

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Overcoming Indoctrination on Abortion

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

Before personally delving into the stark need for deliverance from having been severely indoctrinated into a firm pro-abortion view, supposedly based on biblical ideas, I would like to briefly address a few general concerns about **speaking out** regarding controversial issues.

As serious, biblical Christians, we need to be as “apolitical” as possible, in a certain sense, to be able to fairly reach any folks (with the priority of the Kingdom Gospel), as they come from widely distinct points of view. We are not to be biased against any potential listeners of truth, nor should we add to the deafening cacophony of sharp-edged “us against them” rhetoric which deeply permeates our modern culture. Nevertheless, we do not need to cower in silence before a long-running traditional, “enlightened” mindset, which dismissively purports that all “religious people” have no legitimate voice in public matters! Even though believers in biblical truth have no business trying to bully “secularists” (and others) through coercive manipulations, such believers **do** have meaningful responsibilities to speak wisely and lovingly toward a world in dire need of authentic spiritual perspectives, even if such an effort is risky.

It might be tempting in our current, “trigger-happy” age to shy away from certain “hot, push button” topics, since we are bound to be badly misunderstood! For example, if one speaks positively about the **conservative** value of biblical, monogamous marriages; he or she will most likely be labeled by many, not only as being hopelessly old-fashioned, but as being on the narrow-minded, “right-wing” bandwagon along with (A) racists, (B) those who disregard care for the natural environment, (C) those who support the economic oppression of minorities, and other despicable practices and attitudes!

Contrarily, if one were to speak biblically **against** racism (which is traditionally labeled as a **liberal** view in the U.S.A.), he/she could be wrongly targeted as being in favor of (A) “anything goes” sexual immorality or (B) frivolous pro-abortion policies! To

put it mildly, our modern American society (like all previous societies), is given to a confused, **misguided bundling** of so-called values. Peer pressure to endorse lumped, incongruent “values,” along with two-dimensional stereotyping are vastly unhelpful to us all! For more detailed, level-headed insights into facing such dilemma, you might like to check out: *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It* by Jim Wallis.

Since a Scriptural Kingdom focus does not directly translate into the swirl of terms deemed as society’s *status quo* standards on either “the right,” “the left,” or perhaps even “the middle” of any earthly system, it behooves us as believers to speak kindly with **wisdom** to the specific needs at hand. God certainly does allow that earthly governments (despite real, pervasive Satanic trends – Luke 4:5-6) have a good (but flawed) effect at restraining overt evil (Rom. 13:1-7). However, God **does not** give this authority to govern any societies of this present evil age to the family of believers! Our actual role to help administer righteous norms of government will come in the future age of Kingdom restoration: 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 5:9-10. Meanwhile, we should be joyfully content to simply **influence** individuals through **persuasive** (not coercive) means, respecting the free-will choice-making of others.

In early 1980 (according to my memory), after about eight years of involvement with The Way International, I was introduced to a “new” topic among us — through a fairly brief writing about abortion by Victor Paul Wierwille. As typical of my zealous mindset at that time, I did not even consider questioning the thesis of his writing. I had already assumed for years (including four years of specialized leadership training) that Wierwille “had taught us ‘The Word’ as it had not been known since the first century” (a phrase that had become second nature to us in our group¹). So I quickly assimilated our new, mutual doctrinal stance on abortion without batting an eye, and I did not even dare question it until some 20 years later!

Interestingly, some documentation exists nowadays corroborating the essence of Wierwille’s “new” assertions in early 1980. A website article from The Way International (Biblical Research, Teaching,

¹ The source of the extreme mentality expressed here in regard to the exalted view of V.P. Wierwille and, consequently, the ardent giving of unquestioned devotion to his teaching is reflected by his later retelling of supposed

events in the fall of 1942, as documented in this book: Elena S. Whiteside, *The Way: Living in Love* (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1972), p. 178-181.

and Fellowship) entitled “Pro-Truth – When Human Life Begins” (posted on June 7, 2019, by The Way²) reiterates the views of Wierwille’s old 1980 writing.

It did not truly dawn on me until years later that I had unconsciously switched from a previous view — ironically also taught by Wierwille. Kristen Skedgell’s memoir sharply points out this bizarre inconsistency in two concepts: “A few days later I [Kristen] arrive, I realize I am pregnant. I take the test to confirm....I could always have an abortion. Alec [her estranged husband] need never know. In The Way, the Doctor [V.P. Wierwille] approved of abortions because he said man was not man until he ‘took his first breath and became a living soul.’ Years ago, he taught [in the Power for Abundant Living class] that life was in the blood and life began at impregnation. I don’t know why he changed his mind, but his teaching gave me an out. A fetus was not a person, he now taught.”³ Fortunately, Kristen **did** choose to have her second child (instead of killing it) despite some harrowing personal circumstances in her life!

The article “Pro-Truth – When Human Life Begins” emphasizes (as Wierwille had formerly done) Genesis 2:7 as determining that “man became a living soul” when “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” speaking of the original making of Adam. This is then presumptuously applied (in this article) to an unborn fetus (which Adam never was!). The article boldly states, “So the beginning of a person’s soul life, according to God and His Word, is not when a heartbeat is detected in the womb; it is with the first natural breath after a baby is born.”

A simple rebuttal can be clearly stated; Genesis 2:7 does not at all address when life begins in the womb — it describes the direct formation of a man who was **never** a fetus! The marvelous reality of a zygote (Biology 101) and the amazing period of gestation cannot (through tricky word games) be chalked off as comparable to the impersonal growth of a mole or a wart!

As Wierwille had previously done, the above article then quotes Exodus 21:22-23 about the accidental causing of a miscarriage (a fine would be assessed). Numbers 35:30-31 is then quoted to show the strict penalty for murder; the murderer would be put to death, and no payment could be made for a murderer. The article evaluates, “Thus the record in Exodus 21:22 shows that God does not consider a fetus a living soul.”

Once again, an extremely sloppy interpretation is presented after quoting isolated verses, while giving them a devious spin. Deliberately terminating the **life**

of a fetus cannot be equated with accidentally causing a miscarriage; just as intentional murder should not be equated with manslaughter — the **accidental** causing of death! Interestingly, the “Pro-Truth” article never quoted any of the detailed laws (with protective cities of refuge) for manslaughter, such as Numbers 35:6-29.

The concluding quote used in The Way’s “Pro-Truth” article involves a bizarre King James Version reference to Jesus’ birth in Luke 1:35. The phrase, “that holy **thing**” is explained to mean that while Jesus was in the womb, he was not yet a person. The “child to be born” (other accurate versions) should certainly not be depersonalized in such a fishy, unwarranted way.

As I now, thankfully, recognize the flaky nature of certain strange doctrines (using the weird twisting of very few verses) which once captivated me through **cultic** indoctrination, I am amazed to have been so gullible to blatant error and, sadly, **calloused** toward the precarious condition of the unborn! We, who think of ourselves as truly caring for defenseless people, such as “widows” and “orphans” (mentioned throughout the Bible), or other mistreated folks in modern society, can certainly become spokespersons for defenseless unborn babies! We do so not to play worldly, edgy, tit-for-tat “politics” with anyone, but to simply “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and thus help folks seek loving, viable solutions to precarious or difficult situations they might face. Those who have formerly had (for whatever reason) calloused, **indifferent** hearts toward the unborn (or have been previously involved in abortions) can approach the merciful Father God and experience changed (or repentant) minds and hearts — and ultimately receive forgiveness! (1 John 1:5-2:2).

There is no doubt at all that Scriptures point to the sanctity of human life, even before birth: the baby leaped in Elizabeth’s womb (Luke 1:41, 44). Paul was set apart from his mother’s womb (Gal. 1:15) as was Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) — in reference to God’s dynamic foreknowledge of **real** people! Psalm 139:13-14a beautifully highlights God’s very own involvement with a developing fetus: “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

The blinding obstacles to understanding the precious nature of the lives of children (whether before or after birth) are often rooted in unrecognized **idolatry** among modern folks, including three idols whom the ancients designated as Aphrodite (sex), Mammon (money/wealth), and Mars (war/violence.) N.T. Wright offers the following keen insight: “First, those who

² <https://thewayinternational.com/pro-truth-when-human-life-begins/>

³ Kristen Skedgell, *Losing the Way: A Memoir of Spiritual Longing, Manipulation, Abuse, and Escape* (Point Richmond, California: Bay Tree Publishing, 2008), 183.

worship gods [idols] become like them; their characters are formed as they imitate the object of worship and imbibe its inner essence. Second, worshipping them demands sacrifices, and those sacrifices are often human. You hardly need me to spell out the point. How many million children, born or indeed unborn, have been sacrificed on the altar of Aphrodite, denied a secure upbringing because the demands of erotic desire keep one or both parents on the move?”⁴

Repentance (deliberate, devoted **change**) from such devastating idols is vital to acquiring God’s powerful liberation from debilitating corruption in our lives!

Future Kingdom **values** are paramount in the big picture here. Just as there will be a coming renovation of all the earth when instruments of war will be converted into agricultural tools, and folks will no longer learn war (Isa. 2:4b), so people on a revamped, Messiah-ruled planet will certainly have no desire to exterminate precious unborn babies! Since we should obey God and practice non-retaliatory non-violence **now** (Matt. 5:21-22 and 43-48) in light of the assured world peace of the future, we should help folks carefully love the unborn **now**, knowing that a future, transformative day with no abortion violence will truly arrive! ✧

James and His Place in Scripture

by Tony Baldwin, Georgia

In my study of James, I was overwhelmed by the thought that, while he is the very brother of the Messiah, James often gets a second place to Luke, Paul, and Timothy. I don’t believe James immediately recognized the position of his brother and placement of his brother as the “only begotten” son of God. I am sure James had some struggle to get his arms around this.

As a software engineer asked to audit transactions for fraud and validity, we often use this premise: “That which is closest to the transaction brings about the best source of truth.” Most every software engineer would say this principle is foundational in the forensic search for truth.

Christian channels often distill what we call “The Gospel” to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and works of Paul. John and Paul seem to receive considerable recognition while James seems remote.

Certainly, John, “the disciple loved by Jesus,” cannot be discounted. But, I would suggest the writings

of James to be in the highest regard as the brother of the Messiah. James knew the upbringing of Jesus — I am sure they fought over toys, wrestled as kids, received spankings but both clearly received Old Testament teaching and instruction.

Christianity doesn’t like to think of this human side of the Messiah. And, overall, Christian channels seem to minimize the writings of James as “good moral advice.” I think of James’ writings as pivotal Kingdom direction, and I am sure you do as well. ✧

The Curse of the Capital “W” in John 1:1

by Carlos Xavier

One of the main problems in understanding John 1:1-3 comes when people confuse grammatical gender with biological gender. In other words, the Greek *logos* is a **grammatically** masculine noun, but this doesn’t mean that God’s *word* is an actual person, a human male no less!

That “the word” should not be capitalized and therefore confused with a person is verified by the Old Testament meaning and usage of “word,” the Hebrew word *davar*. If you check any standard lexicon you’ll find that this word was simply understood as God’s creative “speech, reason, plan,” etc.

Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the OT.

davar: a single word, in the proper sense (LXX *logos, rhema*) 2 Kings 18.36; Job 2.13. Also “decree, plan, proposal 2 Sam 17.6; 1 Kings 1.7.”

Liddell, Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon.

logos: word, speech, statement, discourse, refutation, account, explanation, and reason.

The word *logos* is never defined as another person separate from YHVH, God who is the Father. Hence, in the Old Testament the word of the LORD (i.e., the word of God) is never referred to as a “he” or “him” in either Hebrew or Greek (LXX/Septuagint).

As a matter of fact, all English translations from the Greek before the 1611 KJV describe the *logos* as an “it” and not a “he” in John 1:2-3: “All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that was made. In **it** was life, and the life was the light of men” (Tyndale, Matthews’, Great Bible, Taverner, Whittingham, Geneva, Bishops’, and Tomson). Five of these eight translations also do not capitalize “word” in John 1:1.

⁴ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues* Harper One, p. 154

So what does John 1:1 mean?

The word was God Himself, i.e., God's word, as some translations show:

- The Amplified Bible (1965 and 1987 update);
- A Translation in the Language of the People (Williams);
- Original Aramaic New Testament in Plain English

Or "the Divine word and wisdom was there with God, and it was what God was."

- Scholars Version (The Five Gospels), 1993;
- The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version (1992)

The Phillips translation captures the sense of John 1:1: "At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word, was with God, and was God."⁵

The 19th-century German scholar Hans Wendt summed it up well:

"Therefore we should not argue from Philo's meaning of 'word' as a hypostasis [person] that John also meant by 'word' a preexisting personality. In the remainder of the Gospel and in 1 John, 'word' is never to be understood in a personal sense. It means rather the 'revelation' of God which had earlier been given to Israel (10:35), had come to the Jews in Holy Scripture (5:38) and which had been entrusted to Jesus and committed by him to his disciples (8:55; 12:48; 17:6, 8, 14, 17; 1 John 1:1) and which would now be preserved by them (1 John 1:10; 2:5, 14). It cannot be proved that the author of the prologue thought of the word as a real person. Only the historical Jesus and not the original word is said to be the Son (John 1:14, 18). But in this Son there dwelt and worked the eternal revelation of God."

Points to Remember:

- The word and God never talk to each other.
- The word of God is not a procreated, unique Son.
- The word doesn't have a separate "conscious will."
- And the word is not your mediator or your redeemer. ✧

⁵ J.B. Phillips' New Testament, 1972. See also our onegodtranslation.com in John 1 and our article "John 1 in 50+ English Translations" at focusonthe kingdom.org/articles

John 1 and Genesis 1

The great prologue of John 1:1-18 is dedicated to the "word," meaning the reason and whole point of the whole Genesis creation, recalling the light and life of Genesis 1 where 10 times "God said." That Gospel of the Kingdom word was finally embodied uniquely in Jesus who is never called the Word (except in Rev. 19:13), but who always speaks the words of God as Gospel.

Some argue that "In the beginning" in John 1:1 means the beginning of Jesus' ministry. But as the *Pulpit Commentary* notes, "From early times expositors have perceived...here a comparison with the 'in the beginning' of the first verse of the book of Genesis. This can hardly be doubted...The Socinian view that it referred to 'the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel' [is] not now seriously maintained."⁶

Then in 1:14 "the word became flesh" describes the same transition and transformation as the "water became wine," and "stones become bread." The neuter "light" of John verse 5 becomes the masculine person, Jesus in verse 10. That is, the "it" of the light becomes the "him" of the Messiah who appears as the uniquely begotten Son, there being almost certainly a reference to his virginal begetting in John 1:13 (reading "**he who was begotten by God**").

The meaning of "became flesh" is agreed by all the standard lexicons. The word **became** flesh (*o logos sarx egeneto*). "Of persons and things, which *change* their nature, to indicate their entering a *new condition: become* something" (*Bauer's Lexicon*). As also in: "I **became** a minister." "It **became** a large tree." "He did not exalt himself to **be made** high priest." "Water **became** wine."

Daniel Wallace: "as in *sarx egeneto* [became flesh], *sarx* [flesh] expresses the state into which the *divine word entered* by a definite act."

Compare "the word **was** (*een*) God" (John 1:1). No change! "Was" in verse 1 is not the same as "became" in verse 14. "Observe the contrast between the *egeneto* (became) of John the Baptist's appearance [v. 6] and the *een* (was) of the logos, between the man John sent from God and the 'word **became** flesh.'"⁷

"Became" in verse 14 marks the transition. Note how obviously Jewish this is: "One of the most interesting correspondences in the Qumran literature is in fact with John 1:3: 'By his **knowledge** everything has been brought into being. And everything that is, he established by his **purpose**; and apart from him nothing

⁶ "The Gospel of John," *Pulpit Commentary*, 1950, p. 4-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

is done' (1QS 11:11). The equation **Knowledge = Wisdom = Logos** would not be hard to make."⁸

Compare this with Genesis:

"‘And God said’ at the beginning of each work of creation including the two providential words of verses 28, 29 — ten times in all (hence the later Jewish dictum: ‘by ten sayings the world was created,’ Aboth 5:1)...In the fact that God creates by a **word**, there are several important truths implicit. It is an indication not only of the ease with which He accomplished His work, and of His omnipotence and also of the fact that He works consciously and deliberately. Things do not emanate from Him unconsciously, nor are they produced by a mere act of thought...but by an act of will of which the concrete **word** is the outward expression. Each stage in His creative work is the realization of a deliberately formed purpose, **the word** being the mediating principle of creation, the means or agency through which His will takes effect. Cp.. Ps. 33:6, 9, also 107:20, 147:15, 18 in which passages the **word** is regarded as a messenger between God and His creatures. This usage of the OT is a preparation for the personal sense of the term, the word which appears in John 1:1."⁹

All this is in fact the preparation for the *false capital* in John 1:1, which:

- 1) destroyed both monotheism and
- 2) the human Jesus (which is antichrist, 1 John 4:2, 2 John 7-9). "That Jesus has come in the flesh separates belief from unbelief."¹⁰

So the docetists ended up twisting John, who was deliberately wanting to be anti-docetic! Then 1 John (the Epistle) is John's own effort (with its 5 times repeated "that which," not "he who") to frustrate and correct the error being created out of his Gospel! Of all errors, the greatest error!

Any Jew would hear "wisdom = word." Jesus is the incarnation of wisdom and word. He is fully human, and to say otherwise, i.e. that he preexists, makes him not human!

"Preexistence" creates apostasy and polytheism! Kegan Chandler (*The God of Jesus in Light of Christian Dogma*) wrote a whole chapter on "another Jesus," the Jesus who cannot be really human because he begins as non-human. ✧

Passing Over Our True Passover

by Carlos Xavier

In Luke 22:19 Jesus says, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Luke had previously said, "Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together'" (Luke 22:7-8).

Note how "There is something of a cloak and dagger atmosphere generated by the procedure Jesus outlines" for the Passover meal. As the *Word Biblical Commentary* notes:

"The householder is being asked to cooperate in concealing one who had been exercising a **provocative teaching ministry in the temple by day**, and who was at this stage something of a **fugitive by night**. Not even the disciple band itself (including Judas) is to know ahead of time where they will be in the evening. Jesus has seen to it that his final evening with the disciples, spent in Passover celebration, will not be disturbed."

So far from teaching a *repeat* of the annual Jewish Passover festival, Jesus, in his last Passover meal, established a new thing for a new purpose! That is the New Covenant Communion service, which is not once a year ("as often as," 1 Cor. 11:25-26). It is a time to remember his life, i.e., his teaching ministry and ultimate sacrifice/shedding of blood that eventually ratified, gave the stamp of approval (if you will) to this new covenant ceremony.

The *Benson Commentary* notes that when Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of me" he meant: "Do it no longer in remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, under which your fathers groaned...Do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, and death."

As a result, Jesus effectively *replaced* not only the Passover meal practice but even the language that defined it. *Ellicott's Commentary* notes that the word for "remembrance" is also used in the Greek version of the Old Testament in reference to the show-bread (Lev. 24:7), and the blowing of trumpets (Num. 10:10).

Jesus goes on to explain that the "cup of wine symbolizes the new covenant ratified by my blood, poured out for you" (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:28).

⁸ J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve More New Testament Studies*, p. 75.

⁹ Driver, *Commentary on Genesis*

¹⁰ *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol.1, p. 678.

Paul wrote, “Messiah, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. So then, let us be celebrating the festival [i.e. continuously], not with the yeast of vice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Let us not pass over our true passover, i.e., the lord Messiah who with his teaching (symbolized by the bread) and sacrifice (symbolized by the wine) instituted this new covenant commandment. And in so doing we are reminded whenever we get together as a church we continue to proclaim all he taught and did, until he comes again. ✧

Genesis 6

“The **sons of God** saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves from any they chose” (Gen. 6:2).

I offer these thoughts: The Hebrew phrase *Bnay Elohim*, “sons of God,” in the Old Testament always means, on every other occasion, angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). The Alexandrian version of the LXX has “angels of God” in the Greek of Genesis 6.

“Spirits,” to whom Jesus went off to preach *after* his resurrection (1 Pet 3:18-20), only and always means angels or demons, never human beings. Certainly Jesus preached to no one while he was dead! (And he didn’t preach to anyone while *they* were dead!) Human beings *have* a spirit, but they, as a class, are never anywhere called “spirits.” “Spirits” (plural) are angels or demons, unless qualified by the context.

Then Jude says, “**Like the angels**, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves over to **extreme sexual immorality**” (Jude 7). Who were these angels? The sin at Sodom was of course angels and men. In Genesis it is angels and some women.

This was the earliest view held by Jews and the earliest Premillennial Christian believers. And of course by Enoch who is cited in the New Testament. This view was held by Josephus, Philo, and the Dead Sea scrolls. Augustine, who I think got almost everything wrong, did not like this angel view.

“Many Christian expositors, in both ancient and modern times, have understood by ‘sons of God’ godly men of the line of Seth, and by ‘daughters of men’ worldly women of the line of Cain. But for neither of these views is there any support in the text: not only do they rest upon arbitrary interpretations of the words used, but it is incredible that ‘men’ in v. 2 can be intended in a narrower sense than v. 1 [‘when **men**

began to multiply on the face of the earth’]; nor is it apparent why the intermarriage of two races, each descended from a common ancestor, should have resulted in a race characterized either by gigantic stature or by abnormal wickedness” (S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 1906, p. 83). ✧

A Time of Universal Deceit

by Barbara Buzzard

A few years ago an article appeared in a traditional women’s magazine entitled “One man’s confession: ‘I’m happily married...and I watch porn.’” It was written anonymously of course, and the author thinks he is really quite a decent guy. He didn’t claim to be a Christian, but reliable statistics say that “1 out of every 3 men in America has an ongoing relationship with pornography.”¹¹ And the author in question actually quotes Ph.D.’s who say they see no link between pornography and being unfaithful; basically they see nothing to worry about. Whoa! It’s time to start speaking truth to ourselves.

The man in question has a moral problem. He filibusters around it, deceiving himself that he is doing no harm, blind to the possibility that his feelings/desires will crescendo. He is a promise/covenant breaker with no respect for his victims, a man blinded by the darkness of his own lusts. He is a possible homewrecker, ignorant of the perils of trying to fill a bottomless pit.

What a very different picture this would be if the man repented and chose the Christian walk. Then he could be challenged to take his feelings to Scripture and have them named (lust, pride, etc.). Once named, he could no longer plead innocence. He is being deceived into thinking that such feelings can be innocent, but Scripture could set him right – some yearnings are blessed and some are forbidden.

Job could be a wonderful mentor for this man. Job saw the brilliant results of being in/under covenant: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?” (Job 31:1). It is remarkable that such a simple yet profound answer would solve the writer’s problem. Ah, yes, but it would require obedience.

There is so much help from those who have gone before us.: “I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar...I will reject perverse ideas and stay away from every evil.” (Ps. 101:2b-4). “You may say, ‘I am allowed to do anything.’ But I reply, ‘Not everything is good for you. And even though ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ I must not become a slave to anything.” (1 Cor. 6:12)

¹¹ Joel Belz, “Keep it quiet, please,” *World* magazine, Jan. 23, 2016

These very telling words were heard in the movie *Fireproof*: “A parasite is anything that latches onto you or your partner and sucks the life out of your marriage. They’re usually in the form of addictions, like gambling, drugs, or pornography. They promise pleasure but grow like a disease and consume more and more of your thoughts, time, and money. They steal away your loyalty and heart from those you love. Marriages rarely survive if parasites are present. If you love your spouse, you must destroy any addiction that has your heart. If you don’t, it will destroy you.”¹²

Sin, when it is indulged in this way, is defiling, whether the sinner knows it or not. The man I referred to has the gall to say that his is a relatively healthy secret. He is glad that his wife does not know. But character is who you are when no one is looking; and for the Christian it is remembering Whose you are. The concept of “putting on” restraint and other good qualities and “putting off” unholy and forbidden actions is crucial to the choices we make. And casting off restraint is not a good condition to be in (Prov. 29:18).

A wise person has put it this way: “Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.” It is the old rule that “the one who feeds you – owns you.”

“For the world offers only the lusts for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see... These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world” (1 John 2:21).

But the good news is this: “If you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father” (1 John 2:1). There is no need to live with sin or with guilt. The most blessed provision has been made for us, and Jesus’ yoke is gentle as well as dependable. What relief there is to pull into this safe harbor. ✧

Comments

- “It’s been five years since I discovered your booklet *What Happens When We Die?* Its contents answered some of my questions about 2 Corinthians 5, finally! Then I read *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*, and when I realized that the seed of the sower, man Messiah Jesus, means the seed of immortality, my heart leapt within me, and since then I can’t get away from Restoration Fellowship literature; it energizes me even now, at the age of 80. I greatly appreciate your work (and that of your co-workers) — it makes the Scriptures speak to me very clearly; even though I have

studied many books and tried many avenues of the Christian life, 30 years as a Witness and then elsewhere.” — *Czech Republic*

- “We have a friend of our family who is in her 102nd year of life. I call her on a regular basis, as I did this morning. During our conversation on the phone, I read from our German translation of your book *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven*. She enjoyed it very much. Today she asked me to convey to you her heartfelt thanks for your writings. She understands the central message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and she is grateful to God who has inspired you to write all this. She even suggested that we call together a group of like-minded people in Switzerland who would like to hear more of this information which is now being translated into the German language.” — *Switzerland*

- “I love your work. Our family has absorbed all the online material from you we can find, and I’ve read your *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. Thanks so much for your courageous work in championing biblical monotheism. You’ve inspired a whole new generation to take up the cause.” — *Oklahoma*

- “I have been praying for you all too! As for the missionary work, I witness to others and plant seed. Right now they are closing half the prison down. I’ve been reading the book *They Never Told Me This in Church!* again.” — *Ohio*

The Millennium Is Future!

“Revelation 20:1-3 rather clearly contradicts the amillennial interpretation that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ... To describe Satan’s **present** situation as being locked in the Abyss and unable to deceive the nations for a period of a thousand years is **simply not factually true today**, and it requires **extreme spiritualization** of the literalness of this passage as well as other New Testament references to Satan’s activities and present power (Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Pet. 5:8)... **If Satan is actually deceiving the nations today, as the Scriptures and the facts of history indicate, then he is not now locked in the Abyss, and the thousand-year Millennium is still future.**”

— *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1983, p. 979

¹² Stephen Kendrick, *The Love Dare Day by Day: A Year of Devotions for Couples*

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