GED rather than a regular high school diploma. With her age and present educational standing, she will not finish high school.

This information is being shared with you so that you will recognize the changing landscape of child caring and the challenges placed before us. Since the beginning of this school year, we have had suspensions due to various reasons. Some children are not able to function satisfactorily in a regular classroom setting with other children. Each of these children are crying out for something. Each is in desperate need to heal a fractured life. It is our desire to help as much as they will let us. Many social and educational vacuums need to be filled. Of course, we believe that the starting point is to resolve their spiritual needs by their recongition of their own emptiness. We have discussed the need for an on-ground educational facility at the Children's Home and futher contacts seem to re-affirm those decisions.

Please be praying with us for decisions that would be in keeping with His will. There are, and will be, more demands for staff to fill needs that are here.

8th Annual Music Camp

Antioch Christian Camp. June 23-30.

John Fulda will once again be in charge. Jonathan Garrett and James Embree will be assisting John. Roc Moore and Colleen Morrison will be teaching our Bible classes.

Our First Junior Music Camp

Last year the camp was at full capacity, plus there was a big interest in our younger ages wanting to come to camp. Lynn Cone and Sherry Baker have taken the responsibility in having a Junior Music Camp Week. July 15-20 This camp will only be six days and will be structured and geared for ages 9-13.

We are asking for your help in publicizing and promoting the Music Camp among your youth, ages 14 through college and Junior Music Camp, ages 9-13.

Also, we are asking for your financial help. We need support for the expenses of camp, including travel expenses, music and related materials, and a honoraria for John Fulda, Jonathan Garrett and James Embree. The Southeastern Christian Education Corporation has made a grant to help us this summer, but this grant is contingent upon contributions from churches or individuals helped by the camp. We therefore, need 12 churches to give a gift of \$100.00, more or less for this year's camp.

If, after consideration, your church decides to offer financial support to this program, contributions may be sent to: Antioch Christian Camp, 355 Branch Road, Frankfort KY, 40601, Attn: Music Camp Donation.

Antioch Camp Schedule

- 1. Teen Week** (June 8-14) Ages 13-19 Director: Roc Moore
 - 2. Music Week** (June 22-29) Ages 14-College. Directors John Fulda and Debbie Gordon. Teaches music theory and sight reading. Concerts performed in various churches.
 - 3. Junior Week** (July 6-11) Ages 9-12 Directors: Marty and Kathy Pirrman
 - 4. 1st Chance Weekend Camp** (July 11-13) Ages 6-8
 - 5. Junior Music Week** (July 15-20) Ages 9-13 Directors Sherry Baker and Lynn Cone
- Concert** July 20th, 7:00. All invited

Music Week Concert Schedule

- Fri. June 27, 7p.m. Belmont Church, Winchester.
- Sat. June 29, 11a.m. Antioch Church near Frankfort, Ky.
- Sun. June 29, 4p.m. Ebenezer Church, Salvisa Ky.

CHECK UP ON THOSE EXPERTS!

Don McGee

Not long ago I was listening to a radio station from Baton Rouge. I was quite surprised when the announcer introduced his guest that morning--a psychic. People were encouraged to call in and talk to this famous psychic if they needed advice about a matter. I listened to probably a dozen or more callers and each needed some advice. The whole thing was a joke. If it were not so dangerous and anti-God, it would have been comical. It seems more and more people are putting their trust in other people who are under-qualified at the least or who are absolute phonies at the worst. As a result many lives and families have been harmed and even destroyed.

Folks, we need to be careful about trusting people to do things for us they are not qualified to do. Would you go to a cardiologist for a root canal, or a dentist for tax preparation? The same concept goes for matters of the Bible. So many today are making great pronouncements about Bible matters when they have no training/experience in the area.

Speaking of trusting others to do things they are not qualified to do, check out this story:

A photographer was assigned by a national magazine to photograph a large forest fire out West. He was told a plane would be waiting for him at the airport and to get going immediately. When he drove up there was a small Cessna waiting with the pilot just finishing the pre-flight inspection. The photographer jumped in with his camera and said, "Let's go!" The pilot hesitated a moment, but obediently did as he was told. As he was climbing through 1000 feet he asked the passenger, "Now what?"

"Go to the fire and fly parallel the north edge."

"Why?" asked the pilot.

"Because I'm the photographer and I need to go there!" said the passenger.

After a slight hesitation the young man said, "*You're not the instructor?*"

'Nuff said!